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GEGHARKUNIK marz Գեղարքունիք մարզ

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[INTRODUCTION](#) (p. 4)
[NATURE](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
[DO](#) (p. 9)
[WHEN?](#) (p. 11)
How Long
[SEVAN CITY](#) (p.12)
[SEVAN BEACHES](#) (p. 18)
[EXPLORING THE REGION](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
[TRIP 1: WESTERN SHORE](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
- [Gavar](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
[TRIP 2: MARTUNI](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
- [Martuni](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
[TRIP 3: SOUTHERN SHORE](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
- [Vardenis](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
[TRIP 4: EASTERN SHORE](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
[TRIP 5: NORTH GEGHARKUNIK](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
- [Chambarak](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))

RESOURCES (p. 27)

[GEGHARKUNIK MAP](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))
[SEVAN CITY MAP](#) (p. 16)
[SEVAN BEACHES MAP](#) (p. [Error! Bookmark not defined.](#))

Note about pronunciation: we transcribe words into English using local dialect, and substitute "i" for "y" as in Sarigiyugh instead of Sarygyugh. "p." stands for poghots (street), 'pts.' for poghotsner (streets), 'pta.' for poghota (avenue).

Note: GPS coordinates are in decimal degrees (DD) Latitude x Longitude. Elevation (elev.) is in meters. Population counts (pop.) are estimates; due to ongoing migrations official population numbers are unreliable.



INTRODUCTION

Gegharkunik is one of the most spectacular regions in Armenia, its stunning landscape shaped by millions of years of volcanic eruptions and the once steaming waters of Lake Sevan, now cooled to a brisk 18°C at the beach. Sevan is Armenia's largest lake and a summer magnet for thousands of locals who bask on its manmade beaches and party in one of its booming resorts. If Armenia has anything like a Mediterranean character, Gegharkunik is where you'll find it, with friendly beach combers looking for that perfect sand, ski jet, and bikini.

The marz is made from the historic regions of Sevan, Martuni, Kamo, Basargecher, and Krasnosielsk; each with its own distinct geography, flora and history. The lake (also called Gegharkunik through much of its history) is a stunning body of water, and in spite of the ecological risks it faces through mismanagement, uncontrolled tourism and local's notorious penchant to litter everything in their reach, it never fails to impress with its unpredictable moods, reflected in its jet-black to aquamarine colors.

And Sevan is the recreation spot in Armenia, for locals and tourists alike. Over 160 beach resorts, from the humblest beach front with a few domiks (metal huts) and camping spots to the most

pretentious hotels in Armenia angle for trade and on a July or August weekend night they are almost all full. The hub of all this summer fun is the Sevan peninsula, with an 8th c monastery overlooking the beach-partying crowd, who revel in the water by day (sailing, skiing, paragliding, water boarding, jet skiing) and party onshore at night (disco, disco, disco).

On first look, the lake's sparkling waters give way to what seem to be barren landscapes, worth climbing only to get a better view of the lake. Scratch the surface though, and you will find some of the most beautiful landscapes in the country, with hidden glens and seas of flowers on windswept hills of grass. The shoreline is all for the tourists but take a short drive (or hike) up any mountain slope and the landscape changes, monasteries appear, and fields and meadows replace the craggy spots closer to the lake line.



This makes for some excellent hiking trails, with treks exploring the mountain chains that circle the lake, with volcanic cones and alpine lakes, fields of petroglyphs, an ancient star observatory and dozens of historical sites. Flowers include endemic and rare species of flowers found only in Gegharkunik, and the lake has hosted migrating birds of millions of years, with one of the few sightings of the Dalmatian Pelican on its southern shore. The south shore is a unique marsh habitat that is in grave risk due to sudden rising waters, but which still hosts water fowl each migration.

Gegharkunik may have more excavations per square meter than any other marz in the country. The shores are almost littered with the detritus of history: Stone Age open air workshops and

settlements, Bronze Age Vishap stones and fortresses, an entire Iron Age city replete with barrow graves in its acropolis, Urartian strongholds and boundary stones, fortresses, castles and boundary stones from the Artashesian dynasty of kings; Hellenistic and Persian graves, cities and forts, and finally, in an act of synthesis astounding in its depth of feeling and incorporation of all these cultural periods, the Gegharkunik Christian era, second in age only to the Ararat valley but arguably more diverse and more complete than its lowland cousin. Gegharkunik has the largest concentration of Khachkars in Armenia, at several locations around the lake.



Local inhabitants take all this in stride, eking out their livelihood serving the beach combers (selling hot chestnuts, grilled corn and fish) or tilling the upper plots of farmland. And there are rewards for those willing to look a little deeper and climb a little higher, with villagers welcoming the wayward soul into their homes and hearts, for a little tea and sweets and plenty of local lore. Don't let the beach revelers fool you; this is a hard-knock existence, villagers are snow-bound four months of the year. And precious few tourists bother to go beyond the next khorovats stand or beach party bingo. Locals are impressed by those who bother to look into their side of the world and take particular pride in whatever they have, be it an Urartian fortress or a medieval monastery.

Whether you come for the beach, the people, the mountains, the history or the sheer beauty of it, you can find real joie de vivre in Gegharkunik, Armenia's Cote d'Azur.

NATURE ▲

Gegharkunik is surprisingly diverse for being mostly lakeside. Its topography zones range from lakes and marshlands to alpine. The mountains surrounding the lake reach 3598m with steep slopes on the North and Eastern edges and more gradual slopes West and South. The Sevan Mountains are the oldest in Armenia, weighing in at 380 million to 1.2 billion years old and include the Geghama Lehr (West), the Areguni Mountains (North), the Sevan and East Sevan Range (East) and the Vardenis mountains (South), all formed by volcanic activity.

Each mountain range has its own distinct character with its own unique ecosystem. In addition, the topography changes in concentric circles, from the lake shores and marshlands to mountain wetland, mountain slope, rocky cliffs, farmland, subalpine and mountain meadow. At the top are alpine peaks, harsh winter grounds with perpetual springs in the hottest months of summer.

Unique to Gegharkunik alone is the combination of lake shore and upper marshland sub-zones, habitats for migratory water fowl like the Great Egret, Glossy Ibis, Mute Swan, Whooper Swan, Demoiselle Crane and the rarely seen Dalmatian Pelican. The marshlands were historically the largest part of the southern shore, much of it lost in the Soviet period yet quickly regaining its position as new waters pour into the lake (see Lake Sevan, below).

The lake shore is actually part of the Sevan Preserve, Armenia's only national park. Established in 1978 to preserve and protect the sensitive shoreline, the park has been under-funded and little respected, with no less than the Ministry of Nature Protection hindering its preservation work and selling concessions to beach resorts. (Can you say "Yellowstone Park" sellout, anyone?) The park encompasses an area of 150,100 ha. of shoreline, 90% of its total, the rest taken up by resorts, camps and private farmers. Officially, 22,000 ha. has been set aside for recreation and 3800 ha. for research, most of it on the south shore. In reality, the entire northern, northeast and northwest shores are beach concessions, with camping, resorts and hotels, each putting the lake at ecological risk (see below).

Mountain slopes vary from mainly mountain slope and alpine meadow on the east and northeast to

rocky cliff, farmland and orchards, subalpine, mountain meadows and alpine in the West and South.

In the Northeast, the marz includes the separate Getik River valley, hemmed in by Areguni and Mrkhuz Mountains, with its own unique topography and weather system. Anchored by Chambarak, this valley remains one of the last wilderness areas in the country, the Getik River flowing north to the Aghstev River in Tavush, the Chambarak-Navur road passing crossing over tremendously steep slopes of alpine meadow and Gegharkunik's last native stand of forest.



Lake Sevan

The jewel of Gegharkunik is Lake Sevan, which was known in ancient times as the Gegham Sea. Lake Sevan is divided into two sections: Big Sevan and Small Sevan. Big Sevan is 972 square kilometers, with a maximum depth of 46 meters. Small Sevan is 284 square kilometers, with its maximum depth at 99 meters. The lake is 1897 meters above sea level.

The lake is fed by 28 rivers and streams, and is the source for the Hrazdan River, which connects Sevan with the Arax River in the Ararat valley in a controlled drop of 3000m of dams, hydroelectric plants and canals on its way to Yerevan and Ararat valley which depend on the lake's waters for drinking water and farming irrigation.



Sevan is strongly affected by variable weather patterns. The surface of the water can be placid and a sparkling aquamarine mirror reflecting the blue mountain skies, and within a matter of minutes can change a churning black sea whipped by Northeastern winds. Because of its altitude, the water temperature varies between 15° to 21° C, making it a favorite summer retreat from the broiling Ararat valley heat.

The lake is graced with pebble and granular sand beaches on all sides, with the rare mountain lake marshland on the southernmost end. The lake itself is home to a protected species of Ishkhan (a trout called the Prince of fish), which is officially protected from capture, but often appears on beach side restaurant menus.

Sevan is not as old as the mountains surrounding it, the Cenozoic Era sea that covered the entire basin receding to its current form just one million years ago to form the southern part of the lake, Big Sevan and a series of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions hollowing out the relatively shallow bowl of Little Sevan only 100,000 years ago.

Ecological Risks

The lake you see now is in jeopardy, the focus of constant study (and little help) from world bodies and before that, the Soviet regime, with each "fix" creating a chain reaction of negative consequences. Today, what has been trumpeted as one of the few (read: only) commitment by the government to restore the lake's original water table is further risking its eco-logical balance.

What's in a Name

This is what I think:

Referred to in antiquity as Gegham's Sea (Geghamalich), the origin of the name "Sevan" is unclear, though it is probably just as old. Some suggest it comes from one of the old settlements on the lake, perhaps L'chashen or another of the cyclopean fortresses ringing the lake, for the black basalt stone used in constructing their mammoth defenses ("Sev" means black in Armenian; "van" may denote place, spot or locality; hence "Black spot" or "Sevan"). It may also simply reflect the lake's ability to turn from sky blue to jet-black during inclement weather. The name doesn't appear until the chronicles of the Medieval Age, so actual dating is probably impossible, some believing that proves its later moniker.

Locals have a more colorful tradition, placing the name during the 7th c Arab invasion, during a brutally cold winter. At that time Sevan Peninsula was an island, so when locals learned of an imminent invasion, they crossed on the ice to the island's monastery, Sevanavank. The Arab army pursued, but the weight of their horses, weapons and armor cracked the ice and they slipped into the frigid waters and drowned. Locals rejoiced, renaming the lake (black from all the floating bodies) "Sev-van".

This legend is probably truer than we moderns may think, despite its improbable story (that anyone—let alone Arabs—conducted warfare during the dead of winter) and questionable dates (the vank was not founded until the end of the Arab domination in the late 9th c).

No, the mixing of dates and events is a time-honored tradition in mythology, adding immediacy and relevance to each generation's retelling. The myth rings old, its Christian version merely the most recent, describing an encounter with a contemporary enemy that must have been as terrifying to Medieval Armenians as the Northern barbarians (Scythians?) who rampaged through prehistoric Gegharkunik. Myths are lies that tell a great truth. The truth here—divine intervention—was as relevant to Stone Age dwellers as to the medieval peasant.

By diverting part of its water resources to increase irrigation and to generate electricity, the lake was a key component of the Soviet government's technological development of the country, based on several studies, the most influential of which

was a 1910 treatise by a certain Sukias Manasserian, one of the civil engineers behind the Aral Sea disaster. In it, he stated that the evaporation at the lake could be “caught” for the generation of power and irrigation if it was drained to a fraction of its former self, forcing more water into the hydroelectric plants and desert fields on the Ararat plain. Soviet engineers further calculated that they could drain 50 m of the lake, emptying Big Sevan while still maintaining full power capacity, opening of tens of thousands of hectares of agricultural lands. In addition, non-native species of trout were introduced to increase fish production.

Misunderstanding the amount of evaporation that actually occurred (and fluctuates over time), the lake's water table dropped far sooner than anyone predicted when the water was first diverted in 1949, the water dropping more than a meter a year, creating havoc on the entire ecosystem. Native fish were crowded out, interrupting their keystone position in maintaining a balance in the lake while the oxygen levels in the water was severely depressed as massive algae blooms began an annual trek across the lake, further choking off marine life.

One of the key features of the lake—the southeastern marshes near Vardenis, the largest waterfowl habitat between the Black and Caspian Seas— invariably dried up, forcing birds that used the spot to rest (some to nest) on their annual migrations, to go elsewhere, further depressing their populations.



As some tell it, fortunately for the birds (and for Armenia), Stalin died, allowing the government to take a hard look at what they were doing, arresting the lake's destruction just in time to

avoid the disaster that befell the Aral Sea. The water tables were to be brought back up and the hydroelectric plants replaced with thermal plants.

In the 1970s and 1980s partial restoration of water tables was achieved with several reservoirs built near the lake as well as a huge 49 kilometer tunnel bored through the southern mountains, diverting water from the Arpa River in Siunik to Sevan. Unfortunately the energy embargo against the Republic by Azerbaijan and Turkey forced the government to reverse its gains and increase use of the lake to generate electricity at the old Hrazdan River hydro-electric stations. Regeneration of the Metsamor Nuclear plant allowed them to again close the hydro plants, and the completion of a second tunnel diverting water from Siunik was opened in 2005, engineers predicting it would gradually restore the lake's water table to an acceptable increase of 10-15m above its 1998 level (the lake dropped a total of 18m), a phenomena that was predicted to take a manageable 30 years.

The lake now faces a challenge unlike any in recorded history. The waters are surging back into the lake, bountiful precipitation and diverted water pushing in 2-3m of water within 18 months, flooding beach-side campgrounds, resorts and shoreline.

Engineers now admit they have no idea how fast the lake will refill, leaving Greens, tourists and tour operators arguing over what to do now. Predicted to take 30 years to restore itself to its pre-Soviet level, allowing the government to remove thousands of acres of artificially planted forests of beech, pine and nut trees, the lake has instead surged forward, inundating the forests within a couple of years, starting off a biological process of decay that has unforeseen consequences. A new type of bloom has occurred in the last two years, the decomposed wood is creating a different kind of algae that breaks up into fragments and clouds the once crystal clear waters.

Despite this the lake is still a marvel to look at and a magnet for thousands of summer vacationers. The biological bloom that occurs each summer is a byproduct of newly submerged shoreline trees and is considered normal. Though some will find it unpleasant, for most it is nothing more than a new attraction at the Mother Lake that quenches the thirst of Armenia.

Sevan National Park

The Sevan National Park (“SNP”) is the first national park in Armenia (Dilijan's forest became a national park in 2002), charged with the preservation and protection of approx. 489,000 ha. of property (125,000 ha. for the lake, 363,800 of catchments area). SNP is one of two Armenian lakes protected under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, an intergovernmental treaty signed by 154 international parties providing the framework for the conservation and use of over 146 million hectares of wetlands worldwide. The other, Arpi Lich, is in Shirak region.

The treaty recognizes SNP as the most important source of fresh water and fish in the Transcaucasus Region, with an absolutely unique diversity of landscapes and endemic and rare plant and fish species. The lake is also an important breeding area for waterfowl and shoreline birds and a critical rest zone on the migration route from Eastern Europe to Africa. Its breeding area was dangerously reduced when the water table dropped in the 1950s. The influx of new water in 2005-2007 may be rectifying the problem, though it will take years to know for sure.

SNP's diversity is truly amazing, made up of no less than eight wetland types, *Permanent freshwater lakes* being the predominant. The others are *Alpine wetlands*; *Seasonal/intermittent freshwater marshes/pools*; *Permanent freshwater marshes/pools (includes swamps and ponds)*; *Permanent rivers/streams/creeks*; *Ponds*; *Aquaculture (e.g. fish/shrimp) ponds*; and *Geothermal wetlands*.

SNP Problems The park is officially under the control of the Ministry of Nature Protection, a death-knell for property under its watch, the ministry more interested in selling concessions and authorizing deforestation of the country's dwindling nature areas rather than doing their job—that is, protecting the environment. The dangers facing the lake today are a direct result of Ministry actions, which are themselves subordinate to government-sanctioned destruction of the environment in pursuit of easy money. In many ways the government's (read: old Armenian) views on the environment are more like their Middle Eastern neighbors than the enlightened (read: new Armenian) views of the 21st century regarding

protecting natural resources. A shame the old cannot learn the benefits of the new.



Active threats against the park include industrial waste pollution, agricultural runoff, domestic sewage pollution, overgrazing by domestic livestock, erosion and poaching, which has done the most to destroy the native population of the *Salmo ischchan* or *Ishkhan trout* (you'd better hope that tasty morsel you dined on at the restaurant was bred in a fish farm—if it wasn't, you just digested a fish on the verge of extinction—shame on you!)

Minerals Gegharkunik's main minerals are gold, limestone, granite, perlite, sand, peat and mineral waters. Others include quartz, chalcedony, carbonates, pyrite, chalcopryite, halenit, electrum, and ceramic and fire clays. Sodk has a working gold mine and rumors of diamond discoveries are hushed up a little too fast to be disbelieved completely.

The largest concentrations of marine sand deposits are on the East Shoreline, which are also the most secluded beaches. Sand for the North and West beaches is often mined here.

The lake's bed-rocks are tufa, clinker, porphyries and limestone.

Flora

The flora in Gegharkunik is divided between that in the Sevan National park and those on the mountain slopes surrounding the lake. Both are detailed below. The diversity of flora in the marz is truly surprising, as species endemic to areas rich with flowers throughout the country, intermingle with those endemic to marshlands, lake shores and freshwater lakes. In the right season, it is possible

to enjoy water and shoreline flora then hike a short distance to the brilliant displays of poppies, iris, germaniums, gladioli and the Armenian lily.

Sevan National Park Flora

Approximately 1600 species of vascular plants have been registered in the basin of Lake Sevan. Of the 48 species that are in the Red Book of Endangered Species Armenia, six are endemic (*Acantholimon gabrieljanae*, *Alyssum hajastanum*, *Astragalus shushaensis*, *Isotis arnoldiana*, *I. sevagensis*, *Ribes achurjani*). More than 300 species of algae had been recorded in the lake.



Artanish Peninsula Of all the park's ecosystems, the most spectacular may be the Artanish Peninsula, near Shorzha. The largest peninsula at Sevan and one of the most pristine areas of the park, the peninsula is designated as a reserve, which will hopefully preserve its remarkable set of micro-environments. The 2500 ha. peninsula is made from mountain slopes (2100-2200 m) with completely different ecosystems on its different sides. The southern rocky slope has caves of interest to spelunkers as well as the remains of artificial forests (pine, poplar, sea-buckthorn etc.) planted when the water table first dropped. They are resubmerging under the rising waters. Above these are endemic stands of plants with juniper (*Juniper polycarpus*) rose (*Rosa* L.), barberry (*Berberis* L.), spirea (*Spireae* L.), astragalus (*Astragalus* L.) and prickly thrift (*Acantholimon*). Further up the meadows are rich with endemic species while the Artanish Gulf shores are the only habitat of sedge species (*Carex secale* Willd. ex Wahlenb.) in Armenia.

Lake Flora includes algae (*Chara*, *Spirogyra*, *Zygnemia*, *Euglena*, *Volvox*, *Oscillaria*, *Diatomeae* etc.) and other aquatic plants, including seven species of flowering aquatic plants (narrow leaved *Potamogeton pectinatus* L., broad-leaved *P. natans* L., semi-transparent *P. perfoliatus* L. and others), all of which grow either in or on top of the water, blooming with small greenish flowers with green or gray frit sets.

In addition, the lake and its water inlets have hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum* L.), water milfoil (*Myriophyllum verticillatum* L.), crowfoot (*Ranunculus kochii* Ledeb.), horned pondweed (*Zanichellia palustris* L.) and several species of duck-weed (*Lemna* L.). Washed onshore by wave action and storms, the remains of these plants can be quite beautiful, including the reddish water milfoil.

Lake shore flora is of secondary origin and mainly consists of artificial stands of pine (*Pinus*), poplar (*Populus*), oleaster (*Elaeagnus* L.), and sea buckthorn *Hippophae rhamnoides* L.) and other species. The sand back thorn (*Hippophae ramnoides*) is a barrier bush, its sharp thorns not to be messed with.

Grass cover consists of plants adapted to sand as well as weed species, such as blue lettuce (*Lactuca tatarica* (L.) C. A. Mey.), wormwood (*Artemisia austriaca* Jacq.), bird spiderflower (*Cleome ornithopodioides* L.) and different species of genera *Potentilla* L., *Carex* L., *Veronica* L.

Small littoral bogs and swamps will blossom with reeds (*Phragmites* spp.), sedges (*Carex* spp.) and duck-weed (especially *Lemna minor* L. covering the entire surface of ponds by the end of summer); swamps will sometimes have white-flowered bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris* L.) and flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus* L.) with pink flowers. Crowfoot with yellowish nice flowers often occurs at river mouths and flowing waters.

Sevan Peninsula flora on the southern and northern slopes of the peninsula is sharply different; the **south and south-east slopes** covered by upland plants (*Astragalus* spp., *Prangos ferulacea*, *Festuca ovina*), pale rose poppies (*Papaver fugax*) and deep red Persian poppies (*P. persica*). **North slopes** are covered by more moisture-loving plants such as forget-me-nots, crowfoots (*Ranunculus*), wind flowers

(*Anemone fasciculata*), primulas (*Primula*) and similar plants. *Sorbus hajastana* can be found in rocks, from where the species was originally described.



Gegharkunik Flora

Flora on the Gegharkunik's slopes are as varied as their district, water-loving plants inhabiting the more moist northern slopes, with upland flowers favoring the east, west and southern slopes. There are also a couple of aquatic habitats not connected

directly with Lake Sevan, further enriching the flora of the marz.

Argichi River Basin (Vardenis Mountains) is the only habitat in Armenia for the aquatic opposite-leaved pondweed *Groenlandia densa* (L.) Fourr.

Lake Gili once had a thriving population of the rare aquatic plant trifoliate buckbean - *Menyanthes trifoliata* L. but it is believed now to be extinct.

Lower slope flora include *Prangos ferulacea*, *Eremurus spectabilis*, *Tulipa julia*, *Iris paradoxa*, *Iris caucasica*, *Scutellaria orientalis*, *Crambe orientalis*, *Cleome ornithovodioides*, *Gypsophila elegans*, *Senecio vernalis*, *Silene chlorantha*, *Reichardia dichotoma*, *Srophularia olgae*, *S. armeniaca*, *S. grossheimii*, *Artemisia absinthium*, *Spiraea crenata*.

Sevan Pass and mountain flora include *Iris furcata*, *Anemone fasciculata*, *A. ramunculoides*, *Primula ruprechtii*, *P. macrocalyx*, *Trollius patulus*, *Caltha polypetala*, *Veratium lobelianum*, *Palsatilla armena*, *Corydalis persica*, *Fritillaria caucasica*, *Betonica grandiflora*, *Prunus spinosa*, *Sedum pilosum*, *Sempervivum transcaasicum*, *Malus orientalis*, *Pyrus caucasicus*.

Other flora include naturally occurring junipers (*Juniperus* spp.); remains of the oak forests on the north-eastern part of the marz (above Chambarak); and Sweetbrier (*Rosa canina*) which is common everywhere.

Wild relatives of crop plants include **Cereal grains** (*Secale vavilovii* Grossh, *Hordeum spontaneum*, C. Koch, etc.), **Cereal-Beans** (*Pisum elatius* Bieb. **Fruits** (*Cerasus mahaleb* (L.) Mill etc., *Pyrus takhtadzianii* Fed. etc., *Prunus spinosa*), **Grape and Berry** (*Fragaria vesca* L., *F. Virdis* Duch., *Vaccinium myrtillus* L.), **Vegetable Melons** (*Beta macrorrhiza* Stev etc., *Daucus carota*), Technical (*Cannabis ruderalis* Janisch., *Linum barsegianii* gabr.) and **Fodder** (*Medicago papillosa* Boiss, etc., *Onobrychus hajastana* Grossh etc.)

Gegharkunik Flower Tour: Perhaps the most popular flower-watching road in Armenia is the **Sevan-Dilijan Road**, which climbs (don't take the tunnel) to Sevan Pass (2114m) and crosses over the Sevan Ridge. This tour (half-one day) is part of a botanical tour guided by Prof. Nora

Gabriellian, the world's expert on endemic species of Armenian flora, and author of the upcoming Guide to Armenian Flowers. You will never look at Armenia the same way again after a day of flower watching with Prof. Gabriellian, combing the country side and listening to her enthusiastic bursts of delight as this 70-something out-climbs the fittest hiker and finds yet another of Armenia's flowering jewels. Getting her to guide is not easy (see flower tours under [adventure tour operators](#), p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**) but if you can, do it. She is worth every dram.

April-May Flora: Along the road, in a marshy meadow, there are masses of *Gladiolus caucasicus* and *G. tenuis* together with *Ornithogalum*, *Filipendula*, *Centaurea* and other beautiful plants. Higher up are white and yellow *Centaurea fischeri*, *C. glastifolia*. Near the ridge, in small hollows, there are subalpine meadows, in spring time covered with *Primula macrocalyx*, *P. ruprechtii*, and a little later by the exquisitely beautiful *Anemone fasciculata*, whose large flowers vary from snow white or pale pink to sharp pink and dark purple. Rarely one can see yellow *Trollius patulus*. Commonly encountered is *Betonica* with large lilac flowers, *orchids*, blue *campanulas*, *gentians*, yellow *Ranunculus*, violet *irises* (*Iris furcata*) and many others.

June-July Flora: The beautiful Armenian lily flowers in profusion in wet meadows together with huge, bright red poppies (*Papaver paucifoliatum* and *P. orientalis*), dark blue *Nepeta betonicifolia* and *Betonica grandiflora*, white larkspur (*Delphinium*) and soft grey-blue *Scabiosa caucasica*.

For detailed information and list of species see [TourArmenia Flora pages](#) (www.tacentral.com/nature/flora.asp).

Fauna

Gegharkunik is represented by 6 species of fish in Lake Sevan (2 of which are listed in the red Book of Endangered Species in Armenia, 18 species of reptiles (2 in the Red Book), 260 species of birds (36 in the Red Book) and 36 species of mammals (8 in the Red Book).

Lake Fauna The most famous fauna in the marz are the fish, and of those the most famous is the Sevan Ishkhan (Sevan trout, *Salmo ischchan*). The fish has four types at Sevan: winter ishkhani,

Gegharkunik, *summer ishkhani* and *bojak*, differentiated by their head shapes, scale color and method of spawning. *Bojak* and *winter ishkhani* multiply in the littoral area (between low and high tide) of the lake, *summer ishkhani* in the lake and in cold feeder rivers, while *geggharkuni ishkhani* swims upstream to lay spawns. A much-prized delicacy that I am told has delicious red meat, *Ishkhan* is now at the edge of extinction in the lake due to loss of spawning areas, pollution and rampant poaching.



Other fish are the endangered Sevan beghlou (*Barbus lacerta goktschiaicus*), Sevan koghak (*Varicorhinus capoeta sevangi*), Sevan white fish (a hybrid introduced to Lake Sevan from Lakes Ladoga and Chud in the 1920s) and goldfish (silver tsatsan) accidentally introduced in 1983. Thanks to its adaptability goldfish has reproduced at a prolific rate. Another lake vertebrate is the crayfish, also prolific and another favorite delicacy.

The lake also has 14 species of plankton and 136 benthic species of different systematic groups.

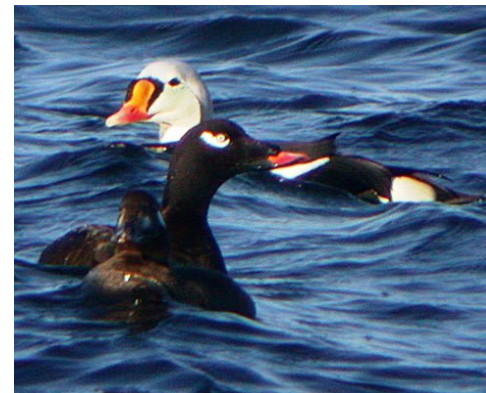
Reptiles and Amphibians are everywhere where small ponds are available. The herpetofauna includes grass-snakes (*Natrix natrix*, *N. tessellata*), lizards (*Darevskia unisexualis*, *D. nairensis*), and amphibians like the green toad (*Bufo viridis*) and frogs (*Rana ridibunda*, *R. macrocnemus* ect.).

Mammals include the hare (*Lepus europaeus*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), weasel (*Martes foina*) and the extinct otter (*Lutra lutra*).

Birds

Gegharkunik has recorded over 260 species of birds, the most famous endemic species being the Armenian gull, which thrives at the lake, nesting on an island in the western part of Little Sevan. Bird habitats include the lake itself, river mouths and littoral swamps, all of which suffered badly from the drop in the lake level in the 1950s.

The most important nesting area between the Caspian and Black Seas, the Sevan basin lost most of its breeders when Lake Gilli was drained in the 1960s, depriving species like the scoter, white-headed duck, grey goose, large saw-beak duck, and the grey crane of a nesting area used for tens of thousands of years. Of a total of 60 breeder species recorded at the lake, 25 continue to nest, and of these only 3—the Eurasian coot, mallard and Armenian gull are abundant at present.



The lake is an important resting zone for migratory birds, especially in October-December (before ice cover). The rare Great Egret (*Casmerodius albus*), Glossy Ibis (*Plegadis falcinellus*), Mute Swan (*Cygnus olor*), Whooper Swan (*Cygnus cygnus*), Demoiselle Crane (*Grus virgo*) are regularly seen during migrations, among a total of 83 species registered in the Bonn Convention Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Water birds. Extremely rare sightings include Pelicans (*Pelecanus onocrotalus*, *P. crispus*), and the common flamingo (*Phoenicopterus ruber*).



Sevan Lake species include the Eurasian coot (*Fulica atra*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and Armenian gull (*Larus armenicus*).

Gilli Lake species included scoter (*Melanitta fusca*), white-headed duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*), grey goose (*Anser anser*), large saw-beak duck (*Mergus merganser*) and the grey crane (*Grus grus lilfordi*).

Mountain Steppe wetlands species include Common Crane, Black Stork, Corn Crake, Common Buzzard, White-tailed Eagle.

Rocky Cliffs, River Gorge species include Rock Dove, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Common Swift, Alpine Swift, Eurasian Crag-Martin, Northern House-Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, Dunnock, Black Redstart, White-winged Redstart, Western Rock-Nuthatch, Eastern Rock-Nuthatch, Wallcreeper, Eurasian Linnet, Red-billed Chough, Yellow-billed Chough.

Mountain Slope species include Red-footed Falcon, Merlin, Eurasian Hobby, Rufus-tailed Rock-Thrush, Blue Rock-Thrush, Sombre Tit, Rock Bunting, Grey-necked Bunting, Crimson-winged Finch, Red-fronted Serin, Trumpeter Finch, Mongolian Finch, Eurasian Linnet, White-Winged Snowfinch, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Spanish Sparrow, Pale Rock-Finch, Rock Sparrow, White-winged Snowfinch, Rose-colored Starling.

Woodlands, Thickets, Farmland, Orchard species include Levant Sparrowhawk, Eurasian Sparrowhawk, Northern Goshawk, Black

Francolin, Pheasant, Eurasian Woodcock, Common Wood-Pigeon, European Turtle-Dove, Common Cuckoo, Eurasian Scops-Owl, Tawny Owl, Barn Swallow, Wood Lark, Red-throated Pipit, Firecrest, Common Goldcrest, Icterine Warbler, Willow Warbler, Eurasian Chiffchaff, Greenish Warbler, Greater Whitethroat, Winter Wren, Dark-throated Thrush, Fieldfare, Redwing, Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Eurasian Blackbird, Crested Tit, Corn Bunting, Pine Bunting, Red-fronted Serin, Twit, Eurasian Siskin, Chaffinch, Brambling, European Greenfinch, European Goldfinch, Eurasian Bullfinch, Hawfinch, Eurasian Tree Sparrow, Rose-colored Starling, Common Starling, Black-billed Magpie, Eurasian Jay, Rook.

Subalpine, Mountain Meadow species include *Caucasian Grouse, Grey Partridge, Common Quail, Eurasian Skylark, Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit, Water Pipit, Whinchat, Radde's Accentor, Ring Ouzel, Mountain Chiffchaff, Corn Bunting, Ortolan Bunting, Black-headed Bunting, Crimson-winged Finch, and White-Winged Snowfinch.*

For a complete list of all birds by species and habitat see [TourArmenia Birding pages](http://www.tacentral.com/nature/birding.asp) (www.tacentral.com/nature/birding.asp).

Thermal and Mineral Springs

In Gegharkunik, a number of mineral springs lie on the lake basin, the two largest at Sevan and Lichk (near Martuni). Neither is developed for spa use, Sevan mineral water being bottled for drinking (a tasty alternative to Jermuk).

Eco Challenges All eco challenges in Gegharkunik revolve around Lake Sevan, its fate tied to any hope of economic and environmental renewal. The lake is suffering from the very thing for which it is loved; its irresistible draw to locals and tourists that visit the lake each summer. The sheer numbers spell its risks: tens of thousands of visitors to more than 200 camps, beaches and resorts, each adding to the lake's stress. But in a country still clawing its way out of poverty, no one dares suggest anything that would restrict access to lake beaches or the jobs created there. The lake is large enough to support responsible tourism, as long as other issues are addressed and locals learn from visitors like you how that can be achieved.

There is a serious pollution problem that confronts the lake and threatens it more than the influx in

tourism alone. As little as ten years ago the lake was clean enough to drink from, its remarkable biology able to absorb and purify contaminants. Those days are long gone. Villages, towns and even some resorts dump raw wastes into the lake, a problem that is compounded by local Armenian's unbelievable compunction to litter the lake with their trash. The latter is the more obvious problem (locals actually argue for their right to dump what they want where they want, never taking into consideration the havoc it wreaks on the world around them) and will only be corrected over time with education (speak up!) and strict enforcement of the laws (read: a change in government). The first is an infrastructure problem that needs immediate attention but has little governmental (or World Bank) desire to achieve.

Ironically the worst environmental offender is the Ministry of Nature Protection (see [Sevan National Park](http://www.sevan-national-park.am), p. 6) which should be leading the charge to restore, preserve and protect the sensitive area but instead sells logging, mining and beach concessions, the proceeds for which do not exactly match the amount that ends up in the state treasury. Politically appointed officials are often featured in the news defending another resource sell off or denying that things are as bad as they really are. Meanwhile truly good people at the ministry are thwarted in their efforts to actually do some good, threatened or simply ignored by their higher ups.

Frustrating everything are the misguided and sometimes well-meaning efforts of International bodies (UN, World Bank) that produce a library of studies while funneling millions into the ministry's bottomless pit, but little else. I understand that agencies like the World Bank are about protecting the interests of wealthy members, not the goof of local Armenians, but their record in Armenia is particularly abysmal, even by their standards. Russia may well have been right to kick them out.

One thing is certain: nature invariably creates a balance, given time and the end of the cause of the imbalance. That may mean a toxic lake that poisons humans and drives them off so the lake can at last restore itself, or it may mean thousands of years, but nature does restore itself. The rising waters are a good thing, but the short term consequences are changing the character of the lake most remember from their childhoods.

ECO ALERT: Local Armenian exporters are currently selling endangered species to unwitting customers, including at-risk-of-extinction species like the Ishkhan. There is no reliable certification in Armenia to determine which fish are bred (legally) in a fish pond or fished from Lake Sevan (illegally). The same goes for the Armenian sturgeon, already considered extinct by some experts. Sites such as <http://nativalues.com> mislead buyers of the real source of their products, and export endangered species like the native ishkan and native Armenian sturgeon, the latter only available by illegal poaching in the Arax River. Again, without verifiable (i.e. vetted by the Armenian Greens or other environmental NGO) certificate, you are probably buying a fish product that is in violation of International treaty or at risk of extinction. Want that on your conscience? Please contact this company and tell them to stop exporting endangered species. Contact the Greens (www.greens.org) for more information on how to address these issues in Armenia.



Sturgeon, an endangered species.

DO: ▲

Sevan Visit Lake Sevan, lying on a beach and swimming the brisk waters. While you are there, try a water sport: sailing, skiing, paragliding. Explore Sevan Peninsula, with its trendy beaches, unique flower habitats and the 9th-10th cc Sevanavank. Visit Ddmashen, west of Sevan, and explore the 7th c S. Tadevos Arakial, 13th-14th cc khachkars and medieval cemetery.

West Shore Visit L'chashen, the Bronze/Iron Age capital with an acropolis for 50,000 people and the most complete 15th c BCE royal burial excavated in Armenia. Explore Artanish Peninsula, a spectacular set of micro-environments in one of the most pristine areas of the lake. Travel the Western shore road to Gavar, stopping at the Iron Age fortresses at Lchap, the 9th c Hairavank with a gorgeous view of the lake at the top of its cliff and the 9th-15th cc field of khachkars at Noradus.

Gavar Visit Gavar, Gegharkunik's capital, with its regional museum, 3rd m BCE Berdi-Glukh citadel and the 9th c Astvatsatsin. Explore the surrounding villages of Tsaghkashen (9th-10th cc S. Hovhannes), Gandzal (4th-5th cc S. Astvatsatsin and 10th-11th cc S. Gevorg) and Landjaghbiur with its 7th c Ilikavank and ruins of a massive 70 hectare cyclopean fortress. Finally, visit Karmirgiugh, with its Urartian ruins, khachkars and the Kanagegh medieval settlement with dramatic views of the lake.

Martuni Visit the medieval settlement at Dzoragiugh, with Shoghaga (one of Gegharkunik's "sister" vanks, built for Princess Mariam of the house of Bagratuni), the 9th c Masruts Anapat hermitage and the nearby 40 ha. Sangiar cyclopean fortress. See the natural bridge at Tsakar and the 9th c S. Lusavorich church at Tazagiugh before stopping at Lichk with its medieval town remains, mineral springs, cyclopean fortress and S. Astvatsatsin church with khachkars. At Nerkin Getashen visit the "brother vank" of Kotavank (built for Mariam's brother, Prince Grigor Supan).

Selim Pass Drive to Larnahovit, gateway to Vayots Dzor and the Selim pass, with dramatic vistas of the pass and lake Sevan, passing Geghovit (2nd m BCE Berd fortress & khachkars) and cliff side Paleolithic-Bronze Age astronomical petroglyphs before ending at the caravanserai at the pass in Vayots Dzor.

South Shore The South Shore is the richest historic area in Gegharkunik, and at least a day should be devoted to its finds. Explore the Urartian city of Teisheba at Tsovinar, founded by Rusa I in the mid 8th c BCE. Absolutely stop and explore Artsvanist with its 903 CE Vanevan (built for Prince Shapuh of the House of Bagratuni), 9th-10 cc Kolataki S. Astvatsatsin and Hnevank,

cemetery, khachkars, cave spring, and the Bronze Age Bruti Berd cyclopean fortress. Detour to Makenis to visit Makeniats Vank, the Gegharkunik's medieval cultural and education center, with its 10th-13th cc churches, gavits, even a medieval porta-potty. At Tsovak there is an 8th c BCE cuneiform inscription for Sarduri II cut in the rock of a huge Iron Age cyclopean fortress.



If time allows, also visit Astghadzor (Poghos-Petros, khachkars), Zolakar (Zorakhach grave monument, Tukh Manuk, S. Sargis, khachkars), Vardenik (Kaftarli cyclopean fort ruins & prehistoric rock carvings), and Karchaghbiur (petroglyphs, Berdidash cyclopean fortress, pagan shrines).

Vardenis Vardenis town is jumping point for some of Gegharkunik's most enigmatic settings, including Akunk with its 6th-4th cc BCE Klor Dar cyclopean fortress, the 13th c church at Kchaghbiur and the alpine jewel of Aiyrk with its massive Iron Age fortress, nearby caves, field of khachkars and churches made from khachkars. Further east is Sodk, with its 13th c Astvatsatsin and the famous Sodk great Khachkar. A little further east are the gold mines at Zod. To the north of Vardenis are the impressive khachkar fields at Pokr and Mets Masrik, including some of the most important great khachkars in Armenia.

East Shore The eastern stretch of Lake Sevan is also its most natural, with long stretches of deserted shoreline and some of the prettiest beaches in the marz. The waves are brilliantly captured on the east side, glittering like dancing diamonds in the sun. Be sure to visit Shorzha,

with a few historical sites (Tukh Manuk, Iron Age fortress) but most importantly the best sandy beaches on Little Sevan, and home to an annual summer retreat of Armenia's reigning artists at the Union of Artists resort. Must see for flower lovers is the Artanish Peninsula (see natural Armenia, below). If time allows, continue S on the shoreline past Jil (Bronze Age fortress), Pambak (cemeteries and pagan shrines), Tsapatagh (Motel), Geghamasar (16th c church and cemetery), then Pokr and Mets Masrik (field of khachkars) before ending at Vardenis.



Northeast Take the Chambarak road to Tavush, exploring one of the last pristine areas in the country with magnificent alpine mountains and the remaining stands of native forests, stopping at (north) Martuni with its 13th c Aghjkaberd fortress and the Old Getik monastery (13th c).

Natural Armenia

Natural treks include exploring Lake Sevan and the surrounding mountains slopes. The Eastern slopes should be considered off limits due to their bordering Azerbaijan, but the rest are open and provide some of most challenging and stunning landscapes in the country.

Lake Sevan

Drive or walk to Sevan Peninsula, with its unique ecosystems and wildflowers. Explore Artanish Peninsula on the East shoreline, near Shorzha, a nature reserve with stunning vistas of the lake and a superb diversity of flora. Sail over the lake on a catamaran or yacht to Seagull Island, or a deserted cove for hiking and camping expeditions.

Hike along the Shorzha shores to Artanish, then continue south on the longest stretch of deserted shoreline on the lake, ending at the southeast nesting preserve near Vardenis. Hike the western shore from Berdunk to the Noradus Peninsula exploring Hairavank and the khachkar field at Noradus village. Continue south along the shore to Martuni, detouring to Yeranós (1215 Astvatsatsin, Tukh Manuk) and the upper slope village of Dzoragiugh (Shoghaga vank, Masruts Anapat, cyclopean fortress) and Lichk (mineral springs). On the south shore, hike from Martuni to Vardenis, detouring to Zolakar, Tsovinar (Urartian city of Teisheba), Artsvanist (Vanevan, Hnevank, Bruti Berd), Makenis (Makeniats Vank) and Tsovak (Sarduri II cuneiform inscription and Iron Age fortress).

Sevan Pass

Take the upper, winding Sevan Pass road in spring (May-early June) and stop to take in the glorious wildflower displays. In July look for upper meadow ponds and the brilliant Armenian Lily displays.

Geghama Lehr

Hike the numerous trails to the top of the Geghama Lehr, including:

Upper Range: L'chashen to Mts. Tslughlukh (2393.8m) and Pokr Tslughlukh (2334.2m); L'chap or Hairavank to the caves by Mt. Janasar (2544.1m) en route to Mt. Sarisurb (2526.8m); Hairavank to the dual cones of Mts. Turki Ishtapa (2516.8m) and Yeratmber (2480.4m) to Mts. Janasar (2544.1m) and lower Azhdahak (3087.0m).

Mid-Range: Gavar to upper Mt. Azhdahak (3087m) or Mts. Imdindutan (2838.9m) and Sevkatar (3225.1m); Gavar to Tsaghkashen (9th-10th cc Hovhannes) then uphill to Mt. Aknasar (3258.5m) and Akna Lich; Saruhan or Landjaghbiur to the immense volcanic mound of Mt. Grasar (3181.9m) then lower Azhdahak (3597.3m) and its petroglyph fields; Yeranós to Grasar.

Lower Range: Yeranós or Dzoragiugh to Mt. Spitakasar (3555.7m) then into Kotaik and Mts. Vishapkar (3157.7m), Yerakatar (2589.6m) and Geghard Monastery; Tsakkar (natural bridge) to Tazagiugh (9th c Lusavorich) to Mt. Pokr Spitakasar (3443.0m); Tsakkar to Tazagiugh to Sarnaghpiur to a nearby petroglyph field then Mt. Mankuv (2932.1m) and the Khosrov Preserve in

Ararat marz; Madina or Selim Pass road to Mt. Armaghén (2829.1m) with its volcanic crater lake. Trace the Argichi River from Karadzi to its alpine delta and Mts. Psian (2502.5m), Gndasar (2946.7m) with its petroglyph field and Tapdag (2878.0m).

South Mountains: Vardenis Range: The range divides Gegharkunik from Vayots Dzor with fantastic views of the lake, petroglyphs, carvings and caves, ancient settlements and citadels, and glorious meadows of wild flowers. The mountains are sloping, but rugged, and 1-2 days should be allotted for any trek to the other side. Vardenis Mountains include:



Southwest: Lernahovit to the petroglyphs on Sevkatar (3063.4m); following the Martuni River from Geghovit to Mts. Sakoivar (3299.0m) and Astghonk (3470.3m), then into Vayots Dzor and Mt. Karkatar (3392.7m); Astghadzor or Zolakar following the Astghadzor River to Mts. Mredivar (3287.9m), Sakoivar and Astghonk; follow the Vardenik River (and the Arpa-Sevan tunnel) from Vardenik to Mts. Amarash (2962.0m) and Astghonk; Artsvanist to the Bronze Age fortress at Kloras (2369.5m) then tracing the Vankidzor River to Mt. Vardenis (3521.5m).

Southeast: Karchaghbiur (petroglyphs, Berdidash cyclopean fortress, pagan shrines) tracing the Karchaghbiur River to the Mechidereh River and Mt. Gmbet (2555.0m) ending at Mt. Vardenis; Karchaghbiur to L'chevan (Bronze Age tombs, 13th-14th cc church, khachkars) to Makenis (Makeniats vank) to Akhpradzor to Mts. Khorapor (2906.5m) and Sandukhtasar (3454.0m) on the Azeri/Karabakh border; Akhpradzor to Mts.

Khorapor and Maral (2904.3m) on the Azeri/Karabakh border.

Vardenis: Vardenis to Akunk (6th-4th cc BCE Klor Dar cyclopean fortress) to Mts. Ojarkhasar (2480.2m) and Daligsar (2714.4m) ending at Mt. Pora (3046.3m) on the Azeri/Karabakh border; Vardenis to Aiyrk (Iron Age fortress, caves, field of khachkars, churches made from khachkars) to Mt. Ketik (3399.4m) or Mt. Tsarasar (3426.4m), both on the Azeri/Karabakh border; Verin Shorzha to Mt. Tsarasar; Zarkend to Mt. Kamarkaiya (3008.5m).

Northeast Gegharkunik

Take the Chambarak road to Navur in Tavush, stopping to hike the huge mountain meadow slopes and the remaining stands of native hardwoods. Camp at one of the deserted hamlets on the way, once inhabited by Azeris, sometimes now by Armenian refugees.

WHEN? ▲

The best time to visit Gegharkunik is May-October. Though beach combers can be found between June and October, most wait until mid June to begin the weekend flock to their favorite resort. The weather is mild and breezy, with average summer temperatures of 16°C (though daytime highs regularly reach 25-30°C). The summer rush tapers off in mid August and by September the lake shores are mostly deserted save a few die-hards found braving the cold waters. High season is mid-June-mid August. However many swear the best time to visit the lake is September-October, when Gegharkunik's 'Indian Summer' sets in for a few weeks and cool nights are complemented by wonderfully mild sunny days, the lake taking on a dazzling blue sheen.

Though subalpine to alpine in terrain, Gegharkunik enjoys the same number of sun hours as Alexandria, Egypt, with annual precipitation of 340-720 mm, creating a milder climate than its neighboring marz. Winters are mostly sunny and windy, with average temperature of -6°C in January. There is a slow thaw lasting March and April. The lake is most ominous in winter, churning in winter storms or eerily still on sunny days, its waters taking on a jet-black color. The northern slopes are ideal of cross country and downhill skiing, but rumored development has yet to occur (a good thing environmentally).



For intrepid nature lovers, the hills and dales of the marz are a wonderland of flowers in these very months, reaching their peak flowering in the upper elevations in the hottest months of the year. The bird migration reaches its peak in April-May and especially in October, as Eastern Eurasian birds stop en route to Africa. Local birders are hopeful the recent influx in the water table will replenish marshes and encourage more species that historically stopped at the lake to return.

HOW LONG?

A visit to the lake can be done as a day trip, though most time their visits to last a day or two (weekends are the most busy times on the lake). A one day visit can include Sevan Peninsula, L'chashen, Hairavank, Noradus and a bit of beach time before returning. In two days you can do the above, and add in Gavar and the rest of the western shore, or just hit a few highlights and race to Martuni and back (but why?). The south shore is really a full day visit by itself, taking in the remarkable sites at Tsovinar, Artsvanist, Makenis and Aiyrk at a leisurely pace, allowing for beach time before and after the trip. Take it faster and everything just ends up being a blur. The east shore is a full day trip also, but you can touch on the highlights at Shorzha beach and Artanish Peninsula in a few hours. If you take the Chambarak-Navur road to Tavush, figure half a day to stop and enjoy it all. Flower watchers can take all day to find the little darlings, but the pedestrians among us will be able to do the same on the road to Sevan Pass in a few hours to half a day. Most hikes are 1-2 day treks over moderately hard to difficult terrain, with camping on the mountains.



Hitting the Highlights North Shore: Sevan Peninsula, L'chashen, Hairavank, Noradus, beach time (1-2 days). Western Shore: Gavar, Gavar region, Dzoragiugh, Nerkin Getashen, Martuni, Selim Pass, beach time (1 day). South Shore: Vardenik, Tsovinar, Artsvanist, Makenis, Vardenis, Aiyrk (1 day). East Shore: Shorzha beaches, Artanish Peninsula (half to 1 day). Northeast: Chambarak-Navur road (half to 1 day). North: Sevan Pass (half day). Mountain treks: Geghama/Vardenis Mountain Ranges (1-2 days).

SEVAN CITY ▲

(DD 40.53281 x 44.72044)

[Sevan City Map](#) (p. 16)

✚ **SEVAN CITY - ՍԵՎԱՆ ԶԱՂԱՔ** (“Black hill or place”, till 1935 Elenovka, elev. 1837, pop. 1645) is a recent invention, as compared to other settlements in Gegharkunik, such as the Bronze Age cities at L'chashen, Tsovinar and the current capital, Gavar. While some kind of settlement was in the area, the actual founding of the city is traced only to the 18th century when Catherine the Great first exiled Russia's Old Believers to the hinterlands of her empire, one of which was the Caucasus, specifically Armenia. First settling in the north of Armenia, Amassia region (Armenia's "Siberia"), these Orthodox believers, which have since been nicknamed Molokans, then immigrated into the Armenian heartland, settling in Lori-Gugark region (Stepanavan, Fioletevo, Lermontovo), on the Aparan plateau and at Sevan in 1842, which is considered the founding date for the town.

The ancestors of the Molokons are from the peasant class in Russia and a few other nationalities in the empire. By religion they belonged to the Orthodox (Greek - Russian) church, although they resist the worship of icons and other representations of God, which they consider corrupted and lifeless because they were created by an idea, not God. They profess the belief in an omnipresent God who lives in the soul of each human being.

Escaping state persecution, sectarians in the central provinces of Russia moved further from the centers of power, to Siberia, Transcaucasia, Central Asia and the Crimea, influencing the local populations as they adapted to new customs and surroundings. One of the most significant sects were the Molokans.

At Sevan they created a tidy town, earning their living from farming and fishing. By the time of their entry, the region was mostly deserted by Armenians, who had left in the 15th-16th cc during the upheavals and famines caused by successive invasions and counter-invasions by Ottoman Turkic and Safavid Iranian armies. Left in their exodus, the huge tracts of fertile land were taken by nomadic Turkic (Shaddadid, Mongol and Azeri) and

Kurdish (the Yezidi) tribes who used the farmland for winter pasturage.

The town remained Russian throughout the 19th c, first named Elenovka Czarina Elenora, wife of Nicholas I. Despite the ascetic makeup of its citizens, the town became prosperous and continued as a stop for Armenians visiting the pilgrimage sites on the Island (now a peninsula) nearby. It was not until the 20th century and the genocide that the influx of Armenians returned to balance the local population, leading to their becoming the majority population by World War II. Thereafter, Molokans began a slow emigration from the city, accelerated in the 1980s and 1990s, so that only the oldest (and least able to travel) remain.



As you explore Sevan City, you will find a few traces of this once thriving community of devout believers, their white-washed homes and starched lace curtains marking the presence of remaining Old Believers from their more mundane neighbors. Few are left; most have immigrated to more secure settlements in Armenia or back to Russia, where they face the risk of assimilation into the modern era, something that has decimated their community in the last 15 years. The restless youth of the once secluded community no longer heed the teachings of their elders, and are quick to trade a secure but subsistence living for the attractions of a modern world.

Like all of Armenia, Sevan faced feast or famine in the 20th century. The draining of the lake and the creation of the beach industry in the 1970s both expanded the town's population and industry; the

lake waters used to run the textile mills that now lie dormant and the beaches creating an tourism industry that the town still depends on for its sustenance.

Of all the regional towns in Armenia, only Sevan and nearby Dilijan recovered from the economic collapse of the 1990s the fastest, providing cheap places for locals to vacation in Armenia. Even then, it took Sevan nearly 13 years before the tourist boom it had experienced in the late 1980s returned, as local incomes—supplanted by remittances from their relatives living abroad—increased enough to afford something like the vacations they experienced in the Soviet days, when R&R meant a month in the country or lying on the beach.

The lake is facing a boom now, and perhaps something of a bubble, as the continual rise in prices (and drop in the dollar and Euro) threaten to out-price Sevan for the normal tourist. Metal domiks that used to cost \$10 for as many as you can pack in, go for \$40-\$50, with little improvement in amenities, and so-called luxury hotels (which would barely pass the “Motel-6” test in the states) charge \$100 and more for an overnight. Already locals talk of traveling to Black Sea resorts in Georgia where prices are 50-75% cheaper and services that much better. In its price-gouging, Sevan is no different from Yerevan or nearby Tsaghkadzor; venue owners calculating the recovery of their investment in the 1-2 year terms rather than the customary 10-20 years customary in the west. At some point, the penny will drop and prices will normalize, but expect steadily rising prices until then, for at least the next 2-3 years.

None of the economic boom at the lakeshore has reached the town, its faded Communist symbols still decorate rusting signs and drab concrete apartment blocks. Poverty in the town is still severe, and despite the best efforts of the locals to benefit from the tourist trade just outside town, the positive effects are spotty. This has not been helped by the monopoly the central government holds over beach concessions (awarded by the Ministry of Nature Protection, to wealthy Yerevan families) and the way to ignores local needs. Still, entrepreneurial locals find ways to reap some benefits of the summer influx of wealth, hawking food, swimwear and souvenirs on beaches and the

highway. Buy some, your purchase really is local investment.



Despite the prices, you will still find lodging and food here for much less than the west (especially if your litmus test is the Cote d'Azur of France or Sarasota), and the quality steadily improves, if in fits. For the budget traveler, the cheaper digs are in Sevan City, which must compete against beach-side camps and cottages, and charges accordingly. You can still eat at street-side cafes for a fraction of what they charge in restaurants, and other costs are at a minimum.

Bearings The town is easy to navigate, if a bit of distance from end to end. The main streets, which runs East-West is Nairian p. which connects to the M4 on the west (Yerevan side) via Shahumian and on the east (peninsula side) via Gortsaranain and Dz'knorsneri pts. Other east-west streets are Charents, Tumanian, Sargis Sevantsi, and Fransiakin.

Arrival by train, bus or minivan is at the Rail Station, at the N end of Sayat Nova, the main north-south street. Other primary north-south streets are Rusakan, Abovian and Karen Demirchian.

Almost all shops, cafes and restaurants are on Nairian and Gortsaranain pts. Between Abovian and the north-south stretch of Gortsaranain pts. The way to the peninsula is via Gortsaranain and Dz'knorsneri pts. The post is at Abovian and Nairian.

Taxis are available throughout the town, in the center and near cafes/restaurants. 600 AMD anywhere in town or 100 AMD per km outside is standard but confirm price before starting on your trip; drivers tend to want 1000-2000 AMD in high season.

SIGHTS



Sevan Monastery - Սևանավանք

The 4th-9th cc monastery is on the "Island Peninsula", about 1 km due east of Sevan City.

Background Sevanavank (also known as "Mariamashen Yekeghetsiner" or "Churches built by Marian") is on the peninsula east of Sevan City, which has also been an island off and on during the history of the lake.

The monastery sits on top of a pagan worship complex that dates back to the Early Bronze Age, though signs of Paleolithic inhabitation can be found scattered about the island-peninsula. One of the first places of conversion after Vagharshapat and the pagan complex at Ashtishat in western Armenia was Sevan. Legends point to Grigor Lusavorich's triumphant entry into the Sevan region, smashing idols and converting locals en masse. More correctly, the region took to the new religion in fits and starts, resisting then embracing Christianity over the next 200 years.

Nevertheless, some kind of Christian community was on the southern shore of the island by the 5th c, growing in importance so that a congregation settled on the island at the end of the VIII c and undertook the construction of a monastery in the last quarter of the following century.

According to an inscription on the south wall of the of S. Arakelots (Holy Apostle) Church, this 9th c expansion is attributed to Princess Mariam, the daughter of the Ashot I Bagratuni, who would become king, establishing the Bagratuni dynasty of Armenia, which reigned for the next 200 years, fostering the second Golden Age of Armenian culture.

The story goes that Princess Mariam, widowed while still young and resolved to dedicate her life to piety, decided to commission thirty churches in memory

of her lost husband, Prince Vasak Kapur of the Siunik Family. Seeking guidance, Marian visited Sevanavank and met with S. Mashtots of Sevan, a 9th c religious figure and the future Katolikos Mashtots Yeghvardetsi.



He must have advised starting her work there, for she immediately agreed to pay for enlarging the monastery on the (then) island, which was centered around the Church of the Holy Resurrection (S. Harutiun), a large triple nave basilica attributed to S. Grigor Lusavorich and believed to have been built in 305 CE over the ruins of a pagan temple.



She continued commissioning churches at Sevanavank, including S. Arakelots and S. Astvatsatsin, which survive to this day. The inscription at Arakelots states that the vank was built (completed) in 874 CE, the date used for its

founding. The monastery had three churches, monk cells and auxiliary buildings and a gavit, its massive roof supported by six wooden columns.

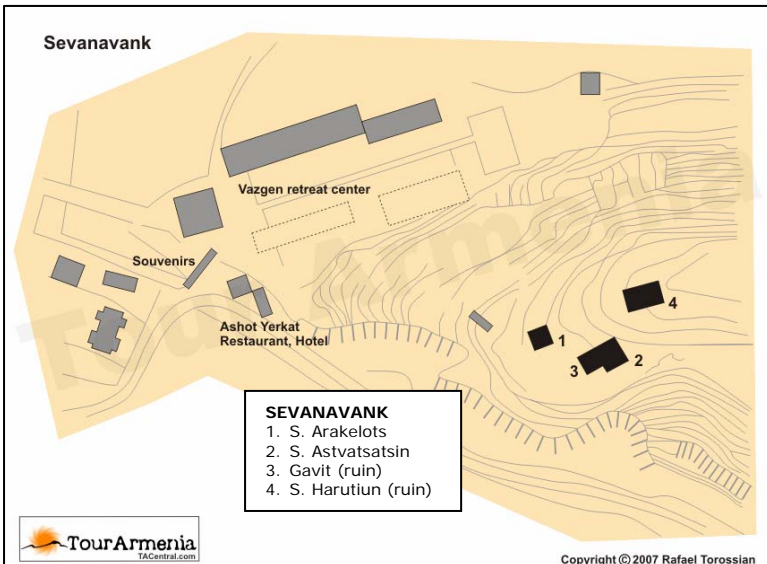
Sevanavank became an important religious center, its ascetic tradition fostering learning and research, its manuscript production continuing into the 19th c. The 10th-century historian and Katolikos Hovhannes Draskhanakertsi lived and worked there, as did countless student monks and chroniclers of the middle age.

Another famous 10th c figure who stayed at the vank was Ashot III (Ashot Yerkat or Ashot of Iron) who led his armies against Arab rulers. The king and his regiment camped on the island in 925 CE, winning a decisive victory against the Arabs, ensuring the re-establishment of Armenian independence and the beginning of Bagratuni rule. It is at this time the name for the lake and monastery is believed to have originated; the floating bodies of the Arab army coating the lake surface, hence the color "sev" (black) in the name.

Sevanavank became an important pilgrimage site after this feat, especially in times of invasion and turmoil, as pilgrims sought refuge and divine intervention against their enemies.



Overall, monastery life was strict as it was mainly intended for errant royal offspring (and later) monks from Echmiadzin who had sinned. Chronicles record the forced tenancy of several "bad boy" princes who rebelled against their lords and, much later, Jean-Marie Chopin, a French explorer, visited the monastery in 1830 and reported seeing a regime without meat, wine,



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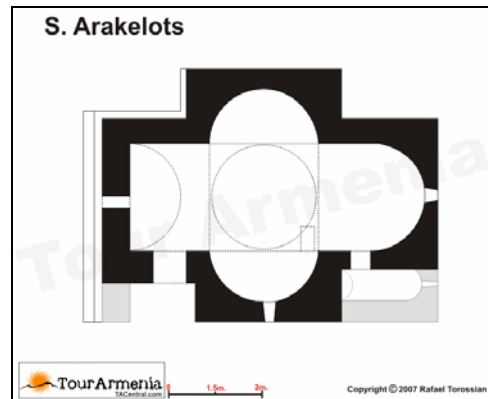
youth or women. Another explorer visited it in 1850 and reported that manuscripts were still being copied manually.



Pillaged during Mongol, Timurid and Turkic invasions in the 14th-16th cc, the monastery was mostly deserted, despite fitful attempts to revive the community after the 1441 re-establishment of the Holy See at Echmiadzin. The 16th c saw an attempt at revival, quashed during one of the five Ottoman-Persian wars of that century, and it only really began its rebirth in the late 17th c when Persia promoted Armenian interests in the face of Ottoman Turkey hegemony in the region. Mkhitar Sebastatsi is recorded as living at the monastery for two years beginning in 1692.

Growing again in the 19th c under Imperial Russian rule, the monastery was still a shadow of its former self; the only buildings from the original three-church vank left standing were S. Arakelots (later S. Karapet) and S. Astvatsatsin.

S. Arakelots



The monastery was closed in the 20th c by Soviets. In the summer of 1929 the Soviet mathematicians Andrei Kolmogorov and Pavel Aleksandrov visited Lake Sevan in Armenia and lived in a cell in the monastery on the island, mentioning Sevan in their memoirs, which are important documents for reconstructing the vank. Further damage was done in the 1936 earthquake.

Reconstruction efforts began in the 1980's which were suspended during the Karabakh conflict, renewing in the 1990s after Katolikos Vaghen I established a theological seminary at Sevanavank, on its far western side. Due to the lake and thriving tourist trade on the beaches, the monastery receives almost as many visitors as Echmiadzin; far more than it would were it someplace more remote.

Complex Important for its history, the vank is

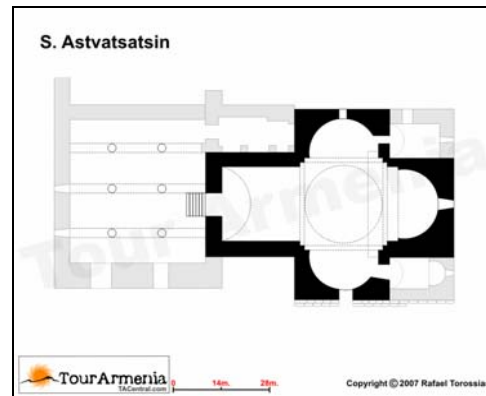
nevertheless not the most architecturally interesting of Armenia's monasteries. Far greater lie elsewhere on Lake Sevan, including two others by Mariam and her brother Prince Grigor Supan in the southwest of the marz. But what makes this vank worthwhile, and what most find after trudging up the 100 or so steps to the top of the peninsula is one of the most beautiful views in Armenia, the sparkling waters of Lake Sevan.

Today, the monastery consists of the two churches, a ruined gavit and traces of foundations for S. Harutiun and monk cells. They are all situated on the southwest side of the hill overlooking Lake Sevan.

The small church of **S. Arakelots** is a central dome type with three apses set inside the cross form. The three-apse style is also called a "trefoil," coming from gothic architecture which the center takes the form of a three-lobed leaf (formed from three partially-overlapping circles). The SW entrance is framed with an arch, its slight detail about as decorous as the church gets.

The larger **S. Astvatsatsin** was built immediately after the completion of S. Arakelots. It has a similar plan as Arakelots, with an elongated western end creating a square hall.

S. Astvatsatsin

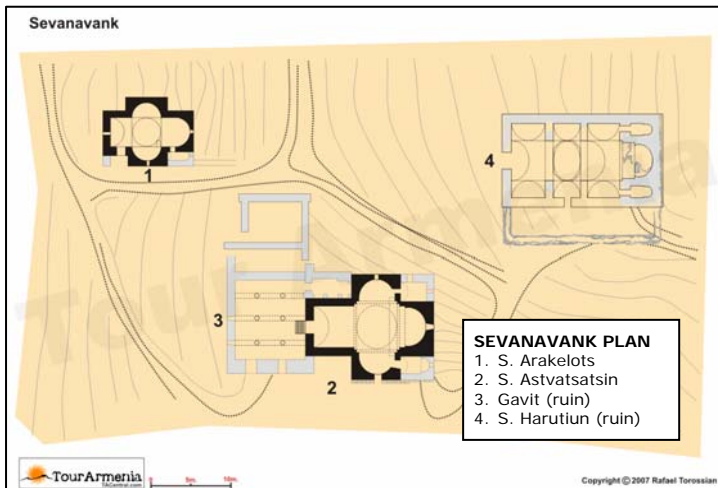


The main apse is flanked by two antechambers, the right (SE) a chapel with its own eastern apse, connected to the main hall. The left (SW) is entered by a northern entry outside the church. There is also a small chamber to the NW, also reached from the outside of the church.



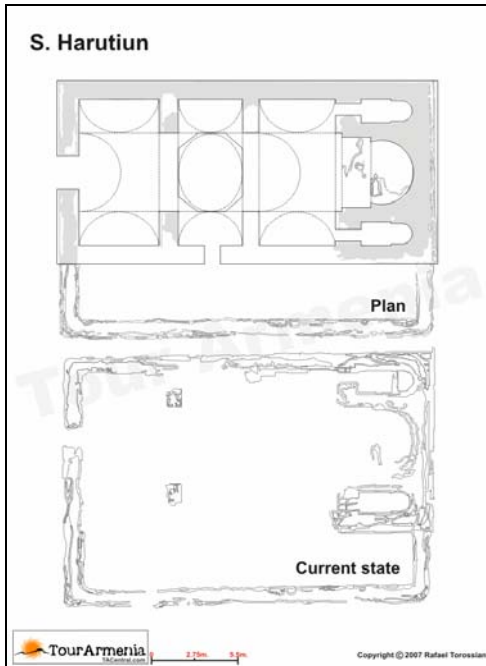
The octagonal drum is placed above the main hall, supported by arches resting on pendentives rising from the main square. What is unique about an otherwise standard support system is the open square space on the western end, the arch for which is wider and taking an inordinate share of the dome weight. The use of the wide arch opened what would have been a cramped space, directing one's gaze to the soaring dome. Pretty standard stuff for us now, but in the 9th c, this was an experiment that could have failed miserably. Its success insured wide scale use of more open arches in future domes.

The outside of the drum has a number of khachkars embedded in the walls. These were not originally intentional, but rather the result of periodic reconstruction after 14th-16th cc invasions and desecration of the church.



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The ruined **gavit**, located on the west of St Astvatsatsin, has been dated to the 9th or 10th c, making it one of the earliest gavits in Armenia. The large square was divided into nine spaces through the use of arches resting on six wooden columns that supported the stone gable roof. The central space was built with a unique dome system, called the "yertik".



The yertik was borrowed from domestic structures that had a central aperture topping a shallow dome, the dome made from wooden crossbeam squares placed at diagonals from each other, stacking them as they grow smaller. The end result is a strong section of ceiling that is also geometric in design. Church gavits took the same idea, using stone squares rather than wood for the dome. Of the original wood columns, two survived, and are on display at the State History Museum in Yerevan along with the church's wooden doors.

The oldest church was S. Harutiun, which is now in ruins, only trace foundations marking its once grand structure. The church was one of the few central domed basilicas, a 5th c. hybrid of the nave temple borrowed from Pagan times and the new dome structure introduced by early Christians. The result was startling, and rare. Most did not survive to our time, struck by earthquakes and deliberate destruction. One that remains is at Sodk, on the opposite end of the lake.



Khachkars Sevanavank has a wonderful collection of khachkar pieces, with a few outstanding intact examples from each period of the vank's history. Among the most interesting are those made from green stone, quarried from the Sevan area. The intricacies and florid designs of these cross stones are at odds with the monastery's ascetic tradition, making them stand out all the more. In fact, their exuberance in a place known for its Spartan existence prompts me to wonder how the vank's inhabitants must have treated these works of art, surrounded as they were by a world of harsh living yet able to gaze upon and worship at stones so alive with emotion and luxury of line. Were these

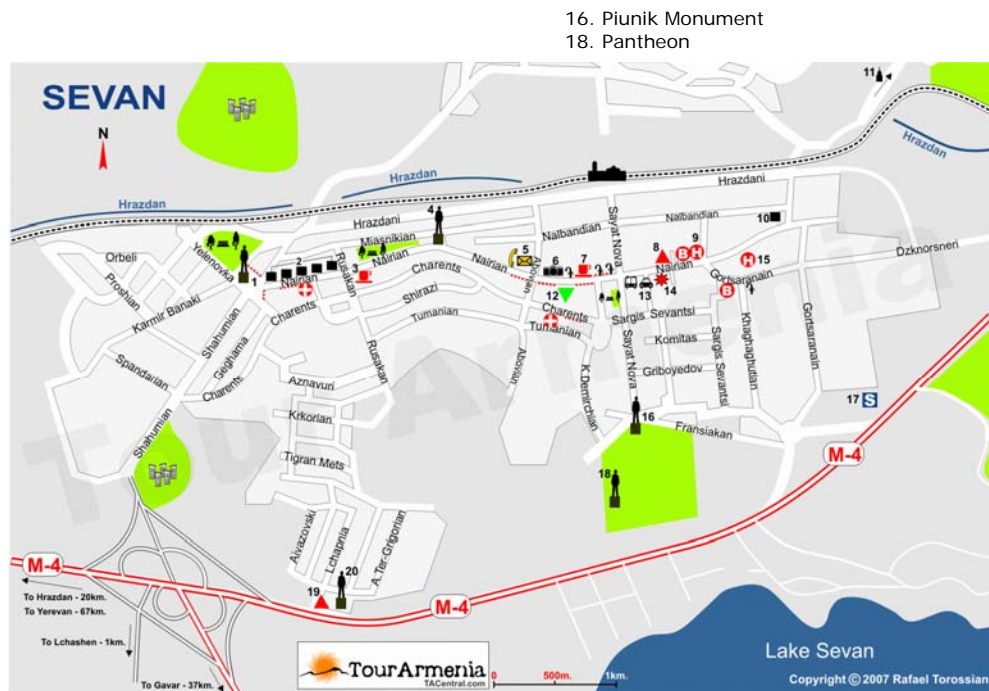
stones the release of pent up desire, their exuberant lines and luxurious décor a way to escape the harsh realities of their lives, in their own ways a 'snapshot' of earth's temptations they dare not touch but must have imagined in their dark cells of ascetic living? Whatever the reason, the khachkars at Sevanavank show some of the most extravagant carvings I have seen in the country, carefully incised with deep, emotional lines.

Other Sites

The **town** itself is worth strolling through, with its wooden and stone houses with carved balustrades in the Rusakan District, where a few Molokan homes still survive.

One km N is the **cyclopean fortress of Metsep** And on a hill just S of the village of **Tsamakaberd**, just E of Sevan city, is a **cyclopean fortress**. Both are Bronze –Iron Age in origin and consist of wall traces and good views of the lake.

The **Lake Beaches** are covered in detail in the next section of this chapter.



Sevan City Map Key

H S OVERNIGHT

17. Yeter Pensionat

▲ FOOD & DRINK

8. Aragast Restaurant
19. Alik Restaurant

☕ OUTDOOR CAFÉ

3. Café
7. Café

🚍 BUSES -MARSHRUTNI TAXIS

13. Aftokaiyan

🚂 TRAIN

- Railroad Station

🏛 MONUMENTS - SITES

1. Worker Monument
4. Genocide Victims Monument

16. Piunik Monument
18. Pantheon

20. Alik ("Wave")

🏛 CHURCHES

11. S. Gevorg Church ruins

.... ▼ ▲ SHOPS, SHUKA

12. Shuka (Market)

✉ INTERNET, PHONE, POST

5. Central Post Office

🏛 GOVT. OFFICES

14. Mayor's Office

🏧 BANK, ATM**🏪 APOTEKAS****🏥 MEDICAL/HOSPITAL/CLINIC - DENTAL**

9. Medical Center
15. Clinic

🌳 PARKS**📷 SERVICES, PHOTO**

6. Photo developing
10. Air Tickets

PRACTICALITIES ▲

Area Code: 261

Long Distance: 0261 + local number

From abroad: +(374) 261 + local number

Mobile Phones: 091 Armentel, 093 Viva Cell

International callers: Armentel +(374) 91 +

number, Viva Cell +(374) 93 + local number

Unless otherwise noted, local numbers require the

(0261) prefix if calling long distance, or +(374)

261 prefix if calling from abroad.

IN AND OUT**By Train**

The Elektrichka connects Yerevan with Sevan City and the Peninsula, originating at the Arabkir (by Monument) Station in Yerevan, arriving at the main station in Sevan City, a station just across from the peninsula, and at Shorzha on the East shore. The train leaves every morning, returning in the afternoon. Tickets at 250 AMD makes this the cheapest way to the lake.

By Bus, Minivan

Buses and minivans (marshrutni taxis) connect Sevan City with Yerevan, Hrazdan (Tsaghkadzor), Abovian, Dilijan, Gavar, Martuni, Vardenis, even Yeghegnadzor in Vayots Dzor and Berd in Tavush. The bus station is on Nairian or at the train station, ask.

Buses Buses depart Yerevan from in front of Dramatic Theatre, 28 Isahakian p. (400 AMD) and arrive at the Sevan City bus stop. Other buses are to Dilijan (250 AMD), Vanadzor (300 AMD) and Berd (250 AMD). All leave from Sevan City's bus stop.

Minivans (Marshrutni taxis) leave from the the bus stop on Nairian or the rail Station. Ask. Minivans do not have a set schedule; they leave when they are full and generally run once or twice a day to outlying villages. Sevan City Minivans connect to Yerevan (500 AMD, 28, Isahakian p.), Peninsula (100 AMD), Shorzha (200 AMD), Dilijan

(300 AMD), Vanadzor (350 AMD), Chambarak (250 AMD), Berd (500 AMD), Gavar (250 AMD), Martuni (300 AMD), Vardenis (400 AMD), and Yeghegnadzor (800 AMD).

By Taxi Taxis are more expensive but the most convenient way to travel (you decide when you go, and you can stop along the way). If you split the price between 2 or more travelers, it is cheaper.

Yerevan-Sevan City Taxis

From Yerevan, just about any taxi will take you to Sevan at 100 AMD per kilometer. Taxis should charge 6700-7000 AMD for up to four passengers. You can also order a taxi by phone (6700 AMD). Most Yerevan taxi services provide this service, but we used Kalina (tel 010-555-333). Note even the best can go bad overnight, ask around when you arrive for best taxi service.

From Sevan City, taxis are around town and at major beach sites. Rates vary depending on the ability of the driver to get return fare. Taxis to Yerevan are 6700-7000 AMD. Call taxis are in town, they advertise their numbers around town.

By Car Sevan City is on the (M4) highway, which connects to the (M10) south of town, leading to Gavar (H39) and Martuni. To the north it continues to Dilijan. Sevan city is 16 km from Hrazdan, 23.5 km from Tsaghkadzor, 34 km from Dilijan and 67 km from Yerevan.

**AROUND**

On foot is easy enough in the center, and it is only 500 m to the beach from the city edge. To



the peninsula it is a km from city center. You can cross center in 10-15 minutes, in 30 minutes to the peninsula. [See Bearings](#) (on page 12).

Taxis Sevan City has plenty of taxis, in the center and at beaches. The service is good, the drivers knowledgeable (but few speak English). The general rate is 600-1000 AMD around town, or 2000 AMD if you try to take one from the beach late at night!

Taxi Services

Look for taxi service ads in the center and area cafes, restaurants and hotels/motels. They change by the season, sometimes by the week. Also inquire at your lodging. Most offer the service or will find someone for you.



TRAVEL AGENCIES

Air Tickets, Nalbandian p. at east end, sells air tickets and organizes simple day tours.

For nature or adventure tours, see [Adventure Tour Operators](#) (Error! Bookmark not defined.).

COMMUNICATION, ETC.

Fire – 101
Police – 102
Ambulance service – 103
Rescue Hot Line - 118
Gas emergency service – 104
Trunk Line – 107
Telephone directory information – 109

Phone, telegraphs

Tsaghkadzor is covered by both Armentel and Vivacell mobile services. International calls can be made at the *Central Post Office*, Nairian p. [See HayPost \(HyePost\) site for list \(www.haypost.am/EN/abt_offices.html\)](#). The post office has trunk line phone service, sells phone cards (30 minutes 3000 AMD) and can deliver telegraphs.

Internet

Arminco has a local representative in Sevan City at 6 S. Sevanetsi p. (Gagik Ghazaryan), tel. 25658, 20910, e-mail: sevandeal@arminco.com. They offer prepaid card service and have begun installing Wi-Fi service at the northern beaches.

High end Harsnakar, Bohemian Resort and Blue Sevan have internet service for their guests. Check around your beach, there may be a dial up service nearby. Armentel and Viva Cell offer mobile internet as part of their cell phone coverage (most expensive option).

Bank, Exchange

ATM, Money wires and credit card advances can be done at banks:

Armeconombank, 141 Nairian p. tel. 25585
22 Sevantsu

Ardshininvestbank, 1 Khaghaghutian, tel 22760

Converse Bank, 153 Nairian, tel. 25452

Unibank, 155 Nairian p. tel. 20003

Shopping

There are a number of shops in town, including mterks, souvenirs and clothing stores. Most are on Nairian p.

Film, etc.

Film can be bought at film developers, shops and the larger hotels in town. A Kodak shop is on Nairian opposite the Shuka. Batteries are suspect, bring your own.

Pharmacy

Apotekas (Armenian: deghatuner) can be found in the center of town on Nairian p.

Hospital, Polyclinic

There is a medical center on Nairian at Gordsaranain and a clinic nearby on Gordsaranain p. For a medical emergency, contact your lodging venue or go to Yerevan.

OVERNIGHT

Except one small pensionat in the city limits, all official lodging is on the beach, covered in the following section (p. 18). Home stays and apartments are a growing local business.

PENSIONAT

Yeter Pensionat, 5 Alek Manukian (local tel. 20128, reservation 010-55-34-13) at the south end of Gordsaranain is a family place run by the Radio Committee. Officially for radio union members only, it is fairly easy to book in advance for just about anyone staying longer than one day (check one week before). Basic accommodations (bathrooms rustic) with three meals a day at 3000-4000 AMD per day per person in double rooms.

BOARDING/APARTMENT

This is a distinct possibility, though done informally, there are no organized rentals. Ask around when you

CAMPING

Free Camping is hard to find near Sevan City, the beaches are all run by concessions. You may find some spots on the hills to the north of town, but there is no tree cover. Paid camping is on the beaches. See next section.

FOOD AND DRINK

A few restaurants, khorovats joints and Cafes are in town, at beaches (Hangestian goti) and on the highway. Food can also be bought at Mterks (food shops) around town.

\$ = 2000 AMD or less for meal w/o drinks

\$\$ = 2000-3000 AMD

\$\$\$ = 3000 AMD or more

Aragast Restaurant, Nairian p east of Sayat Nova p, is a small eatery in an older building with an open porch. Armenian, khorovats menu includes everything from soups, sandwiches to full course meals. Sanwiches avareage 1000 AMD, meals can go for as much as 2500-4000 AMD. \$-\$\$\$

Alik Restaurant, next to Alik monument on the (M4) highway, has khorovats, sandwiches, soups and most dishes between. Like most eateries in Sevan, you can eat cheap for around 1000 AMD or expensively for 3000 AMD + depending on what you choose. \$-\$\$\$

Outdoor Cafes in Sevan City offer some of the same dishes as a restaurant, but at a discount. Sandwiches and moderate meals vary from 600-2500 AMD. \$-\$\$

SEVAN BEACHES ▲

The number of beaches at Lake Sevan is astounding: 161 and counting. They vary from the simplest rock shore for wading and swimming to the most opulent sandy beaches with restaurants, jet ski rentals and discos. The rest are somewhere between, most offering a sand shore, wooden recliners and covered picnic tables, a few domiks (metal containers once used to house earthquake victims in Giumri and Spitak and outfitted for the typical beach bum) or trailer-like cottages, and a café. The vast majority are family run, family visited places, with friendly management and a laid back atmosphere.



When to come The lake water is cold (between 15-21C) in even the hottest months and locals do not consider the season to be "on" until mid June, with the greatest numbers coming July-August. The water is even warmer in September and those in the know stake out a beach claim then, when the lake has the mildest weather of the year (sunny, balmy) and the fewest tourists.

In high season the lake has mostly sunny days with clouds building up on the western horizon, sometimes dumping the lake with a late afternoon shower before clearing for a star-studded display at night. Nights are cool to chilly.

Time your visit to off-peak days (Monday-Thursday) and you will have the greatest pick of beach. The "crush" is Saturdays and Sundays, when advance reservation for overnight is required on the north shore and the Sevan highway all the way to Yerevan seems one long stream of

What to Bring

Sun block. Can't have enough of this stuff. Sevan is 1897m above sea level and while the weather may seem cool, the sun's UV rays are intense; it not unusual for unprotected skin to burn within 15 minutes of exposure. Use sun block 15 SPF and higher for gradual roasting, 30+ SPF for better protection (though none completely protects you from all UV rays).

Clothing Take a hat and long sleeve shirt to protect from the sun; a sweater or sweatshirt for the typically chilly evenings. Tender feet will want a pair of water-sports shoes, sandals or plastic flip flops (even on chilly days the sand is surprisingly hot and shores can be rocky). Take along a change of clothes for evening, when impromptu (and otherwise) discos spring up at beach camps and to protect from the windy evenings.

A **First Aid kit** is not just for campers, it comes in handy throughout your travels.

Other: Sun umbrellas can be rented, but are cheaper if you buy in Yerevan. Likewise folding chairs that are sold on the highway, along with rubber tubes, goggles and swimming attire.

Film and batteries should be brought from Yerevan (the best is still in the west); locals have it but it is 30-50% more expensive and batteries are notoriously bad throughout Armenia.

Personal items include Skin moisturizer, toiletries (including soap, shampoo, deodorant, razor), flashlight, tissue (toilet paper), tea, coffee bags, thermos, Swiss army knife, bottle opener, insect repellent, books to read, music to play (MP3 to schlep with) are some of the items to consider bringing to a beach. The cheaper the place, the more you will need to bring along. If you forget something, you can buy on the North Shore or in Sevan City, at a premium.

headlights Friday night heading to the lake and another, slower line heading the 67 km downhill on Sunday evenings.

Beach Amenities Beaches are chosen by locals depending on their location, whether or not they offer food and overnight possibilities. The simplest offer the beach, a food stand and not much else. The most typical beach offers covered spots for picnics or sitting, some kind of café or food stand, spots for pitching a tent and domiks or cottages for sleeping overnight. Most beaches have public changing booths or screens, where locals change. A public toilet and cold shower is standard on

beach sites, with private baths reserved for the more expensive spots.

Type of Overnight

Domiks are metal containers that have been outfitted for sleeping. They were originally used to house earthquake victims in Giumri, Spitak and Vanadzor, and have found a second use as a temporary motel. Amenities are non-existent to crude, and some sites allow up to 7 people to pack into the cramped quarters. At 5000-7000 AMD, this is your cheapest option.

Cottages can be small trailers especially outfitted for a beach or permanent structures. They have multiple bedrooms, a kitchenette and a common room. At an average of 20,000-25,000 AMD for up to 4 people (up to 6 in some places), these are still reasonable if you split the cost. Trendy spots can charge much more, again, if you split between 4-6 people, it is reasonable.

The **Hangestian Goti** started as a day beach, and it still is, but now more and more offer overnights varying between camping, domiks and cottages.

Hotel/Motel are pretty much as we in the west think of them. Most are attached to a beach and some offer private cottages. The costs vary, most starting around 20,000 AMD with typical price being in the 25,000-35,000AMD range.

Pensionats are the best deal if you factor in the 3-4 meals a day included in the price. Unfortunately the days of just walking in to get a room are passing; Pensionats were built for factories, unions and governmental associations, allowing locals to have an affordable vacation on the lakeshore. Some allow single night stays but most prefer multi-day visits (3 at a minimum) and must reserve rooms for members of their founding unit. Except for the privatized Blue Sevan on the Northeast Shore, most are run down affairs that spruce up a bit for the summer trade but otherwise are rather dingy with rustic amenities. Still, if you get into one, the 2000-5000 AMD per day charger that includes meals cannot be beat.

Camping is done at Hangestian Gotis and especially reserved camps on the main shoreline. Many combine camping spots with domiks and cottages. Costs vary from 2500-5000 AMD per night, can should include public toilet and shower, plus access to the beach and other amenities at

the beach site. Free camping is only possible far from the main beaches, south of Gavar and Shorzha on the east and west shores, respectively and along the south shoreline. Traditional spots are going scarce as the lake's water line rises. Villages are fairly friendly and tolerant of camping, but you should always ask first.

Typical beach costs The little secret they don't tell you is that by law the beaches are free to anyone who walks in and wants to swim. The concessions are for using the picnic tables, chairs, parking on site and spending the night in a cottage or at site camp. Those in the know and just there for a swim will pick a beach, park off site and walk in. The exceptions would be some of the high end spots which—despite the illegality—fence off their shoreline, their security personnel warding off would-be swimmers.

Prices vary depending on the amenities, but the average costs at most of the beaches and Hangestian goti on the North Shore was 3000 AMD for parking, which included table or covered area and reclining chairs/benches.



Where The main activity on the North Shore, which includes the Peninsula and is closest to Sevan City. Beaches on this shore begin just after the Sevan City intersection on the (M4) and continue to the East Shore.

Northwest shore These beaches are less trendy than those near the peninsula but many offer the same amenities. Taking everything from the ultra-cheap Aragast Yacht Club dormitories to the more sophisticated Delphin and Voyage beaches, this

shoreline also includes family run cove beaches like Laguna beach, one of the nicest on the lake. 3000-7000/20,000-25,000 AMD for domik/cottage

Central North Shore / Peninsula Beaches The rule of thumb used to be the closer you were to the Peninsula beaches, the more trendy you were, and for the idle rich (the "Novii Armenii"), this still goes, the social wannabes moving in packs from one hot spot to another in a small area between Harsnaqar (Sevan's so-called "five star" hotel) and the peninsula ("Flamingo" still rounding them up at its large outdoor disco). If you like wall to wall people preening on the beach and eyeing everyone in sight to stack up the body competition, you'll love this area (you'll also like it if you love irony and want to study just how provincial these jet-setters can be). Seriously, this is where the heavy action is at Sevan, and money and sense of local fashion is *de rigueur*. 7000-10,000/25,000-100,000 AMD for domik/cottage-hotel room.

Northeast Shore What this has meant for us mortals is that the rest of the shoreline has been allowed to develop at a more sensible pace, drawing visitors with a more laid back atmosphere and focus on the beach and the water. You can still find discos and jet skis, but the people will be a little more down to earth (their families actually work for a living and had to save for this vacation) and the atmosphere less pretentious. On the North Shore this area takes in the beaches from the Sevan intersection to Harsnaqar Hotel, and then from the north shore of the Peninsula to the east shore.

Part of the North Shore group of beaches, the northeast shore includes beach side hotels and motels, as well as some of the nicer cottage beaches. These include Blue Sevan (still the best for value and price), and the worn but still serviceable Sevan Two Motel, plus some nice hangestian gotis and cottages. Beaches include a string of Hangestian gotis, beaches with domiks and cottages. Prices range from 5000 AMD for a domik to 25,000 AMD for cottage for four.

East Shore The East shore includes Soviet era pensionats and resort hotels that still offer rooms at 3000 AMD per person (food included) plus a growing number of very nice family run affairs with modern buildings, cottages and pleasant staff. Not as trendy as the north shore, this is becoming a magnet for those who want to get away from the

crush on the peninsula, with some of the same amenities (discos, jet skis, sailing and fishing). Prices are about the same as other "normal" beaches on the lake, 5000-7000/20,000 AMD for domik/cottage.

West Shore The least developed of the shorelines is the west shore, beginning at L'chashen and running to Hairivank. There are a few abandoned Soviet Hotels on this shoreline and some activity to renovate or build new hotels, but most are simple Hangestian gotis with domiks and cottages and khrovovats stands. 5000-6000/20,000 AMD for domik/cottage.

OVERNIGHT



These listings are not exhaustive, focusing on most popular or representative venues, especially when it comes to beaches with domiks and cottages. A complete list of all beach venues is attached to beach maps following this section. There is no reliable rating system for Sevan venues. What is great one season can go bad the next and venues can change (or close) almost overnight. Your best bet is still to ask locals who have the same tastes as you for the current season's recommended spots. *Venue names include their (map number) in the corresponding Beach Map.*

HOTEL / RESORT

Northwest Shore

Aragast Yacht Club (1, 3), first beach road after Sevan intersection, tel. 26511, has several long wooden buildings divided into rooms for 4-6 people. Communal toilet and showers, small

beach, but cheap at 3000 AMD per person with full meals at 2000-2500 AMD. They also have yachts available for sailing (\$20/hr.) that can be used as overnight spots (price comparable to wood buildings).

Central North Shore, Peninsula

Hotel Harsnaqar (52), Tsamaqaberd, Sevan (at the mouth of the Hrazdan river, 3 km from the peninsula road, 1.5 km from Sevan City), tel. 20450, 23358, 22400, fax 20065, email: arc@xter.net, url: <http://www.harsnaqarhotel.am>. The hotel bills itself as Sevan's first five star venue, with manicured lawns, 38 hotel rooms, 18 cottages, 10 mini cottages, and a water park rounding out the sand beach, horse park, tennis courts and water sports (jet skis a top draw). Some have complained of worn, ill-kempt rooms and lack of services, but the hotel still reigns as the pre-eminent stop for the social set. Very expensive with rooms beginning with "economy" SGL at 35,000 AMD and 2 bedroom cottages at 100,000 AMD.

Bohemian Resort (61), Sevan North Shore (between Neptune and Malibu beaches), tel. 25885, 010-56-17-76, 093-72-02-22, email: info@atlantis.am, url: <http://www.bohemianresort.am>, is a new motel with rooms built around a swimming pool that leads to the sandy shoreline. Being new, the rooms are in immaculate shape, it remains to be seen how they wear. Expensive with SGL/ DBL/ semilux/ Cottage at 29,000/ 42,000/ 54,000/ 84,000 AMD.

Peninsula

Caboose Restaurant-Motel (71), opposite Ashot Yerkat Restaurant/Motel has a few rooms in its complex starting at 20,000 AMD.

Ashot Yerkat (74), at bottom of steps to Sevanavank on the peninsula, tel. 091-50-00-43, has 10 rooms available starting at 20,000 AMD.

Peninsula Restaurant-Motel (67), on the main road to Sevanavank, has 4 rooms starting at 20,000 AMD.

Northeast Shore

Sevan Motel (111), Lchap, Northeast shore (about 2 km from the Dilijan turnoff), tel. 23539, 010-53-

87-61 is worn around the edges, but rooms have hot water, TV, refrigerator, inner telephone, heating, air-conditioner. The motel has sauna, beauty parlor, disco, outdoor and indoor pool, computer games, billiard, tennis, restaurant, bar. Rooms start at 20,000 AMD.

East Shore

Blue Sevan (120), east shore (sign-posted, about 5.5 km from the Dilijan turnoff), Tel: 22460, 22760, 23060, cell: 091-21-48-90, 093-58-19-51, 091-41-26-49, email: info@bluesevan.com, is perhaps the best established of the hotels and cottages, and the best loved by repeat visitors. The complex includes camping, 48 hotel rooms (DBL/TRP), 10 cottages and 14 wooden chalets in a park like area with a long stretch of beach. Amenities include telephone, TV, refrigerator and renovated bathroom. Cottages are made of stone, with large balconies, sitting room, kitchen (dishware, pots and pans included), fireplace, piano and TV, renovated baths and upstairs bedrooms. Wooden chalets are more rustic, with basic amenities and shared baths. Hotel has rooms with DBL-A/DBL-B/TRP-A/TRP-B/Quad/LUX at 27,000/22,000/35,000/30,000/25,000/40,000 AMD; Cottages (6-8 people) at 80,000 AMD and Wooden chalets (4-6 people) at 25,000 AMD.

Tufenkian Avan Marak Tsapatagh Hotel Complex (152), Tsapatagh Village (57 kilometers from the lake peninsula), tel. 010-54-78-88, 54-27-07, fax: 010-54-78-77, email: hotels@tufenkian.am, info@tufenkian.am, URL: www.tufenkianheritage.com, has 34 rooms (to accommodate ninety guests), including duplexes, large and small room as well as suites. Other attractions include an outdoor swimming pool, sauna, beach cabin, hot tub, table tennis, and billiards. Restaurant overlooks the lake and features an open terrace and serves traditional Armenian food based on fresh local ingredients and regional recipes. Expensive with room rates from 26,000 AMD to 52,000 AMD for one person, 2600 AMD for each additional guest. Rates do not include VAT tax (20%) but do include breakfast. Half board is 3900 AMD per person, full board is 7800 AMD per person.



BEACH DOMIKS/COTTAGES

Northwest Shore

Albatros (25), at the beginning of Sevan City, tel. 091-48-52-45, 46-94-09, has wooden 3-room cottages for up to 5 persons with hot water, bathroom, TV and refrigerator. Cottages start at 15,000 AMD. Catering available at 3000 AMD per person.

Laguna Beach (33), Sevan park, tel. 091-75-39-42, 34-20-83, 093-64-44-07, is a family oriented venue in a natural cove with white sand beach, domiks, cottages, café and mterk. The café is set on a pier over the lake water, a pleasant spot at night with guests swimming up to beg a cup of coffee or splash friends. Lovely beach with shade trees. Domiks (up to 5 people) at 10,000-12,000 AMD and cottages (5 people) at 22,000 AMD.

Other northwest beaches with domiks/cottages include (map number) *Iagora (18)*, *Delphin (22)*, *Voyage (24)*, *Nostalgia (29)*, *Vanatur (30)*, *Mirage (31)*, *Green Huts (37)*, *Spitak Ap (39)*, *Drakht (41)*, *Africa Beach (43)*, *Arpi (48)*, *Zangezur (49)* and *"Loghap beach" (50)*. All venues have comparable prices, with domiks (5-7 people) at 10,000-15,000 AMD and cottages (5 people) at 20,000-25,000 AMD.

Central North Shore, Peninsula

Flamingo (65), Sevan Hwy just before the peninsula, tel. 010- 56-00-00, 52-98-68 has wooden cottages with 4 shared bedrooms, each sleeping 2 per room. Amenities include hot water and bath. Each 2 persons is 8,000 AMD, or 14,000 AMD with food.

Nirvana (59), 700 meters N of "Harsnaqar" hotel, tel. 22121, 091-20-41-56, has cottages for up to 5 people with baths, hot water, refrigerator and TV, telephone in the main lobby. Other amenities include bar-café with music, billiard, tennis, volleyball, general buffet. Catering available for extra. Cottages at 25,000 AMD.

Tsovinar (64), Sevan peninsula, tel. 010-53-05-19, 58-75-98, 58-27-58, 53-34-99, 56-76-12, has domiks/cottages on a granular sand beach with weekend shows and disco. Domiks and cottages have hot water, bath and TV set, some with refrigerators. Their pricing is impossible to understand and management unable to explain. You either pay 9000/10,000 AMD per person for a DBL room or must pay that amount for each of four rooms in order to take a cottage (!?!?). Day rate is 5000 AMD per person, which includes two meals. This is one of the trendy spots so not too interested in outside visitors.

Other central/peninsula beaches with domiks/cottages include (map number) *Vegas (54)*, *Tsamakaberd (55)*, *Arevik (56)*, *Jrarhars (57)*, *Victoria (58)*, *Neptune (60)*, *Malibu (62)*, *Gold beach (63)*, *Kokakabana (64)*, *Lusabats (72)*, *Handipum (77)*, and *Tsovartsik (78)*. All venues have comparable prices, with domiks (5-7 people) at 10,000-20,000 AMD and cottages (5 people) at 25,000-35,000 AMD.

Northeast Shore

Beaches with domiks/cottages include (map number) *Sisuan Hangestian Goti (82)*, *Exotic (85)*, *Drakhtaiyin Ashkhar No-No Beach (86)*, *Gagarin Mets (90)*, *Akhtamar (97)*, *Ninth Wave (99)*, *Papiner (100)*, *Karap (104)*, *Bridge Beach (107)*, and *Piruz (112)*. All venues have comparable prices, with domiks (5-7 people) at 7000-10,000 AMD and cottages (5 people) at 20,000-25,000 AMD.



East Shore

Shant (147), south of Shorzha village, tel. 22457, 091-41-93-90, has rooms in its worn down (but cheap!) facility, with water, refrigerator in all rooms and hot water in select rooms. Site has tennis, billiard, bar, chess, volleyball and a playground in addition to a nice beach. DBL/SGL start at 3500 AMD per person, cottages are 2500-5500 AMD per person. Catering is 3500 AMD per person (3 meals).

Hotel Edem, East Shore between Armasp and Blue Sevan, tel. 091-20-96-64,

Other east shore beaches with domiks/cottages include (map number) *Voski Avasner (113)*, *Arevshat (115)*, *Assa (116)*, *Armasp (118)*, *Akhtamar Hangestian Goti (124)*, *Raketa Hangestian Goti (125)*, *Swallow Hangestian Goti (127)*, *Yeren (132)*, *Zhair (135)*, *Gegham (146)*, *Livago (149)*, and *Maiyorka (150)*. All venues have comparable prices, with domiks (5-7 people) at 7000-10,000 AMD and cottages (5 people) at 20,000-25,000 AMD.

West Shore

West shore beaches with domiks/cottages include (map number) *Waveland (154)*, *Three Mermaids (155)*, and *Tsovavard (158)*. Venues have comparable prices with domiks at 5000-10,000 AMD and cottages at 18,000-22,000 AMD.

PENSIONAT / SANITORIUM

Northeast Shore

Biureghia Sevan (109), Tsoviagiugh, 010-56-16-21, 58-54-66, has basic rooms with rustic bath

(cold water, communal showers on first floor) and cheap rates with SGL/DBL/TRP at 3500 AMD per person, which includes 3 meals a day.

Sevan 2 Hotel (106) (under construction) is at then end of a long road about 1 km after the Dilijan turnoff. Opening dates vary from 2008-2010.

East Shore

Lazur Pensionat (114), East shore between Piruz Beach and Arevshat Beach, is a worn Soviet era pensionat with rustic amenities and cheap rates at 2500-3500 AMD per person, including meals. Walk ins are possible here, in the off season and mid week.

EFI (Yerevan Physics Institute) Hangestian Tun (121), next to Blue Sevan and before Arevik Sanitorium, has rooms and amenities comparable to Lazur Pensionat, with hot water in some rooms. Rates are 2500-3500 AMD per person, includes meals. Hard to get in, but worth the try to meet Armenia's great minds at play.

Arevik Sanitorium (123), south of EFI, is much like Lazur and EFI, with treatment and a slightly better atmosphere. Walk ins are actually encouraged, especially in mid week. They encourage multiple day stays (3-5), with rates from 3500-7000 AMD per day, including treatment (massages) and meals.

Medical Institute Hangestian Tun (148), East shore between Shant Beach/cottages and Livago beach/domiks. The pensionat is comparable in amenities and wear as Arevik and Lazur, with comparable prices and availability. Rates are 2500-3500 AMD per person, includes meals.

Artists Hangestian Tun (151), at the southwest tip of Artinish Peninsula, is a wonderfully eclectic mix of painters, sculptors and other members of the artists union, found combing the beach, arguing over cups of thick coffee or shots of wicked home-made brew, or panting the landscapes. The pensionat is a motel-like building that is rarely open to non-union members for overnight, but the bohemian atmosphere fosters a gentle kind of rebellion, and more than one camper has been welcomed to pitch a tent and join the discussions. Worth visiting just to see who is who in the current artist union world.



CAMPING

Northwest Shore

Beaches with camping include *Beach/camping* (12), *Mirage Beach* (31), *Hangestian Goti* (36), *Beach/camping* (38), *Loghap Beach/Camping* (50). Camps charge 5000-7000 AMD.

Northeast Shore

Northeast shore beaches with camping include *Sisuan Hangestian Goti* (82), *Beach/domiks* (84), *No-No Beach* (86), *Hangestian Goti* (91), *Beach/domiks* (92-96), *Ninth Wave* (99) and *Karap* (104). Camps charge 5000-7000 AMD.

East Shore

East shore beaches with camping include *Arevshat* (115), *Beach/camping* (122), *Beach* (128), *Beach* (131), *Beach* (133, 134), *Beach* (138-141) and *Shorzha Beaches* (144-150). Camps charge 3000-7000 AMD.

West Shore

West shore beaches with camping include *Chkalovka beaches* (153), *Beach* (156), *Norashen Beaches* (157) *Beaches* (160) and *Lchap Beaches* (161). Camps charge 3000-5000 AMD.

FOOD AND DRINK

A few restaurants line the (M4) Highway and are at the Peninsula. But the bulk of eateries are beach cafes (most have at least one grill stand) and the plethora of khorovats joints throughout the beach area. The North shore has the greatest concentration, but in high season, all shores will have summer cafes along the highway. You can walk into any beach to use their café or grill stand.

The more developed beaches have a small mterk for buying supplies and food. *Corresponding (Map Number) is listed with name.*

\$ = 1500 AMD or less w/o alcoholic drinks

\$\$= 1500-3000 AMD

\$\$\$ = 3000 AMD or more

Northwest Shore

Sevan Café (6), features khorovats, dzuki khorovats (grilled fish) and Armenian salads. Typical meals runs 2000-3500 AMD \$\$

Khorovats Stand (8), had the best khorovats on the shoreline when we sampled. Run by two brothers from Yerevan who work all summer so they can sleep winter and get rady for the next season. Excellenet khorovats at 1500 AMD a shish. \$-\$\$

Haiyots Odjak (9), is a sit down version of the khorovats stand, run by family members. Khorovats, fish, salads. 2000-3500 AMD \$\$-\$\$\$

There are a number of Beaches with cafes on the Northwest Shore. These serve everything from simple sandwiches (500 AMD), fries, and popcorn to khorovats, kebab and fish. See Northwest Shore Beach Map (see below). \$-\$\$

Central North Shore, Peninsula

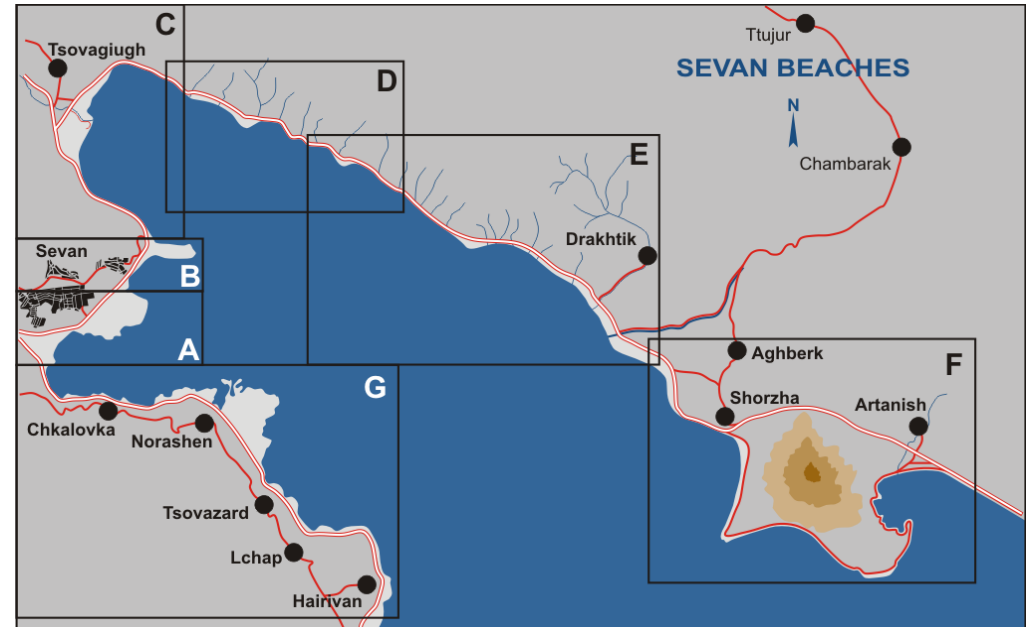
Caboose Restaurant (71), is popular with weekend families and businessmen, for good reason: moderately priced menu of Armenian, Russian, and fish dishes. \$\$

Ashot Yerkat Restaurant (75), serves the Tourist trade huffing and puffing their way up to Sevanavank. Sandwiches at 500-1000 AMD, khorovats at 250 AMD. \$-\$\$

Restaurant (67), serves khorovats and salads in a small building. Sandwiches begin at 500 AMD, meals at 1200 AMD. \$-\$\$

Restaurant (81), specialized in crawfish when we visited, a heap of which cost 3000 AMD (enough for 4), with dzuki khorovats costing 2000 AMD a shish. \$-\$\$

There are a number of Beaches with cafes on the Central North Shore and Peninsula. See Central North Shore and Peninsula Beach Map (see below).



Northeast Shore

Café Grill (83) features fresh fish, crawfish and khorovats at 1500-2000 AMD. \$-\$\$

Kovcheg (Tapan) Restaurant (88,90) was the pre-eminent Sevan restaurant in Soviet times, hanging on with its reputation for good sea food in dining rooms facing the lake. Popular with businessmen and family celebrations. Meals typically run 3000-4000 AMD per person for all the trimmings. \$\$\$

Hovek restaurant (104), has a solid menu of seafood and Armenian dishes (khorovats), with typical meals running 2500-2500 AMD \$\$-\$\$\$

There are a number of Beaches with cafes on the Northeast Shore. S These serve everything from simple sandwiches (500 AMD), fries, and popcorn to khorovats, kebab and fish. ee Northeast Shore Beach Map (see below). \$-\$\$

Eastern Shore

Beaches with cafes include *Assa Beach* (116), *Hotel Edem* (119), *Blue Sevan* (120), *Hangestian Goti* (91), *Akhtamar* (124), *Swallow* (127), *Anush* (142), *Shant* (147), and *Livago* (149).

There are a number of Beaches with Cafes on the Eastern Shore. These serve everything from simple sandwiches (500 AMD), fries, and popcorn to khorovats, kebab and fish. See Eastern Shore Beach Map (see below). \$-\$\$

Western Shore

Tsovavard Restaurant, western shore, Norashen, features Armenian food in a boat that has been outfitted into a restaurant. Fish is their specialty. Possible to order individual dishes at 750-1500 AMD each or full meals 2500-4500 AMD for typical meal \$-\$\$\$

Beaches with cafes include *Waveland Beach* (154), and *Three Mermaids Beach* (155). These serve everything from simple sandwiches (500 AMD), fries, and popcorn to khorovats, kebab and fish. See Eastern Shore Beach Map (see below). \$-\$\$

OTHER PRACTICALITIES

Bank, Exchange

ATM, Money wires and credit card advances can be done at banks in Sevan City.



Communications

Some hotels have internal **phones** with an external in the central lobby (pay by minute). Most rely on their cell phones. Both Vivacell and Armentel have clear signals throughout the Sevan lakeshore. **Internet** is not popular at the lake. Harsnaqar and Blue Sevan offer limited internet service for guests, but the rest wait for new infrastructure.

Beach Supplies

Roadside stands and more developed beaches and hotels will have beach supplies, including swim wear, lotion, goggles, snorkels, inflatable rafts. Bring your own sun block; it was impossible to find at the lake.

Film, Batteries

Film can be bought at beach supply stands on the highway or at more developed beaches and hotels. A Kodak shop is in Sevan City, on Nairian opposite the Shuka. Batteries are suspect, bring your own.

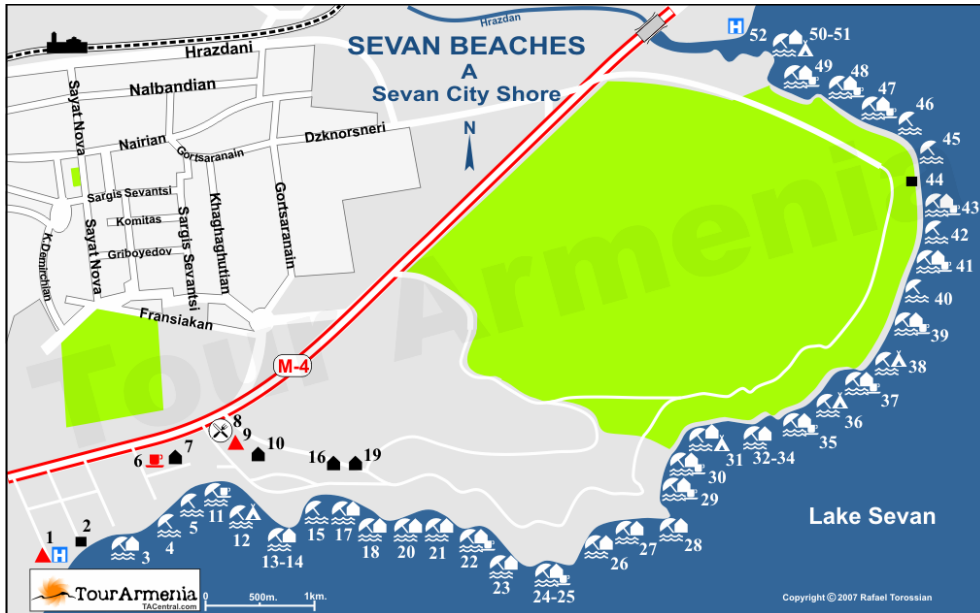
Pharmacy, Clinics

Apotekas (Armenian: deghatuner) can be found in the center of Sevan City on Nairian p.

Clinics are in Sevan City. If you can, go back to Yerevan. Otherwise call 118 for rescue team, or 103 for ambulance.

SEVAN BEACHES

The following maps show locations of beaches on the Northwestern, Central Northern, Peninsula, Northeastern, Eastern and Western Shores.



SEVAN BEACHES MAP A

H S HOTEL, PENSIONAT, SANITORIUM

1. Yacht Club
3. Aragast Rest Area (Hangestian Goti)
52. Harsnaqar Hotel

▲ FOOD & DRINK, KHOROVATS STAND

6. Sevan Café
8. Khorovats Stand
9. Haiyots Odjak Restaurant

BEACH (Café)

4. Beach
5. Beach
11. City beach
14. Beach
15. Beach
32. Beach
40. Beach
42. Beach
45. beach
46. beach

BEACH DOMIKS/COTTAGES (Café)

2. Cottages (under construction)
10. Haiyots Dzor Domiks
13. Beach with domiks
16. Beach with domiks
17. City beach with domiks

18. Iagora Beach / domiks
19. Cottages
20. Beach / domiks
21. Yeter Pensionat Beach / domiks
22. Delphin Beach / domiks (café)
23. Beach / domiks
24. Voyage Beach / domiks (café)
25. Albatros Beach / domiks (café)
26. Hangestian Goti Beach / domiks
27. Hangestian Goti Beach / domiks
28. S. Grigor Lusavorich Camp (private)
29. Nostalgia Beach / domiks (café)
30. Vanatur Beach / domiks (café)
31. Mirage Beach / domiks
33. Laguna Beach / domiks (café)
34. Beach / domiks
35. Hanastavair Beach / domiks (café)
36. Hangestian Goti Beach / domiks
37. Green Huts Beach / domiks (café)
39. Spitak Ap Beach / domiks (café)
41. Drakht Hangestian Goti Beach / domiks (café)
43. Africa Beach / domiks (café)
44. Private Beach
47. Fortuna Beach / domiks (café)
48. Arpi Beach / domiks (café)
49. Zangezur Beach / domiks (café)
51. hangestian Goti Beach / domiks (café)

BEACH WITH CAMPING

12. Beach (camping)
31. Mirage Beach / domiks (camping)

36. Hangestian Goti Beach / domiks (camping)
38. Beach (camping)
50. Loghap beach (camping)

SEVAN BEACHES MAP B

H S HOTEL, PENSIONAT, SANITORIUM

61. Bohemian Resort
63. Gold Beach Beach / domiks (café) / Restaurant
67. Restaurant, Café, Motel
71. Caboose Restaurant, Hotel
73. Government Guest House (private)
74. Ashot Yerkat Hotel

▲ FOOD & DRINK, KHOROVATS STAND

67. Restaurant, Café, Motel
68. Café
71. Caboose Restaurant, Hotel
75. Ashot Yerkat Restaurant
81. Restaurant

BEACH DOMIKS/COTTAGES (Café)

53. "Hangestan Goti" Beach / domiks
54. Vegas Rest Area Beach / domiks (café)
55. Tsamakaberd Beach / domiks (café)
56. Arerik Beach / domiks (café)
57. Jrahars Beach / domiks (café)
58. Victoria Beach / domiks (café)
59. Nirvana Beach / domiks (café)

60. Neptune Beach / domiks (café)
62. Malibu Beach / domiks (café)
63. Gold Beach Beach / domiks (café) / Restaurant
64. Flamingo / Kokakabana Beach / domiks (café)
65. Beach / domiks (café)
70. Beach / domiks (café)
72. Lusabats Beach / domiks (café)
77. Handipum Beach / domiks (café)
78. Tsovarsik Beach / domiks (café)
79. "Hangestan Goti" (Rest Area) Beach / domiks (café)

■ OTHER

66. Swim Shop
69. Vasgen Retreat Center
76. Souvenirs
80. Shop, swimming gear





89. Kovcheg (Tapan) Restaurant
103. Hovek Restaurant

BEACH DOMIKS/ COTTAGES (Café)

82. Sisuan Beach / domiks (café)
84. Beach / domiks (café)
85. Exotic Beach / domiks (café)
86. Drackhtaiyin Ashkhar No-No Beach / domiks (café)
87. Beach / domiks (café)
90. Gagarin Mets Beach / domiks (café)
91. Hangestan Goti Beach / domiks (café)
92. Beach / domiks (café)
93. Beach / domiks (café)
94. Beach / domiks (café)
95. Beach / domiks (café)
96. Beach / domiks (café)
97. Akhtamar Beach / domiks (café)
98. Beach / domiks (café)
99. Ninth Wave "Beach / domiks (café)
100. Papiner Beach / domiks (café)
101. Beach / domiks (café)
104. Karap Beach / domiks (café)
107. Bridge Beach / domiks (café)
108. Beach / domiks (café)
112. Piruz Beach / domiks (café)
113. Voski Avasner Beach / domiks (café)
115. Arevshat Beach / domiks (café)
116. Assa Beach / domiks (café)
117. Beach / domiks (café)
118. Armasp Beach / domiks (café)
119. Hotel Edem Beach / domiks (café)

OTHER

102. Shop
105. Fish
110. Shop

SEVAN BEACHES MAP D

H S HOTEL, PENSIONAT, SANITORIUM

120. Blue Sevan Rest House H
121. EFI (Yerevan Physics Institute) Hangestan Tun H
123. Arevik Sanitarium H148. Medical Institute "Hangestan Tun"

BEACH (Café)

129. Beach
131. Beach

BEACH DOMIKS/COTTAGES (Café)

124. Akhtamar Beach / domiks (café)
125. Raketa Beach / domiks (café)
127. Swallow Beach / domiks (café)
128. Beach / domiks
130. Beach / domiks

BEACH WITH CAMPING

122. Beach, Camping

OTHER

126. RR Station



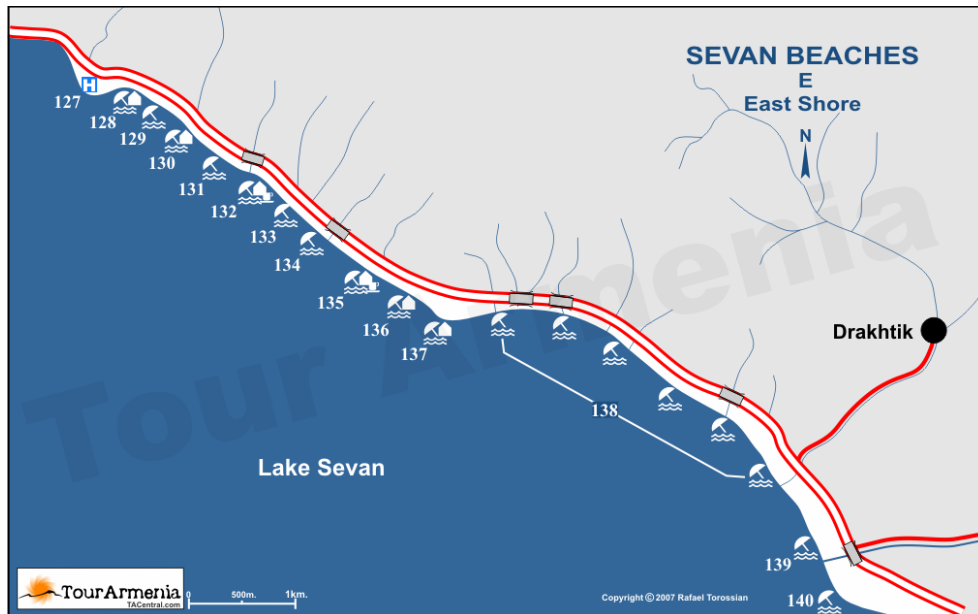
SEVAN BEACHES MAP C

H S HOTEL, PENSIONAT, SANITORIUM

106. Sevan 2 (under construction)
109. Hotel (under construction)
111. Sevan Motel
114. Lazur Pensionat

FOOD & DRINK, KHOROVATS STAND

83. Café / Grill
88. Kovcheg (Tapan) Restaurant



SEVAN BEACHES MAP E

BEACH (Café)

- 133. Beach
- 134. Beach
- 138. Beach
- 139. Beach
- 140. Beach

BEACH DOMIKS/COTTAGES (Café)

- 132. Yeren Beach / domiks (café)
- 135. Zhair Beach / domiks (café)
- 136. Beach / domiks
- 137. Beach / domiks

SEVAN BEACHES MAP F

HOTEL, PENSIONAT, SANITORIUM

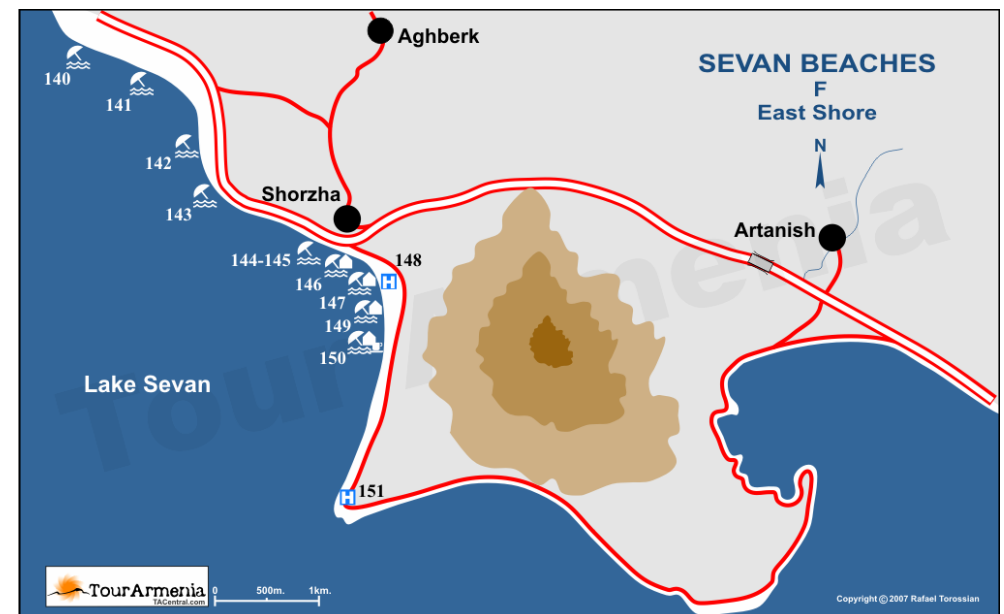
- 151. Artists "Hangestan Tun" (Rest House)
- 152. Tsapatagh Hotel

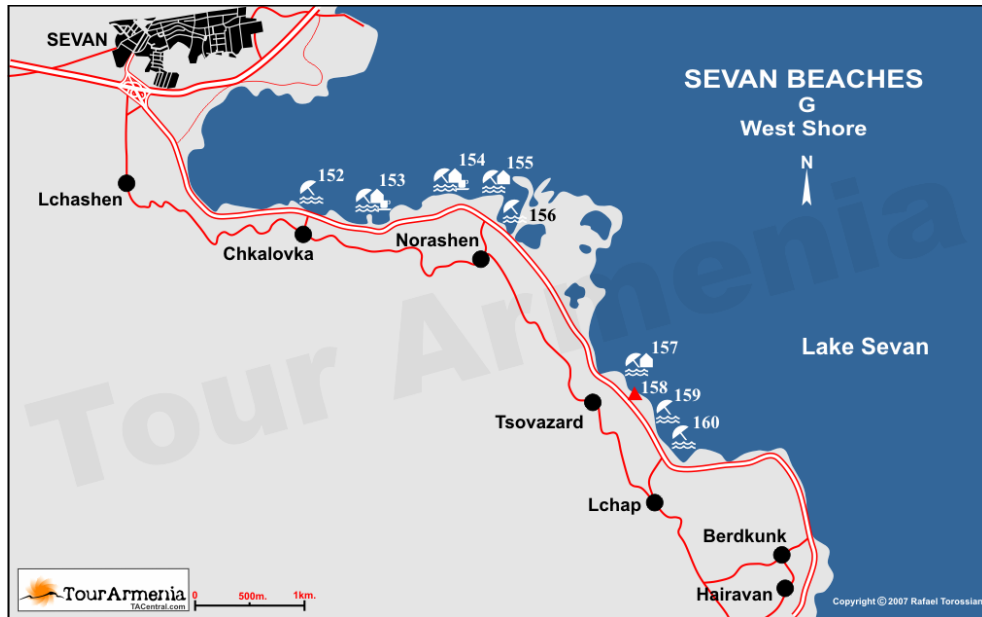
BEACH (Café)

- 141. Beach
- 143. Beach
- 144. Shorza (Beaches)
- 145. Beach


BEACH DOMIKS/COTTAGES (Café)

- 142. Anush Beach / domiks (café)
- 146. Gegham Beach / domiks
- 147. Shant Beach / domiks
- 149. Livago Beach / domiks
- 150. Maiyorca Beach / domiks (café)






SEVAN BEACHES MAP G

-  **FOOD & DRINK, KHOROVATS STAND**
159. Tsovavard Nav (Boat) Restaurant

-  **BEACH (Café)**
153. Chkalovka Beaches
157. Norashen Beaches
160. Beaches
161. Lchap Beaches

-  **BEACH DOMIKS/COTTAGES (Café)**
154. Wave Land Beach / domiks (café)
155. Three Mermaids Beach / domiks (café)
156. Beach / domiks
158. Tsovavard Nav (Boat) Beaches / domiks





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ABOUT THE AUTHORS ▲

Rick Ney (author) first came to Armenia in 1992 to work at the American University of Armenia. In 1993 he began his work in humanitarian aid and development for USAID-funded projects at the Armenian Assembly of America and Fund for Democracy and Development, the latter as Caucasus Region Director. This morphed into writing about Armenia for various publications, which became the first English language complete guide to Armenia in 1996 (online) and 1998 (CD-ROM). It has since become an online resource, visited by more than 24 million unique visitors (www.TACentral.com and www.TourArmenia.info). Rick is passionate about Armenia's deep history, amazing ecology, and making the country accessible for independent travelers, whom he believes will be the basis of Armenia's entry into the open world. In 2000 he began dividing his time between Armenia and caring for a parent in Texas, both of which he considers the richest experiences of his life.

Rafael Torossian (research, maps, and graphics) has been collaborating with Rick on TourArmenia since 1996, providing some much needed reality checks and commentary along the way. In his other life Rafael designs flash sequences, ads, graphics and web sites for TWRI, for a variety of sites and content management projects. In a previous life Rafi was a field and track athlete, setting the All Armenia record (still unbroken) for the 60 meter dash, then as Assistant to the Minister for Sports, serving (surviving) 6 ministers, before meeting Rick, when they worked together on several humanitarian aid projects managed by

the Armenian Assembly of America and Fund for Democracy and Development. In a world where engineers are taxi drivers, Rafi became the finance manager for these projects, creating the first multi-denomination accounting system for USAID projects in the Caucasus, tracking currency that inflated at one time 150% per day. Rafi is an Honored Coach of the Republic of Armenia and lives in Yerevan, a proud Yerevantsi who did not leave during the dark years of 1991-1995.

Bella Karapetian (Editing, Translations, Russian Edition) first met Rick in 1993 when she came to the American University and worked in his office as Faculty services Manager and Special Events Coordinator. There she had the chance to use her remarkable patience and good humor with wide-eyed professors wanting to know where the nearest shopping mall was (God give us patience and a good dose of Pantalgin). She then worked at the World Food Program in Armenia as administrator and Program Officer. In her previous life Bella worked with International architects at ArmStateDesign Institute as an information program assistant and translator. She is currently Executive Director of the NGO Historic Armenian Houses. History and architecture are her true loves and she has traveled to China, Thailand, Malaysia, Italy, Germany, and Lebanon and throughout the former Soviet Union. Bella tops this off by maintaining her membership in the World Esperanto Association. *Saluton!*

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