

Authentic Armenia

ARMENIA AUTHENTIC – this is not just a route for travelling to Armenia, but a tour for Breathing like Armenia From Northern to Southern Gates of Armenia. The program aims to reveal a real connection of Armenian history in its glory and tragedy with its today's everyday life challenges. You feel it with the help both of its historical monuments and of its today's people who has been living the overpass of Ex-Soviet Union era and the growing up of the young Armenia Republic Independence. And this is still in a country where the past and the present live so close to each other since it's still very difficult for old generation to forget the past and very difficult for new generation to build the future. But this is Armenia and YOU ARE WELCOME!!! This is a program to reveal the authenticity of Armenia with the help of its PEOPLE and of their STORIES.

- Meet the locals
- See all regions of Armenia
- Non-classical standard route
- Responsible tourism

Day - 1 Yerevan

ARRIVAL

Departure from homeland Overnight: Yerevan

Day - 2 Yerevan

THE CAPITAL AND THE MODERN LIFE Yerevan – Echmiadzin – Zvartnots – Yerevan

Arrival to Zvartnots International Airport of Yerevan. Meet and greet at the airport and private transfer to the hotel. Short rest or overnight. Breakfast. Yerevan is the capital and largest city of Armenia as well as one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities. Situated along the Hrazdan River, Yerevan is the administrative, cultural, and industrial center of the country. It has been the capital since 1918, the thirteenth in the history of Armenia, and the seventh located in or around the Ararat plain. The history of Yerevan dates to the 8th century BC, with the founding of the fortress of Erebuni in 782 BC by king Argishti I. Even after Erebuni kingdom dissolution the life never stopped in this territory and therefore Erbouni is Yerevan's historical center. Visit Erebouni archeological site. But Yerevan has also other historical centers of later centuries such as the Russian and Persian Empires era traces from 19th cent. and later also one of Yerevan's oldest settlements – Kond district. Explore Yerevan up to today's architecture and rhythm visiting Cascade monument and having a panoramic view to the city and continue to Armenian Church center in Echmiadzin. Visit the religious center of Armenia – Echmiadzin Cathedral 4th cen. UNESCO. Visit also Zvartnots cathedral ruins 7th cen. UNESCO Return to Yerevan. Optional welcome dinner at a traditional restaurant with live music and after dinner stroll in downtown to enjoy Republic Square singing and dancing fountains. Overnight in Yerevan Overnight: Yerevan

Day - 3 Gyumri

NORTHERN GATES of ARMENIA and THE TRAGEDY OF 1988 Yerevan - Ghazaravan village – Talin cathedral – Ashotsk – Gyumri (Villa Kars)

Check out and early departure to Ghazaravan village. Breakfast at Mrs. Anahit house. She is a teacher at local school and a wife of former Major who is now an active hunter in local mountains. They have 3 children who will join the group for the nice open-air breakfast. The hosts will serve chairs and tables laid in the garden of the house. Mrs. Anahit will show her guests how she does their cheese that looks like a thread and it's called "Telik" (translated in English "Thread"). The guest will taste also the delicious Armenian marmalade of nuts. The village is famous for so called Greek nuts and you just can't miss Sujukh tasting made by Mts. Anahit. The guests will enjoy the breakfast participating a master class of Sujukh making. They will taste also different local herb tea with local sweets and the fresh home-made bread. Continue to Talin village to visit Katoghike cathedral of 7th cent. One of the most beautiful churches of Medieval Armenian Architecture which even in ruins still attracts with its beauty of stones and traces of frescos. Proceed to Ashotsk village close to the North-Western gates of Armenia bordering with Georgia. Visit "Redemptoris Mater" hospital which is a donation by the Holy Chair of Rome to the Armenian people in 1991. It is financed by the Italian Caritas and is being managed by the Camiliani Fathers. It's situated at 2000 m. above sea level and seems to be in the edge of nothing. The hospital has been an immense help for the people injured in 1988 earthquake that has taken life of 25000 people of Spitak, Gyumri and surrounded habitats. With this visit, one can also learn about the worries of local people and the Armenian people of Akhalkalaki leaving in their historical homeland of nowadays Georgia. Return to Gyumri and have a meeting with locals around the dinner at a fish farm and restaurant close to Russian army which is on Armenia – Turkey border. *For wildlife ecotourism lover, another overnight in the region to visit Arpi lake. The national park is a habitat for 670 species of vascular plants, including many endemics of the Caucasus and Armenia, as well as 255 species of vertebrate animals, including more than 10 species registered in the IUCN Red List (otter, European marbled polecat, Darevski's viper and others). It is the habitat for the biggest colony of Armenian gull in the world and the only breeding site of Dalmatian pelican in Armenia. It is the only habitat of Darevski's viper in the world.

Overnight: Gyumri

Day - 4 Dilijan

FROM RUSSIAN ZAR EMPIRE ERA TO OUR DAYS Gyumri – Sanahin monastery UNESCO – Sanahin Kayaran – Kobayr monastery - Fioletovo village – Dilijan

Breakfast at the hotel. Check out. Driver to Sanahin village. Visit Sanahin cathedral of 10-13 cen UNESCO highlight. A real pearl of Armenian Medieval Architecture. Descend on Debet river canyon and stop at Mr. Israelyan's house in "Sanahin Station". The history goes back to Russian Zar Era when many Pontic Greek miners were resettled in the area during the 18th century to start exploiting copper. Soon after, nearly a quarter of the entire Russian copper was being mined in Alaverdi. At the end of the 19th century, the concession to exploit the mine was sold to a French firm. With the establishment of the Tbilisi-Alexandropol railway in 1899, a new copper smelter was opened in the area between Sanahin and Akori to set the foundation for a new settlement that became the residence of the smelter staff. The newly formed settlement was called Manés, after the French engineer who was the director of the project. Mts. Israelyan who has been a former employee in gigantic Alaverdi mine will talk about his ex-job experience and will describe the collapse they have lived when the mine was closed because of 1990s economic crisis and the dissolution of Soviet Union. He will tell about the air pollution which caused to death diseases and of course will evidence about his actual job in nowadays miner which was restarted in 2000s. The guest will have this meeting in the balcony which face to the mountains and the beautiful Debed river right in front of the house. Here is the lowest point of Armenia 380 m above sea level (highest peak Mt. Aragats 4090 m. above

sea level). If time permits and the travelers are in good physical preparation hiking to the ruins of Kobayr monastery of 13th cent. situated on a brink of a deep gorge. Even in ruins the monastery attracts with its location and beautiful frescos. Continue to Dilijan town stopping at Fioletovo village. at a 1800 m. a.s.l., and tea tasting from samovar in a local house at ethnic and religious minority named "molokans". Ethnically russians that used to drink milk during Great Fast from where got the russian name "Molokan" milk – drinker and forced to be settled by Russian Empire in especially highly located mountains for hard life. The community is quite big in Armenia and Fioletovo is completely settled by molokans. Arrival to Dilijan – Armenian Switzerland.

Overnight: Dilijan

Day - 5 Nor Ghetik

RESPONSIBLE TOURISM & ECOTOURISM Dilijan - Kalavan – Nor Ghetik

Breakfast and Check out. continue the route to Kalavan, a small village in Gegharkunik province of Armenia, has undergone a magical transformation, turning from a forgotten small village into a touristic center. Even the absence of properly paved roads and modern guesthouses doesn't prevent it from having 1500-2000 enthusiasts of archaeology, adventure and ecotourism visit the place yearly. Not so long ago, residents of the village were deserting it, seeing no future. Meet Robert Ghukasyan whose family moved to Kalavan in 1980s, from Sumqayit, Azerbaijan. When Armenian-Azeri clashes broke out, the Azeri population of Amrkher exchanged houses with Armenians living in Shamkhor, and Amrkher became Kalavan, populated by Armenians. This is a place which admires to every visitor and still a place where the common tourists have not placed a foot. According to the community development plan designed by Robert, Kalavan should be an ideal place for ecotourism, so that people, who love nature and want to enjoy tranquility, visit this place. Tasting of local famous goat cheese in the village. Continue to Nor Ghetik small village where Mrs. Arpine Gyulumyan runs a bed and breakfast with her family. She is also an engineer, a social worker, and a community council member. While few residents venture far from their farming and cattle breeding traditions, Arpine left to study electrochemical technology in Yerevan. She returned to Ghetik after graduation, where there were no jobs in engineering. At 33 years old, she became the first woman community council member elected in her village. Her main goal is to raise the living standards in her community and the region. Take some eco-tourism activities in Arpine house and overnight in Nor Ghetik BB to feel the real life of a village situated very close to Azerbaijan to know better its people which seems to be very isolated.

Overnight: Nor Ghetik

Day - 6 Goris

SILK ROAD route Sevan – Noraduz – Selim – Goris Breakfast and Check out.

Drive to Noraduz cemetery enjoying the beautiful blue waters of lake Sevan- second highest and largest alpine freshwater lake of the world. The oldest khachkars- cross stones in Noraduz cemetery date back to the late 10th century. Cross stones are a peculiarity of Armenian architecture and arts and this cemetery is a biggest collection of Armenian khachkars and reveals to be a unique place in the world. Meeting with local people. Continue the route through Selim pass to visit Orbelians caravanserai 14 cen. built on the former routes of Great Silk Road. Located at the southern side of Vardenyats Mountain Pass at a height of 2410 meters above sea level, Orbelian's Caravanserai is the best preserved caravanserai in the entire country. Armenians were participating at this big trade routes with their own products such as horses, silver, gold, carpets, dried fruits etc. and of course importing silk and other good from other countries. Continue to Goris.

Overnight: Goris

Day - 7 Shikahogh

THE SOUTHERN GATES Goris – Megri – Shikahogh

Breakfast. Check out. Departures to the Southern gates of Armenia. Towards Meghri town. Situated at 400 km (8 hours) from Yerevan Meghri town seems to have no communication with the capital, but still it's the border city with Iran and the transit point bilateral commercial relations. The town's economy is based on the food industry, and contains a bread-baking factory, canneries and a winery. Meghri is one of the biggest producers of Armenian pomegranate. Meghri has a significantly milder climate than the rest of the cities in Armenia, and produces fruits not found in other parts of the country like the persimmon. Over time persimmons have made their way across Asia to other parts of the world making its way into food traditions of new cultures. During that time, the persimmon has snuck into the Armenian way of life. Whether it's dried or eaten fresh, Armenians seem to cherish this amazing fruit. Return to Shikahogh where Armenia's second largest forest reserve is located. Shikahogh is the only place where the forest remains intact. It is home to unique species considered to be the wealth of not only Armenia but the entire world as well. If time permits organize a brief excursion to some part of the forest for a picnic. Overnight: local BB.

Day - 8 Goris

WORLD'S LONGEST AERIAL TRAMWAY Shikahogh – Tatev – Shinuhayr - Goris

Breakfast and Check out. Return to Goris with a stop to Tatev monastery of 10 -15 cen. taking world's longest aerial tramway which flies over the spectacular Vortan river canyon. Another stop at Shinuhayr village for lunch and for visiting the "Wool to Carpet" handicraft studio. The economic empowerment of women is one of the most important contributing factors to achieving gender equality and to reducing poverty. Syunik is one of the most remote areas of the country, with a population of 150,000 people, and where unemployment is high. Two-thirds of the registered unemployed people are women. Additionally, in many households, the male member of the family has gone abroad in search of work, leaving women to bear the burden of looking after children. The 'Wool to Carpet' handicraft studio in Shinuhayr, where Zari works, was established in 2014. It is one of many in the region, employing 120 women in wool washing, spinning and in making carpets and carpet products. In addition to carpet-making, women are also involved in pottery and crocheting. *For travelers interested in conflict of Nagorno Kharabagh an extension of 1,2 days tour will be organized upon request.

Overnight: Goris

Day - 9 Yerevan

WINE ROUTE Goris – Noravank – Triniy winery – Goat farm – Areni cave – Khor Virap – Yerevan

Breakfast at the hotel. Check out. Drive back to Yerevan with a stop in Aghavnadzor village to visit "Trinity" winery which is an organic winery famous for the quality of rose wine and blow-your-socks off arena wine. Tasting wine and grappa. Wine making technics have a long history in Armenia. One of the oldest wineries in the world was discovered in Armenia. Historically, wineries in Armenia were concentrated along the Ararat valley and in actual district of Vayots Dzor. Winemaking took a downward plunge in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union,

but is undergoing a revival, with the addition of world-class labels. Continue the tour visiting Noravank monastery of 10 – 14 sec. en route which is beautifully located over the Gnisghik river canyon. Visit also Areni cave Early Bronze Age ritual site and settlement is located near the Areni village in southern Armenia along the Arpa River. In 2010, it was announced that the earliest known shoe was found at the site. In January 2011, the earliest known winery in the world was announced to have been found. Also in 2011, the discovery of a straw skirt dating to 3,900 years BCE was reported. In 2009, the oldest brain was discovered. And complete the tour with the visit Khor Virap monastery (4-17 cen.) where Armenian first Catholicos had been imprisoned for 13 years. The monastery offers the best and the closest view to Mt. Ararat. Arrival to Yerevan.

Overnight: Yerevan

Day - 10 Yerevan

ARMENIA IS FAMOUST FOR ... Yerevan – Matenadaran – Garni – Hyelands – Geghard – Ararat Brandy Factory - Yerevan

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to Garni pagan temple of 1st cen. – the only one survived in the Caucasus and the Geghard cave monastery 12-13 cen. UNESCO main relic – Holy Spear. Visit Hyelands Eco Village resort represents a unique choice of stylish village dwellings from Armenian tufa stone houses to charming log cabins and modern units. It's built by and Armenian family from United States. The resort is surrounded by ecologically clean gardens and orchards where a substantial number of fruit trees, vegetables, herbs and flowers are grown. You can enjoy walking in the garden, picking with your own hands and tasting our apples, apricots, berries, cherries, figs, grapes, melons, peaches, pears, plums, strawberries, tomatoes, watermelons, almonds and walnuts in different seasons. Guests can watch or take part in the process of lavash baking in the tonir house and butter churning in Armenian khnotsi. Continue to Return to Yerevan and Matenadaran manuscript depositary and Vernissage open air handcraft market if week end. Farwell drink at Ararat Brandy Factory which has a centaury history of its glorious cognac. Gala dinner at a traditional restaurant with live music or participation at Armenian wedding ceremony if possible.

Overnight: Yerevan

Day - 11 Yerevan

Departure

Transfer to airport. Departure.

Inclusions

- 4 nights in Yerevan
- 6 nights in the countryside
- Meal as specified in itinerary
(B = Breakfast, L = Lunch, D = Dinner)
- Activities and excursions according to itinerary
- Tours and excursions as per program with Sedan for 2 pax,
Mini Van 3-5 pax, Mercedes Sprinter up to 6 pax
- English speaking tour guide
- Admission fees according to itinerary

Exclusions

- International flights
- Meals other than mentioned in itinerary
- Tours and Excursions other than mentioned in itinerary
- Early check-in and late check-out at hotels
- Personal travel insurance
- Personal expenses and tips for driver/guides
- Visa fees

Payment Details:

Group from 6 persons and
more starting from (p.P)

USD 1310

Private tour for 2 persons
starting from (p.P.) USD 2096

Booking Availabilities

Booking in between : **23rd August 2019 & 1st March 2022**

★★★ **3 Star/Boutique/B&B**

Single Supplement	: USD 100.00
Double Room Price(per person)for the 1st + 2nd person	: USD 2096.00
Double Room Price(per person)for the 3rd + 4th person	: USD 1557.00
Double Room Price(per person)for the 5th + 6th person	: USD 1310.00