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IT’S THE MARRIOTT WAY.™
Yerevan (also spelled Erevan, Erivan, Jerewan, Jerevan) is Armenia's capital and the largest city.

Long a backwater in Armenian history the city now weighs in as the economic powerhouse for the country, and its cultural, academic and scientific center, a bustling city of one million busy ‘Yerevantsis’ who always find time for a cup of coffee and to share an anecdote, an opinion about the current events.

The city is more than a capital, it has become the central point of a people, a magnet for the eight million Armenians living outside the country. This has made the city much more cosmopolitan than another city its size; Armenians from Buenos Aires, Marseilles, New Delhi and Moscow can be found next to others from Los Angeles, Australia and Beirut, each with their own unique take on life shaped by their experiences abroad, but all bound by one unifying idea; Armenia.

Long scattered across the globe, Armenians have always brought the ideas and tastes of their new homelands to the old. The result is a sometimes bizarre, often startling, always eclectic mixture of tastes, ideas and art, unified by a shared history of loss and tragedy.

Yerevan embodies this mixture in the houses it builds, the art it shows and the food it serves, with wonderful results. Armenian, Japanese and Armenian food sit side by side with French, Lebanese and pub grub in high-concept restaurants, trendy bars and hole-in-the-wall bistros. Yerevan’s cafes are cafeine palaces, built around fountains and flower beds and manicured lawns. Many have themes (Chalet, Old Rome, Retro 50s, the Stone Age) that defy descriptions. Along side your cup of coffee (still less than $1) is the right to sit and watch the world go by, something few cities offer.

Armenians have so long had to prove their worth in their Diaspora countries they have developed an inordinate amount of talent, much of it on show in the mother city. Artists argue the merits of post modernism and expressionism as they display their work each weekend at Art Vernissage, an outdoor park, while ‘lesser’ handcraft artisans ply their woodwork, jewellery, weaving ceramic ware and embroidery on the other side of town at Old Vernissage, the largest Flea market in the Caucasus. More sophisticated work is displayed at one of a dozen galleries in the city. Actors perform in biting satires and Shakespearian tragedies considered among the best translations of the bard’s plays, while singers and dancers regularly recruited by European theatres perform operas and ballets in the large Opera House.

Medieval music and folk dance is performed year round, and troubadours perform year round in theatres, convert halls and clubs. One of Europe's best chamber orchestras gives concerts each weekend in Ring Park. Jazz, ethnic and rock music plays nightly, while the most respected Tango ensemble outside Armenia seem to always have someone who is a true master, close by.

Interlaced with this internationalism is a totally provincial city that never quite got over its past as a mixture of the two is not always comfortable, while beguiling. Men hold hands to show affection, women entice with their clothes and makeup in almost shocking ways, while babulis (grandmas) dressed in grey and black hold down the family fort enforcing a strict code of ethics and morality.

Highlights
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• Gorge on Armenian khorovats (BBQ) at one of Proshian Street’s legendary khorovats palaces, p. 123
• Visit the Bronze Age, L’chashen and Dvin galleries at the State History Museum, p. 38
• Visit the fresco galleries (7th floor) in the National Art Gallery, p. 53
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• Visit the Yervand Kochar Museum, last studio for one of the world’s great modern artists, p. 55
• Spend a night out clubbing at one of the city’s night spots, p. 89
• Catch a play or film, be spotted at the International Theatre or Golden Apricot Film Festival, p. 87
Yerevan is one of the oldest cities on earth. Excavated caves below the American Embassy revealed Stone Age artifacts from ca. 250,000 BCE, but the city’s history as a continuously settled area probably began around 5000 BCE, at the Bronze Age site in Shengavit district, just south.

Prehistoric Origins Shengavit was extremely important in the development of civilization on the Ararat Valley, and its complex hierarchy within a communal settlement, its unique round house structures grouped into “hives” or clumps of humanity.

The structure illustrates how inhabitants had successfully mastered the basics of survival and had moved into a structure that showed some of the first principles of town planning and house construction. Artifacts from the site include jewelry, female idols, baked-clay statues, a and a furnace for making flint forging instruments. Evidence of horse-breeding was also uncovered, the first of its kind in the Caucasus.

The name “Yerevan” is believed to be a variation of the word Erebuni, corrupted over time to its current pronunciation (which is still in flux given the many spellings and variations used by outsiders).

Urartians also fortified Bronze Age sites at Karmir Blur, Yerablur and hills throughout the Ararat valley. The greatest was at Karmir Blur (also called the Kingdom of Van) to the Kur River in present day Azerbaijan. Excavations at Erebuni have reconstructed the sites, with streets, houses, kitchens and storage rooms built to support the large palace and temple complex at the top. Restorations and excavations have sometimes gone at cross-purposes, making it hard to determine which layers are Urartian and which Achaemenid Persian remodeling of the old fortress. What is clear is this was a large, complex city brimming with life.

Also found were a number of other cuneiform stones, some of which refer to the Sushi Temple, located near the palace. The Sushi Temple is considered a keystone site in Armenian architecture, a crossover design from earlier Pagan periods to the styles that became favored by Armenia’s kings in the later Hellenistic period. The

If you come in the summer (most do), you may find the air thick and unpleasant. It is all due to the construction (Yerevan can pride itself on having the highest per capita use of Natural Gas for fueling its cars). Until construction ends the air will continue to wane between a gorgeous blue after hard rains and winter snows, and a hazy white.

When clear, the amazing contour of Mt. Ararat looms over the entire city, dwarfing the tallest building. It is a tremendous thing of nature, and a melancholy reminder to Yerevantsis. Set inside present day Turkey, for thousands of years a part of historic Armenia and the symbol of the Armenian nation, the mountain is an untouchable dream, caught in glimpses and memories, shrouded in fog. So too, the Yerevan you may find. This is a city always on the brink, always reinventing itself. No matter how close you think you get to its pulse, it is an enigmatic riddle that is its essence, the more unreachable it becomes, like the mountain in white air.

**HISTORY**

Yerevan is one of the oldest cities on earth. Excavated caves below the American Embassy
A backwater relatively speaking in the empire, Erebuni/Yerevan nevertheless led a sophisticated life, with water piped into the city, plumbing and sewage treatment, and frescoed walls with elaborate detailing that was borrowed by Assyria when it built its new capital.

Weakened by the warfare that exhausted both Urartu and Assyria, and under pressure by northern tribes (Scythians), Erebuni was burned to the ground when Scythians (who had made a secret pact with the new Median kingdom) attacked and killed much of the population. This was followed in 585 by their destruction of Teishebaini (Karmir Blur), which had received the survivors of the attack on Erebuni. The Scythian success was short lived, as Media fell to the new Achaemenids (the first Persian Empire), along with the territory around Yerevan.

Prehistoric remains include thousands of artifacts found at the ruins at Shengavit (p.55), Karmir Blur (Teishebaini) (p. 54), unearthed remains at Yerablur, Erebuni (p. 49), and the Hrazdan Gorge (p. 38) with its Urartian canal that has irrigated the valley for nearly 3000 years.

**First Persian Empire** After the fall of Erebuni and Karmir Blur, the area became a satrapy of the Persian Empire, its soldiers serving in the armies of Xerxes and Darius during the Greek wars. Not much is certain of Yerevan’s history for the next few centuries, except that there was a city during the ensuing era. Snatches of information about the area seep into Persian and Greek chronicles while the capital moved to Armavir (4th-3rd cc BCE), Yervandashat (220-20 BCE), Tigranakert (95-55 BCE), Artashat (189-163 BCE), Vagharshapat (ca. 163 BCE – 5th c), Dvin (ca. 428-11th c CE), Baghramian (885), Shirakavan (892), Kars (929-1065) and Ani (961-1045).

During the Orontid era (roughly 4th c BCE-4th c CE), Erebuni’s fortress was rebuilt by Persian Achaemenids, expanding the outer walls and importing Persian gods (ceramic ware, jewelry and Persian idols have been found at the site) while the --- expanded to about 100 ha. The same growth was experienced at Karmir Blur, the two “cities” in constant contact with each other through a later level of settlement at the Shengavit site.

**The Parthians and Rome After Artashes I (the first of the so-called “Parthian kings of Armenia,” named for their relationship by marriage to the Parthians, which rose to power in Persia ca. 247 BCE), established the Artashesian Dynasty (189 – ca. 1 BCE) and moved the capital to Artashat (the “delight of Artaishes”), over Erebuni/Karmir Blur/Shengavit began the slow process of importing a new hybrid culture that borrowed from both the Near Eastern and Greek philosophies and which became thoroughly entrenched by the end of Tigran Mets’ reign, when a new capital that rivaled Rome was built at Tigranakert (ca. 80 BCE).

It is around this time the three settlements would have begun to see an area urban area with three districts, with the space overlooking the Hrazdan gorge becoming a central point of focus, it sitting at the mouth of the river that poured into the Ararat Valley, carrying water and caravans from the northern regions to the “civilized” area downstream. During the reign of Tigran II (the Great), Armenia’s lands grew to their greatest extent, connecting the three great seas (Caspian, Black and Mediterranean), its armies rivaling Persia and Rome for control of the Near East. The Romans crushed Tigran at a series of battles, the latter wisely surrendering to his “big brother” to the west, who made the country a protectorate of Rome and Persia. These “first” caravans had entered the area via Artashat (which had been rebuilt at 165 BC and was still a prominent city) and the now capital at Vagharshapat (163 BCE-5th c CE).

These included a massive construction program to erect temples and shrines to Arshakuni, which became sources of wealth throughout the country, including several spots in present day Yerevan. No coincidence, these Pagan temples became the foundations for Armenia’s first churches, including Yerevan’s “first church” Poghos Petros, a 5th c basilica that was identical in its footprint to its pre-Christian ancestor, along with 4th-5th cc temples at Yerevan’s other churches: Zoravar (between Pushkin/Tumanian), Katoghike (Sayat Nova/Abovian), Ss. Hovhannes in Kond and Nork, Avan Cathedral, S. Hovhannes and Astvatsatsin in Kanaker-Zeytun and the burial ground/shrine at Komitas Park.

Others wait to be found, and no doubt have been found during the intense construction of the New Yerevan in its central heart.

**The Arshakunis** Arshakuni Armenia combined Hellenistic and Persian principles, a process that had begun long before, which reached a kind of fruition with the finalization of Armenia’s gods and their human aspects, as well as the combination of Persian (Assyrian/Urartian) and Greek (Roman) ideas in the depiction of gods, the construction of palaces and temples, and the propagation of its beliefs, which balanced dual claims by its neighboring superpowers. Remarkably, Armenia not only preserved what many to believe were its endemic gods, but succeeded in exporting at least one, Mythra, to the Roman pantheon of gods by the time of conversion.

Persophile views on the origin of Near East gods like Mythra aside, Armenia served as both route and origin for many cultural beliefs (and gods) assimilated by its neighbors. The Armenian temple, seeming to be Greek or Persian by some, has been found to actually have its antecedents in pre Greek and pre Persian periods, in the Armenian heartland. By the now united community of Yerevan served as a transit point for goods and ideas between East and West.

Though Yerevan and Armenia became a protectorate of Persia in 238, Arshakuni kings (still related to Parthian overlords who had been ousted by the new Sassanid or Second Persian Empire) continued to resist assimilation, a task made harder when the Sassanids began a concerted effort to destroy the Parthian House of Armenia and impose Sassanid language, culture and brand of paganism (a more radical form of the Zoroastrianism practiced in Armenia) on the Armenian kingdom, in effect to erase the Armenian culture and subsume it completely into the Sassanid culture. Efforts by the Armenian king Khosrov to resist the Sassanids ended with his assassination by a disgruntled Parthian, whose son, Grigor Lusavorich redeemed by converting Khosrov’s son T’rdat III and the kingdom to Christianity (some time between 301-311 CE).

The change in cities like Yerevan was immediate, as thousand year old shrines and temples were demolished by the armies of T’rdat and Grigor in enforcing of the king’s decree to convert. Judging by their foundations, what must have been substantial temples were torn down to make way for the 4th c basilicas of Poghos Petros, Zoravar,
Sargis and those at Avan and Kanaker. At the turn of the 5th c, the city had 7 or 8 churches, where early manuscripts in the new Armenian script engineered by Mesrop Mashtots. Still no mention of Yerevan per se is made in this period, the focus being on events at Vagharshapat and Artashat, which was abandoned in favor of the new capital at Dvin.

The invasion of Armenia by Huns in 505 damaged the city, which was rebuilt just in time for a second invasion during the disastrous decision by Armenians to align themselves with Emperor Justinian II. This was prompted when a Sassanid governor built a Fire Altar near Yerevan and put to death an influential member of the Mamikonian family, leading to the murder of the governor and his retinue in 571.

The revolt was suppressed by the Sassanid King Khosrov I, who declared amnesty for Armenians returning to the empire. However, the city recovered under Khosrov I and his successor Hormizd IV, who took advantage of civil war in Byzantium to invade the Greek empire, coming close to restoring the old Sassanid boundaries, laying a siege against Constantinople. The Byzantines, led by the (Armenian) emperor Heraclius regrouped and pushed the Sassanids back, the ensuing war exhausting both empires. By the time of the Arab invasions, Yerevan was part of an Armenia that had become an autonomous entity within the Sassanid Empire no longer able to protect its own borders.

The Arabs The city was taken during the Arab conquest of Armenia in 658, and it is in this period that the name "Yerevan" became attached to the burgeoning town. Still a second city (Dvin remained the major city on the Ararat valley through the 11th c), its importance was nonetheless noted as the last guard post on the route leading from the East to Persia, and the Arab Caliphate. The Arabs at first wrought havoc on the local population, forcing many to convert, but resistance by armies under Teodor Rushtuni forced the Arabs to make compact with the Armenians. Under Rushtuni and his successor Hamazasp Mamikonian Armenia and Yerevan experienced prosperity.

Several enlightened caliphs tolerated the Christians (one of the "Peoples of the Book") and brought peace to the kingdom for the first time in 500 years. Arabs allowed Armenians a great deal of autonomy in return for the payment of taxes and their submission to Arab authority. As a result the initial Arab period saw wealth and growth in the region, the city receiving the first of its several mosques and noticeable expansion outside its fortress walls. The mid Arab period though, was marked by a brutal suppression of nakharar attempts to assert independence, in addition to intolerance of Christian subjects by the first Shiite caliph. Revolts in the 740s and 770s were brutally crushed, and the extinction of a number of royal families occurred.

Yerevan was pillaged and sections burned, given archeological evidence, while many were exiled to the Arab caliphate in Iraq. Finally, after particularly brutal attempts to subjugate the Armenians in 850 caused a major uprising, which, along with attacks by a resurgent Byzantium forced the Caliph to grant autonomy to Armenia, appointing Asot I the Great governor with the title, "Prince of Princes." This began the Bagratuni Dynasty, establishing the new city of Ani as capital. Yerevan continued, but as much less important city, while Dvin continued as a trade center, maintaining ties with the Caliphs who continued to have governors in the city. Ashot I became King of the Gugark-Lori kingdom in 885, his sovereignty recognized by both Caliph Mutamid and the Armenian Emperor of Byzantium Basil I. The success of the Bagratunis was in their mastery of a game playing Byzantium off of the Caliphate, as their ancestors did between Rome and Persia. Yerevan's part in this game was minimal, at least according to the chronicles. It was still subject to Arab control, which in the next decades threatened to topple the fledging Bagratuni kingdom.

Bagraturi Era The next significant event to occur was in 920, when Ashot II son of Smbat Bagratuni, recovered Yerevan and the surrounding area as part of the kingdom with the help of Byzantium. Yerevan remained in Bagratuni hands through the 10th c. Yerevan was a part of the kingdom of Yohan-Smbat that was secretly given to the Byzantines in 1023, the same time it was pillaged by the first wave of invading Seljuks. In 1041, when the king died, the Byzantine Emperor Mikhail V laid claim to the lands in the secret pact, taking Ani, Yerevan and the Ararat Valley for his own. Beaten back in his siege of Ani, the Byzantines did nothing to avert the second wave of Seljuk attacks, which took Yerevan and camped on the banks of the Hrazdan (Zanki) River at the mouth of the gorge. The Seljuks were vicious fighters, destroying all in their wake, and they showed little mercy. Yerevan was burned, along with Dvin. Gagik II Bagratuni repelled the Seljuk invasion from entering Ani, and a second attack was
In the 15th c Yerevan’s importance grew again as Iskander, the leader of Turkic tribes known as the Shah-Armen (King of Armenia). His brother and successor Jihan-Shah rebuilt Yerevan. The years 1437-1467 saw Yerevan’s importance grow as a provincial capital of the region, which included Azerbaijan, Van, Airarat and Georgia. This is the official beginning of Yerevan as a capital city, of the Airarat Region. The city continued as provincial capital in the succeeding reign of the town, the Ottoman Turks, who, after invading Anatolia from Central Asia three hundred years before, captured Constantinople in 1453 and consolidated their empire by moving eastward.

Mongols and Timurids The glories were short lived as Yerevan fell to invasion by Jalal-al-Adin in 1225, whose armies of Turkmen and Kipchuk mercenaries pillaged the countryside, burning orchards and crops and initiating a period of famine in Armenia, so weakening the country that when the Mongol Hordes invaded in 1236, there was no organized resistance.

The Mongols, after an initial period of pillage, became tolerant governors, respecting the Christians and promoting Armenians into their own ranks. Yerevan was designated the administrative center of the Ilkhanate (one of the four divisions of the Mongol Empire ca. 1256-1388). This event can be called Yerevan’s first moment as “Maim Kaghak” (Mother City or capital), though there was no longer a unified country to be capital of. The Mongols did establish a mint in the city, which continued during later Ottoman and Safavid eras.

Ottoman-Safavid Wars Because to its strategic significance (a fortress considered impregnable by even the Timurids), Yerevan was constantly fought over and passed back and forth between the new Safavid Persians (Shiites) and the Ottomans (Sunnis). At the height of the Turkish-Persian wars, the city changed hands fourteen times between 1513 and 1737. In 1514, the city and surrounding countryside were laid waste by the retreating Shah Ismael I in defense of the oncoming Ottomans.

In 1585 hostilities broke out again, between Shah Abbas I of Persia and the Ottoman Sultan Murad III, Abbas forced to surrender large portions of his kingdom, including Yerevan. Murad’s general Lala Mustafa had all the boys and girls of Yerevan taken to the ottoman empire, while his successor, Ferhad Pasha, rebuilt the fortress with material brought in from the ruins of Yerevan’s churches, some of which he himself had destroyed.

Persian Period The Persian period saw growth for Yerevan and the country, though Moslem population remained the majority. During Safavid rule, Yerevan was a part of the Chukhursaad (Irevan) Beglerbekte (province). The noted French adventurer, writer and jeweler for King Charles II visited Yerevan on this 4 year journey of Persia and the Orient (English: The Travels of Sir John Chardin in Persia and the Orient).

His visit was just before the devastating 1679 earthquake, which completely ruined the city and villages and churches throughout the Airarat plain. The earthquake was so bad it toppled every church in the city and ruined entire districts of the city, as well as monasteries and villages throughout the entire region. In the face of war, earthquake and more famine, Armenians struggled to maintain their identity in their own country, and secretly plotted a way to regain independence, at one time sending emissaries to Peter the Great, who began Russia’s involvement in the Caucasus with an expedition in 1722 that ended at Durband when he signed a treaty with Persia. Yerevan was again invaded by Ottomans during the 1722-1729 Turko-Persian war, Yerevan taken by Turkey in 1727,
only to revert back to Persia in 1729. Still another war broke out in 1743, with Yerevan changing hands back and forth yet again. In 1747 Yerevan became the capital of the Yerevan khanate, a district of a reorganized Persian Empire trying to come to grips with its dwindling power. One of the relics of the Persian era is the neighborhood of Kond (p. 38), a mostly Armenians neighborhood in Persian Yerevan set on a hill in the center of town. Kond was presided over by the Geghamaian family of Meliks, its winding alleys and mud-brick houses the last remaining section of the old city.

Imperial Russian Period

The Russians finally entered the scene permanently during the reign of Catherine the Great, who sent her troops against the Persians in 1797, sweeping through the northern Caucasus and Georgia, stopping just shy of the Ararat Plain and Yerevan. In the Treaty of Gulistan, signed in 1813, Persia renounced in favor of Russia all claims over much of its Caucasus region, save the Ararat plain and Yerevan. Yerevan was finally occupied by Russian troops led by Ivan Paskevich on October 1, 1827, during the second Russo-Persian war. It was formally ceded to Russia in the Turkmanchai Treaty of 1828. When they occupied the city, the Russians found a dusty settlement of exactly 1,736 single story mud-brick houses, 851 shops, 10 baths, 8 mosques, 6 churches, 7 caravanserais and 6 public squares set within gardens enclosed with mud-brick walls. The once impregnable fortress was designated for the Russian garrison, the governor and his staff housed in the Persian governor palace.

One of the first acts of the Russians was in tribute to the visiting dignitary Alexander Griboyedov, who had forged the treaty of Turkmanchai, including a clause guaranteeing the right of Armenians in Persian and Turkish lands to emigrate to Russian Armenia. Griboyedov is best known for his play "Woe from Wit" still hugely popular in Russian Theatre. Banned by Tsarist censors, Griboyedov saw only one performance of his satire, in 1827 in the Shah’s palace in the Yerevan fortress, performed by officers of the garrison that had just taken the city. Yerevan was designated the capital of the "Erivan Uyezd" or Another act was to convert the fortress mosque into a church, and to encourage the Armenian population to return. After 1200 years the tradition of building a central courtyard in the back of a house was kept in even the finest European homes, though they might be outfitted against the last remaining section of the old city.

Yerevan became the capital of the new Armenian Republic on May 28, 1918, as hundreds of thousands of refugees poured into the town seeking refuge. Schools, gymnasiums, courtyards and church yards became refugee camps overnight, the town strained to accommodate the sudden influx.
and the Bolsheviks, Yerevan surrendered to the Red Army on November 29, 1920. Though nationalist forces retook the city in February 1921, it once again fell (this time permanently) to Soviet forces on April 2, 1921. The reasons are many and most of them true, but perhaps overriding everything was the fact the country was too poor and too full of desperate refugees to cope with both the needs of its citizens and the political world around it.

Yerevan became the capital of the newly formed Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, one of the fifteen republics of the Soviet Union. To say the Soviets transformed Yerevan into a full fledged city is too easy a statement and we may never understand just how dramatic a change the city experienced. Other cities of the Soviet Union were changed by Soviets, which introduced the first plumbing, the first electricity, the first schools, hospitals and clinics, and the first modern housing they had. Yerevan witnessed this plus a complete re-alignment of its entire plan. Not only capital of political Armenia, Yerevan became the education, science, research, cultural and medical capital of the country.

Of all the capitals in the Soviet Union, none changed as much or forever as Yerevan, all due to the work of one man, an accomplished but otherwise unremarkable neoclassic architect who found his calling with the Soviets. Alexander Tamanian saw a city where there was a refugee camp, without central water (or sewerage treatment), paved streets, or enough clinics to treat the population. His city plan was approved in 1924 and in less than 10 years he forever changed the face of the city, demolishing mud-brick tenements along with some of Yerevan’s religious icons (the church is still angling to get it all back) to create a thoroughly modern city of grand avenues, large spacious squares, several circles of greenery and parks and Armenia’s first modern housing, university, colleges, schools, theatres, art galleries, museums, clinics and hospitals.

Tamanian’s plan, 1924

Among his monuments are Republic Square (which follows his general plan but has only one building of his own design, the Finance Ministry building on the NE side), the huge Opera, completed under direction of this son and colleagues, and which opened with a performance of Almasi in the still unfinished open-air site on a cold December day in 1933. One of the most interesting was his first, the city’s first Hydroelectric Station in the Hrazdan Gorge (still there and still working).

Tamanian’s plan remained in effect throughout the Soviet Era, buildings gradually added as the budget allowed. Its many features which can still be seen today are the general layout of the center, the Ring Park, Republic and Opera Squares, Cascade, the East-West Boulevard (Vernissage and Post Office building park), and North-South parks from Opera to the Gorge (Shahumian and Miasnikian parks). A new addition that follows the architect’s plan but otherwise has nothing to do with his intent are the steel and glass high rises going up on Northern Avenue, connecting the back end of Republic Square with Opera. The promenade will complete an important piece of the architect’s plan, but the design has little to do with his Armenian Monumentalism, or Neoclassic Armenian style. Many love this fact.

The city quickly grew beyond its original intent for 150-200,000 citizens, incorporating the nearby communities of Nork, Arabkir, Kanaker and Avan into the metropolis that by 1950 had officially reached one million people, allowing it to receive funding from Moscow for a Subway system, the single line Metro you find today. Before then, the city witnessed a number of political struggles that added to its Soviet character, beginning with Stalin’s 1937 purge of the intelligentsia, claiming a number artists and writers (“Yeghishe Charents and Yervand Kochar prominent among them), forcing others to renounce or refocus their work into less controversial subjects.

The Great Patriotic War saw the only population dip in Soviet times, with native sons fighting at Stalingrad and elsewhere. German POWs were used to continue construction work, their contribution to the construction boom that followed the war still an unwritten chapter.

The city was graced in 1950 with a huge monument to Stalin, his Roman patrician attitude at odds with his ruthless nature. No sooner had he died in 1953 but the statue disappeared overnight, sent toppling to the ground by soldiers recruited for the act, in a city suddenly plunged into darkness to prevent potential witnesses from seeing the ignominious end to the dictator’s image. One soldier died during the act, prompting locals to whisper that ‘even dead Stalin takes his victims’.

The second, most important event of the Soviet Era as far as contemporary Yerevan is concerned, was the 1965 riots in Yerevan by locals trying to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Genocide. Unrecognized by the Soviets, the genocide was a festering wound for locals that, while it arguably was the underlying reason the city grew so much so fast (survivors throwing themselves into building the New Armenia the Soviets promised) and drew so many Diaspora Armenians to the motherland post WWII, no one could speak of it openly, or even acknowledge its existence.

While international commemorations were underway, a small group of Yerevan citizens (“Yerevantsis”) marched to Opera Square, soon followed by hundreds of thousands in a 24 hour protest (the first in post Stalin USSR) demanding...
The late 1970s began a period of malaise in the Soviet Union, the Brezhnev years of corruption and indifference to the Soviet Union. While some of Yerevan’s most important structures were raised in this time (Cascade, the now demolished Youth Palace or “Kukaruz,” named for its corncob appearance), others began to crumble, accelerated in the 1980s as people focused on the black market, Soviet Shops no longer carrying goods. One of the richest cities in the Soviet Union, people were unable to spend their money; stocks were depleted. It was not uncommon to travel to Moscow simply to buy bread or meat.

By the 1988 Yerevan officially had 1.2 million citizens, surpassing the one million needed to build the Metro which opened in 1981. Public demonstrations started anew, led by a committee of Armenian Independence who tried to arouse public support, starting with meetings to close down the Metsamor Nuclear Reactor after the Chernobyl meltdown in Ukraine. The reactor was shuttered and public sentiment grew with demonstrations to liberate Nagorno Karabakh from Azerbaijani rule. When 300 Armenians were murdered in Sumgait by Azerbaijani Nationalists in the same year, the meetings swelled, with over one million people pouring into the streets at one point.

The 1988 Spitak Earthquake, which destroyed new Giumri, parts of Vanadzor and the entire Spitak area, did not physically damage Yerevan, but caring for 500,000 victims of the earthquake that lost their homes, as well as the thousands of refugees from Karabakh that started to pour into the capital to escape violence there strained the city to its limits, which snapped when fighting collapsed in the wake of the Soviet Union’s end, immediately making redundant millions of Armenians.

Recognition of the 1915 genocide. In response, the Soviets allowed the first monument to the Genocide to be built in its history, at Tsitsernakaberd, in 1968, the same year the city celebrated its “founding” 2750 years before at the newly excavated citadel at Erbuni (at least one archeologist has rumbled the only reason that then 4000 BCE Shengavit was not chosen as the founding city was the Soviet insistence no republic could have a history older than Russia’s).

The 60s-70s were the golden years for Soviet Yerevan as Tamanian’s plans were gradually realized and public spaces grew at a great rate, with some of the most interesting modernist designs in the USSR. The models for these projects, some on display at the Architecture and urban Living Museum at Vernissage have a dynamic dimension their resulting buildings could not hold; as with architects in the west, Soviet Armenian architects rarely design for people, but for an idea, and the resulting design rarely lasts long after its opening, clashing with the reality of human activity. Just compare pictures of these 1960s jewels against their current states to understand what I mean.

1988 Demonstrations

Azerbaijan and Turkey closed their borders with Armenia, refusing shipments of fuel and humanitarian aid to pass through to Armenia. Azerbaijanians in Georgia began to blow up the remaining oil and gas pipelines into the country, plunging the city into darkness and without means of heat during some of the coldest winters on record. US funded aid and the opening of the border with Iran broke the blockade (which is still ion effect), though rationed water and infrequent blackouts are still experienced in parts of the city.

Armenia’s continued reliance on Russian support has prevented anything worse coming from Turkey or Azerbaijan, and Armenian fighters routed Azeris in a decisive battle in 1995, bring a truce to the fight, though no resolution to date, both sides insisting on their version of the border. As this was unfolding, the economy of the country collapsed in the wake of the Soviet Union’s end, immediately making redundant millions of Armenians.

The economy, indeed better than it was 10 years ago, is still inadequate for the needs of the city and its population. One statistic may explain it best; the government and the World Bank recently gloved over their findings that the unemployment rate had dropped significantly (due to World Bank policies and government diligence). They left out their base employment rate, which was larger than the number of people now in the country. Would it could be so easy.

ECOLOGY, CLIMATE

Yerevan is located at the meeting of the Hrazdan River and the Ararat Valley, a high altitude plateau of semi-desert character that requires irrigation much of the year. Covering 210 square km of space, the city is its own district, bordering (clockwise from the south) Ararat, Armvir, Aragatsotn and Kotayk marz.

The official population of 3.45 million shrunk immediately, as up to half left in search of work in Russia, Europe and the USA, with Moscow receiving the lion share of the new émigrés. Yerevan experienced the same plunge in its population, but recovered at the expense of cities and villages throughout Armenia, emptied of people seeking work in the country’s capital. While officially the government admits it has lost just 200,000 people (Yerevan gaining 100,000), government and international agencies quietly refute those figures, claiming the country may have no more than 2 million in total, with around a million in Yerevan.

Russian census figures show the Armenian population grew by 1 million in the same period, a discrepancy local official decline to comment on. Russia’s president Putin has mentioned this anomaly, claiming in a meeting with Armenia’s Pres. Kochcharian that there were so many Armenians in Russia that he was in fact the president of Armenia.

Whatever the actual count, Yerevan has received substantial investment from outside Armenians, first among them Russian Armenians, who are fueling the recent frenzy in construction, turning the city into one big construction zone of high rise apartment buildings and shopping centers.

No one knows who is buying these properties (developers boast the apartments/condos cost $100-200k), locals speculating buyers are Russian, Persian and Lebanese Armenians buying a “home in the homeland” for summer vacations. Others say it is just a question of money laundering by the mafia. Whatever. Buildings are suspiciously empty when finished, leading some to worry a bubble is about to burst. Film at eleven.

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especially showy in the canyon, and a small grove of plane trees grow in the canyon.

Calling the city a semi-desert capital is a misnomer, no matter how accurate the description can be. In one of the driest regions in the world, Yerevan is also gifted by being placed near snow-covered mountains and over one of the largest aquifers in the Near East. Poorly managed, the city still is one of the greenest cities you will find in the Near East, with tree lined streets, long stretches of green parks and flower beds, and a small forest inside the river gorge.

Cold snowy winters give to a short spring and a long hot summer that is made bearable by its desert air and cool nights, and by being so close to Armenia’s mountain regions. Yerevan is just 45 minutes from the summer resort at Lake Sevan and the winter ski area at Tsaghkadzor. In an hour you can reach half of the country’s regions, with Giumri only 90 minutes away.

Yerevan’s climate is mostly dry, experiencing two rainy seasons; May-June and November-December. Early spring is the greenest time of the year, in autumn un-irrigated land is parched. The weather is mostly pleasant, its dry (humidity 5-12%) air allowing even the hottest days to have cool evenings. Winters are cold and snowy, but no more so than in European cities.

WHEN? ▲

When to come to Yerevan pretty much depends on where you want to go outside the city. The surrounding mountains and marz have completely different seasons from the capital city. While it can be balmy and green in Yerevan it will still be ice-bound in the mountains. Since most use Yerevan as a base point for trips outside the city, consider those seasons before choosing a time to come.

Visiting in spring has the added plus of seeing Armenia’s wild flowers burst into color, especially the magnificent displays of poppies in the Hrazdan Canyon and on the hills in Sari Tagh (where the TV antenna stands). Nearby mountains are brimming with wildflowers, including rare and endemic varieties of Iris, Tulip and gladiolas.

And I have yet to find out exactly what “continental” weather means, except weather on a continent, which covers, oh, 100% of the world’s cities, all of which lie somewhere on a ... continent.

Yerevan’s weather is not as severe as the Soviet’s wrote (Moscow is terribly cold and worse hot), though democratically speaking, it can be unpleasant at times, except for one Tuesday through Saturday in May, when Yerevan has its spring, and nature sparkles an emerald green punctuated by crowds of red tulips and yellow forsythia. In fact, spring is longer, but no more than a couple of weeks, it remains the best time of the year for me, as everything seems to come alive at once; the trees, the flowers, the cafés.

Each year is a little different, but from about mid April to the first/second week of May the spring rains begin to abate and the weather gets noticeably warmer, the trees come fully into bloom. Then there is that short, magnificent period of one-to-two weeks of real spring, with warm days (18-20) and cool nights (15-16).

It is a time, when everything sprouts green from all the rain, even the rocks grow moss, and you begin to think you are perhaps in Ireland and not a semi-desert region of the Near East. Then ‘mi angamits’ (all at once), you wake up and it is a hot summer’s day, with highs topping at 30-33 but lows still a comfortable 16-20. Spring rains continue of an don until June, when they level off, and though it can be hot, it is no worse than Los Angeles in the same time.
Those who can take off for Sevan or Lori, escaping than Albuquerque in May, rarely topping out higher than 40 (104 F). But almost as soon as the worst heat begins, it ends, with the blessing of the grapes and a concurrent drop in temperatures, with a second drop around September 15.

Summer is the best time to visit the high elevations and the forests of Lori and Siunik. While it is sweltering in Yerevan, the mountains are just getting into spring and it can still freeze at night on top of Aragats. Even 20 km uphill from Yerevan will bring a dramatic drop in temperature. The same goes in Yerevan, in the Hrazdan Gorge, which is cooled by the natural effect of the river mists and the canopy of trees.

For many the best time to visit is Autumn—September to October—an extended period of warm days and cool nights. The harvest is in full swing, grapes and figs are cheap and plentiful (the high harvest begins around June 15 and lasts through September). With cooler days, it is easier to visit sites in the Ararat valley, and autumn rains in the mountains create a second greening in certain spots.

Winter in Yerevan begins late; while the ski season at the nearby resort in Tsaghkadzor begins in November, the first snows in Yerevan may not come until the end of December. Snowy, cold, Yerevan's charm turns inward in the winter, as theatres, concert halls, ballets and exhibitions go into high season, and cafes go indoors. Winters are long, lasting through "gizh Mart" (Crazy March), which can have winter, spring and summer in a single day. In April the cycle begins anew, as greens hit the shuka, along with early tarragon, mushroom and wild asparagus.


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Your hotel can provide at least basic information, and will steer you to the most popular spots (though if you ask for a restaurant at a hotel that specializes in business travelers you may end up in a place full of suits). Ani Hotel (19 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 58-95-00, fax 56-53-43, email: info@anihotel.com, URL: www.anihotel.com) is very helpful with information about the city through Sidon Travel (tel. 52-29-67) in its lobby, which can also book in-country tours along with its airfare. The same is true at Europe Hotel, which works with Sabera Tours (32-38 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 52-55-55, email: info@sabateratours.am, URL: www.sabateratours.am).

Tour services specialize in small group or individual tours, and can give you information about the country and traveling independently. Among the most popular are Satı Tours (21 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-10-22, 53-11-20, 53-99-00, email: sati@arminco.com, armenia@satiglobal.com, URL: www.satiglobal.com) and Hyur Services (50 Nalbandian p, tel. 58-04-95, 52-24-14, email: contact@hyurservice.com, URL: www.hyurservice.com) which also can locate a B&B or apartment stay along with hotel reservations.

Travel Agencies that give advice and book tours include Levon Travel (10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, 52-52-84, 58-31-93, email: klm@arminco.com, sales@levontravel.am, URL: www.levontravel.com), the largest agency in Yerevan.

Print Information Guides
Yerevan Guide & TouristInfo Guides are free periodicals with basic maps of the city marked with advertiser locations. Basically existing to sell advertising (hotels charge to have them placed for distribution) with light and sometime incorrect information, but good enough for most tourists. You can find these at larger hotels, restaurants, ArtBridge and The Club, and at the Armenia Tourist Information Office on Nalbandian (Republic Square).

Navigating the City

Yerevan is easy to navigate. Most of the places you will want to visit are in the center, a circle of streets that can be crossed at its farthest points in 20-30 minutes by foot. Most point to point walks in center are 15 minutes or less.

The main street is Mashtots Avenue (Mashtots pta.) which runs from the Echmiadzin Highway (Zvartnots Highway) to the Matenadaran. It intersects with all major west-east streets in center as well as the circle streets. Here you will find (from south) the Blue Mosque, Main Shuka, Museum of Contemporary Art, Yeghishe Charents Museum, Artist Vernissage, Medical College and Charents pts.

A parallel street is Miasnikian pta, which begins as Mkhitar Heratsi at Koriun p. and runs NE to Avan (5th c. Katoghikeh) and Masiv (Garni road) districts before turning into Acharian and the Tbilisi/Sevan Hwy at the Northern Bus Station. Miasnikian passes the Zoo, Botanical Gardens, Water World, Park and Green Palace Hotels.

Tsisternakaberd is reached by Kevian pta (north main entrance) or on its back side via the Hrazdan Gorge Bridge (Haghtanak or Victory Bridge) and Athens p. which skirts the large Hrazdan Stadium.

Isahakian pta (the Echmiadzin Hwy) leads W to Shengavit and Malatia-Sebastia Districts, passing by the Main Bus Station, the American Embassy, Lake Yerevan (Shengavit Excavation), Karmir Blur (excavation and museum) and Year Blur (military cemetery).

Outlying areas are reached by Metro, Bus, Minivan ("Marshnuti Taxi") or taxi within 10-30 minutes from center. See Around, p. 109

DISTRICTS

Yerevan's districts are made of its neighborhoods and a recent invention, which can cause confusion in asking locals directions. Like the marz, there were many more of them pre-Soviet crash, all run by zheks, local offices in charge of managing neighborhood issues and collecting fees. These were regrouped into twelve large districts ("hamaiynk," "shrjan," or "raiyon" in Armenian-Russian speak) which did not make them any more efficient to judge by the potholes, but has at least modified the count. Old timers will still refer to local neighborhoods, which can wreak havoc on your directional senses. When possible I repeat the old names here, many of which are named after communities in western Armenia deserted by refugees of the genocide, commemorating the old place by naming district in its honor. The word "Nor" (new) is sure clue of this.

CENTER

Center is made up the original city, and is its smallest area. Built on a (relatively) level plain overlooking the Hrazdan River and Ararat to the south, the district is rung by a semicircle of hills on the other sides. Its best view is from above the massive Cascade steps, taking the escalator to the top steps, then going on to Monument platform, from where the entire south of the city stretches out to the Ararat Plain.

This of course depends on the exchange rate when you arrive. The same hotels were reasonably priced 3 years ago before the Central Bank started inflating the value of the dram (thank you IMF for wrecking another developing country).

NORK MARASH

Nork lies on the immediate northeastern hills, its houses and gardens overlooking the center. Once connected by a funicular (since closed), this district of private houses, villas and walled gardens is now best reached by minivan or taxi (10 minutes from center). A hodgepodge of rich and not-so-rich, the neighborhood has distinct charms and is blessed by its high altitude with cooler weather than center (a decided + in summer).

Nork has breathtaking views of the city and Mt. Ararat, and still maintains its neighborhood feel, despite the new rich that are popping up with their extravagant villas.

Hotels here are more interesting than in center, with the retro-modern Arma & Regineh Hotels (swimming pool) and the traditional luxury style Tufenkian Avan-Villa at the top end, rounded out with the exquisite, moderately priced Villa de Roses and the friendly, low rent Hotel Nairi (5000 AMD for DBL).

OUTER DISTRICTS

Outlying districts spiral from center, beginning on the west with Malatia-Sebastia.

MALATIA-SEBASTIA

Due west of Kentron is Malatia-Sebastia, nicknamed "Bangladesh" by locals for its far-out location. Its 4 and 5 story apartment buildings are stacked top of each other, ending at the north with failed attempts to build 20 story towers. Unlike Masiv or Malatia, these have more green space and trees lining the streets. The district is reached via Kevian pta from Barekamutin, just across the Kevian Bridge and north of Tsisternakaberd (Hamalir Sports and Concert Center).

Malatia-Sebastia is one of the first suburbs to be incorporated into the city. Its 4 and 5 story apartment buildings are stacked on top of each other, ending at the north with failed attempts to build 20 story towers. Unlike Masiv or Malatia, these have more green space and trees lining the streets. The district is reached via Kevian pta from Barekamutin, just across the Kevian Bridge and north of Tsisternakaberd (Hamalir Sports and Concert Center).

Ajapniak is bordered to the east by the Hrazdan Gorge, a good walking/jogging trail that gradually deepens as it courses north. On the west it is the end of the city skyline, with new housing developments grabbing the rocky landscape.

Ajapniak is made of 15th Block, Lukashen, Norashen and Nazarbekian neighborhoods.

The district's main streets run north-south; Halabian (east side) and Leninakan (west side). Halabian travels through the heart of the district, passing Tumanian Park, one of Yerevan's two great Bowling Alleys (no kidding) and Republic Hospital, Yerevan's largest, with several adjoining specialty centers and clinics. At the hospital's SE corner
there is a bus stop (Buzhakan, Yeghvard, Zovuni, Mrqashen). Halabian ends at the Yeghvard Hwy.

Leninakan begins at Leningradian in the south, turning into Shiraz and Gevorg Chaush before meeting the Ashrarak Hwy at the north end of the district.

**DAVTASHEN**

Davtashen, NE of Ajapniak and northwest of Arabkir, is Yerevan’s smallest district and its newest, made from Davtashen 1st-4th Blocks and the Davtashen neighborhood.

The district is reached via the Davtashen Bridge from Arabkir (Vagharsh Vagharshian p) and the Yeghvard Hwy from Ajapniak. A sort of bedroom community, the district was built to house workers for nearby factories, now defunct.

**ARABKIR**

Due north of center is Arabkir, reached by Marshall Baghramian (Barekamutun) and Azatutian ptas. Arabkir is a classic working class neighborhood, the first real suburb of Yerevan, with rows of low level apartment buildings, shops and stores on their first floors and a number of research centers. It is here you begin to feel the real pulse of the city, less refined than the pretensions of grandeur in the center, but no less vital. People “down there” are what most see when they come to Yerevan; people up here are the construction crews, cleaners, office staff and engineers that make the downtown miracle possible.

Arabkir is made up of Nor Arabkir, built in the 1940s-50s, and the private houses at Aigedzor overlooking the Hrazdan Gorge.

People in the know come to Arabkir for its large discounted goods, though its once legendary parks have long been neglected, save one, the huge and popular Hghtanak (Victory) park across from Monument (Azatutian pta.). The park is actually in the southernmost tip of Kanaker-Zeitun, but is reached via Arabkir. It has spacious grounds, a large manmade lake with paddleboats and the largest amusement park in Yerevan, right under the careful watch of the towering Mother Armenia statue (a.k.a. “Mama Armenian”).

Arabkir has the largest supermarkets and several good CD/trinket shops (Barekamutun) and the Golden Tulip “5 star” hotel (the current choice of Armenia’s oligarchs), set inside the park. Around the corner is the more laid back Arevik Motel/Restaurant, worn at the edges but cheaper and surrounded by greenery.

**KANAKER-ZEITUN**

Kanaker-Zeitun is made from the old village of Kanaker (north) and Nor Zeitun, settled by survivors of the genocide from the Western Armenian district of the same name in Anatolia. It is reached via Azatutian pta off of Abovian Square (west border) or Mkhitar Heratsi/Miasnikian pta off of Korin (east border).

Kanaker-Zeitun is the equally old Avan, its walled garden historic center a mass of winding alleys and stone houses interlaced with 4th, 5th and 6th cc churches (the Avan Cathedral is considered one of the seminal religious structures in Armenia). Avan is reached via Miasnikian pta. (Sevan Hwy) from Korin, which turns into Acharian pta in the northern part of the district.

Avan also has the Botanical Gardens (snow white rows of spirea in May) and Masiv, an extraordinary neighborhood of 1970s-1980s high rise apartments stretching to the eastern foothills of the city. Masiv is at once one of the ugliest and most beautiful areas of the city, teeming with life from the engineers, doctors, lawyers, teachers and other professionals living side-by-side with construction workers, shop keepers and villagers just moving in from the outlying provinces.

**AVAN**

Just east of Kanaker is the equally old Avan, its walled garden historic center a mass of winding alleys and stone houses interlaced with 4th, 5th and 6th cc churches (the Avan Cathedral is considered one of the seminal religious structures in Armenia). Avan is reached via Miasnikian pta. (Sevan Hwy) from Korin, which turns into Acharian pta in the northern part of the district.

**NUBARASHEN**

If Malatia-Sebastia is called Bangladesh for its distance from center, Nubarashen could well be called outer Africa for being so far away. Built to house Diaspora émigrés and as a way to segregate them from the rest of the city, the small community of high rise apartment blocks sticks out of the fetid marshlands near Masis, a sweltering place to live in the summer. Émigrés stuck here came because of post WWII promises of a better life rebuilding the motherland, bringing their furniture, cars and appliances with them. They then found they were caught in a situation worse than they had before, their passports confiscated with no chance of return, stuck in miserable mosquito-infested swampmland far from the center of town. Suspects in their newly adopted countries, these heroes of the motherland endured hard lives and ostracism form a local population afraid to make contact. Almost all left when they were finally allowed to leave in the 1970s.

The district is 26 km from the center of Yerevan, reached via the M15 Ring Hwy that bypasses Yerevan and connects the Artashat Hwy with the Sevan Hwy in the north.

Nor Nork has a large central park with the beautiful, new S. Grigor Lusavorich church overlooking the Ararat Valley. Otherwise apartment blocks, shops and a few cafes.

You pass through Nor Nork on the way to Garni-Geghard, and at the first suburb, J'rvesh, there are a number of clean, affordable hotels and motels, attached to restaurants and rented by 4 or 24 hours, at your discretion. By taxi 20 minutes to center.
EREBUNI
Erebuni is Yerevan’s longest district, adjoining and due south of Center, via Tigran Mets pta which turns into Artsakh pta below the Central train Station before joining the Artashat Hwy at the very end of the city. The district begins in the north at the rail bridge, Tigran Mets passing the Train Station (trains to Georgia, Giumri, Vanadzor and the Ararat Valley, minibuses to Alaverdi, Artik, Bagratsashen, Goris, Giumri, Kapan, Sissian, Vanadzor) before connecting with Erebuni p that leads past the Bulgarian Embassy on its way to Erebuni Square, at the foot of Erebuni Museum and excavation.

One of the early suburbs of Yerevan, Erebuni is a combination of hilltop residences and valley floor apartment blocks, of old village neighborhoods, 1930s "Stalin Shenks" (Stalin Buildings, so called because they were built during his early reign, and are considered the best-made of all Soviet buildings) plus 1950s-70s apartment blocks, factories and offices. Tigran Mets/Artsakh pta has some of the best Soviet Monumental designs in the city, and is a wide avenue that once boasted a great Tram system (recently torn down). The population is a mix of working class, professional and village émigrés, a lively mixture of ideas and cultures that add to its colorful character.

Erebuni is made of Sari Tagh, Nor Aresh, Vardashen and Erebuni neighborhoods.

SHENGAVIT
This southwest district adjoins Erebuni on the east, Malatia-Sebastia to the northwest and Center at its far north end. It is reached by Center via Arshakuniats pta, from Erebuni via Garegin Nzhdeh pta off of Artsakh pta, and from Malatia-Sebastia via Isahakian (Echmiadzin Hwy) by taking the Bagratuniats Pta.

Shengavit is one of the largest districts in Yerevan, and like Erebuni, one of the early ones to be built. Also like Erebuni, it is a lively mix of new and old, of working class and professionals living side by side. The district is anchored by Garegin Nzhdeh Square, one of the prettiest in the city, with a Metro station and the Metro Theatre in the lower courtyard of fountains (the square has a bus stop with buses and minibuses to Masis).

At its northernmost end, the district has Komitas Park, fenced in with impressive 1930s wrought iron, its N corner housing Armenia’s Pantheon, where many of Armenia’s most famous artists, writers and actors are buried, their graves topped with impressive monuments that are artworks in themselves.

At its southernmost end is Armenia International Airport, known by locals by its old name, Erebuni Airport. The airport is used by military craft and the occasional civil flight to regions (government and oligarch).

At its westernmost point, on Isahakian, the district has the American Embassy, Lake Yerevan (site of a 250,000 BCE settlement), and on its eastern shores the 5000 BCE Shengavit Excavation, probably birthplace of the city. Not far away, further west and off of Artashesian and Shirak pts, is the excavation and museum for the Urartian city of Teishebaini at Karmir Blur.
and one block east to rejoin Mashtots and the Matenadaran, then back to Isahakian and east one block to join the Ring Park Walking Tour for two blocks to join the Abovian Walking Tour back to Republic Square. This half-full day walk takes in historic areas and major sights for a full day (breaks for lunch and coffee) visit of the heart of the city (about 5.5 km).

Another that will be possible once Northern Avenue is completed will start with the Tour, detouring to Ring Park west to Mashtots (Matenadaran), back down to and west on Isahakian p. to Cascade/Monument, down to Opera and Northern Avenue and back to Abovian and Republic Square (about 6 km).

Still another combines urban Mashtots Walking Tour with a more natural Hrazdan Gorge Walking Tour (5-10 km). Mix and match as you go for your own walking tour.

Note Museums, theatres and concert halls covered in the walking tours are detailed in their separate sections and indicated with their respective page number; statues and monuments are covered in detail as part of the tour.

Background Throughout its history, Abovian has been a living picture of Yerevan, a place where friends meet to stroll under shade trees or sip coffee at sidewalk cafés, where shops vie for tourists and “Novii Armenii” customers, and where a tattered old man once walked among the crowds handing out flowers to young girls.

Originally called “Berdi Poghots” (“Fortress St.”), the street began at the Hrazdan gorge below the old Turkish fortress, and led through town to Nork, at that time a village on the northern hills. For most its life the street was a dirt road that was the city’s one commercial street. Beginning in 1860, the region’s Governor General, a Russian named Astafiev, commissioned the first Master Plan for the city. Drawing on the rising wealth of his citizens, Astafieva envisioned a city carved out of the surrounding hills with graceful boulevards and tree lined streets.

Astafieva’s plan included the demolition of buildings along Berdi Poghots, widening it to a then unheard of 8 meters, and installing a new horse-drawn trolley line. Large mansions commissioned by architects trained in Moscow and St. Petersburg began to line the new Prospect which was renamed Astafian. Though a Russian, the populace of Yerevan knew him as Astafian, and so they named the street.

Asi Movseshian St. became a grand promenade, including plans for a Cathedral at the site where the current History Museum is located. The church was never built, but the street soon became its most fashionable quarter. The most wealthy and influential citizens in Yerevan lived along this prospect and its adjoining side streets. It boasted several European shops, including rival Aram Ter-Avatikian’s French Emporium and Yegor
Memories of a Lost Time

What remains of that world, an "Armenian Belle Époque," are a handful of buildings dating back to the 1870's. From 1870 up to World War I, two master architects took possession of Astafian Street through their work. Those who could afford it commissioned V. Mirzorian and B. Meghrabian to construct ever more imposing mansions. Whether by design or gentleman’s agreement, the architects built their signature works on opposite sides of the street, and in only one instance did they combine their work, at the Gabrielian mansion (ca. 1910).

Walking along the street is like walking in an outdoor museum. On one side of the street are the ‘modern’ architectural designs favored by Meghrabian, with their Art Nouveau flourishes on balconies, windows and doors. Like the Nouveau masterpieces in Paris, the fluid stone and metal details add grace to otherwise solemn structures. As opposed to Meghrabian’s carved elegance, Mirzorian gave his Neo-Classic buildings lightness through color, contrasting red with black tuff. Taken as a whole, these buildings successfully combined the Art Nouveau style then the rage in Paris with Arabic details and Armenian influences. One of the best features of Old Abovian Street cannot be seen from the street side. The old buildings enclose hidden courtyards where trees, gardens and fountains used to form mini oasis from the outside world.

Beginning in the 1920’s, Alexander Tamanian and his colleagues transformed the character of Yerevan from a regional town to a major metropolis, building ever more imposing structures along the way. The massive designs favored by Tamanian are meant to impress the viewer through sheer volume. They are perhaps more correctly called edifices. In contrast, the more personal buildings in the old sector impress through their graceful curves and simple elegance, the way they defy gravity while staying rooted in the ground. They impress through their details.

Memories of a Lost Time

Abovian reflects the essence of each period of Yerevan’s growth, whether in the turn-of-the-century mansions between Republic Square and Hotel Yerevan, in the Art Deco buildings and signs that flow up to Ishakian Street, even in the substantial Socialist structures scattered between. The street has also managed to preserve its character through the memories held by residents and visitors of times long past, and the buildings they belong to.

I was lucky to meet pensioner Grigor Torossian on one of my explorations of Old Abovian, and he told me a story about one of the buildings on Old Abovian, No. 2, the current Philharmonic Hall, built in 1880 to house a boy’s gymnasium (French style school). “If it wasn’t for that building,” he said, pointing to the front doors, “I wouldn’t be here.” During the 1915-19 genocide, the building was converted into an orphanage for girls. “My mother was an orphan, she stayed there as well.” Torossian remembered as he looked on the richly detailed building. "She lost one sister when they escaped from Van, and her mother died in Yerevan. My father first saw her on that balcony. That’s where they fell in love.” Torossian said that when the orphanage arranged for her to immigrate to America, his father took her from the orphanage and they married. “It was just like Romeo and Juliet, he won her heart standing under the balcony.”

Following Tamanian’s master plan the street was widened to 16 meters above Tumanian St., and trees were planted along the boulevard. The new buildings were designed to make a careful transition from the old quarter to the new, so that the casual visitor is well inside either part before he realizes there has been a change.

Lately the street has become the symbol of a new struggle over the city’s soul, some of its most historic buildings demolished to make way for the structures lining the new Northern Avenue. Several significant structures, in good condition, have been knocked down to make way for the poured cement buildings being hailed as the face of a new Yerevan.

Suspiciously looked on by locals, their investment, and tenants, are all tightly held secrets fed into the gossip grist mill with tales of money laundering, forced purchases by local mafia, rich foreign Armenians buying to have a piece of the homeland (but never showing up to claim their property), etc., etc., etc. What is clear is that the new structures continue to go up, they are somehow invested, and they remain mostly empty after construction. For historic Abovian, the results are disastrous; the number of old buildings being cut from over 100 to a just handful.

Walking Tour

Note: (numbers) denote position on the map.

MAP A The tour follows Old Abovian (or Astafian) Street and begins at the corner of the Noy Brandy and Wine Factory and Haghtanak Bridge, behind the petrol station. Look down into the Hrazdan River Gorge, just below the massive Wine Trust. The Street originally led from here through the center to Nork. A few stone foundations from the 19th c remain, clinging to the cliff walls. Crossing the river are the remains of the 1679 Karmir Karmuch (1), once the only link across the Hrazdan River to Echmiadzin. Built in the 13th century, the old structure collapsed in the 1679 earthquake and was immediately rebuilt by Persian authorities. It was called both Karmir Karmuch ("Red Bridge", due to its red tufa) and Khejra Plaiv, after the donor. The "new" 1679 bridge was 80 m long, 11 meters high. There were originally four arches; under the two central arches ran the Hrazdan River, under the two smaller ran two canals, one of which was the thousands of years old irrigation canal that was extended by the Urartians and came to be known as the Umeshini Canal.

The Hrazdan Canyon has been the life-blood for the city from its beginning. The original city lay along both rims of the canyon and in the area immediately around the old fortress (Noy Brandy-Metropolis, building ever more imposing structures on opposite sides of the street, and in only one instance did they combine their work, at the Gabrielian mansion (ca. 1910).
The fortress is known as the place of rebirth of Armenia’s theatre; in 1828, while visiting the governor during his negotiations with the Persians on the Treaty of Turkmanchai, Alexander Griboedov saw the premiere and only production of his play, “Woe from Wit” during his lifetime. The fortress fell into gradual disrepair as its use as a defensive point became obsolete and imperial forces billeted there required better housing elsewhere. By 1864 the fortress compound was in such bad shape it was decided to demolish the structure and move the soldiers into newer barracks in the then neighboring village of Kanaker (now a part of the city). St. Pokrov was demolished at the end of the century when the grander St. Nikolai opened in central Yerevan.

Miasnikian Statue (4), an imposing structure with typical Soviet force and weight, one of the few left over from the Communist period (1980, sculptor Ara Shiraz). Alexander Miasnikian (1886-1925) joined the Bolsheviks in 1904, was elected to the Central Executive Committee of Belarus in 1919, then became commissar of Armenia in 1921. He was reported killed in an air-crash, but rumors suggest he was poisoned after a protracted disagreement over Western Armenia with Stalin. Yerevan citizens are divided between demolishing statues like this, remnants of the Soviet Era, or preserving a few as reminders of the past. Others look on them purely as aesthetic representations of artistic achievement, and are loathe to tear any down simply because they are a part of the cultural heritage, regardless their political content.

Behind the Miasnikian monument is the Tonino Guerra rose garden, planned to feature fountains designed by the Italian playwright and poet. On the left (W) is the Children’s Park, with a statue to the aviator Nelson Stepastian, a hero of the Great patriotic War. It also has one of the nicest, most laid back cafes in Yerevan (Grigor Lusavorich poghots end), and several kiddy rides.

In the 19th c, the park was part of the Old Shuka, an open air market shut down in the 1920s when the shuka was moved to Mashtots pta, and enclosed. On the opposite corner (E) is the French embassy which faces Grigor Lusavorich p.

The large black Noy Armenian Brandy (2) (ca. 1936) is located where the old Yerevan fortress sat. It is a large building in the same shape as the original fortress, slightly smaller than the original fortress that covered 7 hectares of land. A plaque on the wall mentions the early fortress, which included a palace for the Persian governor, military barracks and a mosque.

After its capture by Russian forces in 1827, a neoclassic Russian church (St. Pokrov) was built to replace the mosque, and the palace was used first as governor offices and residence, then deserted as the Russians built neoclassic offices elsewhere.

The walls of the brandy-wine factory enclose a central courtyard with a fountain. The factory gives tours that include wine & brandy tasting and visits to the underground cellars, vaulted in the medieval style.

Continue north, taking the street to the right (E) of METROPOL HOTEL. At this point Old Abovian is called Koh hurdaran (Parliament) p, and separates into two streets divided by grass and flower beds. Take the left (W) side (same as Metropol) past the offices for VivaCell to the large building with the clock tower, the Mayor’s Office and Yerevan History Museum (3). The museum is located on the south end of the building, on the 2nd-4th floors (open Mon-Fri, 10-5, free). For details see Museums: Yerevan History Museum p. 57.

The street lining the Children’s park follows Old Abovian’ route, and is called Beirut p (once Shahumian p.) and in the 19th c it was lined with shops and homes. That on the other side was recently added and is called Italian Street (6).

The next intersection is Grigor Lusavorich p. Cross it and make your way to the large monument facing the street, the Alexander Miasnikian Statue (4), an imposing structure with typical Soviet force and weight, one of the few left over from the Communist period (1980, sculptor Ara Shiraz). Alexander Miasnikian (1886-1925) joined the Bolsheviks in 1904, was elected to the Central Executive Committee of Belarus in 1919, then became commissar of Armenia in 1921. He was reported killed in an air-crash, but rumors suggest he was poisoned after a protracted disagreement over Western Armenia with Stalin. Yerevan citizens are divided between demolishing statues like this, remnants of the Soviet Era, or preserving a few as reminders of the past. Others look on them purely as aesthetic representations of artistic achievement, and are loathe to tear any down simply because they are a part of the cultural heritage, regardless their political content.

In the park there is a central fountain, flower beds and a couple of statues; “Pepo” erected in honor of a character in the comedy of the same name by Gabriel Sundukian (1825-1912), considered the father of Armenian realistic drama, and a bust of the author himself. The central lane of the park leads to the Sundukian Drama Theatre (7), which was one of Armenia’s cultural jewels until the demise of the Soviet Empire.

The Sundukian hosted some of the most gifted actors in the Western theatre, performing classical and modern repertoire. The theatre opened on January 25, 1922 with the comedy “Pepo” play was so popular it ran for more than a thousand performances. The current building was completed in 1966 (architect R. Alaverdian). The fortress is known as the place of rebirth of Armenia’s theatre; in 1828, while visiting the governor during his negotiations with the Persians on the Treaty of Turkmanchai, Alexander Griboedov saw the premiere and only production of his play, “Woe from Wit” during his lifetime. The fortress fell into gradual disrepair as its use as a defensive point became obsolete and imperial forces billeted there required better housing elsewhere. By 1864 the fortress compound was in such bad shape it was decided to demolish the structure and move the soldiers into newer barracks in the then neighboring village of Kanaker (now a part of the city). St. Pokrov was demolished at the end of the century when the grander St. Nikolai opened in central Yerevan.

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The intersecting street is Khorenatsi (still called Marx Street by people of a certain age, and once Shuka p.), which above the park forms a small plaza. Facing the plaza is the Memorial to Stepan Shahumian (9) (Sculptor S. Merkurov), a more graceful monument than the Miasnikian statue, dedicated to Lenin’s comrade and leader of the Bolshevik movement in the Caucasus (one of the 26 commissars killed in 1917).

The Monument and square stand where St. Nikolai Russian Orthodox Church once stood, torn down to make way for the Yerevan master plan. See St. Nikolai Russian Church (p. 83).

Behind the Shahumian monument is Shahumian Park (10) and a 1968 block-long fountain with 2,750 fountain heads, one for each year of Yerevan’s history til then. The fountain was built to commemorate the founding of Yerevan in 782 BCE, and the opening the Erebuni Excavation and museum. Once considered Yerevan’s birthplace, Erebuni has recently given way to the chalcolithic settlement at Shengavit, focus of recent excavations that date its earlier incarnations to ca. 4000 BCE. Both affirm Yerevan’s position as one of the oldest cities in the world.

The Central Bank, Ardashininvest and Armimpex banks are on the right; the Ministry of Justice and State Prosecutor on the left, along with a couple of BISTROS, including a LEBANESE BISTRO. Both streets lining the park are called Vazgen Sargsian p, named for an oligarch and Defense Minister murdered in Parliament in 1999. Controversial from the beginning of his tenure, locals are divided over his place in history as a despot or as a strong leader who was killed before he could implement programs to help the country. Discussion of his life can still lead to fist fights. The park has a couple of CAFES that are favorite haunts of locals, green oasis right next to Republic Square. They are also rarely full, an enigma considering they are much more comfortable than the MEETING POINT CAFE in front of the Marriott, just around the corner. Of course, the Marriott Café is place designed to be seen in, not to sit and enjoy.

Also on the left is the Paronian Musical Comedy Theatre (11), next to a branch of the Theatre survives on broad satires and Armenian comedies, much of which is lost on non-Armenian speakers, the word play being the gist of most of the humor. Very popular with Novi Armenii. See Entertainment: Theatres for details p. 94.

Republic Square is the center of Yerevan for government offices (the real heart of the city is at Opera Plaza). It was once called Lenin Square, for a huge Lenin Statue (13) on the S end of the square, since torn down. The statue was removed in 1991, and the pedestal in late 1996, replaced first with a stretch of grass, then a large metal girder cross (universally revolved by locals for its poor design and construction), then another stretch of grass, then an electronic billboard and now grass and flower bed. The next erection is anyone’s guess. Now completely demolished, the enormous statue (1940, sculptor S. Merkurov) was cut into pieces with his head and arms ending up in the State History Museum courtyard until it suddenly disappeared in 1996 (some say sold to a New York dealer, Vassilii’s head adorning a disco in Queens).

The statue was considered one of the best examples of Soviet Art, though few protested when it was torn down. However the gorgeous multi-colored marble pedestal’s demolition was vociferously protested against, widely regarded as one of the best stone sculptures in the Soviet Union, despite its subject. On a side note, the statue was also the stuff of local lore, locals delighting in secretly pointing out that, seen in a certain way, the statue of Lenin looked sexually aroused while looking off to the distant statue of Stalin, whose massive effigy stood on top of the Northern Hills, where Mother Armenia now stands.

Tamanian’s square includes five imposing structures, built between the 1920’s and 1950’s: the Post Office (14) (1950) on the right has a striking stained glass window behind the postal counter, a café, and limited postal service. You can still buy kitsch postcards at the counter and send them off for a 4 week jaunt. Unreliable.

The government building with the clock tower (17) (1926-1940) was built under Tamanian’s supervision. The building combines classical lines with Armenian details in the capitals and along the top frieze. The sheer mass of the building is lightened through brown and cream colored tufa stone.

To your upper left is a government building/Ministry of Foreign Affairs (15), with the popular Noyan Tapan bookstore (maps, postcards and calendars) on ground level.
Directly across the square from Shahumian Park are the State History Museum and National Art Museums (16) (1926-1950). The white facade and colonnade is a pure symmetrical design. The lower levels house the History Museum (open Tues-Sat 10-4, 500 AMD) with the largest prehistoric and Asia Minor collection of artifacts in the world. Galleries include significant Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age collections, including a good interpretative gallery of the meaning of the Afterlife in prehistoric Armenia, and artifacts uncovered from the lake bed when Lake Sevan’s water table dropped in the 1950s. Galleries devoted to the early Christian and Medieval periods are exhaustive but poorly marked, with little interpretive presentation. If you visit (and you should), see Museums: State History Museum (p. 42).

On the right side of the street are examples of V. Mirzorian’s architecture, on the left those by B. Meghriabian.

The first is Mirzorian’s 1880 Boy’s Gymnasium (19), now the Babajanian Philharmonic Hall at No. 2, Abovian. The red and black Neo Classical building is part of the site where Astafieva planned the Katoghike church, and is pure Mirzorian.

No. 1, Abovian p. (20) is a row of three Meghriabian buildings across the street, commissioned by Aram Ter-Avetikian between 1900 and 1914, that once housed a thriving trade business on the first floor, with family residences above. The gate into the middle structure yard gives but a glimpse of the central courtyards that once anchored each building on the street. Oasis of greenery, the yards had carriage houses, fountains and outdoor spaces for family members and friends to meet in the hot days of summer, has been rebuilt to include an upper story, carefully preserving the original design. During WW I, Ter-Avetikian gave the building to the Red Cross to use as a clinic. No. 1 has a Treasures of Armenia Shop with high end souvenirs and couture.

The brothel is located one long block up Arami, past the Georgian Embassy and right in front of a beautiful corner 1900 Meghriabian style building with a protruding round tower second floor, then half way up that block. The brothel is on the left, a large 19th century building with gorgeous carvings of animals, nymphs and the 19th c version of advertising of the kinds of pleasures to be found inside.

The cause of much controversy when it first occurred, the government used a special law to condemn the area as a “strategic national interest” allowing them to pay pennies on the actual value of the property they seized (in some cases evicting tenants with no pay), in order to erect the cement and glass structures with $200,000 price tag apartments. A few stalwarts hang on, supposedly to anchor what authorities promise will be a newly constructed historic area for souvenir shops and tourists, based on the old buildings. As each new tower goes up, it is hard to believe their promises.
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Cross Arami p. and at the next corner is the old 1950s Detski Mir Department Store, its current renovation stopped when the investor was arrested for tax evasion (oops!). On the first floor are several CD shops and cafés worth investigating; MARCO POLO (great coffee, great indoor space in winter), SQUARE ONE (expensive American fare, but excellent Onion Rings) and DISC LAND (every pirated CD on earth). Across the street are a row of 1870s buildings (21) due for demolition to make way for a large plaza that will anchor Northern Avenue. Their graceful lines and old wooden balconies are the last of their kind in the old city. At the S corner is the good but pricy FRENCH CAFÉ.

On release Karabala's life went into a downward spiral, his wife and son deserting him and his beloved rose bushes uprooted. With no family or means of income, Karapet took to the streets, wandering the streets giving out flowers he found in gutters, and muttering 'I am no longer Karabala, I am "Dardi bala" ("suffering soul")'. Legend says after her death, he placed a red rose on Arus Voskanian's grave each day for the remainder of his life. Karabala was found frozen to death on the street. Locals still love this romantically smitten figure, while authorities try to shunt his memory away, repeatedly moving his statue out of public view until protests force them to return it to the street.

Commissioned by the brothers Grigor and Barseg Yeghiazarian in the 1880's, the two buildings on the right (23, 24) have strong Mirzian Neo-classic details. The door on the building marked #8 is an 1890 original. Both buildings were used by the Central Soviet Committee and Comsomol as their offices beginning in 1937, a large red star set in the top arch of the corner building. The star has been removed, but its faded outline can still be seen in the masonry, until current renovations erase it from memory. Across is the site for Meghrabian's masterpiece and one of the most prized buildings in Yerevan, the 1910 Gabrielian Mansion (25), combining Classical and Nouveau details. The building was destroyed and being replaced with a hulking piece of stone and glass. The building was pulled down without the current city architect's knowledge or permission.

In front of one of the SHOPS is the movable 1991 Karabala statue (22) by Levon Tokmajian. Karabala is a curious fixture of 1930's Yerevan, a prison mate of Charents and subject of one of his few surviving prison poems. In better times Karabala (a nickname meaning "dark baby"; his real name was "Karapet" though his surname, like his birth and death dates, are unknown) grew and sold roses, handing them out to pretty girls who passed by. He was especially smitten with the Armenian actress Arus Voskanian, who walked each day from her theatre to his stand, where he gave her a single red rose. The story goes that a jealous Turk tried to kill Karabala, stabbing him with a knife. Karabala pulled the knife out of his wound and used it to kill his assailant, which landed him in the same prison as the Socialist poet Yeghishe Charents. Among the few poems saved from Charents' prison writings is one about Karabala, his "Flower Man":

He puts on a mackintosh
And then suddenly tatters.
I didn't know if he is an Artist or Karabala, who is growing flowers.

The next crossroads is Pushkin p. Turn R down what seems an alley, to one of Yerevan's eating institutions, Dolmama (10 Pushkin p, tel. 56-89-31; 56-13-54), which advertising reads, "food est. 800 BC". The restaurant combines traditional and nouveau cuisine in a small, pleasant atmosphere. Expensive but worth it.

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Just past and on the right in the basement of the large building is the Avantgarde Folk and Jazz Club (34A Pushkin Street, tel. 56-14-97, email: ara@ara.am, URL: www.ara.am), one of the spots to hear eclectic music in Armenia. Their schedule is posted outside the entry. The next square (at Nalbandian) is Sakharov Square, with a bust of the writer and dissident Andrei Sakharov (2000, sculptor T. Arzumanian) in the center of a small bed of roses. Sakharov was a famous dissident in the Soviet Union, persecuted for his views against the Communist government. Following mass murders of Armenians in Sumgait, Azerbaijan, and using his position in the Academy of Sciences at the 19th Party Congress in 1988, Sakharov spoke out in favor of Armenian independence in Karabakh.

Go back to Abovian and continue forward to explore west Pushkin p, now a mass of cranes that make up the heart of the New Yerevan tenement towers, and a second route to the Astafian Brothel House (turn left at the second block. When construction is finished, Pushkin will connect you to Mashtots pta, via a lovely tree-lined street.

Backtrack to Abovian, turn North to continue the tour.
Next door at No. 3 is the Hovhannessian Mansion (29). Built between 1915 and 1916, Meghrabian designed the large building to house a hospital on the ground floor. In 1920 the building was used as a tropical diseases clinic, and now houses the Armenian Society for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

Among the distinctive features of the building are the large stained glass arabesque windows, incorporating a Star of David design in the framework. Though faded and worn, the extensive use of wooden trim is a rare find in Yerevan. OUAX, an association for International friendship and offices for the local branch of Esperanto Society are in the building. It’s worth a visit to the Society’s offices to see the interior of the building, since it has kept much of its original design. Frequent exhibitions are held in the building.

Across the street at 3/1 is the Khanzatian Mansion (28), designed by both Meghrabian and Mirzorian. The red tufa building housed the Saxon Import Store on the ground level. Like other owners on Abovian, when the builders laid the foundation, Khanzatian placed money between the stones for good fortune and a strong building. The pink with white trim building next door (27) dates from the same period and is the last of its kind in Yerevan.

The hotel faces the Charles Aznavour (nee Kino Moscow) Plaza (31) with its Zodiac fountains, built on the site of a 17th c Persian Mosque and the 19th c Poghos Petros basilica in the 1920s. Opposite the square from Hotel Yerevan is the 1933 Kino Moscow (32), designed by T. Yerkanian & G. Kochar, which serves up first run films dubbed in Russian (and 150 AMD popcorn)!

The frieze on the facade (covered by posters) quotes Lenin’s famous saying “In culture, the best art is film.” Opposite is the Russian Stanislavski Theatre (33), one of Yerevan’s cultural “hot spots” with comedies, dramas and popular entertainment. See Entertainment: Theatres p. 93.

MAP C
The next intersection is Tumanian p. Turn R at Tumanian and in 100 meter on the R you will see the entrance to the 1968 outdoor theatre for Kino Mosva (Kino Moscow), which hosts shows occasional films and concerts (architects S. Khanzatian, T. Gevorkian). Continue to the next block (Nalbandian p) and in the R corner building there is a home museum for Alexander Spendiarian, composer and founder of Armenia’s classical music movement. The museum has posters and artifacts of the premier of his landmark opera “Almast” as well as personal belongings and an enthusiastic staff thrilled to share his life with you (21 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-12-99, 58-07-83, open Tues-Sun, 11-4:30, 300 AMD, guided tour 1500 AMD).

Tumanian to Sayat Nova
Starting at Tumanian p, Abovian widens to a boulevard with ample sidewalk space and tree shade. The white facade buildings all date from the 1940’s. The winding green space on the sidewalk is populated by some ceramic figures (artist Hrachia Simonian) and a number of shops and outdoor cafés.

The next cross street is Sayat Nova pta. Across Sayat Nova on the left corner is the 12th c Astvatsatsin Complex (37), once behind the Language Institute, which is being dismantled to expose the tiny church and give space to rebuild the monastery that once stood there. The monastery was demolished in 1936 to clear the area for Tumanian’s master plan (boulevard and the neoclassic language institute building). Legend has it the workmen were able to demolish all but the sacristy of the basilica: the stone work was so strong their sledge hammers broke as they tried to pound through the walls.

They realized that the sacristy was actually a separate 13th c church, and historians descended on the site to excavate the area. Already simmering over the destruction of churches in the country, locals poured out in protest against an obviously historic place. The authorities relented, boarding up the church and building around it. A partial restoration of the sacristy was done in 1996 and the church reopened as a chapel. The current controversy is over the destruction of the Linguistics building to make way not just for the 13th c chapel, but to build a Yerevan residence for
the Katolikos, something that could have been built anywhere. Locals suspect the church is angling to regain all the lands it lost in communist times, even to the point of evicting its flock. See Churches: Astvatsatsin p. 76.

Sayat Nova to Abovian Square

To your right on Sayat Nova pta is HOTEL ANI. Continue north where further up the street on the left is CAFÉ DE PARIS (38), while the right side has RED L’ORANGE BAR, DISC WORLD (a megastore for pirated CDs), CENTRAL CAFE and THOMAS TEA. On your right there are three buildings of interest: No. 28, No. 30 and No. 32 (I and II). The three were built in the 1930’s to house artists and intellectuals, preserving the cultural character of the street. Monuments and plaques in front of the building commemorate famous residents.

The street was long planned for, a part of Tamanian’s original redesign of Yerevan, connecting Abovian with Opera Square and Monument on a North-South axis. The controversy erupted when residents of the old neighborhood were evicted without payment, or with payment so low they have not been able to find suitable housing elsewhere in the city. Meanwhile, developers have built the towering stone and glass structures that line the avenue and surrounding streets, housing offices, shops, a few eateries and basement discos as well as upper floor apartments. The place is already the stuff of urban legends, locals speaking of curses thrown on the new buildings and the government pressuring people into buying apartments to satisfy Russian investors, none of which can be confirmed.

While many decry the loss of Yerevan’s history to rampant growth, just as many marvel at the face of “New Yerevan,” and proudly point to otherwise exceptional architecture (the street looks like an office park), as proof of Armenia’s revival. No doubt this will be a hot topic of argument for many years to come. Architects foolishly left out

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MAP A

Start by going up the first two blocks of Abovian p (see Abovian Walking tour, above), then turning left at the new plaza that leads into Northern Avenue (1). The Avenue ("poghota") has been carved from a warren of historic neighborhoods that were the heart of the old city, and is the most controversial building program the government has embarked on.

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greenery and shade for the hot, dusty central plaza, making this a place to walk through to get to the other side in hot weather.

First intersection is **Tumanian p**., with cafes, bistro's and restaurants lining the sidewalk. More expensive places are to the left, cheap eats to the right (Sharma, Khinkali).

**Opera Square (2)** is across the street, with the large gray Opera building (3) run by trees and a large asphault plaza. The building houses the Alexander Spendiaryan National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet and Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall—simply called Opera by locals. The monumental building was designed by the early Soviet city planner Alexander Tamanian and some say his best work.

The building went through several versions before the current was settled on, the most interesting being the Palace of the Soviets, the base of a huge 50 story statue to Socialist Progress. Alas, funds intervened and the current structure was erected beginning in the 1930s, and completed under the direction of his son after his death. Though I would never call it beautiful (it is best at night when architectural lighting soften the harsh features) the design, inspired in part on the design of Zvartnots cathedral near Echmiadzin, won a gold medal at the Paris International Exhibition of 1936.

The building hosts performances by the State Opera and ballet companies (schedules are posted at the ticket office across from Opera at the corner of Tumanian and Mashtots), and the National Symphony (ticket booth outside the Sayat Nova/Place do France entrance), and a host of popular concerts and performances by classical, folk and pop musicians, singers and dancers, as well as special events (chess matches, celebrations, readings, etc.). Watch for events on the large fence billboards on the Tumanian p. and Mashtots pta sides of Opera Park. For more information about the Opera and Ballet theatres and the Symphony, see Entertainment section).

**Opera Park (4)** surrounds Opera, and is arguably the true heart of the city (Republic Square reserved for government offices and official celebrations), the meeting point for locals and visitors alike, where families gather to share news and gossip (their kids streaming by in a rented scooter or bicycle), students and couples meet at one of the outdoor cafes to visit, play billiards or listen to music in on of the large cafes in the park, and where late-nighters dance in underground discos.

**Opera Square (Freedom Square or Azatutian H`raparak) (2)**, is the asphalt plaza in front of the Opera and Ballet Theatre, and is used for concerts, celebrations and political meetings, the latter considered a guaranteed right by locals who bitterly complain of the uneven distribution of wealth in the country. The most famous meeting at the plaza was during the 1988 Karabakh demonstrations, when over 1 million people crowded the plaza and surrounding streets to listen to political speeches.

East of the plaza is a cement pond in a shape vaguely reminiscent of Lake Sevan. "Swan Lake" (8) hosts live swans and energetic kids in the summer, while its southern end is frozen over in the winter for enthusiastic skaters. South of the pond, facing Tumanian p. is an energetic statue to the composer **Aron Babajanian** (9) (sculptor David Bejanian), whose songs and musicals won him international fame.

Babajanian was the most popular composer of 1970s-80s Soviet Union, especially his songs Memory, I Ask You, Song of First Love, and Yerevan, still hummed by people of a certain age. The statue is a wonderful depiction of the composer’s personality and explosive musicality, though old-timers were horrified by the sculpture when it was first unveiled, their outcry forcing the sculptor to modify some of his more energetic details.

Two large seated figures anchor the square. On your right as you face Opera is a statue of the writer **Hovhannes Tumanian** (5) (sculptor Ara Sargsian), whose greatest fame is as writer of children's tales, but whose epic poems Anush and Almast were the basis for two of Armenia's most popular operas (by Armen Tigranian and Alexander Spendiaryan, respectively).

The figure on the right is **Alexander Spendiaryan** (6) (sculptor Ara Sargsian and Gukas Chubarian), called the father of Armenia’s modern classical music movement for his compositions (combining folk and classical music, like those of his mentor Rimsky Korsakov), and his founding the Philharmonic Orchestra and the music conservatory nearby. Spendiaryan’s body lies under a tombstone (7) in the grass just NW of his statue, at the foot of the garish Egyptian style Astral Club, which pulses disco beat each night along with Opera Disco in the basement of Opera, no doubt spinning the composer in his grave.

In front of the Philharmonic Hall side of the building (facing Place de France) is a statue of **Aram Khachaturian** (10) (sculptor Yuri Petrossian), Armenia's most famous classical composer, whose best known music is for his ballet's Spartak (a.k.a. Spartacus) and Guynaneh (music of which was used in Stanley Kubrick’s film 2001: A Space Odyssey). The latter ballet features in its final act what is probably his most famous movement, the "Saber Dance".

**MAP B**

Place de France (11) was recently named in honor of one of Armenia's key Diaspora communities, a busy traffic circle where three of Yerevan's major throughways meet; Mashtots, Baghramian and Sayat Nova Avenues (poghotas).
The circle is rung by parks; Opera on the south, Sarian (12) (Artist Vernissage) to the west, Tamanian (19) to the north and Sayat Nova or Conservatory (15) to the east.

Sarian Park/Art Vernissage (12) is anchored by a large sculpture of the "father of modern Armenian art" Martiros Sarian (13) (sculptor Levon Tokmachian), its sidewalks taken over each weekend by local painters who display their wares, all on sale. Browsing is encouraged, and artists will stroke up a conversation, hoping to make a sale, but none expect you to buy. Open Saturdays-Sundays 9-dusk.

Across Sayat Nova to the east is the small Conservatory or Sayat Nova Park (15) facing the Music Conservatory, with a large statue to Komitas (16) (sculptor Ara Harutunian) sitting on a bent tree, and on the far end, a fountain monument with a bust of the 18th c troubadour Sayat Nova (17) (sculptor Ara Harutunian, architect Y. Sarapian). Both men are credited with forever changing the music tradition in Armenia, Sayat Nova for his mournful, romantic ballads that infused a heretofore religious art form with secular themes, especially that of love; and Komitas, for combining spiritual music with folk traditions collected from villagers, where he recorded folk songs and ballads handed down orally.

Perhaps Armenia's greatest musical genius, Komitas went mad after witnessing the atrocities of the genocide, and died in a mental hospital in Paris. The conservatory (18) on the east side of the park has churned out famous musicians from its inception in the 1920s, including opera stars, vocalists, instrumentalists and composers. Student recitals are given in the conservatory's concert hall. Feel free to step in for a sample of what the next generation offers.

Nestled between Sarian and Conservatory parks is the lower end of Tamanian park (19) that has been taken over by Santa Fe Café, which has actually created a delightful garden for passersby, replete with one of the only lawns in Yerevan (the others are also at outdoor cafés). The park links Opera Square with one of Yerevan’s most amazing views, the Cascade Park and Monument.

Tamanian /Cascade Park (20), north of Opera, is an oasis in the middle of an urban jungle, an immaculately maintained park without any café to interrupt the greenery or prevent passersby from strolling or sitting along the manicured lawns and flower beds. A series of fountains center the park as its leads towards the equally beautiful Cascade monument, rising 60 meters from its base to Monument. At the base of the park is the large Alexander Tamanian Statue (21) (1974, sculptor A. Hovsepian, architect S. Petrossian), the park’s namesake. Tamanian is credited with creating Yerevan’s first Soviet master plan, reshaping a provincial village into a major metropolis. The architect is stylistically shown hunched over the original plans, details of which are etched on the polished base. Other than marking the spot, the statue has become a favorite hangout for toddlers, who love running between the architect’s legs.

The park also includes the large statue Cat (22), by the Latin American sculptor Fernando Botero, at the bottom of the cascade, a second Botero sculpture Roman Warrior (30) on Monument platform at the top, and several pieces on cascade platforms, including Lynn Chadwick’s Stairs (24) (1991) and Sitting Forms (25) (1980) and Barry Flanagan’s Hare on Bell (26) (1983). Indoor escalator platforms display Barry Flanagan’s Acrobat (1998), Lynn Chadwick’s Two Watchers (1960), and Open Window by Stanislav Libensky & Jaroslava Brychtova (1992).

The park’s preservation is a gift from Gerard L. Cafesjian, a wealthy American-Armenian whose private modern collection will be housed in the large Gerard L. Cafesjian Museum (27) complex under construction at the top of Cascade, due to open summer of 2009. See Museums: Gerard L. Cafesjian Museum p. 48.

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Arts, at the top of cascade. The site of the Cafesjian Center has sweeping views of Yerevan and will include a public plaza, ornamental pool, sculpture courts, a café and an exterior cinema all accessible to passers-by as well as museum visitors.

A prominent glass tower, housing the Cafesjian glass collection, will be most striking part of the design, a modernist design balancing Cascade, Monument and the large outdoor cinema screen, as well as becoming anew emblem for the city. Other facilities will include an auditorium for educational programming and performance art, sales shop, restaurant, reception areas, administrative offices, exhibition department and collection storage.

True to its mission to foster community involvement, the museum foundation is already presenting cultural events, including a series of open-air free concerts at Cascade, one of the most popular entertainment venues in the city. Concerts include classical, folk, jazz and pop music by local and international artists. Upcoming performances are announced on large billboard at cascade and are available at the museum foundation office, 2 Tumanian p. suite 48, tel. 54-19-32, 54-19-34, URL: www.cmf.am

Climb the steps (or take the escalators) to one of the upper terraces of Cascade, for panoramic views of the city and Mt. Ararat (clear days). By hiking up to the top (temporary steps lead from upper cascade to the space under Monument, where more steps trudge up to the top platform and a spectacular view).

The 50th Anniversary of Soviet Armenia Monument (28) (architects Jim Torossian, Sarkis Gurzadian) is a tall slender stele topped by a golden staff of wheat. The symbolism (Vishap stone ersatz Christian stele and wheat) come from Armenia’s earliest periods, primeval symbols of what and bread, or life. Under the square platform next to the tower, a lower courtyard (29) has a monolith in the center (looking vaguely pre-Christian) surrounded by thick façades of Armenian motif carvings, some khachkar in style, others Pagan. This is a rarely visited part of the monument, but well worth investigating. The monument marks the spot where the May revolution in Yerevan began.

Nearby are Botero’s Roman Warrior (30), and the nearby cartoon sculpture, Boat (31).

End Northern Ave-Opera-Cascade Walking Tour.

RING PARK (OGHAKATSEV AIGI)  ▲

Ring Park is probably the most walked area of Yerevan, after Abovian p. The park is a long stretch of greenery and trees carved out of the urban landscape, with a number of monuments, outdoor cafés, fountains, tennis courts, even a chess house the Norwegian Consulate and an aviary.

Mostly it has become a place for cafes of all kinds; from the (relatively) simple collection of canopied tables surrounded by flower beds and a fountain to ever-growing structures combining indoor restaurant-bars with outdoor cafes in exotic settings (A ship with sails, Old Rome, a Swiss Chalet are but three) with live entertainment stages.

The cafes are both encroaching on the public spaces and preserving the nature in their part of the large park, a controversy sure to continue for some time. In the meantime, the space has become both a magnet for people escaping the stifling summer heat and swirling dust in the construction zone called central Yerevan, and a place to meet friends, hobnob at a trendy café-bar, or just to sit a spell, sip coffee and perform one of the most popular basic rituals known to humankind; watch the world go by.

The park is bordered north and south by four distinct streets; Isahakian and Alec Manukian (north) and Moskovian and Khanjian (south). It starts on the west one block east of Mashtots Ave (pta.) and continues for 6 “blocks” to the SE where it ends at Tigran Mets pta. where Kino Rossiya faces the massive Grigor Lusavorich cathedral. Intersecting streets that provide entry points are Terian, Abovian, Nalbandian, Sayat Nova, Tumanian (dead ends at the park) and Vardanants.

Ring Park Walking Tour starts at the NW end of the park, one block east of Mashtots pta. at the Arbat steps off of Isahakian p.

BLOCK 1 (ARBAT STEPS/MASHTOTS) (MAP A)

The park begins just east of Mashtots pta. between Isahakian p. (one block east of Kino Nairi (1)) and Moskovian p. (one block east of the Conservatory & Choreographic College building (2)). En route you pass a new Jazzve (3) indoor café, the Oscar (4) Café-restaurant below Kino Nairi and a Raffi’s Kebab bistro (5). At the opposite corner where the park begins is the basement Red Bar (6) Disco.

Another entry is from Kochar / Arbat Steps (7), which connect Isahakian and Konun pts. The steps are a recent addition to an alley that was once filled with trash and cars. The passage are now a manicured step way with trees, flowers and park benches, lined by a series of buildings, the popular Arlekino Karaoke Bar (500 AMD per song, reservations required on weekends, tel. 53-96-94), a couple of decent, inexpensive bistros, the offices for Erivan Magazine (NW corner) and at the opposite corner, the Dramatic Theatre (8) (Dramatikakan Tatron, 28 Isahakian p., tel. 52-47-23, 52-47-33), which repertoire includes radical interpretations of classics like Romeo and Juliet and Macbeth, as well as modern pieces (William Saroyan’s My Heart is in the Highlands, Tennessee Williams Streetcar named Desire). Performances often sold out, book early.
The park begins with a small playground next to the imposing Plopavak/Aragast Café (9), which boats blue sails for its topest masts. The pseudo-ship edging a large pond and fountain once boasted the best live jazz performances in town in the summer and became notorious in the 1990s for the murder of a supporter by presidential bodyguards. It continues to provide live entertainment on the small platform adjoining the downstairs outdoor café. Next door is the less pretentious Triumph café (10), with indoor facilities next to a pleasant tree canopied outdoor café. Triumph faces the massive publishing house building, part of which offices are for Armrino (11), Armenia’s first and largest internet provider. It also faces the monument to Hakob Meghapart (12) (sculptor Khachatour Isakarian), an Armenian in Venice who established a printing house and published the first book in Armenian in 1512.

On the opposite bank of the pond is the less upscale Moskovian café, next to a small statue dedicated to Karo Haabtun (13) (sculptor Ron Juhiakian), Soviet era architect who died in 1959. Born 1897 in Elizabetpol, Halabian was schooled at the Nersissian School in Tbilisi before training as an architect. In 1929 he founded the Society of All Russia Protestant Architects, became editor in chief of Arkturutssr SSR magazine, and quickly rose in communist ranks. Yerevan work includes busts of Karl Marx and Armenian Soviet hero Shafhamion and Kamo, graphic illustrations for poems by Yeghishe Charents, theatrical designs for the Sudkunian theatre, the design for the original Russian Stanislavsky Theatre on Abovian (done in the constructivism style, now covered over by 1960s era stone plates) and the Yerevan Hydroelectric Workers Residency (a.k.a. the large apartment building behind the Martiros Sarian statue in Artist Vernissage). From 1929-31 he was director of the State Design Institute (current ArmDesign Institute).

In Moscow he designed the Agriculture Exhibition Armenia pavilion, the Soviet Army Theatre, and the Soviet Pavilion for the 1939 New York World Fair, for which he was given a medal. In 1936 he was elected member of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Other monuments in the park include a 3000 BCE Vishapkar (14) (dragon stone) in the SW end of the block, brought from the Gegham Leh (mountain range) to the spot. Vishap stones are carved rough pillars that were placed at the headwaters of rivers or at springs. The dragon in Armenia has a fishlike appearance, some thinking it is a lake Sevan cousin of the Loch Ness monster in Scotland. Just E of the pond an exact copy of the Carrara Spring Monument (15) (sculptor Ara Haroutunian), a large khachkar stone with two ram figures, given to Yerevan’s sister city Carrara in Italy; on the SE corner a new Memorial to the Armenian-Jewish Genocides (16), and N of that closest to Terian p. the eloquent Vahan Terian Statue (17) (sculptor Karlen Karakhanian).

In 1913, Terian left Moscow University for the University of St. Petersburg, where he majored in oriental languages, intensifying his political involvement. After the revolution he became representative of Armenians in the Ministry of Nations, personally working with Lenin and Stalin. He died of Tuberculosis at age 35. Each year there is a commemoration of his life in Javakh region (Akhaltsikhe & Akhalkalak), at Gandza Village, where he was born.

North of the Terian Statue is a group of food stalls (cheap eats), and the euphemistically named Isahakian Bus Station, which is in fact a group of dilapidated buses on the street shuttling folks (mostly students) between Yerevan to Dilijan (800 AMD) and Sevan (400 AMD). On the opposite corner is the trendy Karrara Café (19), given to Yerevan in friendship by its sister city Carrara in Italy (a copy of Yerevan’s gift sculpture to Carrara sits on the other side of Terian, the Spring Monument). Flanking the statue are several cafes, including the appropriately named Karrara Café (19) on the SW corner of the block. Across the NW corner café is HSBC Bank with a row of ATMs. At the center of the block, facing Isahakian p. is the entrance to the Yeridasardakan Metro station (20) (still only 50 AMD) with café and bistro close by. Web

The park ends a small plaza with the Avetik Isahakian Statue (24) (sculptor Sarkis Bagdasarian) at its central point. Isahakian was one of Armenia’s most famous poets. Among this Tsarist rebel’s famous works are “Songs and Wounds” and “Abu Lalla Mahari” along with many lyrical poems that continue to endanger him to Armenians. See Museums: Avetik Isahakian p. 64.

The 999 Pharmacy is at the SE corner, above steps leading to a series of underground shops (25), including some wonderful book stalls which sell mainly Russian and Armenian editions, but also maps, old guides and a few English language titles. Great bargains.

One short block up Abovian (N) on the left is an alley leading to the Derenik Demirchian Home-Museum (26), dedicated to the author of the popular satirical “Kach Nazar” and “Vardenank” (see Museums: Derenik Demirchian for details). This block begins Yerevan’s “Fauburg District” with Doka Pizza, Netsys Internet and a number of stalls, kiosks and shops vying for your attention. South on Abovian you will find the popular Café de Paris (27), plus a number of other cafes and shops.

Cross Terian p. from the center of the block and you immediately approach the Hands Sculpture (18), given to Yerevan in friendship by its sister city Carrara in Italy (a copy of Yerevan’s gift sculpture to Carrara sits on the other side of Terian, the Spring Monument).

Blocking the statue are several cafes, including the appropriately named Karrara Café (19) on the SW corner of the block. Across the NW corner café is HSBC Bank with a row of ATMs. At the center of the block, facing Isahakian p. is the entrance to the Yeridasardakan Metro station (20) (still only 50 AMD) with café and bistro close by. Web
Armenian Chamber Orchestra (weekend concerts), and performances by a variety of classical musicians. The walkway to the chamber hall is flanked by a café with fountain, and a trade hall/café.

To the S of the hall there is a small square with a statue to Hownannes (Ivan) Aivazovski (31) (sculptor Yuri Petrosian), a phenomenon of the 19th c art world, best known for his seascapes and his manipulation of light and shadow that dominated the art world until his death in 1900.

Aivazovski was born in 1817 in Theodosia, Crimea, to a poor Armenian family, achieving fame in Europe soon after graduating from the St. Petersburg Art Academy, where he was elected to five European Academies and given the medal of the French Legion of Honor.

Due as much to his long life as his capacity for work, Aivazovski became the most prolific Russian painter of his time, leaving over 6,000 works at his death. His works have been auctioned for as much as $3,200,000 and his international reputation continues to grow. He is also said to be the most forged of all Russian painters.

Across from the statue is the entry to Ajarian University (32), and a little down, the Youth Theatre (33), once the Communist Youth League offices and theatre. The crest of the building boasts some nicely done friezes of Soviet youth (the Pioneers) and two large bas relief figures; the left of Lenin and the right once of Stalin, rubbed out and replaced with Shahumian. Across the other side of the hall (Isahakian p.), there are a number of businesses (beginning from the Abovian/Isahakian corner): Doka Pizza, Café Verona, Polygon Internet Club, Joy Bar, Southern Fried Chicken, Magnum Internet Club, Armeconombank (ATM), Pizza di Roma, Liber Bar and Ultra Café. On the SE side of concert hall is the Aivazovski café and ping pong tables.

BLOCK 4 (NALBANDIAN) (MAP D)

Cross Nalbandian p. and continue down the central walkway, which passes (R) the Statue to Mikhail Nalbandian Statue (34) (sculptor Nikoghayos Nikoghosian). Mikhail Nalbandian (1829-1866) was born in Nor Nakhichevan (now Rostov-on-Don) in a family of Armenian craftsmen. Largely self-educated, he initially pursued priesthood, then studied medicine briefly at Moscow University (1854-58) before collaborating with the writer Stepanos Nazaryan in founding the influential periodical, Aurora Borealis (Hiusisapail).

In a time when revolts in European seemed destined to erupt in Russia (1859-1861), Nalbandian was one of the first Armenian writers to support revolutionary democracy, in the magazines Kolokol (Bell) and Sovremennik (Contemporary), and in his travels to Europe, India and Constantinople, the last where he established a secret society named Party of the Young at the Armenian magazine Meghu (Bee).

In London he befriended and joined the Russian revolutionaries Hertz, Ogarev, Bakunin in writing "What the People Need." His main work was the 1862 article "Agriculture is the Only Way," where he harshly criticized the peasant reform of 1861, writing that a peasant revolution was the only way to truly reform Russia. Returning to Russia in 1862, he was arrested, charged with distributing propaganda against the tsar, and imprisoned, exiled in 1865 to a remote area in Saratov province, where he died a year later of Tuberculosis. During the 19th c, it was forbidden to read his work or even possess his picture; but his portrait with a copy of his poem "Liberty" written in the margins was secretly circulated and his fame grew despite the ban.

On the opposite corner there is a café and a couple of lamajo/sharma eateries (cheap eats). The central fountains (35) in front is remembered by generations of university and institute graduates who sweated out their entry exam results there, a ritual that continues today (come by in July-August to commiserate).

Just past is a small delight, an aviary (36) filled with exotic birds, including a rare white peacock when we visited. The birds come from around the globe and are in good health, seeming to enjoy the attention they get by students and couples strolling by. Bird keeps line both sides of the central walkway. Just past on the left in a small bend is an evocative Memorial Khachkar to the Artsakh War (37), the front cross panel carved as a door set ajar, flames leaping from the open crevice. On the right is the Siro Arahet (Path of Love) Café (38).
The university serves 24,000 students in a large number of disciplines, and has a fine library in the main building with one-of-a-kind edition books. In front of the main building there is a small statue of Sahak Partev and Mesrop Mashtots (41) (sculptor Ara Sarkisian), accepted as the sponsor and creator of the current Armenian alphabet. The statue which was originally intended to be erected in large size in front of Matenadaran, but refused by (story A) the communists because it depicted religious figures or (story B) was refused by the church because Sarkisian was an atheist. Another in the yard is to the medieval historian Movses Khorenatsi (42) (1996, sculptor A. Poghosian). Directly in front is Moka Club (43), more or less connected to the Ararat Tennis Club (44) (12 Alek Manukian p, tel. 57-06-48), university tennis courts open to the public with some excellent instructors and its own cafe.

Continue past the tennis club, where the park sidewalk winds through some trees and passes more cafes before entering at the backside of the Chess House (45) and a small statue to Chess champion Tigran Petrossian (46) (sculptor N. Nikoghosian), of whom World Chess winner Gari Kasparov once said (with pure Kasparov arrogance), "I am No. 1. There is no number 2. But only Tigran Petrossian can be No. 3." Hmm. The Chess House supports the chess federation and a large cafe-restaurant on the ground floor.

Café Bardiner (47) is at the SW corner of the block, just after the Chess House, and opposite the large Sayat Nova Complex (48) (33a Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 58-00-33, email: sayatnova33@yahoo.com, fax: 58-77-06), at the corner of Sayat Nova pta. and Khanjian (nee Moskovian) p. The complex has a café, restaurant and the Coliseum Club, with live performances by popular, jazz and ethnic performers.

On the other side of the café (in the park) there is a grassy clearing with the large Yeghishe Charents Monument (49) (sculptor Nikoghayos Nikoghosian), a polished granite platform with a long trench and 40 pomegranate fountain heads lining the south side. The tall series of towers has a large bust of the writer’s head on one side with larger-than-life size human figures on other sides, representing characters from his poems. It is a moody piece full of symbolism hard to fathom, but kids love to slide on the polished platform after it rains. There is another café on the other side of the monument, across from the Radio Tun (50) (Radio House), a fine Soviet constructivist building still boasting the SSR crest.

Khanjian and Hanrapetutian (Alaverdi) pts, the corners of which have a Khachapuri bistro and Doka Bar. Ten meters down Hanrapetutian is Old Tiflis restaurant, one of the better eateries in town. As you cross Sayat Nova you enter the busiest block of the park, crammed with outdoor cafes, bars and entertainment centers, along with manicured lawns, flower beds and a single public walkway under the trees. The first thing you encounter on the block, to the right, is the Lido Café, right in front of the Tekeyyan Center (51) and one of many cafes to come. The Tekeyyan center does not belong in the park; it is a business center housing offices, a computer shop and the Norwegian Consulate. May it be torn down once and erased from memory.

Opposite Giani on Alek Manukian is the AUA Center (57), with main offices for Air France, Austrian Airlines and Menua Tours. Next is the Batsat Café (58), then Hin Hrom (Old Rome) Restaurant (59) (WC) and Karap (Swan) Pond (60), a pleasant public spot with fountain and live swans in the summer, lined by trees, grass, behind which is a Kiddy ride park and Laguna Café (61), a must see spot to watch the sprays of water and neighborhood kids love to slide on the polished platform. Two blocks over is the Lido Café, right in front of the Tekeyyan Center (51) and one of many cafes to come. The Tekeyyan center does not belong in the park; it is a business center housing offices, a computer shop and the Norwegian Consulate. May it be torn down once and erased from memory.

Continue south past a series of cafes (Flowers, Libar, Jrahars, Lucky’s, Edvar’s) and cafes before reaching the large Arjen Tigranian Statue (66) (sculptor Artashes Hovsepian) in a forlorn area of the park. Arjen Tigranian (1879-1950) was an Armenian folk and classical music composer. His major works are the operas David Bek and, perhaps the most popular musical theatrical production in Armenia, the opera Anush, based on the poem of the same title by Hovhannes Tumanian.

It is unclear why the sculptor chose to depict Tigranian as a medieval chef/director, with long flowing robes and hair. The composer was nothing like, fitting the 19th c picture of a gentleman to the T. Continue south past a series of cafes (Flowers, Libar, Jrahars, Lucky’s, Edvar’s) and cafes before reaching the large Arjen Tigranian Statue (66) (sculptor Artashes Hovsepian) in a forlorn area of the park. Arjen Tigranian (1879-1950) was an Armenian folk and classical music composer. His major works are the operas David Bek and, perhaps the most popular musical theatrical production in Armenia, the opera Anush, based on the poem of the same title by Hovhannes Tumanian.

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Andranik, Nik) to the end of the block at Vardanants p.

**BLOCK 6 (VARDANANTS) (MAP F)**

Just across Vardanants are a couple of cafes and the massive Zoravar Andranik Statue (86) (sculptor Yervand Kochar), depicted charging horseback with a raised sword.

Mamikonian was an Armenian prince in the 5th century, who led an ill-fated charge against the Persian army at the battle of Avarayr, during an Armenian revolt against Sassanid Persian attempts to convert the country to Manichaeism (a form of Zoroastrianism). Equipped with overwhelming forces (including the Immortals) and a Calvary of elephants, the Persians dispatched the Armenian rivals, killing Mamikonian in the battle.

Winning the battle, the Persians lost the war, as Armenian fighters literally took to the hills, waging a guerilla war of attrition, slowly wearing down the Persians until the Sassanids recognized Armenia’s right to freedom of worship. The battle of Avarayr is called by Armenians the first battle in history over freedom of conscience, a claim disputed by many historians.

The park around the church is ill kempt, the church opting not to restore the grove of trees it cut to erect the building. The result is a scorching sun-baked approach to the Persians until the Sassanids recognized Armenia’s church. With your back to the front of the church, in front and to your right there is a plaza with the large Zoravar Andranik Statue (86) (sculptor Yervand Kochar) as its focal point. Zoravar Andranik (Andranik Toros Ozanian), was born in 1865 in the town of Shapin-Garahisar, Ottoman Turkey (present-day Giresun Province, Turkey). At the age of 14 or 15, Andranik joined Armenian resistance partisans (the Fedaiiyi), against Ottoman forces, and was captured and imprisoned. On his release he moved to Constantinople, where he worked as a carpenter. Moving to Batumi, he rejoined the resistance, fighting in Kars, Sasun and at Msho Arakelots, establishing his fame in several key battles.

Facing Vernissage on its side streets are the State Song Theatre (70) (13a Khanjian p, tel. 56-67-90, 56-70-44, 56-67-92, 54-42-50, email: griganit@freenet.am), which presents popular singers and a lot of wannabes in its weekly amateur shows., NPAK Armenian Center for Contemporary Experimental Art (71), 1/3 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 56-82-25, 56-83-25, email: accea@netvys.am, URL: www.accea.org which presents Performance Art and solo performances in its large modern hall, and Naregatsi Art Institute (72) (16/1 Vardanants p, tel. 58-01-05, email: suzy@naregatsi.org, URL: www.naregatsi.org), a wonderful gallery/performance hall with rotating exhibitions, film and video showings, concerts and performances.

Behind the statue are two cafes, including Vizavi and “Shinanuit (Builder’s) poghots (73),” or south Vardanants p, crammed with shops selling building materials. Continue down the park (take the steps) into a grove of trees with less kept grounds. This area is more popular with students and working class families, and so less pretentious than the previous block. Taking the sidewalk closest to Manukian p., you pass several cafes (Manukian side: Getar (74), Voskeh Lotos (75); Khanjian side: Golf (76), Oazis (77), Arbat (78), 7th Nyebo (79) and Virtuos (80) opposite the Music School) before reaching a crosswalk that connects Manukian with Khanjian pts. Continuing on the path closest to Manukian p, you reach a dried cement pond on the left, at the base of the massive Grigor Lusavorich Cathedral (81).

On your right a larger cement pond appears, with paddleboats, the cafes lining the far side, beginning with Shvak Café (82), then Amado Café (83) and Bochka Restaurant (84) nearest the amusement park. The modernist statue “Mother” (85) (sculptor Khoren Ter-Harutian) stands in the water. As you continue along your side of the pond, you will see a series of stone steps on your left that lead to the front entry of the church; take these to the top plaza.

The large Grigor Lusavorich Cathedral (81) is a new addition to Yerevan’s skyline, its consecration timed to coincide with the 2001 celebrations of 1700 years of Christianity as a state religion. Taking most of the SE end of the park, the church was the first large structure to be erected in the post Soviet period, and the start of a building boom that has yet to stop. Other than its size (built so that 1700 people can sit in the church at one time), there is little of architectural value to the building. Its cavernous hall and booming acoustics reminds me of a train station rather than a church, a feeling that may change over time, but not yet. While most locals simply ignore the building, a few flock to the building as proof of a revitalized religion. The park around the church is ill kempt, the church opting not to restore the grove of trees it cut to erect the building. The result is a scorching sun-baked approach to the church.

With your back to the front of the church, in front and to your right there is a plaza with the large Zoravar Andranik Statue (86) (sculptor Yervand Kochar) as its focal point. Zoravar Andranik (Andranik Toros Ozanian), was born in 1865 in the town of Shapin-Garahisar, Ottoman Turkey (present-day Giresun Province, Turkey). At the age of 14 or 15, Andranik joined Armenian resistance partisans (the Fedaiiyi), against Ottoman forces, and was captured and imprisoned. On his release he moved to Constantinople, where he worked as a carpenter. Moving to Batumi, he rejoined the resistance, fighting in Kars, Sasun and at Msho Arakelots, establishing his fame in several key battles.

Andranik fought in the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) as a commander of Armenian auxiliary troops alongside General Garegin Nzhdeh. During World War I, he participated in the Caucasus Campaign and was appointed general of the Armenian volunteer units in the Russian army, helping to free the city of Van, defending Bitlis against forces led by Mustafal Kemal, and supporting the migration of Armenians from Van to Eastern Armenia in 1918, when Turkey renewed the genocide.

He then moved to Zangezur (present day Siunik), saving native Armenians and repelling attempts by troops from Azerbaijan and Turkey to capture the territory and create a Pan-Turkic Empire stretching to Central Asia. Andranik refused to participate in...
peace talks that gave western Armenian to Turkey, moving to Fresno where he hoped to plan a new offensive to liberate his homeland. He never returned, dying in Fresno in 1927. For his courage, audacity in battle and tactical genius, as much as for his saving thousands of Armenians from slaughter, Andranik is the closest thing to a modern saint Armenia has, his picture worn as a talisman by soldiers in battles in World War II and Karabakh, many measuring their own bravery against his legacy.

To the side of the Andranik statue there is children’s park with rides (87) (loads of fun for a few dollars) and at the farthest corner the Alexander Griboyedov Statue (88) (1973, sculptor H. Bejianian).

Griboyedov (1795-1829) was a Russian diplomat, playwright, and composer, recognized as homo unius libri, a writer of one book, whose fame rests on the brilliant verse comedy "Woe from Wit", still one of the most often staged plays in Russia. When first written, the play was rejected by the censors for its satire of the Russian nobility, and was not published in the writer's lifetime, instead distributed secretly.

Soon after he was sent to Persia as Minister Plenipotentiary, where a crowd of Islamic religious fanatics, incited by the British ambassador, stormed the Russian embassy. Griboyedov (airing with almost everyone else inside) was slaughtered, and his body was for three days so ill-treated by the mob that it was at last recognized only by an old scar on the hand, due to a wound received in a duel. A famous statue at the Pushkin Pass in Lori marz marks the return of the writer's body to Russia, met by Alexander Pushkin en route.

The park ends at Tigran Mets p, a street teeming with pedestrians, cars and shops of all kinds. Directly in front of the church is the huge Kino Rossiya (89) building facing the church. The theatre, with two wings for roofing (best seen from the side of the building) house two large theatres, now defunct. The roofing is designed to resemble both the outline of Ararat and a large ship, a.k.a. Noah's Ark. The lower levels have been taken over much as for his saving thousands of Armenians from slaughter, Andranik is the closest thing to a modern saint Armenia has, his picture worn as a talisman by soldiers in battles in World War II and Karabakh, many measuring their own bravery against his legacy.

Behind and above Kino Rossiya there is a small parking lot acting as a Minivan Stop (90) (euphemistically called the "Agatangeghos & Khorenatsi Bus Station") with minivans and taxis heading to Giumri, Vanadzor, Sissian, Goris, Kapan, Alaverdi, Artik and Bagrataxen.

Head north on Tigran Mets and in a couple of blocks you reach Republic Square (91), passing a number of exchange shops, and the entrance to the claustrophobic but dirt cheap Furdusi outdoor market (soup to nuts). Head south in one block, passing several Persian shops, you will pass the modern Tashir Shopping Mall where shops sell the same items you can find at on the street but at a premium, next to a large Shuka (fresh produce and fantastic dried fruits), across from Sil Hotel.

Head west on the street that was Khanjian (now Agatangeghos) and in a block you will pass the Circus (92), still working bringing fun to kids of all ages. There is a small café in the small park and in front of the circus, the Leonid Yengibarian Statue (1995, sculptor Levon Tokmajian), one of the most famous clowns of the Soviet Union.

Yengibarian (1935-1972), was born in Moscow, in 1935. Before devoting his life to circus, Yengibarian (Yengibarov) had tried various other trades, including boxing (winning several bouts in 1952-1953) and gymnastics before entering the newly formed State Circus School in 1955.

Graduating in 1959, Yengibarian joined the Yerevan Circus, where he began to perform his now legendary routines, which, unlike the stock-in-trade shtick that his fellow clowns performed to get laughs, but routine that were more reflective, at times even sad. The result was immediate being funny enough, then gradually winning acclaim for their humanity. Perhaps for the first time Yengibarian began to create poetic clowning in the circus arena, certainly in the Soviet Union, which designed its shows to entertain only.

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Museums include the Blue Mosque, Yeghishe Charents Home Museum, Yervand Kochar and the Matenadan, the largest repository of the priceless Armenian manuscripts and miniatures. Theatres include the Opera and Ballet, Symphonic Hall, Pantomime, Conservatory Concert Hall, State Marionette and Chamber Theatres. From S to north, Mashtots intersects with Movses Khorenatsi (Marx) p. (English park, Old Abovian), Amirian p. (Republic Square), Boulevard (Bluzand/Arami to Abovian and via the tunnel to the Hrazdan Gorge and its walking tour (p. 38), Pushkin p. (Northern Avenue p. 25), Tumanian (Opera, Tumanian Home Museum, Abovian), Place de France (Artist Vernissage, Sayat Nova Park, Opera, Tumanian Park), Sayat Nova (Opera, Children's Art Gallery, Katoghike) & Marshal Baghramian (National Assembly, Avetik Isahakian & Aram Khachaturian Home Museums), Moskovian & Isahakian (Ring Park Walk p. 28) and Koriun (Abovian, Garni/Sevan Hwys) before its end at the base of Matenadan.

Along the way you pass distinct neighborhoods each with its own brand of humanity, from the commercial south to a more laid back leafy north.

At least part of this walking tour is unavoidable if you go anywhere in Yerevan on foot, there are so many streets and places you will want to see that intersect with the avenue. Use this tour to familiarize you with the layout of Yerevan's center, and to locate particular destinations as you pass through.

Start the walking tour at the avenues base, Haghhtanak (Victory) Bridge (4), which is also the starting point for the Old Abovian Walking Tour (p. 18).

The bridge spans the Hrazdan Gorge (p. 38), site of Bronze-Iron Age settlements and some rather remarkably designed theme restaurants (2) straddling the Hrazdan River (enter gorge on opposite side of bridge, below the Hrazdan Stadium (3)).

Walking Tour

Figure 3-5 hours if you stop along the way to gawk, browse a museum or two, sip coffee at a sidewalk café, haggle over the fresh produce at the shuka. You can walk straight through in about 45 minutes. (Numbers) denote position on the accompanying map.

MAP A

At the end of the bridge is the Cognac factory (4) and at the beginning of the street is the Noy Armenian Brandy Factory (5), covered in the Old Abovian Walking Tour (p. 18).

Above is the new Metropol Hotel (6), the offices of VivaCell to a block of apartment buildings from the 1930’s, the so-called “Stalin Shenk” for their construction period (1920s-1930’s being generally accepted as the best period of architecture and quality in Soviet construction) and Armenian Monumental design style.

Go up the left (W) side street instead of the main thoroughway, which is closed to pedestrians, and take the first left street that follows the N rim of the canyon to S. Sargis (7), considered the main church in Yerevan despite the erection of the massive Grigor Lusavorich Cathedral, at Ring Park. Rebuilt in the 14th c over early Christian and pagan foundations, the church was renovated several times in succeeding centuries, the last in 2001. See Churches: S. Sargis (p. 76).

Retrace your steps to Mashtots and head N to the top of the overpass, and the intersection with Grigor Lusavorich (E) and Paronian (W) streets.

Side trip: A right turn will lead in a block to English Park, and the Russian, French and Italian Embassies; a left turns leads in a block to the Woodcraft Museum (8) (See Museums: Woodcraft p. 62) on the right; and in a couple of more blocks in an alley on the left the remarkable Parajanov Museum (9) (Museums: Parajanov p. 59).

Backtrack to Mashtots and cross the street (use the pedestrian underground) and make your way to the E side of Mashtots (R side). Once you emerge onto Mashtots you will see shops on both sides of the street, the beginning of the lower commercial district.

MAP B

On your right you will pass Arena Bowling (a hot ticket for Yerevan), and a little north, the entrance to the Blue Mosque (10), opposite the Shuka.

The Blue Mosque (Persian: ﺒﻴﺴﻮر) or the “Goli or Gök-Jami”, was one of Yerevan's 8 mosques, and its largest and most beautiful. Originally built by Turkish Emirs, the mosque was rebuilt in the 18th c by Persians (1766) during the reign of Hussein Ali, the khan of Erivan (it was often referred to as “Ali Hussein’s mosque”), adding the current arched courtyard and a

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dive into the food tasting frenzy; the foods are not pre-washed, so if you have any concern about the way something looks, or getting the Armenian equivalent of "Montezuma’s revenge" (diarrhea), don’t eat!

At the next corner (Sarian/Khorenatsi) on the L is HaiArt gallery (12) (the building with the series of round walls), which hosts art exhibitions from time to time (See Art Galleries: HaiArt, p. 69). Across the street also on the L is the Museum of Contemporary Art (13), hidden from view in the ground floor of the apartment building behind the strip of shops facing Mashtots. The museum displays the most important Armenian artists (many still living) of the modern era, in a large space (See Art Galleries: HaiArt, p. 59). If you turn R down Khorenatsi/Marx p, you pass the Customs Ministry (14) on the left (that will be the building with people coming out looking at their empty pockets), and, in the same building, the best, cheapest café in town. No name, just an Aquafina sign in the window, and delicious, large portions of food for a pittance of what they charge elsewhere (the most expensive thing on the menu is 1500 AMD). Continue down the street to Shirak Hotel, Children’s park and Shahumian Square on Abovian (15) (See Old Abovian Walking Tour p. 18).

Continuing up Mashtots you pass a number of shops and bistros (our favorite: Taco Bell Sharma, with burritos at 300 AMD and Lahmadjo 300 AMD) and just before the next corner, Grkeri Ashkhref/Mir Knig (Book World) (18) one of the two best bookstores in Yerevan (Russian, Armenians and English editions on two floors), the other is at the top of the avenue, coming up.

Next is Boulevard (19), a ca. 1970’s central park of fountains, sidewalks and greenery that was part of Tamanian’s master plan to connect the outer edges of Yerevan via a central greenbelt. Designed by A. Zakarian, the parks were built in place of historic neighborhoods that were demolished to make way, and were among the first to suffer from late Soviet neglect, the massive fountains leaking and the sprinkler system pillaged for parts by locals.

Paler reflections of their former glory, they still provide one of the few public green spaces in the city, and are a favorite playground for neighborhood children, and locals escaping Yerevan’s sweltering nights. Two cafes have taken over parts facing Mashtots, one renovating part of the fountains (the other totally neglects its role). Out on the boulevard, there is a pedestrian tunnel that will take you to Hrazdan Gorge (for details see Museums: Charents, p. 65).

The next block begins to change the character of the street somewhat, the large plane trees that grace Boulevard also planted on both sides of the avenue for the next several blocks. Shops are a slightly more upscale, with several eateries in the mix. Our favorite is Teinik/Chainik, a lower level tea house on the left side of the street just past Charents museum with great desserts and a variety of black and herbal teas.

The next cross street is Pushkin (turn left one block for Envoy Hostel (22), 54 Pushkin, tel. 53-03-69, email: info@envoyhostel.com, URL: www.envoyhostel.com).

MAP D

This is complimented by large stands of fresh herbs and spices, rows and rows of pickled fruits, vegetables, compote and jams; all of which is somehow topped by the freshest produce in the country, trucked in from the regions in the summer (greenhouses or Persia in the winter), with taste testing de rigueur before buying, and encouraged by sellers vying for your purchase. The back is devoted to fresh meat (not for the squeamish) and fish. A word of caution before you return to Mashtots and continue north. The next street is Amirian, a right turn of which takes you to Hanrapetutian H’reparak (Republic Square) (16) in two blocks. A left turn takes you to the Theatre Institute and the Hamazgaiyin Theatre (17) (26 Amirian p, tel. 53-94-1).

Boulevard is bordered by the next two cross street; Pavstos Buzand (S) and Arami (N). The Yeghishe Charents Home-Museum (20) is at the NW corner of Arami and Mashtots (across from the Maternity Hospital (21) on the other side of the street).

The next street is Tumanian (23). A left on Tumanian leads to several excellent eateries and clubs, beginning with Akump (40 Tumanian), a madrasah (school for students of the Koran). The large building has 28 rooms, a library, a main prayer hall and the courtyard. The site is open to guests on weekdays, and has an exhibition of photos of Old Yerevan. Closed for prayer, and guards are instructed to restrict certain areas from non-Moslem visitors. For details see Churches: Mosques (p. 83).

Across the avenue (there is a pedestrian underground in front of the mosque) is the covered market, or Shuka (11) (1951, architect G. Aghababian), one of Armenia’s personal treasures and the largest market for fresh produce and meats in central Yerevan. The shuka (sometimes called “pak” or “enclosed” shuka by old timers who remember when markets were all open-air), has become a destination in itself for tourists, due as much to the unique design of the huge gilded wrought iron frontage piece as for the tasty morsels inside. All senses are assaulted on entry to the market, first by the beautifully arranged dried fruit treats, nuts, sijuk (walnuts dipped in plum or grape juice), t’tu lavash (natural fruit roll ups), fruits dipped in sweet juice and a new entry to the gastronomic delights of the shuka, a roll cake made entirely from dried fruits, nuts and t’tu lavash.

Charents Museum (20), 17 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-55-94, 53-14-12, open Tues-Sun 10-5), is located in the building where Charents lived the last 5 years of his life, the upper floor consisting of the actual apartment he shared on a communal basis with his neighbors. A famous early 20th c poet, whose poem ‘Yes Im Anush Hayastan’ has been called the “Our Father” for Armenians, Charents was a fervent believer in the October Revolution who became bitter and disillusioned at Stalin’s policies began to take effect. He, like dozens of other literary figures and artists, became a victim of Stalin’s 1937 purge, dying while under control of the KGB in an insane asylum in Yerevan. For details see Museums: Charents, p. 65.

This is complimented by large stands of fresh herbs and spices, rows and rows of pickled fruits, vegetables, compote and jams; all of which is somehow topped by the freshest produce in the country, trucked in from the regions in the summer (greenhouses or Persia in the winter), with taste testing de rigueur before buying, and encouraged by sellers vying for your purchase. The back is devoted to fresh meat (not for the squeamish) and fish. A word of caution before you turn R down Khorenatsi/Marx p, you pass the Customs Ministry (14) on the left (that will be the building with people coming out looking at their empty pockets), and, in the same building, the best, cheapest café in town. No name, just an Aquafina sign in the window, and delicious, large portions of food for a pittance of what they charge elsewhere (the most expensive thing on the menu is 1500 AMD). Continue down the street to Shirak Hotel, Children’s park and Shahumian Square on Abovian (15) (See Old Abovian Walking Tour p. 18).
basement restaurant, souvenir shop and music hall, one of the trendiest spots in Yerevan, the upscale Al Leoni (51 Tumanian) and Malkhas Jazz Club (52/1 Pushkin p, tel. 53-53-50, 53-17-78) which serves food and some of the best jazz performers around playing nightly until 3 am. On the same side of the block as the neat coffee house/bistro Sicily, which hosts avid fans of the CIS era Mafia role playing game is Barcelona, a wonderfully decorated restaurant in the old Spanish style. The end of the block are the steps to the Tumanian House Museum (24) (40 Moskovian, tel. 53-12-71, 56-00-21, open 10-6 Tues-Sun), one of the best house-museums in Yerevan (for details see Museums: Tumanian p. 62).

The park, under a canopy of trees stressed by the activity below in the ring of outdoor cafes, some worth visiting, others totally Rabiz and thick gold chains on bared chests. Follow your design taste and macho quotient. At the far end the garish pseudo Egyptian Astral Club throbs with coffee by day, writhing bodies in the disco by night. Opera itself has a disco in the basement with a nightclub show at night. For details about Opera and the park see Opera p. 93 and Opera Park p. 85.

For tickets to Opera/Ballet visit the ticket office at the NW corner of Tumanian and Mashtots. Tickets for the Symphony and events in the Symphonic hall are at a small booth on from of the Opera, Sayat Nova pta side.

A Right on Tumanian (25), next to the corner flower stands are several great bistro-restaurants; New Delhi Indian Food, under the Art Gallery/restaurant Baccus where the proprietor will regale you with his insights and opinions on life, art and the way of wine; and just a block away, several sharma stands in front of Tufenkian Carpets and the best Khinkali (Georgian) in Armenia (150 AMD each).

Mashtots forms the western border for Opera Square (26), with the State Opera and Ballet Theatres and the Philharmonic Hall on your right. Sarian Park or Artist Vernissage (27) is on the left.

Opera square (26) (Azaztian or Freedom Square) is a large plaza on the SE end of the huge building, a place for political meetings, outdoor pop concerts and for youngsters to zoom by on their inline skates or motorized toy cars.

Sarian Park (27) is anchored by the large white marble statue to the impressionist painter Martiros Sarian, called by some the "father of Armenian modern art" (for more about Martiros Sarian visit his House Museum, p. 60). The park is also Artist Vernissage, a weekend art fair that takes over the sidewalks of the park (See Walking Tours: Northern Avenue-Opera-Cascade p. 27). The cafes in Artist Vernissage include two of the laid back variety, that at the southernmost corner, Kazirok Café, haunt of Yerevan’s actors, writers and artists.

Just north, also facing Opera and serving as a fulcrum for Mashtots, Baghramian and Sayat Nova Avenues is Place de France (28), a large traffic circle with a small flower bed in the center. The otherwise unprepossessing ring of cars and buses is encircled by four important parks; Opera Park to the south, Sayat Nova/Artist Vernissage to the west, Tamanian Park (29) to the North with its link to Cascade park and Tamanian monument (30), and Sayat Nova or Komitas Park (31) to the east.

Tamanian Park (29) is a busy minivan stop on the Baghramian end, with a large leafy park that has been taken under the wings of an outdoor café, which immaculately maintains the park would other cafes do in kind.

Just north, across Moskovian p, the large Statue to Alexander Tamanian (30), Yerevan’s first Soviet Master Plan architect, stands bending over the now famous plans for the city. Behind him is the impressive Cascade Park, a public area of fountains, flower beds totally free of commercial interests (outdoor cafes are restricted to sidewalks off park property), which leads to the massive Cascade monument and soon to open Cafesjian Museum of Modern Art. The museum is the first in Yerevan that can be truly called world-class, and will contain one of the most valuable modern art collections in existence. (See Walking Tours: Northern Avenue-Opera-Cascade p. 27).

On your right as you continue through Place de France is Sayat Nova or Conservatory Park (31), less maintained but no less important as a park for students of the Music Conservatory (32) which stands on the far east side. The park has the Sayat Nova spring monument (33) (sculptor Ara Harutunian, architect Y. Sarapian) at its NW end and a large, enigmatic statue of Komitas (34) (sculptor Ara Harutunian) in the central plaza, depicting the melancholy composer sitting in the crook of a tree.

Side Trip: Take a R onto Moskovian and you will reach in a short block the Ballet Dance School (right side of street) and on the left, the Ring Park (36), one of Yerevan’s remaining green belts, with sidewalks, outdoor cafes and restaurants, and some great fountains. For details see Walking Tours: Ring Park, p. 28.

Backtrack and continue N on Mashtots. The next cross street is Isahakian. A left turn takes you past the Yerevan Pantomime Theatre (37) (Isahakian p, tel. 56-18-55) and at the end of the block, the Russian Art Museum (38) (See...
Museums: Russian Art, p. 60). A right turn takes you to Ring Park. For details see Walking Tours: Ring Park, p. 28. At the NE corner, Oskar Restaurant/Café sits under the popular Kino Nairi (39), which shows first run, independent and off beat films in its halls.

The next block of Mashtots includes several spots, three of note: the State Marionette Theatre (40) (43 Mashtots pta, tel. 56-24-50, 56-04-91) which can be very creative in its plays, using found objects along with more traditional puppetry; the next door Ararat Brandy Store, set within a “medieval” store; and just north the Girker Book Store (41), about the most beautiful shop I have seen, the walls and elaborate plasterwork covered with exquisitely painted frescoes and Armenian miniature motifs. May this shop never change! Buy something just to encourage the owner to keep fighting gentrification. At the end of the apartment block, the wall on your left protects the grounds of the Government Guest House (42), for dignitaries and the “Hoy Polloi” who visit from time to time.

The next street is Koriun, at its SE corner a Yerevan institution, the Ponchikanots (43), bought and renovated by Grand Candy for a new generation. ’Ponchikanots’ is a clever Armenian adaptation of the Russian word “Ponchik” for the deep fried sweet-cream filled doughnuts popular throughout the USSR, adding the Armenian suffix “–anots” to indicate a place or spot (hence the new Armenian slang ‘doughnut-shack’). Ponchikanots were popular with people of all strata, from the poorest student to the best-connected party apparatchik, all needing a cheap sugar fix. The new version respects this tradition while updating the surroundings. Stop for the adrenaline rush.

Cross over Koriun and continue north to the base of the uphill cobbled street. The Matenadaran (46) will face you at the top of the hill in front, under the Mair Hayastan (47) (“Mama Armenia”) Statue. On the lower alley to your right about half way up the block is the popular Chamber Theatre (44) (58 Mashtots, tel. 56-60-70, 58-78-44, email: erkat@xter.net, URL: www.erkat.am) which performs mainly satires and comedies, some of which comment on current events and are quite funny, if acidic. Whatever is performing, if you have the time, get a ticket to watch some entertainment with a bite.

Continue up the cobbled street and steps to the Mesrop Mashtots Statue (45) (sculptor G. Chubarian) at the foot of the Matenadaran (46). The Matenadaran (59 Mashtots pta, tel. 58-32-92, 56-25-78, www.matenadaran.org, open Tues-Sat 10-4, 500 AMD, with over 25,000 manuscripts and fragments dating back to the Greek era, is literally a world treasure, one of the oldest and richest book-depositories in the world. The collection contains manuscripts from the pre-Christian era, Armenian manuscripts form the 5th c, and those from foreign countries, some of which survive only in their Armenian translation at the Matenadaran. Give yourself an hour for this visit, worth every second. For details see Museums: Matenadaran p. 40.

End Mashtots Avenue Walking Tour.
The Hrazdan Gorge cuts through Yerevan, dividing the center-east communities from the west. More than a barrier that has to be crossed, the river gorge is a unique habitat for several endemic flora found only in the canyon, with a dramatically different climate than that above the rim. While the upper rim will be parched dry, the bottom of the canyon is moist and cool year round, fed by the waters of the Hrazdan river and its feeder canals, legacies of the Urartian Empire.

There is also a popular children’s park with its own 1 km train ride and some kiddy rides in a newly redone park with stone carvings. The gorge also runs under Hrazdan and you exit the tunnel, look to your L; a stone is crouched on the rocks between the two tunnels. This whimsical touch is carried throughout the gorge, first on the L, with the Children’s Park. The Children’s Park has been completed revamped, with brand new sidewalks, beautiful flower beds and a new fountain. The small park as a few kiddy rides and the famous children’s train, which still packs ‘em in on weekends for its 1 km ride. The train station is still to be renovated, though its current state is all the more romantic. There are eateries and a café in the park, and at the entrance, a new café with wooden pavilions straddling the river. Their questionable taste in music and design aside, these are the coolest places in a sweltering summer, and at least one is so over the top it is worth a visit just to gawk. These include a Teutonic castle, a moored ship, a bear’s den and a restaurant looking it came out of the 1960s B movie Barbarella.

Now a playground for the up and coming classes and horribly neglected by locals, the river canyon is still a wild space, where fauna like rabbit, fox, lynx and even a (rarely) stray wild cat can be found. When the river floods, water courses over the asphalt roads that have been laid on either side of the river, leaving behind 75 km of mud, bio-mass and trash carelessly tossed by local revelers.

As the river cafes and restaurants, who derive their income from the natural beauty and cool breezes coming off the river, clean off the trash (doing a fairly good job of it, relatively speaking), the canyon assumes a bit of its former glory, when teeming stands of trees towered above the 100m canyon walls and mossy grass blanketed rock surfaces. Each year the annual wildflower bloom continues, in wet years (like this I am writing in) the canyon walls are blanketed with red and orange poppies.

The canyon’s green belt officially extends throughout the length of the city, but in reality, what is really ‘green’ and worth a stroll is bordered by Hghtanak Bridge (between the Cognac and Wine factories) in the south and just above Kveian Bridge in the north, about 2.5 km of woodlands, rugged cliffs and grass, interrupted every 100 m or so by one of Yerevan’s “theme restaurants”, straddling the river. Their questionable taste in music and design aside, these are the coolest places in a sweltering summer, and at least one is so over the top it is worth a visit just to gawk. These include a Teutonic castle, a moored ship, a bear’s den and a restaurant looking it came out of the 1960s B movie Barbarella.

Developers have their eyes on Kond as a prime piece of real estate for new high rises, which would destroy the last piece of Yerevan connected to its past. In 1984, Soviets started to put a plan together that would rejuvenate the area, turning it into a ‘green’ and worth a stroll is bordered by Haghtanak Bridge (between the Cognac and Wine factories) in the south and just above Kveian Bridge. The park is two blocks from Hanrapetutian H’raparak (Republic Square). To get there from the Square, go NW on Amirian to Mashtots, cross the street and turn R, going NE on Mashtots one block to the Boulevard, which is behind a café. Take the central sidewalks NW through the park to the end, where the pedestrian tunnels are.

The 250m pedestrian tunnel connects boulevard (and the center) with the gorge, running underneath the Post Office tower and Kond neighborhood into the canyon. There is also a motorized Tram that takes people through the tunnel to the children’s park (100 AMD).

Kond Kond is best known to locals as the location of one of its most popular neighborhood churches, S. Hovhannes. The domed basilica sits in the midst of the oldest extant neighborhoods in Yerevan, a meandering series of alleys and mud and stone houses on a hill overlooking central Yerevan and the Hrazdan gorge.

Backtrack to the tunnel and continue walking along the paved road that follows the river upstream. In about 150 meters you will pass the Hydroelectric Station, a piece of 1930s technology that continues to generate modest amounts of power for the city. The plants is one of about seven on the river, beginning at Lake Sevan, taking advantage of the nearly 1000 meter drop form its source to the Ararat valley floor. A bridge by the plant allows pedestrians to cross over. In high water season, the raging water below is pretty impressive.

In about 25 meters there is a bridge that crosses to the other side. Continue forward for about 75 meters to the Monte Christo Restaurant “drawbridge entrance”. There are two towers on hundreds of years of joys and tragedies, peace and adversities.

The tunnel also runs under Hrazdan and Dvin Hotels before emptying into the gorge. As you exit the tunnel, look to your L; a stone panther is crouched on the rocks between the two tunnels. This whimsical touch is carried throughout the gorge, first on the L, with the Children’s Park.
the other side, entrance to the theme restaurant, which, no matter how Teutonic it looks, still serves Armenian and Russian food. The Rabiz is ear-splitting.

Immediately after is Bardiner Restaurant and the Hrashk Café, with lime green umbrellas over the tables, less over the top with more of a focus on the natural surroundings. The woods take over for about 150 meters until you reach a spring on your right side in a concrete grotto of sorts. It may or may not be flowing.

Another 50 meters brings Yerevan Jur, a collection point for Yerevan’s drinking water, and on another 100 meters the back side of Geghema Restaurant and Motel, the restaurant a growing enterprise of wooden balconies and eating patios, the motel to let by the hour (12,000 AMD 4 hours), or night (30,000 AMD). There is also a sauna. Immediately after the large Princess Mariana ship appears, seeming to have somehow floated up river and moored at the point, in reality, the “ship” was built piece-by-piece at the spot. A fun place to eat our or sip coffee.

In another 50 meters the Archanots Café appears, a modest establishment on clean concrete pavement with multi-colored florescent lights hanging in the trees and a live bear in a caged den by the river. Nice folks, decent prices, the last of the working class establishments on the gorge.

Right after the ship, a bridge crosses over the river, under the towering supports for the Kievian Bridge and Kievian pta, 150 meters above. The L bank begins with the front side of Geghama, which straddles both sides of the river. The L bank is a little more wild, a little farther with more of a focus on the natural surroundings. The woods take over for about 150 meters until you reach a spring on your right side in a concrete grotto of sorts. It may or may not be flowing.

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The road starts to rise towards Hrazdan Stadium at H’rashlik (its supports and one of the gates is across the road form the main entrance), and just after the restaurant’s walls there is are some trees and greenery, obscuring steps to a foot bridge that crosses the river. Side steps go into the gorge itself, at first trash laden, but the deeper you go the more wild it becomes. The footing is slippery— not for the flat-footed, but a nice escape into the wilds, and a great view of the bridge itself, its massive arching hiding the bridge’s real purpose. The bridge is in fact aqueduct carrying water from the side canal from the R to L bank. The current canal the latest incarnation of canals that go back to the Urartian Era, some 2800 years.

The road turns through some grasslands after Parvana, passing the gates to a private club (HAH) before passing the front entrance of Monte Christo. In 75 meters you meet the first bridge you meet on the other side of river, and can cross back to return via the tunnel, or continue to the Hrazdan Stadium and the Dzoraguih portion of the gorge.

If you continue, in another 200 meters of forested road you pass the exercise point, chin-up bars and places to do sit-ups, push-ups and stretches, busy most the day with athletes of varying ages and abilities. In another 250 meters the amazing H’rashlik (“Wonder”) Restaurant appears, a vision of white stone and black iron that opens to one of the most incredible fantasies I have ever seen for an eatery.

The restaurant is in a complex that looks like something out of the movies “Barbarella”, the “Flintstones” and Pirates of the Caribbean, with rhino tusk detailed flourishes throughout the area. Taking up several hectares of territory, dining tables are set out in private “huts” or “caballos” some in trees, others at river side. There is a huge indoor dining area that in no one seems huge until you go inside, so well designed is this place. The band shell includes a large outdoors dance floor river side, and several bridges seeming to be supported by dinosaur skeletons or bones cross the river. It is both outlandish and beautiful; the grounds are meticulously maintained with greenery and flowers everywhere. The menu is Armenian, dishes prepared in the tonir are delicious but pricey, while the regular menu is moderate to inexpensive depending on what you order. If you go no where else to eat out, H’rashlik is the place to go!

Cross the river via the aqueduct bridge to explore Dzoraguih. Sidewalks L or R from the bridge take you back to street side, L eventually towards Proshian p, R sidewalks go into what is called Dzoraguih, with a series of steps in about 200 meters below S. Sargis Church, at the base of Mashtots and Old Abovian pts.
Magistros (990 - 1059), and Hovhannes Yerzenkatsi (1293).

The Matenadaran preserves the works of over 30 Armenian philosophers, such as Eznik Hovhannes Sarkavag (1045/50 - 1129), Hovhannes Yerzenkatsi, Vahram Rabuni (13th century), Hovhan Vorotnetsi (1315 - 1386), Grigor Tatevatsi (1346 - 1409), Arakel Sunetsi (1425), and Stepanos Lehatsi (1699). “The Definition of Philosophy” by David Anhaght (5th - 6th centuries) is the most important study on philosophical thought in Armenia, relying on classical philosophies to refute progressive trends at the time.

The guides are friendly, and it is even possible to make advance arrangements to watch the restoration department at work.

For a very small portion of the collection is on display in the museum, but enough of the ancient manuscripts with their beautiful miniatures are on display to impress even the most jaded of visitors.

Histories

Histories make up the largest, most studied genre in the Matenadaran catalogue and include a wide range of authors and periods. These include “The Life of Mashtots” written in the 540s by Mashtots’ student Koriun, a “History” by Agathangelos (5th century) about the struggle against paganism in Armenia; a “History” by Pavstos Bizanq, a contemporary of Agathangelos who covered the historical period of 330-387; a “History of Armenia” by Movses Khorevatsi, the first chronological history of Armenia from mythological times to the 5th century; “The History of Vartan and the war of the Armenians”, by the 5th century historian Yeghishe desribing the struggle against Sassanid Persia in 451; “The History of Armenia” by another 5th c historian, Ghazar Parspetsi; A History of the Arab invasions by the 8th c historian Ghrevond; The 11th c history of the Turkish and Byzantine invasions by Aristakes Lastiverti; and 12th - 13th manuscripts by writers who created the Second Golden Age: Samuel Anetsi, Mkhitar Anetsi, Mattheos Urhayetsi, Mkhitar Arvakanetsi, Vartan Areveltsi, and Vazken Gandelaketsi. Other collections include A History of Armenia (1699), Ruzan, Sembat Sarpapet, Hetum Patmich, and Stepanos Orbelian.

Manuscript writing collapsed in the 14th c, as Mongol, Timur and Turkic raiders decimated the country. One writer surfaced, Tovma Metsopetsi (1376/9 - 1446), who wrote the history of the invasions of Timur Lenk (Tamurlane) and the total destruction of the country. Manuscript production rebounded in later centuries, waning after the printing press became wide-spread.

Geography

A number of works by medieval geographers are kept at the Matenadaran, the oldest of which is the “Geography” by the 7th century scholar Anania Shirakatsi, who cites a number of geographical sources from the ancient world. Other manuscripts include travelogues by Armenian adventurers and explorers, some of which are the only contemporary descriptions of those parts of the world.

Literature includes early histories that extensively quote pagan myths and legends (giving us the only surviving descriptions of the Armenian pagan world), followed by the development of religious literature and poems that held sway for 600 years until the 11th c writer Narekatsi created new type of poetry with his “Book of Lamentation,” for the first time bringing love, female beauty, nature and work into the Armenian poetry. His work, and creative use of language, is considered one of the treasures of world literature.

Grammar

The first grammars were written in the 5th c, mainly translations of “The Art of Grammar” by the Greek Dionysus Thrax (170 - 90 BCE). His study on Greek etymology was used for over a thousand years by Armenian scholars, shaping the unique grammatical style used in Armenian. Interpreters include David, Movses Kertogh (5th - 6th centuries), Stepanos Sunetsi (735), Grigor Magistros (990 - 1059), and Hovhannes Yerzenkatsi (1293).

Philosophy

The Matenadaran preserves the works of over 30 Armenian philosophers, such as Eznik Koghbatchi, Movses Kertogh (5th century), David Anhaght (5th - 6th centuries), David Harkatsi (7th century), Stepanos Sunetsi (8th century), Hovhannes Sarkavag (1045/50 - 1129), Hovhannes Yerzenkatsi, Vahram Rabuni (13th century), Hovhan Vorotnetsi (1315 - 1386), Grigor Tavatsi (1346 - 1409), Arakel Sunetsi (1425), and Stepanos Lehatsi (1699). “The Definition of Philosophy” by David Anhaght (5th - 6th centuries) is the most important study on philosophical thought in Armenia, relying on classical philosophies to refute progressive trends at the time.

Miniatures

Perhaps the most beautiful exhibit is that of the miniature, detailed decorations that accompanied bibles and religious treatises. The oldest examples of Armenian miniatures are from the 6th century, and exceptional examples of the art form at the museum include the Gospel of Echmiadzin (988), Gospel of Katolikos (10th century, found in 1977), Gospel of Mughni (11th century), and the Gospel of 1038.

The Gospel of Echmiadzin is an extraordinary work, with its carved ivory binding and four miniatures from the 6th century. Miniatures were divide into “schools” each with a distinct style, those from Ani-Haghbat, Glazdor, Van, Metsop, Tatiev, Yerezenka, Carin - Erzurum and the Crimea being among the most famous. The later Cilicia school, with its 15th century master Tatos Roslin, brought the art form to new heights, Roslin now considered a predecessor to the Renaissance for
his insightful depictions of human emotion and empathy in an otherwise iconic art form.

Music & Theatre Music developed from pagan times into religious sharakans (hymns) in the 4th century, first by Mashtots, then by other masters. In the 8th - 9th cc unique musical signs, called khazes, were created. Their code has not yet been deciphered, and they were used to record and sing hymns by several masters, including Mashtots (361 - 440), Khosrovudikt’s 8th c hymn to Vahan Goghnetnis, the new poems by Grigor Narekatsi (951 - 1003) and Nerses Shnorhali (1102 - 1173). Perfected in the 15th c, the music’s code was lost in the 16th-17th cc, its secrets alluded to in several early theories of music, but still a mystery.

Several manuscripts have miniatures of masked actors, one on display showing a pantomime with double masks (1286 King Hetum II manuscript). The first recorded theatre in Armenia is over 2000 years ago, by the Greek historian Plutarch who wrote that in 57 BCE Euripides' "The Bacchae" was performed. "The Bacchae" was performed in Artashat and the Armenian king Artavazd wrote tragedies.

Law One of the oldest writings of Armenian church law is the "Book of Canons" by Hovhannes Odznetsi (728), containing the canons of the ecumenical councils. The most important was "The Armenian Code of Law" by Melchior Gosh, the first collection of the Armenian civic law. Created during the 13th c Zakarian dynasty, Gosh’s code is still cited in Armenian law principle.

Medicine Medicine was already advanced in Armenia in the 5th cc, flourishing during the 11th - 15th cc when Mekhtiar Heratsi (12th century), Abusaid (12th century), Grigoris (12th - 13th centuries), Faradj (13th century), Amirovdot Avamissati (15th century) practiced. The first autopsy was performed in the 12th c, 400 years before Europe. Mekhtiar Heratsi (12th c) in his "Consolation of Peace" described the theory of outside agents as a factor of infections and allergic diseases, while his western counterparts were bleeding patients to balance their humors. Caesarian section, ablation of inner tumors, operative treatment of various female diseases were practiced in Armenia as early as the 12th c, while "Dispasus" was used for general and local wounds, "Zedoar", Melilotus officinalis and other narcotic drugs were used to anaesthetize births.

Accepting that the world is round, he wrote that the Sun illuminates both spheres of the Earth at different times so that when it is one in half, it is day in the other. He considered the Milky Way "a mass of stars" but also "the Milky Way", through which his theory of planetary motion, lunar phases and solar eclipses are explored.

Chemistry & Alchemy Texts on chemistry and alchemy include "Alchemy and Signs" by Hovhannes Yerzenketsi (1283), the anonymous "Methods of smelting Gold" (16th century), and a herbal pharmacopoeia, which included plant names in Persian to eliminate confusion.

As you approach the museum from the steps, the large Mesrop Mashtots Statue appears ( ), his arms outstretched in front of a tablet inscribed with the Armenian Alphabet he is credited with discovering/creating in 405 CE.

Upper level statuary Flanking the entrance to the museum are sculptures of six statues of representative figures for Armenia's arts & sciences (from left to right): Toros Roslin (13 c miniaturist), Grigor Tatevatsi (15th c academic & head of Tatev University), Anani Shirakatsi (7th c scholar, mathematician, and geographer), Movses Khorenatsi (5th c historian, the "father of Armenian history", Mkhitar Gosh (12th c scholar and priest who compiled Armenia’s first code of civil and canon law) and Frik (12th-13th cc poet).

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Nerses Shnorhali), archival documents (with one of the largest seals I have ever seen, Russian), and the largest and smallest manuscripts in the collection, the largest (the 1200-1202 Homilies of Mush) weighing 27.5 kg and the smallest (Calendar) weighing 19 grams. The last display case against the wall shows foreign manuscript and documents in the collection, including Japanese and a Torah scroll.

Unfortunately the collection is at times a mish-mash of items from different eras, without explanation or context: in some rooms the displays appear to have been assembled by a fashion designer rather than an historian. Upstairs there is a sense of context, but downstairs artifacts are displayed hodgepodge, with 19th c domestic carpets next to 4000 BCE ritual vessels. The museums at Metsamor, Erebuni and Sardarabat, though in poorer physical condition, are infinitely more illustrative of their history, with more knowledgeable staff.

The next, inner ring of displays (start L) continues with miniature examples, restoration efforts (before and after), silver binding, an ivory bound bible with miniature pages, miniatures and the types of ink used (vorotan red being one of the more famous, a valuable export that was as valuable as imported tea and silk), high medieval miniatures from the 13th-15th cc (look for Grigor Tatevatsi and his pupils portrait in Ms 1449), illustrated figures and samples from different regions of Armenia.

There is an over-priced book of old color photos for 15,000 AMD, but you can't understand the collection from reading it. Use the following maps and details to guide you. They sometimes provide guides for a fee (2500 AMD), but the ones we tested were a waste of money.

Museum Plan The Museum is laid out on two floors. The Ground Floor focuses on 19th c carpets, Early-Middle Bronze Age Vases (4000-2000 BCE) and Church items/Stone Carvings. The Second Floor contains galleries dedicated to artifacts related to Burial Rites, excavations at L’chashen (Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age), Dvin, Ani, Applied Art and the Stone Age.

The central table has (start facing outside window) displays with gospels, hymnals and particularly rich miniature paintings.

And unless you are fluent in Armenian, you are out of luck: the curators haven't got around to translating placards into foreign languages, despite a rich Armenian gave a fortune to renovate the museum and re-curate the collection into a "world-class" exhibit. Other than dusting the floor and changing a few light bulbs, one wonders where all the money went. Not into translations! Save a few poorly translated placards in the Burial and L’chashen rooms, you are on your own, to learn Armenian in a hurry or wander around in confusion. The museum provides no maps and no multi-language brochures.

The collection is a must see, but save your visit until the end of your trip, when what you see may make better sense as you put things into perspective with the places you have been.

Right Gallery: Stone Carvings, Khachkars
1. Church model, 12th-13th cc
2. Arch element, rose detail, 9th-10th cc
3. Cornice pomegranates, Zvartnots, 7th c
4. Basalt with tree of life detail, 5th-6th cc
5. Memorial stone detail, Dvin, 5th-6th cc
6. Cross, Dvin, 5th-6th cc
7. Noradus Khachkar, 8 petal 'roses', 991 CE
8. Memorial Khachkar, basilica, 4th c
9. Column Capital, Dvin, 5th-6th cc
10. Open Cross, Tree of Life, Dvin, 7th c
11. Hovhanavank column detail, 13th c
12. Monument of saint, Talin, 5th-7th cc

Left Gallery: Stone Carvings, Khachkars
1. Model of bell tower, 12th-13th cc
2. Model of church, 12th-13th cc
3. Gravestone, Gavar, 1542
4. Hunt, Proshian king, Spitakavor, 14th c
5. "Mariam Barikhos", Vayots Dzor, 14th c
6. Carving of Christ, Spitakavor, 14th c
7. Carving "Desus" Hovhan Mkrtich, 14th c
8. Detail of Eagle, Hovhanavank, 13th c
9. Khachkar, Barsum, 18th c
10. Cross Stone detail, 13th c
11. Cross, unknown, 1447
12. Eagle, Kecharis, 11th c
13. Khachkar, Havuts Tar, 12th-13th cc
14. Winged lion, Hovhanavank, 13th c
15. Khachkar fragment, Kecharis, 1280.
16. Wing Cross, Sevan, 1448
17. Model, Angeghaght, Sissian, 5th-7th cc
18. Column capital, Dvin, 7th c
19. Lion, Alyutzavan Village, 14th-15th cc

North Gallery: Religious Artifacts
1. Carved wood door, Tatev, 1614
2. Miter collars, 17th-19th cc
3. Staff ornament, 1747
4. Note Vestment, Constantinople, 1601 & Myrh vase, bird, 19th cc
5. Stole, 1819
6-9. Bibles, curtains, crosses, 15th-19th cc
10. Candelabra, Ani? 13th-14th cc
11. Lectern, Ani, 13th c
12. Curtain, Tiflis, 18th c
13. Lectern, Ani, 13th c
14. Vestments, 17th-18th cc
15. Altar cloth, Van, 17th c
16. Altar Cloth, Zmorinia, 1723
17. Silver crosses, chalices, 18th-19th cc
Note Relic, 1794
18. Meron lid ornament, 1798
19. Staff ornaments, 18th-19th cc
Note Ornaments, Jarjaris, 12th-13th cc, & Censor, oil lamp, 11th-12th cc

MAP 1-B
Long Gallery: Carpets / Bronze Age
1. Khachkar, Goshavank, 13th c
2. 19th c. Carpet
3. Vessel, Karnut, 3000 BCE
4. Carpet
5. Vase, Verin Naver, 19th c BCE
6. Vessel, L'chashen, 1700-1600
7. Carpet
8. Vessel with serpentine, Dvin, 10th c BCE
9. Carpet
10. Ritual Vessel, Dvin, 10th c BCE
11. Carpet
12. Door, Arekelots Vank, Sevan, 1486
13-15. Carpets
16. Vessel with water birds, snakes, fish, Gavar, 18th-17th cc
17-18. Carpets
19. Black Vessel, Vanadzor, 17th-16th cc
20. Carpet
21. Carpet
22. Red Vessel, birds, Dvin, 10th-13th cc
23. Carved door, Tatev, 1253
24. Black Vessel with three orifices, representing the cosmos, Van, 10th c BCE
25-27. Carpets
28. Carved door, master Husan Hovhanes, Arekelots, Sevan, 1176
29-30. Carpets

West Galleries: Shengavit, 19th c, Carpets, Bronze Age, Zvartnots
1. 19th c. Carpet
2. Artifacts, Shengavit, 3000 BCE
3. Carpet
4. Carpet
5. Stamps, Forms, Psalters, 19th-20th cc
6. Carpet
7. Carpet
8. Vessel, Shengavit, 2400 BCE
9. Carpet
10. Carpet
11. Black Vessel wserpent, Dvin, 10th c BCE
12-19 Carpets
20. Vessel with female or cosmic symbols, Shengavit, 4000-3000
21. Carpet
22. Red Vessel, Garni, 3rd-1st cc BCE
23. Model of Zvartnots
24-35. Carpets

State History Museum
1 - B

State History Museum
1 - A
Gallery: 17th – 18th cc. Religious Artifacts
1. Vestments, 17th cc
2. Chalice cover, 1800
3. Jewelry, 18th c, vase, 1950
4. Chalice cover, 18th c
5-7 Chalice covers, 18th c
8. Silver buckles and Jewelry, 18th-19th cc
9. Chalice cover, 18th c
10. Detail, fireplace, Sissian, 18th c
11. Religious Items, 17th-19th cc
12. Buckles, 17th-18th cc

Copper Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Urartu, Roman Age Gallery
1. Sculpture, Tavush, 6th-5th cc
2. Coins, Anahit
   (a) Coins, 3rd c BCE – 13th cc (Look for: (27) Tigran II, 95-55 BCE, (16) Antiochus VIII, 125-96 BCE, B (52) Levon I, Cilicia, 12th-13th cc),
   (b) Gold Coins, (c) Bronze head, Anahit, 4th c BCE, Satag Village, found 1873. Original in British Museum.
3. Anthropomorphic Idol, Karmir Blur, 13th-12th cc

4. Urartu, rein of Argishti I, 8th c BCE
   (a) Helmet showing tree of life, (b) Quiver,
   (c) Shield, (d) Daggers, (e) Spurs
5. Female Statue, Tavush, 6th-5th cc BCE
6. Metal figures
   (a) bronze goat, Artik, 3rd c BCE,
   (b) 3 color vase, 16th-15th cc BCE
7. Bronze Age Artifacts
   Look for (22) Vessel, Echmiadzin, 19th c BCE, (23) Riton, 8th-7th cc BCE, (12-15) Jewelry, 12th-7th cc BCE, (16) Belt ornaments, 11th-10th cc BCE, (18) Jewelry box tree of life, 7th c BCE, (19) Jewelry box lion detail, 7th c BCE, (20) Decorative items, 11th-10th cc BCE, and (21) Belt ornament, 11th-10th cc BCE.
   Reverse side of case:
   Note (1) Bronze Bull figurines, 13th-12th cc, (2) Riton, Armavir, 6th-5th cc, (3-5) Bronze Bull figurines, 6th-5th cc, (6) Figurines, Nor Bayazet, 13th-12th cc, (7) Bird figurines, 15th c BCE, (8) Bird figurines, 15th c BCE, (9) Bird figurine, 15th c BCE.
8. Stone carving, Shirak, 3rd c BCE
9. Stone carving, Yerevan, 2nd-3rd cc
10. 15th – 5th cc BCE Artifacts
   Among the items, note: the 2000 BCE Vessel, (12) Metal sun, Sevan, 11th c BCE, (15-16) Bronze deer, 6th-5th / 9th-8th cc, (19) Handle, Karmir Blur, 8th-7th cc, and (11) Vessel, Astghi Blur, 9th-8th cc.
   Opposite side of case:
   (1) Goat, Lori, 11th-10th cc, (2) Figurines, Parakavar, 10th-9th cc, (3) Figurines, Parakavar, 9th c BCE, (4) Hairpins, Artium, 12th-11th cc, (5) Animal figurines, Armenia, 6th-5th cc, (6) Figurine, Nor Bayazet, 6th-5th cc, (7) Female figure, Parakavar, 6th-5th cc, (8) Female figures, Armenia, 6th-5th cc, (9) Raft,

2ND FLOOR
MAP 2-A
Center and Left galleries
A. Black decorative Pot, Urartian period,
B. Black decorative pot, Urartian period,
1. Photo Story of the excavation. L’chashen was discovered when the waters of Lake Sevan receded due to hydro-electric activity. As the waters receded, first the “Rusis” stone from the Urartian period emerged, then a large settlement from the Early Iron Age (2000-1200 BCE). Excavations uncovered a civilization unlike any seen before. The discovery of an intact burial site, including wooden hearses with metal talismans, further showed a people who held the afterlife central to their existence. The current exhibition is miles beyond the previous one that placed a Sears-Roebuck mannequin in a wooden carriage.

2. Weapons (a) Deer, 15th c BCE, (b) Goat, 13th c BCE, (c) Horse?, 15th-13th cc, (d) Lion, 14th-13th cc, (e) Symbols, 12th-10th cc, (f) Bird, 13th c BCE, (g) opposite side of case) Sun symbols

3. Totems (a) Left: Weapons, 3rd-2nd millennium, (b) Fork, 13th-12th cc, (c) Sword tips, 19th-12th cc, (d) Axe heads, 13th-12th cc

4. Ritual 3-color clay vessel, 15th c BCE Bow & Arrows, 15th-14th cc

5. Aries figure, 3rd millennium BCE, Harich

6. Bronze Bull figurine, 15th c BCE, (b) Vessel, 15th c BCE

7. (a) Silver cup, 22nd-21st cc, Karasham, (b) Gold necklace, 15th-14th cc, Vanadzor, (c) Necklaces, 22nd-9th cc, various locations

8. Bronze deer, 12th c BCE

9. Tools and Implements of the Stone Age (a) 250,000 – 8000 BCE, (b) Middle: Neolithic, 7000-6000, (c) Right: Aneolithic, 7000-6000; Note spoon: carved 7000 years ago.

10. Bronze Pot, 17th-16th cc, Oshakan

11. (a) Ritual Vessel, ca. 4000-3000, unknown, (b) Ritual clay Hearth, 3rd millennium BCE, Kamrut

12. Black vessel, 21st-19th cc, Nor Naver

13. Black vessel, 21st-19th cc, Nor Naver

14. Black vessel, 21st-19th cc, Nor Naver

15. Black Vessels

16. Black vessel, 21st-19th cc, Nor Naver

17. Photo Display of new excavations

18. (a) Necklace made of bronze, silver, chalcedony, 3000-2000, Geghard, (b) Birds, 15th-14th cc, Kuchark.

19. Obsidian, other artifacts (1) Aries Ritual statue, 5th-4th m, Adablur, (2) Vessel, 5th-4th millennium, Adablur, (3) Obsidian knives, 6000-5000, various, (4) Obsidian, 6000-5000, various, (5) Hearth, 4000-3000, Shengavit, (6) Totems, 3000 BCE, Agarak, (7) Totems, 3000 BCE, Geghard, (8) Mortar, 3000 BCE, Agarak, (9) Stamp, 3rd...
History of the excavation. Excavations periodically continue, and a museum by the dig has more detailed information about this important site.

2. Blue ceramics, 11th-13th cc
   (1) Bowl, (2) Bowl, (3) Pitcher, (4) Vase.

3. While with blue feathering, 11th-12th cc
   (a) Serving bowl, (b) Pot, (c) Vase, (d) Bowl.

4. Red clay pot with belt decorated with animal imagery, 10th-12th cc

5. (a) Paper thin Red clay pottery 10-12th cc, (b) Vases and pitchers, 10th-12th cc, (c) pottery fragments, 10th-12th cc.

6. Red clay pot with belt, 10th-11th cc

7. Red clay pot covers, 9th-13th cc

8. Red clay pot with belt, 10th-11th cc

9. Green Glaze Ceramics, 11th-13th cc

10. Red clay belt pot, 10th-12th cc

11. Iron tools, 9th-13th cc

12. Coins, 8th-14th cc

13. Glass, 9th millennium BCE, Tatev, (10) Cup, 3rd millennium BCE, Shengavit

20. Hellenistic Period

(a) Figurines, 1st-2nd cc, Artashat, Armavir, (2) Silver cup, 6th-7th, Sevan.

21. Metal, Gold


17. Cobalt Blue Ceramics, 12th-13th cc
   (1) Lion design with gold inlay, (2) Vase

GALLERY: Ani

1. Ani Crest, Bagratuni Family, copy. As with Dvin, Ani designs incorporate pre-Christian and Christian imagery prevalent in the times. It is also interesting to see how fashion repeats itself: note the difference between the incredibly refined glazed and lacquered ceramic ware and the pre-Christian imagery and styles used in the red clay pottery. One side says it’s merely shows the difference in importance between that of the king and the peasants, but jewelry and other objects show something different: is the copying of more primitive designs from the past our first glimpse into fads?

2. Lectern, 1272 CE, Ani

3. Column Capital, 847 CE, Sevan

4. Lectern, 10th c, Ani

5. Model of Church, 10th-12th cc, Ani. Models had four purposes: First as a gift to the church from the donor, second as a receptacle for the host, third as an architect’s model and fourth as a decorative piece on the walls of the church it eventually became.

6. Pictures of excavation and city. Ani’s ascendency began in the 8th c, after the Armenian rebellion against the Arab Caliphate. The Bagratuni family forged an agreement with the Caliphate to have autonomous control over regions of Armenia, eventually including the North. The Bagratunis built their capital at Ani, which became known as the “city with 1001 churches” and indeed dozens of church ruins remain. Declining after the Seljuk invasion of the 12th c, the city lost its hegemony in the 13th c and was slowly deserted. Beginning in 1892, Russian archaeologist and orientalist Nicolai Marr began the first serious excavation of the site, uncovering much of what we know about the city. Under Russian control, the city was eventually lost to the Ottomans in the 1921 division of the Armenian lands. Ani is now mostly destroyed, called a “Turkish city”, with some Turkish tourists using the carvings on the...
buildings for target practice, even defacing the one remaining mosque.

7. Model of the city
(A much more detailed plan can be found at www.virtualani.freenet.am and our chapter on Shirak: Ani)


8. Bronze pot, 11th-13th cc, Dvin

9. Bronze, Note:  
   (3) Pitcher, 12th-13th cc, (4) Base, 11th-13th cc, (8) Pitcher with animal handles.

10. Oil Lamps, censors, crosses, 6th-13th cc, Ani, Echmiadzin, Lori, Dvin, Vayots Dzor, Note:  
(a) 1-7 censors have beautiful details of religious figures, (b) crosses 11th-13th cc.

11. Various  
   (1-5) Architectural details, 11th-13th cc, (6-7) Mercury holders, 9th-13th cc, opposite side: (4) Clay pitcher with cow spout, 9th-10th cc, (5) pitcher, 10th-11th cc

12. Fabric  
   (1) Child's gown, 12th-13th cc, (2) Carpet fragment, 12th-13th cc, (3) Embroidery in gold, 12th-13th cc.

13. Metal Candelabra, 12th c

14. Story of Ani excavation

Gallery: Dvin / Ani Ceramics, 9th-13th cc
1. Glazed platter, 9th-10th cc
2. Green/brown ceramics, 9th-13th cc, Dvin
3. "Lusapatantz" ceramics, 10th-12th cc, Dvin

4. Decorative ceramic ware in blue with birds, winged lion, portraits, 12th-13th cc, Dvin
5. Glazed turquoise pot, 12th-13th cc, Dvin
6. Glazed ceramic ware with tree of life, deer imagery, 11th-12th cc, Dvin
7. Etched cobalt ceramics, 11th-12th cc, Dvin
8. Ceramic ware, 10th-13th cc, Dvin, Ani
9. Woven ceramic ware, 10th-13th cc, Dvin
10. Pot, 8th-9th cc, Dvin
11. Color ceramic ware, 9th-12th cc, Dvin

Gallery: Applied Art
1. Porcelain, 17th-18th cc
2. Carved Stone dinnerware, 17th-18th cc
3. South Door to Sacristy, wood, pearl, turtle shell, 1721, Echmiadzin
4. North Door to Sacristy, wood, pearl, turtle shell, 1721, Echmiadzin
5. Salt Holder in shape of pregnant woman, 19th c
6. Window shade, 18th c
7. Salt holder, 19th c
8. Salt holders, 19th c
9. Bronze, copper trays, 17th-19th cc
   Note 1695 table (7) and Zodiac table top (13)
10. Baptismal, 18th c
11. Eggs and Tile  
   (a) Porcelain Eggs, 17th-18th cc. Eggs are among the oldest symbols in the world, representing fertility, birth, the cosmos, life and the sun. Used in Armenian churches, they were hung near the altar in memory of the deceased. (b) Persian tile, 17th-18th cc. Tiles were used for baths and courtyards, this was used in a Sheiks’ harem.
12.  
   (a) Garlic Mortars, 18th-19th cc, (b) Cake Stamps, 18-19th cc, (c) Cake mold, 19th c.
13. Amulets for animals, 18th-19th cc  
   Salt holders, same period
14. Copper/tin vessels, 18th-19th cc
The gallery has sections on Armenian art (medieval miniatures, frescoes, sculpture replicates, 18th–20th cc paintings, sculptures, drawings, applied art, and Diaspora Armenian artworks), Russian art (18th–20th cc paintings, sculptures and drawings), European art (14th–20th cc Italian, French, Dutch, Flemish, German, 19th c Romantic art, 15th–20th cc English, German, Spanish, Belgian) American art, plus Egyptian, Greek, Chinese, and Persian art.

The oldest paintings on display are frescoes from churches in Arub and Lmbat villages (5th–9th cc). The gallery also has copies of frescoes from the Church of S. Grigori Prosvetitel (the teacher in Ani, and from Haghpat, Tatev and Akhtanin monasteries (10th-14th cc).

European galleries include Italian (Di Bicci, Garofalo, Bassano, Tinoretto, Strozzi, Lanfranco, Guardi, Kanovi, Guercino, Benvenuto, Tiepolo); Flemish (Rubens, Van Dyck, Jordanaes, Deit) Dutch (Berham, Dujardin, Netcher, Codde, G. Flinka, Teniers, Neefs, Claesz, Van Goen) German and French (Boudin, Courbet, Monticelli, Fragonard, Greuze, Rouais, Robert, Diaz, Vernet, Rousseau) masters. Look for The Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine (Di Bicci school) and work of the Barbizion school of landscape painting (Narcisse Diaz de la Peina, Rousseau, Boudin, Monticelli and Van Gogh).

The name comes from Barbizon village in northern France where most of the school's painters lived.


Armenian Galleries cover the period from Medieval to modern times. Medieval art includes work by the miniaturists Toros Roslin, Sarkis Pitsak, Grigor Tavetatsi and others. A number of rare samples of mural painting, preserved in the monasteries and churches of Tatev and Haghbat, have been transferred to the gallery along with displays of applied arts.

The "Modern Age" is represented by the work of Hovsep Kojoyan, Stepan S. Hakobian, Hovhannes (Ivan) Aivazovskij and Gevork Bashnianjian. In addition there are landscapes by Isaac Levitan, Mikhail Vrublev’s graphic works and portraits by Victor Borisov-Musatov. Of special note are Bashnianjian’s landscapes and Aivazovskij’s impressive seascapes. The National Gallery has the second largest collection of Aivazovskij’s works (the largest is at the Theodosia Memorial Museum). Others are the emotional depictions of mythic figures by Vartkes Surenian, the colorful paintings (some say precursors to Sarian’s later masterpiece works) by Yeghishe Tadevosian and Panos Terlemezian, and the etchings of Edgar Shahin. Late 19th-20th century art includes some real jewels by Zakari Zakarian, Hovsep Pushman, Vano Khojabekian, Martiros Sarian, Hakob Kojoyan, Sedrak Arakelian, Alexander Bazhbeouk-Mekkian, Gabriel Gurjian, Georgy Yakoulov, Yervand Kuchar, Gregorio Scibian, Leon Tutunjian, Arshile Gorky, Carrazz, Girardo Orakyan, Bedros Kondradjian, Janssen, Harutyun Galents, Minas Avetessian, and Hapkop Hakopian.

Periodic Exhibitions, Concerts and Films The museum also hosts period guest exhibitions (past exhibits have come from Japan and France), and presents musical concerts and foreign films on a regular basis in its upper floor theatre.

A calendar of events at the Museum can be found at www.armtown.com/events/en and www.armenianinfo.am/calendar/view.php.

GERARD L. CAFESJIAN MUSEUM OF ART is Cascade, Cafesjian Museum Foundation, 2 Tamanian p, Suite 48, tel. 54-19-32, 54-19-34, fax: 568-350, email: cmf@netsys.am, URL: www.cmf.am, due to open 2009. The core of the Museum's permanent collection will be The Gerard L. Cafesjian Collection of Art, with the definitive collection of major works by renowned artists Stanislav Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova. Their monumental sculptures have pushed the limits of the glass medium and take the studio movement into the realm of fine art. Their accomplishment remains unchallenged. Important works by world famous artist Dale Chihuly are part of the studio glass collection, which includes artists from many countries.

The Nairi, a people inhabiting the Armenian Plateau, are mentioned in Assyrian texts as early as 1200 BCE. The territory and people called Nairi, but the word meant "country or land of rivers", and contemporary Assyrian accounts describe about 60 different tribes and small kingdoms and about 100 cities included in this land. The "people" in this description were an alliance of tribes led by a dominant tribe, the Nairi. From what we know of the tribes at this time, their customs and traditions were similar to others found in Mesopotamia, and they mixed Semitic or Ugaritic origins with their earlier Indo-European genetic and cultural roots. Among the tribes in Nairi was one called Urartu.

By the 11th c BCE, Assyria went into 200 years of decline, allowing Urartu to develop and expand its influence. Hurrian influences continued, but the Urartu tribe began to absorb Assyrian culture, including the use of cuneiform to replace pictogram writing. By the 9th c. BCE the Urartu kingdom had established its regional power far beyond its capital at Tushpa (present day Van), invading Mesopotamia, and unifying the tribes in the Armenian plateau into one centralized state.

The Urartu consistently cut Assyria from the trade routes to the Mediterranean, and enjoyed a monopoly on commerce between Asia and the West. The Urartians called their country Baniili (the name "Urartu" comes from the Assyrian language). Urartu was a remarkably developed culture with extensive contacts with the major empires of the Ancient world; Urartian timber was shipped to Egypt, its metal forges were used to produce iron weapons and tools, and its development of irrigation created vast agricultural tracts. They worshipped a pantheon of gods which closely resembled those in other empires, and their temple architecture show a similarity to that discovered in Ur (ca. 3500-2000 BCE) and Babylon. When the Assyrian king Shalmanasar III conquered Van, he integrated details from Urartian secular design schemes into his throne room. Frescoes found in the excavation of Erebuni in Yerevan are virtually identical to those later used by the Assyrians.

The window decorations of the Erebuni Museum (above) represent the Urartian culture that occupied the area before the arrival of the Assyrians. The museum is at the foot of Arin Berd, site of a 1970s excavation that uncovered a fortress-city. Other facilities will include an auditorium for educational programming and performance art, sales shop, restaurant, reception areas, administrative offices, exhibition department and collection storage.
Republic into its reaches. He ordered the building of several key outposts, among them Erebusi in 782 BCE and Argishtishnili (present day Aramvair).

Erebuni was established in the foothill area on the edge of the Ararat Valley and served as a base for the Urartian advance into the area around Lake Sevan, a region rich in cattle, occupied by tribes with Hurrian roots. The citadel of Erebuni contained a royal palace, a temple and storerooms. In the year before, campaigns in Northern Syria conquered the kingdoms of Hatti and Melita, and 6,600 prisoners captured in those wars were forced to build and settle the new city at Erebuni. Tablets at Erebuni proclaimed Argishti's power, building a city "to despoil the might of the land of Biaini and hold her enemies in awe".

Six year's later Argishti established a new city in the Ararat Valley on the ruins of Armvair, calling it Argishtishnili ("built by Argishti"). The city boasted cyclopian walls reinforced by towers, within which were temples, storerooms, and in the citadel, a new palace. Inscriptions found at the site bear witness to the importance of the city as an administrative and religious center, while Erebusi was used primarily as a military fort.

By the end of Argishti I's reign Urartu was at the zenith of its power. Its authority stretched between the Transcaucasus and well into the Hittite territory in the west. Northern Syria was dependent on Urartu, which now controlled the main trade routes to western Asia. Urartu barred Assyrian expansion into Asia Minor, and its culture had begun to penetrate into the Mediterranean. Urartish languages and inscriptions are used on many of the finds from the Akkadian and Urartian explorations in Armenia. The finds include not only Urartian artifacts and design but also items made outside of the country, giving a good idea of the enormous wealth in the empire and why it was so coveted by the outsiders.

The Urartian Empire in Armenia include the citadels of Erebuni (Yerevan), Teishebaini (Karmir Blur), Argishtishnili (Armati), Giunmi, Vanadzor, and Sislian, three fortified cities on Lake Sevan (L'reshen, Gavar and Martuni) and numerous forts throughout the country (most Bronze Age forts were followed by an Urartian level).

COMPLEX The complex is in two parts: the lower entrance, with galleried exhibits, and the museum. The museum opened on its 25th anniversary, November 16, 1994. Visitors are led through the excavation itself, which was reinforced and renovated for the museum's 30th anniversary, 1998 opening and slightly repaired for its 1998 celebration, but mostly deserted and ill-kept. Still walking through the excavation gives some good idea of the extent of Urartu's development in the Iron Age, and their influence by the Assyrians.

MUSEUM The museum has a large collection of items on display; jewelry, idols, tools and implements used at the fortress and at Karmir Blur and Shengavit. This is the most completely collection of Urartian artefacts in the world (12,235 in all), arranged in a way to show how the fortress operated as a settlement, temple and seat of power. Two other branches are at Shengavit (5288 objects) and Karmir Blur (1620 objects).

The museum is divided into four central halls arranged around a central courtyard. The displays are arranged into 15 sections. Guides can give tours in English, French and German (give a day notice in off season) for an additional 2500 AMD. The museum is officially opened to the public in 1998, the 2750th anniversary of the founding of Urartu.

The Urartians recovered under the reign of Rusa's son, Argishti II, and Rusa II, re-establishing trade routes and building a new capital called Rusahitshnili, but by the 6th c, Urartu and Assyria were both exhausted by constant warfare, and betrayed by their allies the Scythians, Urartu ended abruptly ca. 585 BCE when the Medes—assisted by Scythians—invaded and destroyed the capital of Tushpa. Signs of fire and pillaging at Erebusi and Karmir Blur are from the same period. The rest of the empire were subjugated by the Achaemenid Empire (under Cyrus, Xerxes and Darius). Relics of the Urartian Empire in Armenia include the citadels of Erebuni (Yerevan), Teishebaini (Karmir Blur), Argishtishnili (Armati), Giunmi, Vanadzor, and Sislian, three fortified cities on Lake Sevan (L'reshen, Gavar and Martuni) and numerous forts throughout the country (most Bronze Age forts were followed by an Urartian level).
There were 79 gods in the Urartian pantheon (14 female, and 65 male). The three main deities were Khaldi (or Khaldi, the supreme god, symbolized by a man standing on a lion), his wife Anubani, and Teisheba (a fighting god symbolized by a man standing on a bull). Others in the pantheon included Khuba (the god of war), Shinvin (the sun god, depicted as a fireball) and Tushpue (the god of the Urartian capital Tushpa).

Section 1

1A. Bas Relief of Teisheba. Reconstruction in tufa stone.
1C. Bas Relief of Khaldi. Reconstruction in tufa stone.

Note 1A & 1C: The two bas relief's in tufa stone are contemporary carving based on fragments found at the excavation. The one on the left (1A) is the god Teisheba and the one on the right (1C) depicts the god Khaldi.

Erebuni. The city of Yerevan traces its birth to the same date. Though actually much older, considering earlier versions of the city at Shengavit and Lake Yerevan (4000 BCE and 90,000 BCE respectively) Erebuni marks the beginning of 2,790 years of continuous inhabitation.

Hall One: Empire And Cuneiform

Section 1

1A. Bas Relief of Teisheba. Reconstruction in tufa stone.
1C. Bas Relief of Khaldi. Reconstruction in tufa stone.

1D. Model of Erebuni. Underneath the map is a model of Erebuni. It was first built, including the temples of Sushi and Khaldi, a Ziggarat (in Armenian “Ashtarak”) or watch tower within the layout. The walls were between 12-15 meters in height (40-50 ft), with an average thickness of between 2-4 meters (6.5-13 ft). The royal entourage and soldiers lived at the highest point (the most fortified section) of the city, while urban dwellings rung the hillside below and around the citadel.

Section 2

2A-H. Cuneiform Stones. The next section houses a selection of cuneiform storms in Urartian, Babylonian and Assyrian writing. Urartu adopted cuneiform from the Assyrians and Babylonians along with other traditions and beliefs. Until 1950 the city of Erebuni was known simply as Arin-Blur, a hill where after rainstorms and melting snows villagers cuneiform writing by villagers led to excavations directed by Constantine Hovhannissian. From all excavations in Armenia since 1950, more than 500 cuneiform stones were discovered; the tablet bearing the inscription by Argishti I proclaiming the birth of Erebuni to declare the might of the land of Biaini and hold her enemies in awe.

Hall Two: Subsistence

Section 3

3A. Stone irrigation and water pipes. The stone pieces are from the Menuas and Shamiram (after Queen Semiramid) canals. The city and surrounding area was extensively irrigated. Notice the way the stones were carved with male and female joints. Central stone has an oblong opening for cleaning. Stones nearby are those used to clean pipes (even the ancients had plumbing problems)

3B. Large Stone Bowl made of volcanic rock used for filtering water.
3C. Grinding stone.

3D. Excavated Seeds and Fruit. The kernels were uncovered from a layer of the city that had been destroyed by fire during the invasions of the area following the collapse of the empire. Kernels of wheat and burgher are included in the display, along with whole dried plums.

Section 4

4A. Picture (left) of excavated Cattle shed.
4B. Picture (center) of Urartian Brewery
4C. Picture (on right) of Urartian Brewery

4D. Excavated Seeds and Fruit. The kernels were uncovered from a layer of the city that had been destroyed by fire during the invasions of the area following the collapse of the empire. Kernels of wheat and burgher are included in the display, along with whole dried plums.

Section 5

5A. Oblong Jars for brewing/storing beer are shaped in a way that they had to be stored on their sides, thereby keeping corks wet and tightly in place.
5B. Large Wine Vessel. Vessels such as this were used for storing wine, oil and wheat. Jars were kept partially buried in the ground to maintain a constant temperature. Notice the marks on the side of the vessel, three akarki. In Urartu, 1 akarki was equivalent to about 250 liters, 1 metric ton to about 25 liters. So the three akarki marks on the jar told Urartians it could hold 750 liters of liquid.
5C. Sulfur Cleaning Vessel. The small strange shaped jar with triangular holes was filled with sulfur and placed inside large jars to clean them between use.

Hall Three: Weaponry And Crafts

Section 6

6A. Oak Wood Fragments. 3000 years old, these fragments of oak were used for columns, door and window casings and roof construction. Roofs at Erebeni were made by crossing wood beams and covering with woven reed mats. The wood has been compared with those found at other sites in the Ararat Valley hat, along with geographical studies of the region show that as late as the Urartu Empire the valley held vast stands of forest.

Section 7

7A. Iron pipes (fragments, ca. 200 BCE) used for drainage and bringing water into the citadel. The piping system illustrate a predilection for hygiene not common in the era.
7B. Bronze Door Lock is among the bronze and iron items in the display.
7C. Bronze Vessel
7D. Molds used for pouring iron and bronze.

Section 8

4E. Saddles and Farming Implements include 2 scythes, a spade and a horse brush.
4F. Milk Jugs are in the corners of the display case. Urartians had developed agriculture to a high art, and were able to store products such as milk in jars designed to maintain a cool temperature even in warm weather.
Tumanian Street, all in Yerevan. This suggests a much larger area of human occupation. Life and health, while the emblem of death was represented by a deity that "transferred the souls". By believing in a deity that "transferred the souls", Urartians showed a distinct belief system, boundaries between this and the other worlds, and that the soul alone could not cope with the incumbent problems of that existence. Apparently the soul met with another god on the borderline of the other world—Shebitu, who like his Mesopotamian counterpart Sabitu-Siduri, guarded

The idea of the other world was related to the which was Lake Van, a reason for their occupying

Section 9

9A. Drawing of Erebuni
9B. Drawing of King's raiment
9C. Fragments of Urartian clothing and Sewing Artifacts include fragments from aristocratic household textiles, thread spinner and pieces from a loom.
9D. Ceramic Oil lamps, divided into two halves, the smaller well linked to the larger by holes. The wick sat in the smaller section.
9E. Pottery Wheel
9F. Stone Wheels from an Idol.

Section 10

10A. (inside drawer) Vessel Fragments include handles and two-handled pieces.
10B. (upper case) Small ceramic bottles used for holding medicine, perfume and ointments.
10C. (small case towards end) Funerary Jar with the heads of the deceased were placed. Note the three holes. They were cut so that the soul of the deceased could leave the confines of the jar.
10D. Large Storage Jars. The corner jar is decorated with designs representing water and wheat, also found at Metsamor jars dating to 4500-4000 BCE.

Section 11

Artifacts from an Urartian Tomb One of the most important displays in the museum are these artifacts uncovered in 1984 by Armenian archeologists (see side piece).

11A. Ceramic Vessel. This vessel is adorned with concave lines and sculpted heads of bulls. Vessels of this type were of common occurrence in the empire, and is a replica of respective bronze vessels widespread in the area.
11B. Ceramic Vessel. The vessel is adorned with three belts and a statuette of a lion, reminiscent of that uncovered at Teishebaini (Karmir Blur) and a symbol of Yerevan. By believeing in a deity that "transferred the souls", Urartians showed a distinct belief system, boundaries between this and the other worlds, and that the soul alone could not cope with the incumbent problems of that existence. Apparently the soul met with another god on the borderline of the other world--Shebitu, who like his Mesopotamian counterpart Sabitu-Siduri, guarded

Hall Three, Section 12: Burial

The Baini Tombs in Yerevan One of the more important finds in Armenian archeology—the graves at Nor Aresh and Erebuni—occurred like so many others around the world—by accident. When construction of a new factory was begun in 1984, a large graveyard was uncovered. Further excavation by archeologists of the Armenian Academy of Sciences uncovered a sepulcher in the graveyard from the Urartian period, stone-coffins from the Early Bronze and barrows from the Middle Bronze Age. One of the pots found from the early 1st millennium BCE was found adjacent to the old graveyard.

The 8th century BCE sepulcher is floored with polished black, red and brown tufa stone slabs, with caches underneath. The walls were built in five layers, of finely crafted tufa, with five niches, three of which were fitted into the western wall, each containing an urn filled with fragmented bones of humans, animals and birds.

A niche of the same size was fitted into the southern wall. On the eastern wall a longer niche was found, spanned by a large tufa beam which supported most of the weight of the stone slatted roof. The niche held a large clay vessel decorated with the heads of three bulls, in addition to a bowl with a rabbit-effigy stamp on the base. Five large tuff beams span the upper walls from east to west, with another two completing the roof construction running from north to south. The entrance to the sepulcher lies on the northern side, hermetically sealed with a massive tufa stone.

Artifacts in profusion were found in the tomb, including a pitcher with a lion-headed spout, an ewer, a lamp holder and a number of bowls at the northeastern corner. Underneath the floor slats at the end of the sepulcher were found, one holding bronze quivers, a bowl, agate beads, a weight-sealed bowl of black stone engraved with the effigies of a griffin and a crescent. The second cache held bracelets with snake heads. The third cache held remnants of three different straps and saddles, snake-headed bracelets, an iron spear tip, knifes and daggers, bronze nails, a bucket and other artifacts.

The high quality pottery is in two types: wide-mouthed, slender-bodied with wide base vessels, high necks and protruding lips and those wrought with animal figurines. The first were bored with three triangular holes on their sides. Similar urns have been uncovered at other excavations in Armenia. The second group of pottery comprised two vessels wrought with animal-shaped figurines, one which had three belts and a statuette of a lion, reminiscent of that uncovered at Teishebaini (Karmir Blur) and a symbol of Yerevan. The second vessel is adorned with concave lines and sculpted heads of bulls.

Weaponry uncovered included a 0.90 cm long iron sword, three daggers are in the style popular in the Near East and made in Armenia in Middle Bronze Age up to the 8th century BCE. Three leaf-shaped spear heads and two almond-shaped arrowheads were also found. The horse saddles included harnesses, head stalls, bells, buckles and a number of curb chains. The headstalls are of bronze.

Far from the confines of Erebuni, the graveyard is thought to have been used for a separate city, and may have been the beginnings of present-day Nor Aresh. Further excavations are hoped to reveal the existence of a third habitation within the limits of Yerevan (Erebuni and Teishebaini or Karmir Blur being the other two) at the time. Urartian monuments have also been uncovered in the residential areas of Charbakh, Noragavit and Tumanian Street, all in Yerevan. This suggests a much larger area of human occupation.

Burial and Religious Beliefs The Urartians, like others found in Armenia and Anatolia, shows a pattern of belief in the soul and after-life. It further elaborates a system that revolves around birth-death-life-afterlife, with the "dwelling of the soul" making up the most significant element of burial.

It is believed that the Urartian god Adaruta was the symbol of birth, Imushshin stood for disease, life and health, while the emblem of death was represented by a deity that "transferred the souls".

By believing in a deity that "transferred the souls", Urartians showed a distinct belief system, regardless of other traditions and cultural effects they adopted. They had their own legends concerning the soul, the other world, the boundaries between this and the other worlds, and that the soul alone could not cope with the incumbent problems of that existence. Apparently the soul met with another god on the borderline of the other world--Shebitu, who like his Mesopotamian counterpart Sabitu-Siduri, guarded the entrance.

The idea of the other world was related to the concept of water—the ocean or sea—an example of which was Lake Van, a reason for their occupying the adjacent area for their capital. As with ancestral Armenian beliefs, life in the other world was similar to that in this world, except for the fact that it was reversed as in a mirror. Instead of the human, it was the soul that was in need of food, clothing, arms, implements and means of travel in the other world. Khutuini, the fourth deity in the pantheon as master of mankind's destiny, was supreme ruler of the other world.

The idea that the road leading to the other world must have passed through caves and grottoes, as well as "gates", is testified to in burial forms found in rock openings or manmade caves. Significantly, if the deceased was buried in the ground, the latter was covered with a stone "shield" with a central "gate" at one end. It was believed that the gods emerged from the rocks to maintain contact with humans, and there was a habit of dedicating the "gate" to one god or another (usually Khalidi, the supreme deity over all others).
Despite a unifying concept of the other world, individual burial rites are markedly dissimilar, reflecting the geographic and prevailing ethnic nature of the ethnic groups in the Armenian Plateau, while others believe the general principles surrounding all burials and the belief in the other world and its passage shows a deeper homogenous Indo-European character among all tribes with dialectical differences, and some integration of Hurrian, Alarodians and surrounding cultures.

Burial of the Body Intact: This rite—practiced throughout the Armenian Plateau in all stages of development—varied in Urartu with the corpse buried in caves; in a sarcophagus placed within a subterranean, single-or-multiple-sectioned cell made from stone, with tombs; in a rock opening, stone coffin, large stone-walled grave, earthen vessel or directly in the ground.

Cremation: Originating in the Armenian Plateau in the Bronze Age, the rite of cremation persisted until the adoption of Christianity, and varied by laying the vessel containing the ashes of the corpse in a rock opening, a man-made cave, in a stone coffin, in a burial cell with dronoms, or directly in the ground.

Dismemberment: Also originating in the Armenian Plateau in the Bronze Age, this rite persisted until the early Middle Ages AD. In its earliest practices, it consisted of removing certain bones from the skeleton or by dismembering the skeleton when the bones were not collected in urns. In Urartu they were invariably placed into urns with opening bored into the sides (of the urns). Variations of burial included placing the urn into a stone coffin, buried in the ground or placed in a wall niche of a stone burial cell with dronoms.

Despite these variations, widespread use of all two are all three types of burial can be found in within the same graveyard, suggesting the empire policies of the Urartians promoted movement of tribes with differing traditions throughout the region. Especially in the reign of Argishti I, migration within the empire was encouraged as a way to promote central administration and control, much as the Romans did 500 years later to solidify their territorial gains. Some have suggested this shows the hydrogen nature of the ethnic groups in the Armenian Plateau, while others believe the general principles surrounding all burials and the belief in the other world and its passage shows a deeper homogenous Indo-European character among all tribes with dialectical differences, and some integration of Hurrian, Alarodians and surrounding cultures.

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On the front of the helmet has a hammered picture on three levels. The central image is of two gods taking fruit from a “tree of life”. Eight (four on each side) snakes with lion heads curve over the entire design (guarding against evil spirits/souls). The back of the helmet shows a picture of Urartian soldiers in chariots or on horses.

14I. (on wooden stands):
   a) Argishti I Arrow and Stamp, arrow has inscription in cuneiform
   b) Necklace with stone beads
   c) Necklace strands
   d) Clothing buttons
   e) Wooden box fragments and bone wall hanger
   f) Bronze necklaces and rings
   g) Necklaces, stone beads and bronze amulet

Section 15

Picture on the wall shows scenes from religious and everyday life as reconstructed from excavations.

15A. Bronze buckle from belt and Iron Sword

15B. Drinking Vessels made into the likeness of a horse, man riding a horse and a small bull. From the 5th-4th centuries BCE, the vessels are identical to others found during the Urartian period, showing a strong cultural link that continued in the early Armenian period.

15C. Bronze shields. The shields were mostly ornamental, once decorating the walls of the temple to Khaldi, Persians converted the temple to a pre-Zoroastrian temple in the 5th century BCE. These shields were found at Karmir Blur and Armavir.

15D. Argishti I Drinking Cup. Cuneiform inscription circles below a tower with spears rising from it. The symbols of the tower with a spear have become Yerevan’s coat of arms.
The Adana or temple to fire deities, was constructed during the Persian Epoch. Several dozen mammoth vats were partially submerged in the ground. A dedication stone is placed in the wall of the entrance. A reconstruction of the peristyle courtyard is in the museum. Argishti I dedicated the Temple to Sushi, which he believed brought him particular favor and power. Notice the dimensions of the temple, it is planometrically identical to the Temple to Mythra at Garni, which was built over an Urartian temple.

The walls of the room were adorned with frescos showing a ring of lions on a central band. The deep hues are almost impossible to detect due to exposure of the reconstruction to the elements and lack of maintenance. The palace kitchen and banquet room were also used by palace officials, and lay on the outer edges of the citadel. 6,600 men captured in battle during Argishti I’s wars with Assyria were force-marched to the site to construct the citadel and build a city. Estimates range up to 280,000 inhabitants in the area, the majority living around Erebuni and Teishebaini (Karmir Blur). The steep hills surrounding the walls of the citadel were a natural deterrent against sudden attacks, and were shaven to their current form by builders.

FORTRESS COMPLEX As you approach the complex, you ascend a triangular hill. The ramparts of the original walls, seen from a distance, surrounded the entire citadel, and varied in thickness between 2 and 4 meters (6.5-13 feet). The citadel was reserved for the king and his entourage, administrative personnel and soldiers protecting the compound.

Urban dwellings ranged the immediate area below the hill, with cultivated fields lying beyond. None have survived, due to their mud-brick construction. The excavations at Erebuni showed that except for the protective walls and the palace itself, the foundations of citadel were of stone, with mud-brick being used to complete construction. You can still see some of the original mud-brick within the complex, though most of it has washed away.

1. Hall of Columns. A reconstruction of the original hall used to greet dignitaries.
2. Argishti Stone. A copy of the stone kept in the museum, called “Erebuni’s Passport”. The stone announces the building of the citadel to declare the might of the land of Biaini and hold her enemies in awe”. The Ziggurat (“Ashtarak” in Armenian) or watch tower was situated just beyond the steps leading to the outer courtyard, to the left of the Adana.
3. Alley to Necropolis. A narrow passageway led from the citadel to the necropolis, lined by steep walls. This was a common feature of fortified cities, allowing soldiers to scrutinize those below as they made their way to and from the fortress.
4. Temple to Khaldi. The foundations alone remain from the original structure, which was a long, narrow hall dedicated to the main Urartian deity. Looting when Xerxes and Darius took control of Erebuni, the temple was razed.

The tiny but well-presented museum at Karmir Blur is a solid compliment to the massive excavation above. The museum is in a rather badly-preserved building that will remind some of a shack. The treasures inside are real, though, and a shame on the Culture ministry that is in charge of their preservation and safe keeping.

The city was the second major site created by Rusa II, confirmed by an inscription found on site. First excavated in the mid 1930’s, the site emerged after particularly strong rains revealed the top layers of the walls and numerous arrows, showing a violently destroyed site still rich in well-preserved remains. Although most of its inhabitants seem to have been spared when the fortress was torched, the collapsing walls created a thick layer of debris, creating a protective vacuum that enabled artifacts of even the most delicate nature to survive. These included food and luxury items like furs and fine cloth.
Just how extraordinary a find this was became evident as the entire ground plan for the citadel was uncovered, showing 150 rooms filled with artifacts that identified their purpose. Eight wine cellars were uncovered, each with dozens of underground jars large enough for a person to climb inside. There were also rooms devoted to grain storage. In total, a room could hold 3000 gallons of wine and 750 tons of grain. Other rooms held dry goods, food, while still others were workshops to support the large central household, which governed the city in direct line from the king.

The surrounding town was a warren of streets and houses of all strata of society, there seeming to be no neighborhood distinction between rich and poor, but rather only a difference in the quality of homes that stood side by side. Houses were built of brick with the walls of the city of 3.5-4 cm thick limestone. The fortress was surrounded by huge walls and towers with impressive marble sculptures of horsemen and soldiers that mark the city for its obvious wealth and prominence in the Armenian Highland.

Among finds were 97 goblets, 11 bronze shields, ornamented armors and other bronze items, all of which are kept at the State History Museum in Yerevan except for 20 goblets and a bull statue that are kept by the Hermitage in St. Petersburg.

Despite its poor current state, the importance of the site cannot be overstated; no excavation of Urartu has provided a richer yield of small finds or better architectural preservation than Karmir Blur.

MUSEUM
The museum is in the small wooden building at the base of the hill. Armenian descriptions give some context to the site, and the helpful guide fills in the details.

Among the displays of jars, pots, tools and implements, several displays show some of the wealth uncovered in the site, mostly through photographs.

Among the items uncovered were a number of seals used in sealing documents. These included a Hittite seal representing a hunter in a mask and an Assyrian seal representing a hunter shooting at a long-horned goat (8th c. BCE), a number of Assyrian seals with the images of a man shooting at a snake, a man wrestling with a Billy goat, a man wrestling with a mythological winged creature, a man shooting with a bow and an arrow, Goddess Ishtar, God Ea, birds and human heads, two Billy-goats, and a horse and a stallion.

COMPLEX
The current site is fairly desolate and in great disrepair; pottery shards and fresco fragments lie scattered on the hill, foundation stones and mounds of eroded red mud bricks jutting from the surface. Locals still dig for treasures, and word is they have found a great deal, and a lot still remains to be found.

The city in itself covered about thirty hectares. The citadel is located on a hill overlooking a river and covers a considerable area, approximately 4 hectares. It is organized around a large courtyard through which one reached the building’s interiors, inside of which the 150 rooms were found. They included living rooms, workshops, as well as warehouses, attics, and storerooms intended for the storage of tax in kind collected in the form of royalties, gathered in the northern end of the building complex.

The enclosing walls had a thickness of approximately 3 m, and were more than 9m in height. Roofs were built in the shape of a barrel vault. Some walls were covered with painted frescos. The upper floors of the fortress were used for residence while the ground floor was used primarily for storage and workshops.

SHENGAVIT EXCAVATION
(40.15642x44.47715, 925m) Shengavit p, Lake Yerevan (opposite bank from US Embassy), open Tues-Sat 11-5, 300 AMD, is reached by taking Bagratunian S from the Echmiadzin Hwy, then immediately crossing the lake, turn L into the 6th Hospital back parking lot. The museum/shack and excavation is behind the rock wall with a small stone in front (Bus 15, 28, 56, 60 / MV 12, 46, 47, 56, 60, 92).

The 4th millennium BCE excavation at Shengavit is a much more likely candidate as birthplace of Yerevan. Like Karmir Blur, Shengavit is rarely visited by tourists, a shame, since they are both easily accessible and happen to be two of the most important excavations in the area.

The site was first excavated in 1936 and 1958 before being turned into a training ground for archeology students in 1985, which was suspended when the latest excavations began, in 2005. The results of the last dig are considered the most important archeologically, as it has uncovered new artifacts and prompted a surprising adjustment to its timeline, pushing its heretofore 4000 BCE founding back a thousand years, to 5000 BCE, well before the Urartians “founded” Yerevan at Erebuin.

Excavators say the site has yielded some of the richest finds in the region and shows a highly developed social system, including jewelry, female idols, baked-clay statues, and a furnace for forging instruments. The discovery of 50 equine bones suggests inhabitants were horse-breeders, the earliest discovered in the Caucasus.

Excavations focus on two areas of the site, in addition to the round house foundations that give the site its distinctive traits (and link it to the Kuras Culture, also ca. 5000 BCE); one area shows walls of brick and river-stone while the other, on the north end of the hill, shows a wall that surrounded the city.

Lower structures were two-three meters below the surface, an older layer of inhabitation, while the ground floor was used for residence while the ground floor was used. Religious structures were decorated with ram motifs and held high quality stone tools and earthenware. Ram eyes were made with obsidian, the first example of the use of stone eyes discovered in Armenia. Other structures were pear-shaped stores with round portals for grain, which have been excavated.

Between 7000 and 4000 BCE, this series of cities appeared at evenly placed spots in this crescent, all of them built around the metal industry. The successful smelting of bronze (along with gold, silver and magnesium) and the mining of precious gems transformed an agrarian civilization into to an urban one. The first signs of fortified cities are traced to this era, beginning with the excavation at Metsamor (a thriving trade culture by 5,000 BCE, and with many more strata to be uncovered). Other 5th millennium cities include Darai Blur, Artashat Blur, AdaBlur and Teghut. In the 4th millennium BCE the cyclopic walls of L’chashen had been erected by Lake Sevan, while in the Ararat valley cities included Algevan, Aigeshat and Shengavit.

Shengavit is distinct among the cities in Armenia for its use of round shaped dwellings made from river stones and mud brick. The artifacts found at Shengavit (ca. 5000-3000 BCE) include black-varnished, red and gray pottery, in geometric patterns similar to those used in the Minoan culture. The culture had distinctive religious beliefs revolving around the sun and planets, reflected in burial artifacts found at the sites.

History
The oldest settlement found in Armenia is a 90,000 BCE Stone Age settlement across the lake below the US Embassy. From then through the Paleolithic period, proof of human settlement is scattered between cave dwellings and stone inscriptions on the Gegharma Le. Suddenly, at the end of the Mesolithic period, a complex web of cities and fortified settlements appeared throughout the Ararat valley, only handfuls of which have been excavated.

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Each able to hold four tons of wheat. The stores held a large number of sickles, axes and milling tools. Another surprising find was a forge with nine smelters capable of supporting a sizable industry of copper smelting.

Excavations are ongoing, and they welcome inquiries into their finds.

The importance of this museum cannot be over-emphasized, documenting the tragedy of the Armenian genocide and its continued effect on Armenian victims and Turkish perpetrators, especially its denial by Turkey, which has become a spur to other governments believing they can perpetrate the same act with impunity. For Armenians, the mere fact of its existence is a triumph against concerted efforts by the Turkish government to rewrite history, and for the Diaspora, this is perhaps the most painful part of their trip to the Motherland, despite its testament to affirming Armenia’s survival.

The museum has displays based on the horrific events of 1915-1923, when the Turkish government set about annihilating its entire Armenian population, resulting in the death of up to 2 million Armenians who were branded, horseshoeed, shot; burned alive; raped; bludgeoned, and starved to death on death marches into the Syrian desert. Pictures, films and first hand accounts by victims, perpetrators and world governments make up displays that are more than shocking. The fact that these cities, once centers of Armenian life, become at this memorial testament to the suffering and courage of all the genocidal victims people in the face of tyrants. To date the Turkish government and to a large extent the Turkish genocides, a lesson in denial Hitler knew all too well when he commanded his SS soldiers into Nazi killing fields, reportedly saying “After all, who remembers the Armenians?” Perhaps more fitting are the words of Stalin, who claimed, “One death is a tragedy; one hundred is a statistic.”

As first-hand victims die of old age, remembering their stories becomes even more important, and the museum devotes most of its energies to documenting and publishing research on the genocide. The oral histories will be made available to source materials about the events of 1915-1923, in special storage vault, some of which are on display.

The upper floor has permanent displays as well as decrees and documents by governments and associations condemning the event.

The central courtyard has a large khachkar divided by a glass wall. Written on the upper left end of the sculpture is the phrase, “Praise to the morning sun that brings life”, while the lower right (inside the foyer) reads, “the other side of the sun brings darkness and can burn.” The khachkar is divided left and right, the left side showing a double tree of life with the symbol of wheat in the middle. The symbol of wheat can also be found at the top of Monument above Cascade, and is a universal symbol of life. The right side shows the same elements, but destroyed and in rubble. There are several cuneiform markings on the aura around the cross. On the walls of the courtyard there are twelve quotations by famous persons regarding the genocide; Henry Morgenthau (US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, 1913-1916), Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930), Nobel Peace Prize (1922), Jacques del Moro (acclaimed painter of 19th century Tbilisi), Russian Poet, Fa’iz El-Ghusien (1883-1938), councilor to King Feisal I, friend of Lawrence of Arabia, Armin T. Wegner (1886-1976), German soldier, photo-documenter of the Genocide, Albert Einstein, Baron Hans Freiherr von Wengenhege (1859-1915), German diplomat, Vladimir Gordievski, Joseph, Jacques Anatole Francois Thibault (Anatole France) (1844-1924), French poet, critic, novelist, playwright, and Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975), British historian.

The first gallery shows key areas of Western Armenia (Oriental Anatolia) and Ottoman census records from before the Genocide, then those remaining afterwards. In total approximately two million (some say three million) Armenians lived in Ottoman Turkey at the beginning of 1915, from which 100,000 remained in 1918. Up to 600,000 Circuitans were murdered between 1894 and 1918 by Ottoman Turks, Kurds, and Circassians (Cherkes), and one million became refugees.

The second, main gallery is in a dim circular hall with displays showing first hand documentation, witness accounts and photographs of the genocide itself, as well as initial reactions by the International Community (almost all of whom feared reaction by the World War II, only to renege on their words immediately after). Britain and France were essentially curiously at that time, reversing in the post-war treaty conference to secure additional colonial territory. Britain bears particular blame for encouraging Ottoman Armenians and then deserting them to Turkish pan-nationalists in 1918, some of which is detailed in this gallery. An art exhibit in the central wall provides somber images, but none are as horrific as the photos of actual events and victims in the main exhibit. One poignant display is at the end of the hall, a large poster with photos of some of the last survivors of the genocide.

Many have now died, leaving but a handful who can describe events first hand. The exhibit would benefit greatly by displaying some of the original film footage of the genocide, as well as playing oral histories that have been taken of the survivors.

The last gallery has additional statistics, a series of columns topped by vases filled with dirt from empty sites of Armenians in the genocide, photos and artifacts of victims, and a series of cases showing proclamations by world bodies and governments in recognizing the genocide. One prominent case is empty; when I asked why, I was told by a docent it was “waiting for America’s” proclamation officially recognizing the genocide. More likely it simply waits a new exhibition.

The museum is under new directorship and there are plans to refresh the exhibition itself, as well as also an exhibition of other additional displays and updated information with more first hand accounts of the events of the genocide, to counter increasing efforts by Turkey to deny its responsibility. Hopefully their rich bank of oral histories will be available to the public; the voices and pictures of survivors telling how loved ones were murdered, sisters and mothers raped or stolen for brothels, mothers begging strangers to take their children so they might survive the slaughter, starving in the wilderness, suddenly orphaned and living off insects and bloody water—the personal tragedies are made all the more chilling for who remembers—sweet faced 90 and 100-somethings who should be living the rest of their lives in quiet comfort, not tearfully recounting the murders and rapes of their loved ones; not as victims whose only mistake was to be born an Armenian in Ottoman Turkey.

The lower levels of the museum are reserved for the Genocide Institute, with a library, document storage rooms, a conference hall and a scholarly research center of the history of the Armenian genocide. The Institute collaborates with other institutes and participates in campaigns against worldwide genocides, the most recent being the ongoing genocide against the victims of Darfur, in Western Sudan.

The museum has displays based on the horrific events of 1915-1923, when the Turkish
worthwhile even if only to get away from the sweltering summer heat and swirling construction dust below; the statue is part of Yerevan’s largest park, close to a 1960s era amusement park with children’s rides and a Ferris wheel offering one of the best views of Yerevan. The museum is impressive, if overtly patriotic in its displays of recent conflicts. The retelling of the Great Patriotic War (WWII) is especially moving, telling as it does the sacrifices of over 650,000 fighters, half of which never returned.

The museum houses about 30,000 items, including photographs, documents, personal effects and maps. WWII exhibits focus on the sacrifices made by the third of Eastern Armenians who went to war. Armenian distinguished themselves in many war, receiving more honors than any other ethnic group (106 earned the Soviet Union’s highest rank, the Soviet hero, 74 became Marshals and 1 Admiral). Part of the displays are the personal effects of Marshal Baghramian, Armenia’s most famous hero of the war.

A perfect time to get a glimpse into the continuing effect of the war is Mat 9, Victory over Germany Day, when remaining soldiers come out in force, their chests covered with medals and their minds full of memories of personal sacrifices and comrades in arms lost to the enemy. Old Age War veterans also come out to receive much-deserved thanks of younger generations, and for many, additional funds to supplement their meager pensions. Less and less now, but even just a few years ago, pensioners would be treated to flower’s members of the younger generation. Now many just walk past the proud survivors, fighters who saved their nation.

YEREVAN HISTORY MUSEUM, 1 Argishti p (Mayoral Offices), tel. 56-81-85, 56-81-09, open Mon-Fri 10-5, free, is a disappointment, newly installed in the brand spanking new Mayor’s building, with plenty of money to burn on exhibits, but falling back on dry displays in glass cases, with minimal contextual notes, poorly translated. If you are first timer you may find it difficult to navigate, and you will have to insist on guides performing their duties; there are no signs pointing to the museum (which is on floors 2, 4 & 4 on the S end of the building), and staff are more interested in gossiping amongst themselves and making phone calls than showing guests around.

The museum has more than 87,600 artifacts, though less than 200 are displayed in the current galleries. Exhibits vary from copies of originals at other museums to original pieces. Exhibits are translated into English, but there are no signs explaining why items are on display. Too much is left to your previous understanding of what deserves being seen.

Second Floor exhibits revolve around Prehistoric and Medieval periods, with most items featuring the Stone Age settlement at Lake Yerevan (90,000-80,000 BCE) and Yerevan’s “true birthplace”, Shengavit (marked 4th millennium BCE, but now understood to be 5th millennium). Other items come from Karmir Blur (Karmi Berd; both its Bronze/Iron Age epochs and the Urartian city of the same name), Ani Blur (Erbeni, and isolated sites in Avar/Arin), among others. Pots, arrow heads, jewelry and religious totems are part of the display. The museum houses about 30,000 items, including photographs, documents, personal effects and maps. WWII exhibits focus on the sacrifices made by the third of Eastern Armenians who went to war. Armenian distinguished themselves in many war, receiving more honors than any other ethnic group (106 earned the Soviet Union’s highest rank, the Soviet hero, 74 became Marshals and 1 Admiral). Part of the displays are the personal effects of Marshal Baghramian, Armenia’s most famous hero of the war.

A perfect time to get a glimpse into the continuing effect of the war is Mat 9, Victory over Germany Day, when remaining soldiers come out in force, their chests covered with medals and their minds full of memories of personal sacrifices and comrades in arms lost to the enemy. Old Age War veterans also come out to receive much-deserved thanks of younger generations, and for many, additional funds to supplement their meager pensions. Less and less now, but even just a few years ago, pensioners would be treated to flower’s members of the younger generation. Now many just walk past the proud survivors, fighters who saved their nation.

The complex includes the museum, a cenotaph to the Unknown Soldier and the Mother Armenia Statue, which draws most visitors to the site. The statue is a bit of Yerevan urban legend, placed over the spot where a 1950 statue of Stalin once stood, his fierce gaze pointedly looking towards the Turkish border. The statue by Serge Merkurov, who also sculpted the Lenin statue that stood on Republic Square, was considered a masterpiece, despite its subject. After Stalin’s death and the political thaw that ensued, the statue was suddenly removed, eye-witnesses recounting the city suddenly plunged into darkness

Khosrov 332-338, capital beginning ca. 428-11th c, then regional center until the 15th c), Bagharan (founded 885 by Ashot Bagratuni), Shirakavan (892), Kars (founded 929, dual capital 963-1065), Ani (dual capital 961-1045), Yerevan (founded 782 BCE, gubernia capital 1828-1918, capital 1918 to present).
Room 2 features performers, composers, musicians and writers such as Petros Adamian (Armenia’s first great actor, renowned for his ‘Hamlet’); the actress Siranush; Yekmelnian, Muradian; Nardus; Shirvanzade author of The Evil Spirit, and the play Namus (1911), a tragedy about two young lovers betrothed from childhood but separated by family namus (honor); Hovhannes Tumanian, one of Armenia’s most famous writers, poets and adventurers. His poems and fairy tales are especially popular, many of which were turned into songs and cartoons in later years. His Anush was the inspiration for the famed opera of the same name, composed by Armen Tigranian; the modern bard Ashot Jivani; the novelist Perj Proshian (A Matter of Bread; Sako the Publican); and Hovhannes Hovhaness, author of Araxes Came Devouringly and A Gentle Sleep.

Room 3 continues with early 20th century artists, beginning with the extraordinarily talented group of writers and intellectuals who were murdered in the 1915 genocide: Daniel Varuzhan (The Red Soil, The Oriental Bath, The Lamp), Siamanto (Prayer to Anahit on the Feast of Navasard, The Glory of Invention, The Dance), Ruben Sevak (The Crane, Letters from a Student), Grigor Zohrab (Armenia), Melkon Khurshidian (The Emigrant’s Life), Tigran Cheokian (The Monastery: The Diary of an Archimandrite). It was said that Komitas went mad when he saw their severed heads, a madness he never recovered from. Other displays commemorate the Abelian Theatre in Tiflis; the writer Vahan Terian (I Love Your Dark and Wicked Eyes, Coming to Terms (or Reconciliation), In the Style of Sayat-Nova, Carousel, This Time Like a Sister, Farewell Song, The Gallows); the linguists Hrachik Adjarian and Manuk Abeghian; Avetik Isahakian, the most famous poet of the early 20th century (Abu Ala al-Mahari, Saadi’s Last Spring); the composers Romanos Melikian (romances), Armen Tigranian (the operas “Anush” and “David Bek”), Alexander Spendiarian (the opera “Almast”) and the greatest composer of sacred, folk and choral music, Komitas.

Room 4 features 20th century writers Arshak Chopanian (Gregory of Narek, The Bond, To the Moon, Ode to My Native Tongue) and Vahe Tekeyian (It is Raining, My Child, To the Armenian Nation, Ode to Verlaine, Dark Hours, Prayer on the Threshold of Tomorrow, Dear Brother in the Bond: A Letter of Tekeyian to Varuzhan); the actors Levon Kalantar, Hasmik; the Rustaveli Theatre in Tbilisi; the actor Vahram Papazian; the Sundukian Theatre of Yerevan; the composer Aram Khachaturian who wrote the ballets Spartak (a.k.a. Spartacus) and Guyan (music of which was used in Stanley Kubrick’s film 2001: A Space Odyssey). The latter ballet features in its final act what is probably his most famous movement, the “Saber Dance”; the poet Axel Bakunts (The Alpine Violet) who was killed during Stalin’s 1937 purge; Yeghishe Charents (Nairi, I Love the Sun-baked Taste of Armenian Words, Ocean Song, Ode for the Dead, Hairdresser’s Charms) also killed during Stalin’s purge; the American Armenian William Saroyan (The Human Comedy, The Time of Your Life); and a small display to the early years of Armenia’s film industry, featuring the director Hamo Beknazarian and his film “Namus”.

Gregorian’s most disturbing painting is his monumental 13-canvas, “The Gate of Auschwitz” based on his reaction to the Holocaust. Now widely discussed, the holocaust and it causes were shunned in the 1950s when Grigorian began creating his masterwork, even by Jewish Associations. Three canvases of this 120-foot long epic painting are on display at the museum. Deeply immersing himself into the work, and the horrific nature of the theme, Grigorian radically changed his concept of art, beginning his series of “earth works”, canvases and multi-media pieces using dirt as its primary medium. Years ahead of his time, Grigorian’s experimentation with earth, straw and paint predate later pieces by American, European and Japanese artists by decades. Several pieces are on display, hauntingly evocative artwork combining earth, straw, found objects and insight.

A rare find in Yerevan, this small museum was founded in 1992 and houses the collection of the artist Marcos Grigorian in the memory of his daughter, actress Sabrina Grigorian, who tragically died at the age of 29. You can stroll through the museum in less than 30 minutes, but give yourself more time to take in this remarkable collection.

Grigorian has had a storied life, and in his eighties, he continues to work, adding to his substantial collection of multi-media art and unique Modern Armenian carpets. The museum houses a working carpet loom, where Grigorian painstakingly weaves his intricate designs based on Armenian themes when he is in residence. Grigorian began his work in the 1950’s in Iran, where he began assembling his substantial collection of Persian historic and tribal art and objects. In 1962 Grigorian moved to the USA and established the Gorki Gallery, in memory of he American Armenian painter Arshile Gorki.
His films are beautiful, but hard to watch, their slow pace and relative lack of storyline leaving most unable to watch them for more than a few minutes. Parajanov is famously called a master who made films almost no one saw but everyone loved.

The museum is divided into 7 main galleries, on two floors. There is no chronology to the displays, except for the two rooms housing furniture from his Tbilisi home (he lived in Tbilisi throughout his life, moving to Yerevan only in his later years), and for homosexuality, he married in 1950. His wife was murdered in 1951 by her Tatar family who considered the marriage a smear on their honor.

Released in 1977 but blacklisted, Parajanov entered what some think was his most creative period, working from whatever he could lay his hands on, the fruits of his efforts making up the largest part of the museum’s holdings. In 1982 he was again imprisoned, a five year sentence that was commuted after an outcry by some of the world’s most famous artists and filmmakers. Art work from his prison days make up one gallery of the exhibition.

I would say this is the most important art museum in Armenia, despite its focus on one artist. Parajanov was a genius who was adept at so many genres and media it is hard to ‘label’ his work: film, painting, drawing, sketches, graphics, carving, design, plastic arts, sculpture, jewelry, clothing, embroidery, models, conceptual art, collages, assemblage—all are a part of his extraordinary visions, yet none alone describes his work. Other artists are famous but they remained primarily artists of a single media (painting, sculpture, performance); Parajanov worked easily in many different media, and mastered them all.

Best known in the art film world as the director of the mid-20th century films Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors (1964), and Sayat Nova (The Color of Pomegranates, 1968). Banned by Soviet authorities, his work won awards throughout Europe and he was called a genius, master and magician by Fellini, Tarkovsky, Antonioni, and Godard. Yet few outside the art film world knew of him as his films were purged and he imprisoned for alleged offenses against the state (a cover for his open homosexuality).

He was phenomenally energetic, turning the most mundane objects into works of art, his skill at painting, sketching and assembling objects on great display at the museum. The artwork here is from his late years, when he was banned from displaying his work and lived off the charity of friends who dared be seen with him and funds sent from abroad (Sophia Loren allegedly sending jewelry to her “maestro” which he hawked to buy bread).

Born in 1924 in Tbilisi, Georgia, Parajanov studied at the Moscow Institute of Cinematography, afterwards assigned to work in Kiev, at the Dovzhenko film studio. First imprisoned in 1947 for homosexuality, he married in 1950. His wife was murdered in 1951 by her Tatar family who considered the marriage a smear on their honor. He then remarried in 1956 Svetlana Ivanovna Sherbatiuk who gave birth to his only child, Suren, in 1958. They divorced but remained close, throughout his life.

The success of Parajanov’s revolutionary film “Shadows of Forgotten Ancestors” (1964) was compared to Sergei Eisenstein’s 1925 classic Battleship Potemkin and won the Grand Prix of the Mar Del Plata Film Festival, the Rome Film Festival and the British Academy Award. Due to his masterpiece film Sayat Nova’s non-conformity to Soviet ideology, Parajanov was forced to rename the film The Color of Pomegranates and to allow the Soviet director Sergei Yutkevich to reedit a censored Russian language version of the film (Tsvet Granata). It was still withheld from public view for many years and his screenplays for “Intermezzo”, “Ara the Beautiful”, “Demon” and the “Miracle of Odense” were all rejected. In 1974 he was again imprisoned, a five year sentence that was commuted after an outcry by some of the world’s most famous artists and filmmakers. Art work from his prison days make up one gallery of the exhibition.

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The museum has quality postcards, posters and films on sale, and guides (2500 AMD) give a very good introduction to his life and work. Ask to have one of his films shown on the downstairs VCR. Worth it, even if you only make it through a few minutes…

The museum is located in a beautiful 19th c reproduction mansion, two blocks from Mashtots, tel. 53-84-73, URL www.paranjnov.com (unofficial site), open 7 days 10:30-5:30, 700 AMD, is located in a beautiful 19th c reproduction that was meant to be the artist and film auteur’s home for his final years. He died before it could be completed, and the space was then converted to a museum in 1991 to house his personal effects, about 200 art works and his catalogue of films.

Impressive paintings include a huge red scene by Carzou that almost looks like an expressionist opera scene; that amazingly detailed fantasy work of Guynah Khachatran which resembles embroidery in paint; the nightmarish paintings of Zhirair Oragian, especially his "Genocide", which reminds me of Picasso's "Guernica", though Oragian's languished figures seem more deeply drawn, his witnessing the terror obvious; the equally moving genocide depictions by Podpromovog; and V. Elilibekian's fantasies of Old Tflis (Tbilis).

**MUSEUM OF 19TH CENTURY RUSSIAN ART ☞ 38 Isahakian p, tel. 56-03-31, 56-08-72, open Tues-Sun 11-4, 500 AMD, was founded in 1984 to exhibit the personal collection of Prof. Aram Abrahamian, and includes over 300 works on exhibit. Work includes Russian painters of late 19th-early 20th cc., sketches for theatrical productions and graphic art.

Other than its fine location on Cascade (the only public park in Yerevan not infested with mafia cafes), the museum deserves a look for some of the rare paintings on display; Valentin Serov, Mikhail Vrubel, Konstantin Korovin, Serebriakova, Grigorov, and Fodorov. Together with the National Art Gallery, the 19th c Russian collection is the second largest in the world.

**MARTIROS SARIAN STUDIO MUSEUM ☞ 3 Sarian p, tel. 58-17-62, open Fri-Wed, 11-4, 700 AMD, is a branch of the National Gallery, and housed next to the artist's last home and studio. The studio is now a part of the museum. The galleries are on three floors, starting on the top.

"Life is an island. People come out of the sea, cross the island, and return to the sea. But this short life is long and beautiful. In getting to know nature man exalts the wonder and beauty of life" - Martiros Sarian

Sarian (usually spelled Saryan), was born in Russia in 1880, and studied at the Moscow School of Art. He was heavily influenced by the work of Paul Gauguin and Henri Matisse, and his early works show this in their love of the exotic and bold colors. The works of this period, which Sarian showed at Moscow exhibitions, were executed mainly in watercolors and tempera. They include: "Flowering Mountains", "The Comet", "By the sea: Sphinx", "Two Panthers", "Under the Pomegranate", and "At the Well on a Hot Day."

He first visited Armenia in 1901, but spent much of his youth abroad, traveling extensively in Turkey, Egypt and Iran, starting a new period in his art. In Egypt especially, he was struck by an imagery that took hold of his paintings, including a series of paintings that are a feature of the museum. The works of the 1900s-1910s include two "Self-portraits", "In the Grove at Sambek", "Morning at Stavrino", and "Hyenas", or "Burning Heat with a Dog Running". The 1910s were prolific, generating "A Street at Noon: Constantinople", "Dogs of Constantinople", "Date-pan in Egypt", "Night Landscape", "Still-life with Grapes", "Flowers of Kalaki", "Still-life with Masks", "Flowers of the East". These paintings are infused with color and mood.

He went to Echmiadzin to help during the genocide, returning to Tbilis, where he married. After the revolution, Sarian moved to Russia before settling in Armenia in 1921. Reputedly some of his great works were composed during a two-year stay in Paris, almost all of which were lost to fire on his return trip to the USSR by boat. Those that survive this period include landscapes that were already famous, including "Armenian Mountains", "Midday Stillness", "Erevan", and "Mount Aragats".

During the 1930's, Sarian withdrew from public scrutiny, devoting himself to landscapes. He was rewarded with the Order of Lenin and was appointed deputy to the USSR Supreme Soviet. It is said that during this period that controversy over Sarian's place as Armenia's 'greatest' artists comes, some seeing his tacit complicity with the soviet government as an unforgivable act, while others say that any criticism of the artists who had to survive Stalin's purges and reign of terror is hypocritical in itself. Not just a landscape artists, Sarian also worked in graphics, illustrated the works of Tumanian, Tumanian, Isahakian, Charents, and the poet "Shah-Nameh" by Firdawsi. He continued his monumental painting, and dabbled in theatre design. Portraits include Yeghishe Charents, Alexander Tamanian, Toros Toramanian, K. Igumonov, R. Simonov, A. Akhmatova, M. Lozinski, G. Ulanova, Stepan Malkhasian, and Hrachia Ajanian.

His mastery of painting is still undisputed, the surviving work setting a standard that would reign in Armenian modern art until the end of his life, when a new style emerged with the work of Minas Aveitessian, who set the artistic world onto a new course of experimentation and style. Sarian was fascinated by Aveitessian, who worshipped "his maestro." Sarian worked up to his death, sketching on a pad his last drawings. Sarian died in 1972.

Sarian's studio is also a part of the museum, with dozens of paintings and drawings on the walls and furniture arranged as it was when he lived. Over his sofa-bed, note the sketches of trees, these were among his last. Next to it is a memorial to Sarian by the Katolikos Vazgen I. Among the documents on display is an amazingly clear 19th c map of the Caucasus and some wonderful small paintings of his friends and their homes.

The museum sells postcards, books and posters of Sarian's work at the ticket desk.

**YERVAND KOCHAR MUSEUM ☞ 91/2 Mashotsts pts, tel. 52-93-26, 58-06-12, open Tues-Sun, 11-5, 600 AMD, was founded in 1984 at the artist's studio, and is dedicated to one of Armenia's great Avantgarde artists, as famous in Europe as he is here (his work is exhibited at the Louvre and the Pompidou Center in Paris) and the only real rival to Sarian for honors of being the greatest of the 20th c.

The sculptor for the huge Sasuntsi Davit statue in front of Yerevan Railroad Station and the more controversial Vartan Mamikonian statue in front of Vernissage, as well as the eagle of Zvartnots statue at the entrance to Zvartnots ruins, Kochar was a member of the 1920's Paris School, regularly exhibiting along with fellow friends and artists Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian, Jean Arp, Marc Chagali, Salvador Dali, Constantin Brancusi, Jacques Lipchitz, Alexander Stirling Calder among others. Kochar held the copyright for a breakthrough in the artistic world with the invention of the cold wax method application of color.

Kochar lived in Paris for 13 years, exhibiting there and in Holland, Prague, Budapest and London. Despite his success in Europe, Kochar wanted to live in his homeland and repatriated in 1936, taking the same ship that brought back Komitas' remains, a close friend. He left his wife behind, promising to send for her, but Stalin's Armenia was not the one Kochar knew in his youth, and they never again saw each other. Kochar quickly fell out with Soviet authorities; his art considered suspect and counter-revolutionary.

He was imprisoned and tortured for anti-social behavior (1941-1943), and released only when two friends from his days at the Nersissian Academy in Tflis (Tbilis) interceded on his behalf.
After Stalin’s death, Kochar was more or less rehabilitated and his Sasuntsi Davit and Zvartnots Eagle were produced. In 1955, Paris artists and critics petitioned the USSR to participate in a retrospective of his work, combining his Parisian art (which remained in France) with his post-Paris work. Soviet authorities refused, and an exhibition was not made until 1966, without the artist or his Soviet artwork. He was eventually honored for his work, becoming a People’s Artist of the Soviet Union in 1976, three years before his death.

The museum displays large photos of his major sculptures, graphics, drawings, paintings and the “Spatial Art” assembles Kochar experimented with throughout his life. Kochar was one of signatories (along with Vassili Kandinsky, Marcel Duchamp, Joan Miro and Francis Picabia) of the Dimensionist Manifesto of 1936, which called for a “fourth dimension” in art and literature, one that merged time and space. Kochar followed through by creating art work that combined traditional media in a kinetic form, something totally new at the time. Four pieces following this concept are at the museum: Spanish Prisoners (1968); Images of Biblical Themes (1974-75); Yerevan-Erebuni and Morning (1962). The painted sculptures rotate on disks, their pieces moving in and out of each other’s spheres, creating an ever-changing perspective on the subject.

Kochar’s early work is pictured in a series on the wall of the museum’s hallway, showing an energy, daring and imagination he seemed to have lost in his later years, judging by the work on display. Especially compelling is his sculpture “Suffering” (1920), and portraits held at the Vienna Mekhitarian Library and in private collections.

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The second room shows models of larger sculptures, including a few nudes (“the first allowed in the USSR!”, our guide breathlessly told us), “Hiroshima” (1957), “Sahak Partev and Mesrop Mashtots” and the mock up for Giumri’s Mother Armenia, much more detailed in the small version. The third has busts of Yeghishe Charents, Petros Adamian (Armenia’s “Hamlet”) and the linguist Brusov (original up the street at the crossroads with Moskovian), as well as highly detailed double-sided three-dimension frieze based on grape and nudes gathering them.

Kochar was born to a family of jewelers in Armenia in 1907-1909 he lived in Paris, then returned to Russia, finally moving to Armenia in 1918. Kojoian was a member of the famous expedition of Ani, along with Hovhannes Tumanian, N. Marr and Toromanian. Kojoian is most famous for his illustrations and graphics, creating bold images full of energy and virility that adorned covers and inset pictures (including powerful images of Armenian heroes—David Sasuntsi’s charge on his steed as Kojoian pictured him would sit comfortably in any Marvel superhero comic on the market) that are iconic for their age. And a lot of fun to look at too!

The next room features some of his theatre designs and other busts. The fifth, his office, has his furniture and early sketches, some of which he later turned into sculptures. There is a picture of a sculpture he made from a tree trunk in Dilijan, “God of the Woods”. The downstairs studio has large models of statues he did for WWII memorials (“Partisan”, “Monument to Warrior Victims of Janfida”), Mirzoian, N. Stepanian and Stepan Shahumian, as well as an evocative “Tatev”, medallions and friezes.

Equally fascinating are the guides that greet you at the door of this museum, a bounding wide-eyed fan of Sargsian who argues the merits of his work as if for the first time and a husky-throated petite dynamo at the Kojoian museum, who still thrills at opening Kojoian’s world to visitors, no matter how many times she has to retell his story. If only every museum had guides as interested in their museum’s subjects as these!
open Tues-Sun, 11-4, 500 AMD, is a delightful trip into the world of Armenian folk art, with some pretty surprising turns along the way. The small museum houses about 12,000 artifacts (embroidery, silver jewelry, wooden, stone and gold objects, ceramic ware, ornamented metalwork, carpets and rugs) showing off the best of Armenia’s folk art by self-taught artists.

Temporary displays and a traditionally decorated “ginetun” (wine cellar) is downstairs. Permanent displays are upstairs in two large rooms divided by display cases.

Some of the art is copy of well known works in other museums (the coinage and wood carvings especially), while others are original and in a style all their own. The jewelry and gold work is exceptionally good, as are the embroidery, carvings and ceramic ware.

WOODCARVING MUSEUM ², 2 Paronian p, tel. 53-24-61, open Tues-Sun, 12-6, 300 AMD, is another delight, a small (3 room) museum showcasing in woodworking. The 2800 items on display include a traditional kitchen with hand carved utensils and pots, carved columns and walls, household implements including some intricately carved salt and spice holders, and a large collection of amulets, hailing to Armenia’s Pagan era.

Integrated within each other, the museum follows three broad areas; Ancient culture, Applied Arts, and Sculpture. The oldest items on display are pots (3rd-1st millennia BCE) discovered during excavations in the Lake Sevan basin and in the Ijevan region. Applied Arts and Sculpture sections display the artwork of professional sculptors, painters and experts in wood carving.

A great counterpart to the Parajanov Museum in the same area (p. 59), the museum shows handicraft in its most personal and naïve form.

CHILDREN’S ART GALLERY ², 13 Abovian (tel. 52-09-51), open 10-4 Tues-Sun, has temporary exhibits in its first floor gallery and permanent exhibitions below, leading to a second street level gallery with textiles, ceramics and woodwork. The art on display varies from rudimentary to exquisite, with some of the best reserved for the last galleries.

It helps that Tumanian is a cultural hero and led the kind of life most of us wish we could; joining adventurous expeditions to Egypt and the fabled city of Ani, and establishing the most famous salon of 19th c Armenian arts, his Vernatun in Tbilisi (1902-1908). A lover of fine things with an eye toward fashion, Tumanian once said he was “too poor to buy cheap,” and his dandy appearance in photo after photo in the museum confirms his love of the good life and good friends. The Russian poet and linguist Valerii Brisuov wrote about his friend, “a southern type in whom two principles, fun and genius, are astonishingly synthesized.”

Tumanian’s artistic merits are known to every child in the country, each time they watch one of his Armenian folk tales that have been turned into a bedtime cartoon. Adults best know his poem “Anush” (1894), which was made into an opera by Armenian Tigranian in 1912, and the short story “Gikor,” written in 1894 and which became a popular 1934 film of the same name. Both of these are considered his best works, and through them he moved Armenians in ways no other writer had before, his emotional depictions of the underclass making him an Armenian sensation.

Another of his poems, “The Capture of the Fortress of T’mk” (1902) was composed into the opera “Almast” by Alexander Spendiarian in 1918.

Tumanian’s work mirrored his life, born in a village into a family marginally better off than the rest, while carefully woven into the fabric of his whole, a writer with a keen eye, whose sensitivities were shaped by observing the struggles and suffering of the simple villager, heretofore considered a simpleton by Armenia’s upper class, but who in Tumanian’s writing lived lives as full of yearning and passion as those he served, and whose often tragic fates were faithfully recorded in Tumanian’s works. He is most famous for children’s stories, tales he loved to spin, but his greatest contribution to Armenian literature is his forthright depiction of the simple man, revolutionary for the time.

Eespecially noteworthy are paintings by the founder’s son and cohorts (1980s), illustrations of Armenian Fairy Tales, and the exceptional hand crafts, some of which would add immeasurably to the Folk Art Museum and National Art Gallery collections. Postcards and prints are on sale as you leave the museum, proceeds go to help the art school continue its work.

LITERARY FIGURE MUSEUMS ²

HOVHANNES TUMANIAN HOME MUSEUM ², 40 Moskovian, tel. 58-12-71, 56-00-21, open 10-6 Tues-Sun, is something of a find; a museum that takes what can be pretty dry material (the life of a writer) and turns it into something interesting.

Hovhannes Tumanian was born in 1869 in the village of D’segh in Lori marz, then called Lori-Gagark. Born to the family of a priest, Tumanian grew up in an idyllic setting, still one of the most beautiful regions of the country, its legends and lore those of the region; sprites and woodland gods that inhabited the glens and recesses of brooding forests, or skittered on top of tumultuous river currents. OK, I digress into romanticism, but to understand the beauty of Tumanian’s work, you need to begin with his nature, that is, the nature of his home; the legends and land of his birth became an integral part of his writing, and of his portrayal of characters, simple people with complex motivations.

Tumanian was first educated in Lori, and then attended one of the best schools of the time, the Nersisian School in Tbilisi, where he received his only formal education, but was forced to leave before graduation due to his father’s death. At 16, Tumanian returned to support his family, marrying at nineteen then beginning his literary career in the 1890’s. An avid reader, Tumanian collected over 10,000 books for his personal library, and 8000 are kept at the museum. Except for a few short trips, Tumanian spent most of his life in D’segh and Tbilis (Tbilisi), one of Armenia’s cultural centers in the 19th c, where he worked and thrived among his friends and colleagues.

Tumanian is often called Armenia’s first 20th c writer, turning otherwise banal events into emotional episodes. One commentator wrote that reading Tumanian reveals more about the Armenian character to an outsider than volumes of reference books, His heroes were simple village people whose life was harsh and full of prejudice, their lives often ending in tragedy. Despite their sadness, Tumanian renders his heroes with nobility and strength, creating emotional complexity and fullness of character. They lead lives many of his readers recognized, something not done before in Armenian literature.

The museum is on two floors, with most of the displays on the first floor. The first hall features pictures and posters of the original productions of the opera version of "Anush," and a diorama of a model of the setting with music from the opera.

The second hall has models of Tumanian’s village home, D’segh, and pictures of his parents and uncle, who is responsible for his first education. In one case there is a photo of his first love, a girl from a wealthy family, and a poem the love-struck boy penned in her honor. Nothing came of the crush, but at age nineteen he married, fathering ten children. Pictures of his years at the Nersisian School in Tbilis (Tbilisi), which he had to leave at age 16 when his father died. There is also a model of his first fairy tale, “The Dog and the Cat,” which he penned at the school, and which brought him his first income as a writer. He used the money in part to begin his collection of books, and one of his book cases is on display, its contents hidden behind a cloth cover. Tumanian used this technique to avoid lending books to friends, many
of which never came back (of the 10,000 he collected, 2000 were lent and never returned).

The third hall begins with maps and pictures of his travels; to Egypt, and with Khimian Harik to one of the first excavations of Ani (a picture of Tumanian and friends is in front of the Ashot the Merciful Church). There is also a display case for two of Tumanian’s most famous tragedies, “Maro” and “Gikor.” There are also pictures of Tumanian and his friends and supporters in the early 1900s. One of his early supporters was the Melik-Halkasian family, shown in several photos with Tumanian. Another case is devoted to his “Anush” poem, which Komitas began to set to music before the genocide ended his musical career. The poem was eventually made into an opera by A. Tigranian. Both Komitas and Tigranian are shown. A corner case shows additional works, including “Parvana”, popular at the time. Further pictures and displays revolve around Tumanian’s life in Tiflis (Tbilisi), where he spent most of his life. These include several pictures of a dapperly dressed Tumanian and he and his friends at his “vernatur”, or upper room, the first Armenian literary salon. Tumanian’s friends included Avetik Isahakian, Ghasaros Aghaian, Levon Shant and Derenik Demirchian.

The fourth hall covers Tumanian’s years to the events of 1917, and his mature work. It includes books and publications, and large collection of cartoons based on his fairy tales, through which most Armenians get their first exposure to Tumanian’s imagination.

The fifth hall covers Tumanian’s last years, coinciding with the genocide, the Revolution and the Communist period. Profoundly affected by the events of 1915-1917, Tumanian led efforts to bring genocide victims to Armenia, becoming the president of the Aid to Armenia society in 1921. He famously fought church officials during the genocide, feuding with the Katolikos in Echmiadzin, who had shut off parts of the church to refugees. Confronting the Katolikos over this policy, Tumanian is famously reported to have countered the Katolikos order to refuse shelter with a “I am the Katolikos of all Armenia” with an order to shelter them by “The Poet of all Armenia”. This alienated him with the church but endeared him with Armenians everywhere. The hall finishes with details of his final sickness and death in 1923.

Upstairs, there is a large hall for temporary exhibitions, a display case with Tumanian’s writing instruments and his library. A second wing recreates his Tiflis home (Tumanian never lived in Yerevan), with furniture and personal belongings of the large family. There are photos of his ten children, three dying during the Stalin purges of 1937-1939. Other rooms include furnishings used by one of his daughters (the pink room), a large dining room (set of twelve), its formal dining not for a special occasion, but every day, his wife Olga’s room and the sitting room. The maps were used to cover the book cases, hiding their contents. The office is faithfully reconstructed, with Tumanian’s large desk and day-sofa he used when composing quatrains (a small box next to it held the slips of paper for his four-line poems on), and several richly ornamented cabinets. A sign on the wall reads, “Please don’t smoke and don’t ask for books”. The large catalogue cabinet held his unpublished poems. A wooden cabinet between the windows was used for his medicine, and, after his death, his heart. Tumanian always wanted his heart to be buried in his hometown, and for a time, his daughters kept it in this case. A story goes that after his death, the poet Avetik Isahakian came to visit and spent a fitful night in the room, complaining the next morning he was unable to sleep. “You wouldn’t have,” replied his hostess, “because the heart of your friend was with you.” The heart was moved to Yerevan, kept at the Medical Academy for a time and finally laid to rest in D’segh on the 125th anniversary of his birth.

Khachatur Abovian Home Museum → 2nd Kanaker p, tel. 28-46-86, 28-16-87, open Tues-Sun, 11-4, is located in an obscure part of Kanaker, once a village outside the capital and now surrounded by cement block buildings. The village center survives in meandering alleyways and shuttered courtyards, and at its topmost point sits a large stone structure perched over Abovian’s tiny village house, looking la bit like a red and white version of the black monolith that came to earth in Stanley Kubrick’s “2001”. There is no easy way there; most take a taxi to Kanaker cemetery, follow it to the north, and then start asking. The museum is one long block SW of the intersection of Hasratian and Kanakerstl pts, then R on 2nd Kanaker p (Bus 2, 4 / MV 24, 26, 40, 45, 95, 100, 101).

Khachatur Abovian is credited with creating modern Armenian literature, choosing to write in the vernacular, the language of the streets used by Armenians in their everyday life, far removed from the classical Armenian used only by the church and a literary figures from before Abovian’s time. A champion of the lower classes, Abovian felt that education in modern Armenia was vital to forging a new national identity, and he spent a great part of his life in establishing schools and curricula that are still emulated. This latter process is probably his most important contribution to unifying Armenians, though his writings are more famous, especially his seminal work, “Verk Hayastan (Wounds of Armenia)”, which was published posthumously a decade after Abovian mysteriously disappeared on a morning walk in 1848.

His “Wounds of Armenia” (1841) is the first secular novel in Armenia, interweaving romanticism, realism and lyrical departures in telling the story of Armenian struggle for liberation during the 1826-1828 Russo-Persian war, graphically detailing the suffering of the Armenians under Persian and Tatar dominance. Its heroes, Agassi and his partisan comrades-in-arms, personified the ideal Armenian character to Abovian, suffering figures who nevertheless fought for freedom and nationhood. The most famous quote of the novel, “Give your
life, your soul, but never your motherland," became a rallying cry to future generations and is still known to every squirming school child made to recite Abovian’s writings.

Believing the Russian Empire would encourage the revival of Armenian statehood, Abovian felt betrayed when the Russians abolished the Armenian Oblast in 1940, substituting a relatively benign rule with a more authoritarian one that tried to "Slavicize" the Armenian population. His love for the Russian Enlightenment turned to distrust and anger at its bullying tactics. On April 14, 1848 Abovian left his house on a morning walk and was never seen again, the reason for which has supported a host of varying explanations including his death at the hands of tsarist military officials at the behest of the church to his simply walking into the wilderness to spend the rest of his days in nature. None has been universally accepted.

The museum consists of the original 200 year-old home Abovian was born and raised in, and where he spent his final years, and a large modern hulk built over the village house, the exhibition hall that includes displays of his life, his work, and first and secondary publications of his writings. Paintings of Abovian and his world by Georgi Baghchashian, Yervand Kochar, Isakelian, and Hovhannes Zararian are hung on the walls. Halls are dedicated to Old Kanaker, childhood years, Echmiadzin, Tiflis, the Russo-Persian war, the climb on Mt. Ararat and Parrot, Drops, the writer’s studies, “Wounds of Armenia” and his disappearance, and his afterlife fame.

Underneath the exhibition hall is the tiny village house Abovian loved in, reconstructed using ethnographic descriptions of the time and furnished as originally as possible. The large garden surrounding the house and museum has commanding views of Mt. Aragats and the northern region of the city.

Isahakian’s writings are still admired by Armenians, his lyrical Romanticism often quoted, many of his poems becoming popular songs that can still be heard at gatherings and weddings. Just as important as his writings were his commitment to a free Armenia. He was as much a freedom fighter as he was a writer. Isahakian might be considered the first contemporary writer to use his writing as a weapon against authorities; first the Ottomans, then the Tsarist Russians. For both he was imprisoned, and he was forced into exile for much of his life, returning to Armenia for his last years, after one last exile in the face of Stalin’s growing reign.

Avetik Isahakian was born in the village of Ghaziaibad, near Alexandropol (Giumri) in 1875, to a commercial family that soon moved to a wealthy area of Alexandropol. He was educated at the Kevorkian seminary in Echmiadzin, where he joined the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, which raised funds to send arms to Armenian partisans fighting the Ottomans in Western Armenia. For this he was arrested and spent a year in prison, writing his first book of poems “Songs and Wounds” at age 22. The lyrical, emotional pulse of his poems, as well as their subjects (mediations on the fate of humanity and injustice) had a profound effect on the public, and Isahakian immediately became a sensation.

He was soon arrested again for his activities and sent to prison in Odessa. Upon release, he went abroad to Zurich and Leipzig where he studied philosophy and anthropology, returning to Armenia in 1902. He moved to Tbilisi (Tbilisi), cultural center for Armenians in the Russian Empire, where he was a founding member of Hovhannes Tumanian’s literary salon, “Vernatun”. Isahakian continued to focus on Armenia’s aspirations for independence, dedicating his next book, “Songs of Haikus” to the struggle for independence. In 1908 he was jailed again, this time along with 158 Armenian intellectuals at the Meehan prison in Tbilisi, he was freed after six months, and left Armenia in 1911 for Europe, ending up in Germany where he joined a German-Armenian movement and edited the group’s journal, ‘Mesrop’.

Knowning the Young Turk movement wanted to eliminate Armenians living in Turkey, he at first thought Germany’s army could prevent them from their goal, but once the killing began, Isahakian became disillusioned and bitter, focusing in his next work, his “White Book,” of the atrocities and events of the genocide through 1922.

Isahakian returned to Armenia in 1926, and was instrumental in convincing many of Armenia’s best artists and writers to join him in building a “New Armenia”. This was his most prolific period, where he penned a number of poems, including his anthology "A Pipe to Peace” (1928). As the situation changed following Stalin’s rise to power, Isahakian left Armenia to act as an emissary for the Soviet Union (1930-1936), which may have done much to save him from Stalin’s purges when he returned to live out his life in his homeland.

An avowed Socialist, Isahakian never doubted that Armenia’s survival depended on its place in the USSR while he mourned its loss of independence and the loss of Western Armenia to the Turks. His poems reflect the ideals of a strong, free Armenia, in poems like “Sasna Mher” (1937), “Our Historians and Our Minstrels” (1939), “To my Motherland” (1940) and “Armenian Literature” (1942).

Isahakian’s best works include “Yerker u Verker” (Songs and Wounds), “Abu Lalla Mahari,” “Im Hairenikits Heru” (Away From My Fatherland), and “Tariner Heto” (Years Later). From 1946 until his death in 1957 Isahakian was the Chairman of the Writers’ Union of the Republic of Armenia.

The museum is on two floors, the first showcasing Isahakian’s office, dining/sitting room and library, with his personal effects, furniture and paintings, the second with cases displaying documents and...
YEGHISHE CHARENTS HOME MUSEUM
17 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-55-94, 53-14-12, open Tues-Sun 10-5, is located in the building where Charents lived the last 5 years of his life, the upper floor consisting of the actual apartment he shared on a communal basis with his neighbors. The bottom floors hold an impressive series of exhibits of this modern Socialist writer, who, along with Tumanian and Isahakian arguably represents Armenia’s literary genres of the early 20th century. Many will disagree with this statement, but between them, the development of what is known as the “Armenian Style” was completed, to be supplanted only with the coming of new writers in the latter half of the 20th century.

In 1916 he went to Moscow to pursue literary studies at the Shaniavskii Institute, where he witnessed first hand the events of the October Revolution and was deeply influenced by its culture. He joined the Red Army, actively fighting against Armenian and Russian nationalists from 1918-1921. Poems from this period include “Soma” (1918), and “The Demented Crowds” (Ambokhnere Khelagarvats, 1919), which became one of the most popular Soviet poems about the October Revolution. He moved to Yerevan, working as a teacher before moving back to Moscow in 1922 to complete his education. He became director of Armenia’s State Publishing House while he continued writing, translating into Armenian literary works by Pushkin, Nekrasov, Yesenin, Mayakovsky, Goethe, Gorky, Walt Whitman and others. He also published the novels Rubayat (1927), Epic Dawn (Epikakan Lusapats, 1930), and Book for the Road (Girk Janapari, 1933). The last included a famous peon to Stalin, which, when the second letter of each line was strung together read, “Oh! Armenian People, Your Salvation Lies Only In Your Collective power.” Shortly after the release of Book for the Road Charents was arrested and later died on November 29, of 1937. The circumstances of his death are against Armenian and Russian nationalists from 1918-1921. Poems from this period include “Soma” (1918), and “The Demented Crowds” (Ambokhnere Khelagarvats, 1919), which became one of the most popular Soviet poems about the October Revolution. He moved to Yerevan, working as a teacher before moving back to Moscow in 1922 to complete his education. He was greatly influenced by such Russian writers as Pushkin and Mayakovsky, the latter having a profound affect on his writings. Friends and both members of the Russian Futurist movement, they were made to recant in 1924, to save their lives and careers as national poets. Charents was forced to carry out work of mourning as part of his renunciation, and he traveled abroad to Turkey, France, Italy, and the US. In 1926, he began a long period of disillusionment, his poems a series of meditations on the place of poetry in the aftermath his recant. Mayakovsky’s suicide in 1930 pushed Charents into a downward spiral of depression from which he did not recover. Regardless of these events, Charents continued writing, entering the most prolific phase of his life, beginning in 1926 with his satirical novel, Land of Nairi (Yerkin Nairi), which was a huge success. He became director of Armenia’s State Publishing House while he continued writing, translating into Armenian literary works by Pushkin, Nekrasov, Yesenin, Mayakovsky, Goethe, Gorky, Walt Whitman and others. He also published the novels Rubayat (1927), Epic Dawn (Epikakan Lusapats, 1930), and Book for the Road (Girk Janapari, 1933). The last included a famous peon to Stalin, which, when the second letter of each line was strung together read, “Oh! Armenian People, Your Salvation Lies Only In Your Collective power.” Shortly after the release of Book for the Road Charents was arrested and later died on November 29, of 1937. The circumstances of his death are still shrouded in conspiracy theories, but the official line of a suicide is doubted, some saying going on a hunger strike, Charents was transferred to an insane ward where he repeatedly hit his head against the wall until he hemorrhaged and died. But no one knows for sure. The museum has on display the doors to the prison hospital wing where Charents was held.

Charents’ work cannot easily be identified or labeled, his work was breathless and emotional, and inspired a nation at war with its identity. “If you want your song to be heard”, he insisted, “you must become the breath of your times.” And Charents embodied the often contradictory feelings of his countrymen as they entered the Socialist world, banishing feudal precepts that had guided them for a thousand years in exchange for what they thought was a brave new world of freedom and equality (but which turned out to be more restrictive than the feudal period, even while it raised the standard of living). No church or government educated, clothed and fed the nation like the Soviets, even while they censored speech and killed their opponents. Charents above all considered himself a man of the people, of the oppressed, and he embraced Communism as the cure of all Armenia’s ills. His ego was as large as his poetry, taking all in his path, and when he fell, he crashed, like a magnificent fighter plane exploding in flames. You have to read his poems to feel the extraordinary passion he brought to Armenian language, as well as the unbelievable depths of despair.

The museum has five rooms on three floors, in addition to a sub floor reception area and the rooms given to Charents by the government for his family to live in. Displays include the poet’s personal items, documents, manuscripts, publications and other materials related to his life and work.

The first room is a sort of tribute to Charents, with large wall murals, quotations and objects of his life and work. There is fire in my heart, fire.' --Yeghishe Charents

Like Tumanian and Isahakian, Charents was a rebel, writing against the injustices of his time, and like Isahakian, he supported the early Soviet government, believing it was Armenia’s best chance to achieve independence and a unified culture. Unlike Isahakian, he was unable to weather the disillusionment and bitterness as the promise of communism was usurped by Stalin’s dictatorship, and he ended his life as one of the victims of Stalin’s Purge.

The museum includes a lovely garden in back, where Isahakian loved to entertain friends and spend time alone. The stone seat in the center was given to him as a gift, and her loved to sit there, sipping coffee.

The museum has on display the doors to the prison hospital wing where Charents was held.

The second room is upstairs and covers the Revolution period, when Charents became a rebel, writing against the injustices of his time, and like Isahakian, he supported the early Soviet government, believing it was Armenia’s best chance to achieve independence and a unified culture. Unlike Isahakian, he was unable to weather the disillusionment and bitterness as the promise of communism was usurped by Stalin’s dictatorship, and he ended his life as one of the victims of Stalin’s Purge.

Yeghishe Charents, the latter of whom came to Isahakian n the eve of his arrest to plead for his family’s safety. As connected as Isahakian was, he could not prevent the KGB from taking Charents, who died under their charge in the insanity wing of a hospital.

The museum has five rooms on three floors, in addition to a sub floor reception area and the rooms given to Charents by the government for his family to live in. Displays include the poet’s personal items, documents, manuscripts, publications and other materials related to his life and work.

The first room is a sort of tribute to Charents, with large wall murals, quotations and objects of his life and work. There is reference to his early life in Kars and the period before the revolution, with family photos (there were six children, Charents and one of his brothers were both killed in the purge of 1937) and early manuscripts of his poems, “Dantesque Legend” (Danteakan Araspel, 1916), “Three Songs to a Pale Girl” (Yerek yerk tkhradaluk aghjik, 1914), “Blue-Eyed Homeland” (1915), and “Rainbow” (1917). Pictures of Van, Komitas and his Moscow university are included. There is a portrait of the poet by Minas Avetissian on the wall.

There is fire in my heart, fire.' --Yeghishe Charents

Charents’ work cannot easily be identified or labeled, his work was breathless and emotional, and inspired a nation at war with its identity. “If you want your song to be heard”, he insisted, “you must become the breath of your times.” And Charents embodied the often contradictory feelings of his countrymen as they entered the Socialist world, banishing feudal precepts that had guided them for a thousand years in exchange for what they thought was a brave new world of freedom and equality (but which turned out to be more restrictive than the feudal period, even while it raised the standard of living). No church or government educated, clothed and fed the nation like the Soviets, even while they censored speech and killed their opponents. Charents above all considered himself a man of the people, of the oppressed, and he embraced Communism as the cure of all Armenia’s ills. His ego was as large as
Outside in the alley leading to his apartment building a stone stele stands with the inscription, "Derenik Demirchian, master of Armenian prose, lived in this house from 1922 to 1956." The museum is the writer’s three room apartment, rooms dedicated to Demirchian’s early life and work, his study, and a third displaying books and materials from his mature period.

The first, small ante-room displaying exhibits from Demirchian’s early life; pictures of his parents, Karapet and Natalia, his birth certificate (January 17, 1877 in the Georgian town of Akhaltsikhe), and family life. The family moved to Ardahan where Demirchian attended primary school before entering the Gevorkian Seminary at Echmiadzin (teachers included Hovhannes Hovhanessian and Komitas). Displays include his first printed poem, collected verses (1899, 1913), memorabilia and photographs from his time studying in Tiflis (Tbilisi), Moscow and Geneva, his Stradivarius violin and pictures of Demirchian with his mentors and colleagues H. Hovhanessian, V. Terian, Shant, A. Isahakian, M. Sarian and others.

The actual apartment where he spent his last months is further upstairs, and includes three rooms of furniture owned by Demirchian at the time of his death. The sitting rooms has a Buddha image, which appears in Sarian’s portrait of the writer.

The next room is the author's study preserved as it was at the time of his death, including the author's desk and a bust of Sayat Nova. Gevorg Bashindjaghian's painting "Dawn" hangs on the wall.

The third room features Demirchian’s life and work after the October Revolution, an event he highly supported. His works from this period were of oppressed victims from the Tsarist times who transformed into heroes of the Socialist society. Displays include handwritten works, articles and certificates, pictures and the author's clothing. There is a section revolving around World War II (The Great Patriotic War) and his playwriting, including "Kach Nazar" (Nazar the Brave), still popular with the Armenian theatre public.

Mahari is the author of the controversial "The Burning Gardens", the story of the writer’s home, Van, and its resettlement in 1915. In the book the young Gurgen was witness to the siege and atrocities, his father murdered, he was separated from his mother and his sister committed suicide. He was eventually reunited with his mother in Tbilisi. The book was banned when first written, and the writer forced to rewrite the book for its audacity mentioning Armenians antagonizing Turks. Authorities might have had something to do with the genocide. The writer and his wife were threatened, the book burned below their apartment window, self-claimed patriots and intelligentsia (including Paruir Sevak in an shameful act by an otherwise brilliant, compassionate writer) mercilessly criticizing Mahari while some threw stones and garbage at the couple.

Both the writer and his Lithuanian wife were exiled to Siberia, he for his writing (he was a close friend of Yeghishe Charents and a member of the famous Association of Armenian Proletarian Writers, along with Bakunts, Totovents and Zabel Yesaiyan) first sentenced for ten years (1936-1947) then another ten years on his return to Armenia (1948-1954); and she for her resistance to the Soviet takeover of Lithuania in 1945 (she attempted escape but was caught and returned. On completing her first five year sentence she was then sent to Dizhenski, where she met Mahari). They were both released in 1954, following Stalin’s death, and moved to Armenia. In 1966, Mahonia was exercised, once by the Soviet authorities in the 1970s and then again by Armenian intellectuals who of late have rediscovered his talents and are more tolerant of his views.

The museum is in one room, part of the apartment shared by Mahari and his son, in a building built by the Soviets and allotted to writers. The collection includes letters written by Mahari, articles, clothing and photographs. The memorabilia cover not only the writer’s life, but hers as well, which is described in her memoirs, "My Odyssey".

The museum is as moving in meeting the author’s wife (who speaks perfect English) and listening to her fierce determination to memorialize her husband, as it is in his remarkable work, including three short autobiographical novels, Childhood, Adolescence, and On the Threshold of Youth, and his experiences in the early years of the young Republic. If you visit no other museum of an Armenian writer, visit this one.

There is a section revolving around World War II and artifacts of a 19th-20th cc Armenian writer, best known for his satires. Demirchian’s most famous works are his play "Kach Nazar" (Nazar the Brave) and his novel "Vardanik", both written in Soviet times by an author who believed wholeheartedly in the Communist vision.
Yerevan Conservatory and posthumously lending his name to the Opera and Ballet Theatre. Along with Komitas, Spendiarov is considered a founder of the modern Armenian school of classical music, combining folk melodies with classical strains to forge a sound never heard before in the musical world. A man of extraordinary talents but simple tastes, the apartment he lived in during his last years is sparsely, provided to the maestro late in his life, a consolation prize surely for someone who gave so much to creating the Armenian Music scene.

Spendiarov was barely acquainted with Armenia when he arrived in 1924 to conduct the fledgling orchestra that became the State Symphony and contribute to the new Armenian Republic. He was born (1871) to wealthy Crimean parents, and attended the Conservatory in Moscow, where he was a student of Rimsky-Korsakov, who instilled in the young composer a respect for traditional music and ways to incorporate it into otherwise western European classical music.

Spendiarov composed a number of works based on Armenian folk music, including his more famous “Yerevan Etudes” and the opera “Almast” which gave him his fame and drew him closer to the Armenian Arts world. Friends included the artist H. Aivazovski and the poet Al. Tsatourian. Others included Maxim Gorky and the composers Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov, Lyadov and Arensky. Immigrating to Armenia in 1924 and immediately acclaimed, Spendiarov nonetheless led a difficult personal life, not having family connections he had to rely on the support of colleagues like the architect Alexander Tamanian to pull strings to obtain a small room for the composer, inside a communal apartment. Spendiarov died in 1928.

The museum consists of the three room communal apartment from which Spendiarov shared one room with members of his family, and includes displays from about 1300 personal items, 80 of which are on permanent display. The three rooms are grouped around his personal belongings and photos of his early life (room 1), his professional work, including “Almast” (room 2), and his bedroom and studio (room 3).

Inscribed at the entrance is a quote by the poet Alexander Isahakian, “What he gave us was immortal,” and a portrait of the composer by Martiros Sarian, a large frame photo of the Opera building and playbills and musical editions. Among the displays is a 1927 photo of the composer with Khachaturian and G. Budarian, and a case with his personal belongings, musical compositions, photos and documents of his life and friends. The research center holds manuscripts, documents, an important part of the museum, his sparse furnishings and simple objects (his violin, a rough desk with ink stand, the coal stove) hark back to what must have been a difficult life for the new immigrant, despite his prestige and fame.

ARAM KHACHATURIAN HOME MUSEUM, 3 Zarubian p, tel. 58-94-18, 58-01-78, open Mon-Sat, 11-00 AMD, is located off of Marshall Baghramian pta, 3 blocks from Place de France.

The museum is built around the apartment given to the composer and which he used when he stayed in Yerevan. It includes the apartment plus a large modern shell built around and over the apartment, including spacious display halls and a large neo-classical recital hall that gives vocal and instrumental recitals year-round.

Khachaturian was an enthusiastic supporter of communism, joining a propaganda tour of Armenia in 1920 to win local hearts and minds. He joined the Communist Party in 1943, and both his socialist ideals and Armenian nationalism are apparent in his works, especially Guyaneh (which takes place on a collective farm) and the Second Symphony. He held important posts at the Composer's Union, and became, one of the three Titans of Soviet music, along with Prokofiev and Dmitri Shostakovich, enjoying world-wide recognition and the right to travel to the west to proselytize Soviet superiority in music.

It was his Symphonic Poem, later titled the Third Symphony, that caused the wrath of the Communists, Khachaturian's musical tribute to “the Soviet people's joy and pride in their great and mighty country” had no meaning to party officials who it was rumored were miffed because Khachaturian left mention of the Soviet government out of program notes, and so attacked the composer, Andrei Zhdanov, Communist Party Central Committee Secretary condemning Khachaturian in a 1948, along with Prokofiev and Shostakovich, as “formalist” and “anti-popular.” All three were forced to apologize publicly, dealing a server blow to Khachaturian. He later said that the decree and public apology crushed him, “My (repentance) speech at the First Congress was insincere. I was crushed, destroyed. I seriously considered changing professions”.

The "reformed" Khachaturian became professor at the Gnessin State Musical and Pedagogical Institute (Moscow) and the Moscow Conservatory in 1951; continuing to compose, adding the ballets “Spartacus” to a prolific catalogue of compositions.

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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN LIFE

Government Bldg #3, 1st Floor (Nablbandian at Arami, Vernissage), tel. 52-46-30. E-mail: archmuseum@web.am. 500 AMD, is just off Republic Square on Metro Tavush. The small museum is at the Metro side of Government House, and houses rotating exhibitions based on its collection of over 120,000 items, mostly photographs, models and plans of architectural work. The museum is small enough to walk through in a few minutes, and gives a good overview of Armenia's historic architectural currents. There is a semi-permanent exhibition of the domes of Armenian churches as seen from the inside, as well as a model of Zvartnots Cathedral as the architect Tororianian imagined it.

ALEXANDER TAMANIAN MUSEUM

Government House, 3rd Building (large building at Arami and Hanrapetutian in Vernissage), tel. 58-57-73. Open 10-noon, 11-5, free. This is located on the opposite end of Government House from the national Museum of Architecture. The small museum includes graphics, sketches, plans and drawings by the architect who did more than any to reshape the face of Yerevan, bringing what was a feudal town in the early 20th c into the modern age, creating Armenia's first modern master plan in the process, one that continues to begeti (or bedevil) developers.

Alexander Tamanian (1887-1936) was born in the Russian city of Yekatirinodar (modern Krasnodar) into the wealthy family of a banker. He graduated from the Saint Petersburg Academy of Arts in 1904. His work imitated the neoclassic trends of the times, with detailed columns and window frames dividing colorful walls of pink, yellow and blue. Designs from his early period includes the 1911-1912 V. P. Kochubei mansion in Tsarskoye Selo; the 1911-13 Moscow mansion for Prince S. A. Scherbatov; the 1913-1923 Prozorovskaya (now Kratovo) Station housing and tuberculosis sanitarium; and the 1916 Kazan Railway workshop in Lyubertsakh, 1916.

His designs changed immediately and inalterably after the revolution, his romantically drawn neoclassic homes with delicate detailing abandoned for monumental designs favored by the Bolsheviks. He played the new political game well, for in 1917 Tamanian was elected Vice-President of the Academy of Arts of the USSR, chief engineer of the local Council of People's Commissars and was a member of the CEC of the Armenian SSR (1925-1936).

In 1923 he moved to Yerevan, where he led new construction for the republic. This "mature" period included include town layouts for Leninakan (Giumri), 1925; Nor Baiyazet (Gavar) and Ahta-ahpara, 1927, and Echmiadzin, 1927-1928. His most famous city plan was the first master plan for Yerevan, approved in 1924.

Sometimes called "Neoclassic monumentality", Tamanian's designs softened otherwise massive ruins of stone with details taken from historic Armenian structures (alternating stone colors, using red linings, carvings of grape leafs and clusters, pomegranates and other traditional motifs found on Pagan and Christian buildings).

Among his most famous designs in Yerevan are the hydroelectric station (ERGES-1, 1926-1927), this was the Soviet Union, which transformed mundane work spaces into Proletariat Palaces and destruction, rebuilding the herbarium piece by piece, mourning their losses but determined to rebuild the lost glory.

The real jewel, though it the resident Botanical Institute’s Herbarium, the largest collection of Trans Caucasus flora species in the world. The collection is preserved inside the Botanical Institute Building, where staff catalogue additions to the collection. Staff welcome visitors along with students of botany. If you have a few hours, this is a good place to start a flower tour, the preserved species greatly help in identifying flowers on your trip.

The last room was installed to hold stuffed hunting trophies killed by the museum's donor, a wealthy Iranian Armenian. The exhibition includes a short

BOYATONIC GARDENS HERBARIUM

Botanical Park, Avan District, tel. 62-82-11, 61-44-40, open 7 days 10-5, free, is located in the large Botanical Gardens in Yerevan, (Miasnikian/Acharian cloverleaf), opposite Water World and the 2nd Masiv turnoff to Garni/Geghard. Bus 5, 10, 17, 22, 46 / MV 9, 15, 20, 26, 54, 55, 91.

The park's green house originally hosted 500 species of native plants, with about 100 surviving the dark days of the 1990s when government support collapsed and successive directorships dashed off some new notes (few of which are in English). A better world awaits these displays, which do in themselves make up some pretty impressive items (the butterfly exhibit alone is impressive for its variety).

The museum was formed as a "one stop look" at Armenia's natural History, taking advantage of the resources of several institutions; the Zoological, Botanical and Geological Institutes each donated some of their exhibits, with the zoological seeming to have given the most. There is in addition a room filled with stuffed hunting trophies by a wealthy Iranian Armenian who donated funds to create the museum.

What the museum lacks in combining all these resources into an extremely limited space is the depth of display the country deserves. With over 3,500 species of birds, two-thirds of Eurasian birds and the largest variety of geologic formations in the Near East, Armenia deserves a world class exhibition of its splendors, and you won't find that here. What you will find is a frustrating race through the natural world with exhibits much the worse for wear, some of which look like the curators just rubbed off the Soviet marks and dashed off some new notes (few of which are in English). A better world awaits these displays, which do in themselves make up some pretty impressive items (the butterfly exhibit alone is impressive for its variety).

Room 1 features a large geographic model of the country and has a hodgepodge of displays, including displays of geological formations and origins of Armenian rocks (some nice examples of quartz, agate, obsidian and amethyst), birds, a graphic advertising the benefits of "chemical farming" and desalination, Armenian earth cores, irrigation methods, wild wheat and herbal samples and uses, water fowl (pelican, sea gull, ducks and swans), a display showing animals that roamed Armenia from prehistoric-medieval times (elephants, rhinoceros, elk, camel, mastodon), and a few fossils.

Room 2 features insects, and regional displays of birds and mammals from the Ararat Valley, Khosrov Preserve and Armenia's forest (Dillijan) regions; including a very nice collection of moths and butterflies collected from around the globe, hawks and eagles, bear, deer, badgers, minks, bobcat and the Armenian leopard, one of Armenia’s many endangered species of animals. There is also a display of native seeds found in the region.

Room 3 features Armenia’s Dry Steppe, Mountain Steppe and Alpine regions, with birds (hawk, eagle, owl) and flora (Armenia’s water endangered water lily).

The last room was installed to hold stuffed hunting trophies killed by the museum’s donor, a wealthy Iranian Armenian. The exhibition includes a short treatise on Iran’s natural beauty and how hunting made the donor healthier.

H. KARAPETIAN GEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

10 Abovian p, tel. 58-06-63, open Tues-Sat, 11-4, 500 AMD, is a gem of a museum, its aged exhibitions in one of Yerevan’s most historic buildings adding a peculiar charm to the

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Armenia, all but two of which are now dormant (the exceptions being still smoldering volcanoes near Sissian in Zangezur/Siunik). The last eruption was in 1461.

Beautifully detailed old maps on the walls mark the location of volcanoes, and display cases in the second gallery show the variety of volcanic stone in Armenia, beginning with samples from the formations like the “stalagmite” stones at Goris and Khndzoresk that were carved into cave dwellings beginning in the Stone Age, and volcanic “bombs” formed by lava flow that was thrown into the air and congealed before it hit the ground. Other volcanic stones on display are basalt and a

Further displays include mineral springs, diatomite reserves with native fauna. If nothing else, if you have a particular zoological interest, they can contact someone at the Institute to help, and this is a good place to look for expert guides to nature reserves with native fauna. If nothing else, if you have the time, your visit would cheer them up enormously.

ART GALLERIES

ACADEMIA GALLERY, 24 Baghramian p, tel. 52-70-40, email: hvgaard@sci.am, open 11-6.


AKUMP, 40 Tumanian p (at the corner of Spendiarian and Parapets p), tel. 53-13-61, open 7 days 10-23, is a restaurant/cafe/gallery/concert hall/hang out that has several exhibitions a year, along with regular concerts, video showings and gatherings. One of the trendiest spots in Yerevan, for good reason.

ALBERT AND TOVE BOYAJIAN EXHIBITION HALL, 36 Isahakian p, tel. 56-18-55, email: ira.isabekyan@yafa.am, URL: www.boyajiangallery.am, open 12-5.

AKUMP, 40 Tumanian p (at the corner of Spendiarian and Parapets p), tel. 53-13-61, open 7 days 10-23, is a restaurant/cafe/gallery/concert hall/hang out that has several exhibitions a year, along with regular concerts, video showings and gatherings. One of the trendiest spots in Yerevan, for good reason.

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ARAMEH GALLERY, 13 Amirian p, tel. 53-92-65, open 11-5.

ARAME GALLERY, 13 Amirian, tel. 53-92-65.

AREV GALLERY, 15 Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 54-20-22, open 11-9.

ARTISTS’ UNION OF ARMENIA, 16 Abovian p, tel. 56-48-53, open 12-5.

BACCHUS GALLERY & RESTAURANT, 29 Tumanian p, tel. 56-46-00, open 12-22.

FE GALLERY, 58 Mashtots pta, tel. 093-34-90-99, URL: www.hayarvest.am.

FIRST FLOOR GALLERY, 75 Yeznik Koghbatsi p, tel. 53-37-99, email: fgallery@hotmail.com, open 11-10.

Gabone Gallery, 2 Tamanian p, tel. 52-54-42, open 12-5.

GEVORKIAN GALLERY, 38/1a Tumanian p, tel. 53-48-37, email: info@gevorgyangallery.com, URL: www.gevorgyangallery.com, open 11-9/2-9.

HAI ART GALLERY, Mashtots at Sarian, 7a Mashtots, tel. 53-91-96, open Mon-Fri 11-5, was the Contemporary Art Museum, before it was privatized and now doing business as a City-run gallery. Exhibitions support programs and artists on display.

MKRCHIAN GALLERY, 44 Isahakian p, tel. 52-67-94, email: mgallery@freenet.am, open 10-8.

NAREGATSI ART INSTITUTE, 16/1 Vardanants p, tel. 58-03-03, URL: www.naregatsi.org, open 10-7, is a wonderful gallery/performance hall, with rotating exhibitions, film and video showings, concerts and speaker platforms. They have an ambitious calendar of events, which can be found at www.naregatsi.org/DM/

NPAK GALLERY/ARMENIA CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL ART, 1/3 Bizanp p, tel. 56-90-25, has exhibitions and performance art in their large space.

SAGAREL GALLERY, 7 Alek Manukian, tel. 57-68-04.

STONE GALLERY, 10 Abovian p, tel. 56-45-04.


VERNISAGE GALLERY, 32 Tumanian p, has one of the most intriguing entrances of any gallery in Yerevan, with a copy of one of the winged gods from Erebuni supporting the entry column.

YEREVAN STATE ART ACADEMY GALLERY, 36 Isahakian p, 56-07-30, 56-18-55, has regular exhibitions of student art and the occasional professional showing.
The statue is by one of Armenia’s most important modern artists, a member of the modern movement in Paris (his friends and admirers included Picasso, Miro, Duchamp) who faced discrimination and torture when he emigrated to Armenia in 1937, only rehabilitated, his art accepted in his later life.

His other works include Vartan Mamikonian Statue by Vernissage, and the Eagle of Zvartnots at the entrance to the 7th c church ruins. About his work on David Sasuntsi, the artist famously said, “They had ten centuries at their disposal, but they commissioned me to design the monument a mere one and a half months before the jubilee.” It remains one of his best works.

The pantheon is the final resting place for some of the most famous 20th c Armenian artists, writers, composers, filmmakers, actors and scientists. Originally built in the 1930s as a home for Armenia’s famous artists, the site became so famous that persons of other fame were interred as well, including some controversial interments of politicians in recent years. The first pantheon was a small space, hemmed in by a fence. When Sergei Parajanov (filmmaker, artist, genius) died, his grave was conspicuously placed outside the fence, causing a minor furor. The fence was torn down, the site enlarged, and now all are interred in the same area.

The 10th c. epic poem Sasuntsi Davit is the story of the Armenian fight against its Arab invaders (7th-9th cc), and more importantly, how one demigod (David) defeated the enemy with his sword of lightening while riding his steed Dzhahali. The epic is a combination of epics from several time periods, collected into a retelling that focuses on the 9th c uprisings against the Arab caliphate. Some aspects are very old and can be traced back to the Urartian era. Two of the epic’s heroes - Mets Mher and Pokr Mher - are named after the Iranian god Mythra (who is Mher in Armenian) and parts of the story have analogies to the Persian epic The Shah-name. Likewise, the ending of the epic of Sasun, when Pokr Mher fights the angel of death on horseback, at full gallop, his hands pulling his sword out of its hilt, ready to strike his enemies.

In 1961 he was inducted into the Central Committee as a full member. Outside Armenia he is known by the Russified version of his name, Ivan (or Ovannes) Kristofovich Baghramyan. He was widely regarded as a national hero in the Soviet Union, and continues to hold such esteemed status among Armenians.

The pantheon is laid out in rows between newly laid sidewalks and a few trees. All grave monuments are inscribed in Armenian or Russian, hard for the non-speaker to decipher, and there is no guide at the site. At time of printing this was the layout of graves at the site. Rows are laid out north to south, the first row being that closest to the street. Begin at the south end of the row 1, then north of row 2, south of 3, etc.

ROW ONE (S TO N):
1. Gohar Gasparian (1924-2007), singer, opera performer, People’s Artist of the USSR, state laureate and the “Armenian Nightingale”. Gasparian was born in 1924 in Egypt and moved to Armenia in 1948, at age 24. A year later she was singing at the Armenian National Academic Opera and Ballet Theatre. She appeared in 23 operas and had over 500 songs in her repertoire.

She toured throughout the Soviet Union and Europe in roles as diverse as Queen of the Night, Lacme, Anush, Aida, Traviata, Norma, etc. The singer once said, “Song has come into my life forever, it is the reason for and essence of...
my life, I live for the sake of my art. My theme is – not to surprise, but to touch.

2. Silva Kaputikian (1919-2006), poet, writer. Kaputikian was born in Van, immigrating to Eastern Armenia with her family during the genocide. Her first collection of poems was published in 1944, and she became a leader in the "new literature" movement in Armenian poetry, depicting the life of Armenian women and survivors of the genocide.

She was a vocal supporter of the liberation of Karabakh. Once married to Hovhannes Shiraz, their marriage ended in divorce, the two "Titanic personalities" clashing and unable to flourish in a marriage. Their son, Ara Shiraz is a prominent sculptor.


5. Hamo Sahian ("Hmaiak Grigorian" 1914-1993), poet whose collection "Open Sesame" brought him a state award. His best work includes "Evening Meal", "The Call of the Tribe", "Mint Flower".

6. Mher Mkrcian ("Frunze", 1930-1993), one of Armenia's best beloved actors, whose sad eyes and bulbous nose are fixtures of the Armenian cinema.

Mastering dramatic and comic roles with equal ease, Mkrcian acted in some of the Soviet Unions most popular films; "Khatabala", "Mimino", "Aibolit-66", and "Tango of Our Childhood". Theatrical productions include an acclaimed version of Gorky's "The Lower Depths", which he directed.

7. Vahagn Davtian (1922-1996), poet, writer, translator, author of "Arachin Ser" and the dramatic poem "Tondrakitsiner".


9. Hrant Matevosian (1935-2002), writer, member of the "war generation" of artists born between 1920-40 (Sergei Parajanov, Vasili Shukshin, Andrei Tarkovski) who struggled against censorship and created a modern literature. Matevosian is the author of "We are, Our Mountains".


11. Karen Demirchian (1932-1999), Soviet politician, first General Secretary of Communist Party of Armenia (1975-1988). Falling out of power at the end of Soviet Union, Demirchian regained his stature during the 1990s as a leading opposition leader, forging ties with then de facto head of Armenia, Defense Minister Vazgen Sargsian. Both men were gunned down in parliament in 1999 by dissatisfied Armenians.

12. Vahan Terian (1885-1920), famous poet known for his sorrowful, romantic poems are still beloved by young romantics. Poetry collections include "Dreams at Dusk" and "In the Land of Nairi". A fervent believer in the goals of the 1917 Revolution, Terian served as representative for Armenia, working with Lenin and Stalin. He died of tuberculosis at age 35. See Ring Park Walk: Terian Statue (p. 29)
13. Hrachia Nersissian (1895-1961), Soviet Armenian film actor, first credit in "Namus", a 1925 silent movie. Later credits include "Zangezur" (1938) and "David Bek" (1944). Complete work includes over two dozen films, several released posthumously.


15. Shirvanzade (1858-1935), Armenian playwright and novelist whose books include "Chaos" (1898), describing life in a large industrial city, "The Evil Spirit" about an epileptic woman and his most famous, the play "Namus" (1911), a tragedy about two young lovers forced to part because violations of namus (honor) in the girl's family forces her father to betroth her to another.

16. Stepan Zorian (1889-1967), Writer, books include "The Starving Ones" (1909), "Sad Men" (1918), "Fence" (1923), "War" (1925), "The President of the Revolutionary Committee" and "The Girl in the Library" (1926). Zorian's "The Story of a Life", published in two volumes between 1935 and 1939, has been compared to Charles Dickens' "David Copperfield". Depicting the Soviet Union realistically in his novels, Zorian was forced to change his writing in the late 1930's, turning to historical fiction.

17. Vahram Papazian (1888-1968), dramatic actor who began his career in Constantinople in 1908 and went on to become the foremost Armenian actor of his day and widely regarded as the greatest Shakespearean actor in the Soviet Union. His most famous role was as Othello, a part in which he excelled and of which he was said to have been the master. He also appeared as Hamlet, King Lear, and in Molière's Don Juan, and William Saroyan's "My Heart is in the Highlands".

18. Grigor Arzumanian (1919-) is an odd choice for the Pantheon, Arzumanian had not artistic merit and produced no literary work of significance. His brother, the famous academician Anushavan Arzumanian is said to have helped him advance in Soviet circles because he was a relative of Anastas Mikoyan, one of the most powerful Communists in the Soviet Union. The USSR Central Committee instructor became Secretary of Armenian Communist Party after Y. Zarobian's resignation, in 1972 he became the chairman of the Council of Ministers and the head of executive power during Karen Demirchian's reign. His place in the pantheon raised eyebrows when it happened (he was the first non-artists to be buried there) and is basically a story of being who knew who.

19. Andranik Margarian (1951-2007), engineer, politician, prime minister of Armenia (2000-2007). Margarian joined outlawed National Unity Party which advocated the secession of Armenia from the Soviet Union, for which he served two years in a labor camp. In 1992 he joined the ruling Republican Party. Margarian was Armenia's 14th prime minister, the second prime minister to die in office, the first of natural causes.

21. Martiros Sarian (1880-1972), modern painter, perhaps Armenia’s most famous artist, canvases are famously known for their expressionistic depiction of life in bold strokes of bright colors or dark, moody hues of blue and black. His landscapes are seminal paintings of Armenian modern art, capturing the country in startling ways. Sarian successfully navigated the pitfalls of working in a Communist country; in the difficult years of the 1930s, he mainly devoted himself to landscape painting, and portraits. While most of his work reflected the Armenian landscape, he also designed the coat of arms for Armenian SSR and designed the curtain for the first Armenian state theatre. He also was chosen as a deputy to the USSR Supreme Soviet and was awarded the Order of Lenin three times and other awards and medals. See Museums: Martiros Sarian p. 60.

22. Komitas (1869-1935), one of Armenia’s most famous composers, considered by many the most important Armenian composer of the early twentieth century. A graduate of the Gevorkian Seminary in Echmiadzin as a specialist in Sacred Music, Komitas spent much of his time collecting Armenia’s folk songs, his efforts fostering the acceptance of folk music melodies in classical repertoires. His efforts to decipher medieval Armenian musical notation is also credited with helping to read Europe’s medieval music. Ironically, Komitas research into polyphonic musical notation (that found on ancient manuscripts) helped to decipher Gregorian chant notation, which had its antecedents in Armenian medieval music, reputedly introduced to Pope Gregory by an Armenian monk. By the beginning of the 20th century Komitas believed he had succeeded in cracking the notation code, and was about to make public his research when the genocide ended his career. On April 17-18, 1915 Komitas conducted the premiere of his Patarak (Messiah). The second concert was to scheduled for May 3rd, but on April 24th, along with other Armenian intellectuals in the city, he was arrested and exiled from the city. En route he witnessed the genocide first hand, and the horror drove him into insanity. Due to the intercession of influential authorities he was brought back to Constantinople, but it was too late. The remaining years of his life were spent in insane asylums, the last in Paris where he died in 1936. In the same year his ashes were transferred to the Pantheon.

23. Romanos Hovakimi Melikian (1883-1935), composer, founder in 1921 of the music studio that became the Yerevan Conservatory.

24. (top) Spiridon Melikian (1880-1933), musical composer, teacher, musicologist. One of Komitas’ earliest students, Melikian devoted his work to choral works and disseminating folk music. His collection “The Songs of Shirak” (1917) is the product of a musical ethnographic expedition, and contains samples of folk songs and dances, as well as “ashugheh” (troubadour) improvisations, and which has become an important tool in Armenian composition.

25. (bottom) Khnko Aper (1870-1935), author, writer of fairy tales and children's stories, the Children's library in Yerevan is named in his honor. Aper is still hugely popular among children, his works in having been turned into film, music and dance. One, The Meeting of the Mice, was turned into a cartoon by Mkneri Zhoghove (1978, Hyefilm Studio) based on Khnko Aper’s fable of the same name. In it a group of mice meet and decide to hang a bell around the neck of the cat, letting them know when he is near. Their antics in choosing the lucky sucker to hang the bell are part of the fun and Aper’s wit.

26. Nkarich Yeghishe Tadevosian (1870-1936), famous artist of late 19th and early 20th cc, best known for landscape, portrait and genre paintings, worked in a variety of mediums: painting, drawing, mosaic, sculpture, stage design and book illustration. A number of his works are on display at the National Gallery of Art at republic Square.

27. Avetik Isahakian (1875-1957), Armenian lyric poet, poems are those of love and sorrow. His best work is “Abu-Lala Mahari” (1909-1911), which is depicted on the bottom of the grave monument (camel caravan) while his other well-known works include “Songs and Novels” and “A Mother’s Heart”. He became a member of the Armenian SSR Academy of Sciences in 1943. During the Great Patriotic War Isahakian wrote patriotic poems, for which he was awarded the USSR State Prize in 1946. His face appears on the 10,000 AMD note. See Museums: Avetik Isahakian p. 64.


(24) Hovhannes Shiraz (1915-1984), poet, born Hovhannes Ohnig Carabedian in the city of Alexandropol (Giumri), his first work “Beginning of Spring” was published in 1935. The novelist Atpet nicknamed the poet “Shiraz”, because “this youth’s poems have the fragrance of roses, fresh and covered with dew, like the roses of Shiraz. (a city in Iran known for its roses)”. Most of Shiraz’s publications were poetry.

(29) Alexandre Tamanian (1876-1936), neoclassical architect, who is remembered for his master plan for Yerevan, which turned a dusty provincial town into a major metropolis. His work demolished much of he old city, a warren of mud brick and stone homes, creating grand promenades and avenues lined with buildings design in the “Armenian Monumental Style” synonymous with Tamanian’s work. Republic
Square and opera are a result of his vision. See Museums: Tamanian p. 68. 

(31) Vrtanets Akhikian (1872-1936), painter, born in Van, student of the Russian Artist Repin and one of the Armenian school of realism. During genocide emigrated to Tblisi, moved to Yerevan in 1921. Work includes industrial art, paintings, and illustrations.

(32) Toros Toramanian (1864-1934), 19th c archecologist who laid the foundation for the research of classical Armenian architecture. Famous expeditions include his excavation of Ani with Nikolai Marr and the excavation of Zvartnots cathedral, which resulted in a widely accepted sketch of the church as it stood in the mid 7th c.

(33) Leo - Arakel Grigori Babakhanian (1860-1932), historian, writer, philologist, professor, member of the Institute of Science and Art of the Armenian SSR. His historiography (published in multiple volumes) is one of the giants of Armenian research, a compendium of scientific and cultural heritage including numerous monographs, articles, and pieces of literature.

(34) Hovhannes Hovhannesian (1864-1929), writer, teacher, best known as a linguist and translator, a member of the Ashkharabar or Modern Armenian literature movement, which used a simpler and more easily understood form of the language to write in. Part of the intellectual circles that arose in the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th century, Hovhannesian was a contemporary of Charents, Tumanian, Shirvanzadeh, Teghian and Komitas, all of whom studied at the Gevorkian Seminary in Vagharshapat. See Armavir Marz: Echmiadzin chapter for details and information about his house-museum.

(35) Stepan Yesayi Manukian (1901-1980).

(36) Vartan Ajemian (1905-1977), theatre director, national actor of USSR, hero of social work, from 1953 general director of Sundukian Theatre.

Arus Asian (pronounced Aserian), Ajemian's wife, buried at the same spot. Asian was a popular actress in theatre and film, roles include many dramatic roles at the Sundukian National Theatre and roles in the films Kach Nazar (1940), Davit Bek (1944) and My Heart is in the Highlands (1976).

“I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, literature is unread, music is unheard, and prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread and water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a new Armenia.”

(38) Mariam Aslamazian (1907-2007), painter, People's Artist of Armenia, one of two sisters who managed to transcend the strict constructs of Social Realism while leading independent lives within and without the Soviet Union. Mariam spent her last years in Moscow. A contemporary of Picasso, Gaugin and Martiros Sarian, Mariam's paintings evoke the dramatic, colorful themes of the times. While critics argue the relative strengths of her paintings, her exquisite ceramic plates are universally proclaimed masterpieces.

(39) Sahak Lisitsian (1864-1934), American author who wrote many plays and short stories about growing up impoverished as the son of Armenian immigrants. Books and stories include My Name Is Aram (1940), The Human Comedy (1943), Days of Life and Death and Escape to the Moon (1970), My name is Saroyan (1983). Plays include The Time of Your Life (1939) - winner of the New York Drama Critics' Award and the Pulitzer Prize, My Heart is in the Highlands (1939) and The Cave Dwellers (1958). Saroyan wrote one of the most memorable declarations of solidarity with Armenia, “The Armenian and the Armenian, set during the Armenian Genocide. A famous excerpt reads:

“They have never spoken in my lifetime, and I can only imagine how they spoke. They sang and they prayed and they laughed. They lived on and they continued.”

(40) Vasil Davti Ghoghianian (1865-1934), musicologist whose personal library of over 3900 items is kept in the Special Collections section of the National Library of Armenia.

(41) Tigran Petrosi Mushhegian (1886-1935), geologist, honored scientist of Armenian Republic, founder of the geology department at YSU.

(42) Stepan Gurgeni Demurian (1872-1934), singer and conductor, musical ethnographer and composer, a contemporary of Komitas. Published “Knar,” the first book of Armenian songs using European notation.

(43) Tsolak Khoreni Khazhadian (1886-1935), linguist and translator.

(44) Yervand Lalaiyan (1864-1931), ethnographer, archeologist, folklorist, founder and the first director of the History Museum of Armenia (1919-1927), founded The Ethnographic Magazine (1896), the Armenian Ethnographic Society in Tiflis (1906) and its ethnographic-archeological museum (1908).

(45) Vrtanets Papazian (1866-1920), writer, author of seminal work The Source, contemporary of Tumanian and a member of his "Vernatun", along with Avetik Isahakian, Levon Shant, Nikol Aghbalian and Derenik Demirchian.

(46) Hakob Hamazaspi Manandian (1873-1952), writer, one of the major Armenian historians of the twentieth century. Scholars and students continue to use his articles, monographs, and books as definitive sources on a variety of topics. Works include "The Last Days of Rome", which avoid patriotic sentiment concentrating in steady on Greek and Roman primary sources.

GENOCIDE MONUMENT

Tsitsernakaberd park, enter via Kevian pta, just W of the Kevian Bridge (opposite Halabian p, B 3, 35, 40 / MV 21, 34, 50, 56, 63, 71, 83, 101, 107, 114, 117, 125), or a back entry via Brazil traffic Circle through the Yarmaka, or from Tsitsernakaberd p, getting off at the back road that leads to museum (B 30, 33 / MV 70, 74, 87, 90, 110, 112).

The monument of the genocide (designed by the architects Artur Tekhian and Sashur Kalashian and the artist Hovhannes Khachatryan) is a large complex set on a high point of Tsitsernakaberd
(Swallow’s Fortress). The complex is dedicated in memorial to the 1915-1921 genocide, which claimed up to two million Armenian lives by Turkish led attempts to wipe out the Armenian population under its rule.

There were earlier genocides against Armenians and Greeks in Ottoman Turkey (the 1894 Hamanid Genocide being one particularly gruesome attempt to wipe out Christians in the country, resulting in the murder of 300,000-500,000 Armenians and Greeks), but the 1915 genocide was noted for its careful planning and coordination of slaughter, as hundreds of thousands of Armenians living in Ottoman controlled Western Armenia were rounded up, shot, raped, burned to death or had their throats cut, many children watching the murder of their parents before they had the same fate or kidnapped by Turkish forces. The stories are horrific and almost impossible to believe, were there not documentary evidence showing the extent of the slaughter. Led by Turkish forces, but often assisted by Kurds sharing the same lands, Fully 2/3rds of Armenians living in the world were murdered or exiled from Ottoman lands.

The complex consists of several parts; the circle of stone slabs bent over the eternal flame, a tall 44 meter double-spire nearby and the long wall facing the approach to the monument circle and spire. There is also a grove of evergreen trees at the far west end of the plaza, planted by dignitaries and heads of state from countries around the world. The genocide museum-institute lies just S of this grove, in a subterranean bunker-style building. There are also monuments to the fallen of Artsakh and a row of graves of soldiers from that conflict.

The long wall has twelve inscribe stones, again one for each of the Western Armenian towns and regions in Turkey where atrocities are known to have occurred. It was originally built to hide the city from view and focus attention on the main monument. What most consider the monument is made up of the ring of stone slabs and spire. The eternal flame is at the center of the ring of twelve basalt stones, their massive slabs bent forward to form a protected inner space that is reached by steps between the stones. The stones stand for the twelve regions of Western Armenia lost during the genocide. Some say the stones resemble khachkars, but I think that is mostly an foreign Armenian idea, I never felt that.

The pain of their past is hard enough, the fact that Turkey refuses to admit there ever was a genocide (fearful of the reparations it would be forced to make if it did), is a gnawing wound in the side of every Armenian. If the subject comes up, even the most polite, cheerful hosts will turn bitter and cynical. Bear this in mind as you visit the monument, and act with respect. Regardless when you visit, it is customary to bring flowers to lay at the eternal flame. Flower sellers are at the entrance to the park on Kevian p.

It is important to know that this is probably Armenia's most revered site, and locals take visits there very seriously. Virtually everyone you meet will have had a member of their family killed in the genocide, or forced to leave their home to see refuge. Some are still living in the temporary housing they were given when they crossed the Arax River to escape Turkish forces. The pain of their past is hard enough, the fact that Turkey refuses to admit there ever was a genocide (fearful of the reparations it would be forced to make if it did), is a gnawing wound in the side of every Armenian. If the subject comes up, even the most polite, cheerful hosts will turn bitter and cynical. Bear this in mind as you visit the monument, and act with respect. Regardless when you visit, it is customary to bring flowers to lay at the eternal flame. Flower sellers are at the entrance to the park on Kevian p.
Whatever the dates, it is worth visiting to see the oldest intact church in Yerevan, and one of its home of the Armenian Academy, as it is being destroyed, bit by bit. Two pieces of history hurtling towards each other in the light of day…

In an odd twist of fate, the Tamanian era building that obscured the church from sight for so many instigation in order to rebuild the vank. That building was built in 1938, first as a school and later as a hospital in WWII. In 1943 the National Assembly of Sciences of Armenia was founded there, whose first presidents were Orbeli and the noted Astrophysicist Victor Hambartsumian.

The demolition of the Academy building has set off a new debate, pitting the interests of the church, church that once came from the Soviets. An artist rendition of the new monastery that will replace the 1930's red tufa building is at the corner of Sayat Nova and Abovian.

The key inscription, on the N wall states the church was finished in 1264, its construction donated by someone from Ani. Supposedly public and scientific outcry stopped demolition, and there is record of some, but Tamanian’s architects are also known to have realized its importance and redesigned the master plan building to wrap around the small church. Church officials say it imprisoned the small church, but much more likely its obscurity during the Soviet years saved it from ultimate demise while the Stalinists were still in power.

A more likely version of events is that no one knew about Astvatsatsin’s existence until it was uncovered during demolition, Tamanian and his crew were more sensitive than the first version gives them credit, not minding much the destruction of the larger buildings which no one admits had much architectural value (being hastily rebuilt after the 1679 earthquake, exact dates 1693-1695), but stopping when the small jewel encased in the larger building was slowly uncovered, historians uncovering inscriptions from the 13th c on the church walls.

In an odd twist of fate, the Tamanian era building that obscured the church from site for so many years is being demolished at the church’s instigation in order to rebuild the vank. That building was built in 1938, first as a school and later as a hospital in WWII. In 1943 the National Assembly of Sciences of Armenia was founded there, whose first presidents were Orbeli and the noted Astrophysicist Victor Hambartsumian.

The demolition of the Academy building has set off a new debate, pitting the interests of the church, which says it wants to build a summer residence for the Katolikos there, and Armenia’s scientists, academicians and researchers, who decry the same heavy-handed attitude coming from the church that once came from the Soviets. An artist rendition of the new monastery that will replace the 1930’s red tufa building is at the corner of Sayat Nova and Abovian.

**New Vank** The new compound, open to the street, will hold the existing Astvatsatsin (1), or rebuild or add anew version of Katoghike Met Yekeghetsi (2), a gavit (3) and a bell tower (4). The Katolikos’ residency will wrap around the N and W end of a new large plaza, obscuring the northern reaches of historic Abovican.

**The old vank** Astvatsatsin was part of a monastery, the largest (Katoghike) church of which encased the small church that now stands. Katoghike was built after the 1679 earthquake, with tufa-stone and cement. It was a basilica without a dome and one of the largest churches in the country, and so built over a pagan temple. The building was said to have been inspired by the great church at Zvartnots, though except for its round-ish base, there is little resemblance between this huge cement structure and the elegant 7th c cathedral that was the wonder of the Near East.

Actually the church is a complex of three buildings, the main hall and two chapels, named for King T’rdat and Queen Ashkhen, who converted to Christianity in 301 CE and declared Christianity as a State religion. The building was said to have been inspired by the great church at Zvartnots, though except for its round-ish base, there is little resemblance between this huge cement structure and the elegant 7th c cathedral that was the wonder of the Near East.

**S. Hovhannes-Mkrtich**, 15 Hovhannes Kozerni p., Kond, enter via Paronian p. S. Hovhannes-Mkrtich Church was rebuilt in 1710, on the ruins of a previous medieval structure ruined during the 1679 earthquake. That church in turn was built over an early 5th-7th c structure that took over a pagan shrine, perhaps a now-dry...
Embedded in the walls are a number of old khachkars, some dating to the 15th c. The local priest is happy to decipher the inscriptions, and to retell the church’s history, inviting you in to pray, light a candle, or simply rest in the stillness of the inner hall. There are still traces of the old mud brick and timber houses that crammed against the church, which was in its heyday part of a larger monastery, though its purposes seemed to always have been to serve the local population opposed to Zoravar and Poghos Petros, which were used for instruction and a contemplative life).

The renovated church serves fervent parishioners and has throngs of worshippers at major holidays (palm Sunday, Easter, the mid-August blessing of the grapes) both praying and jostling in line to have their totems blessed. The church yard is also popular with local children, who finally have a yard to play in, and they can be found most evenings playing hide-and-seek or tag in the church yard. Sunset is the best time to view the church when the sun’s rays cast an amber glow over the building.

The actual origin of the monastery is lost, though a tomb of the 1st c martyr Ananias—who is believed by locals to be buried in the basement shrine next to the church, as well as the shrine’s architecture—suggests a much earlier date than the traditional founding date of 1615. A monastery sat on the site for centuries, confirmed by the record of an event that took place on November 21, 1409, when Grigor Tatevetsi (a giant of academicians in late medieval times), together with Hakob, the abbot of Sahmosavank and clergy from Kachberunk (present Turkey), met with church leaders and parishioners from Yerevan at the Monastery of S. Ananias to confer the rank of Vardapet (Archbishop) on his pupils, including Tovma Metsopetsi, the 15th c historian who left the only contemporary account of the Timurid invasions.

Metsopetsi worked for a time at S. Ananias monastery, collaborating with the copysists Galust Vanandetsi and Vardapet Simeon on a volume of Armenia’s manuscripts from oblivion in the 17th-19th cc.

Few know of its long history as a monastery, an ascetic community of monks and artisans, and a repository of priceless manuscripts saved from ruin by repeated invasions during the late medieval period. Monks at the monastery continued copying manuscripts at the site, some of which are the only surviving copies of their original.

Metsopetsi worked for a time at S. Ananias monastery, collaborating with the copysists Galust Vanandetsi and Vardapet Simeon on a volume of the sermons of Grigor Tatevetsi. This manuscript, dated 1410, is the oldest known to have been written in Yerevan, and the first to mention the monastery as a center of manuscript art. Before then, nothing is certain, though its existence a the start of the 14th c, suggests at least a 12th-13th cc beginning, the last prior period that monasteries are known to have been built. Excavations at the site, suggest a 5th-7th cc structure stood at the site. The basilica form of the medieval church, inherited from Greece, also suggests an earlier date, the church built on older foundations.

The mausoleum is not conclusively dated either, though historians believe it dates to the 9th-13th cc, a wide span of time that nevertheless represents the glory years of Armenian medieval architecture. However, the inner sanctum layout and style, as well as the position of the stone, suggests it may have been built over a much earlier shrine, perhaps even a Pagan sacred burial spot, not unheard of in Armenian history.

The 1615 founding date comes from a restoration of a ruined medieval monastery on the outskirts of early 17th c Yerevan, under the patronage of the Persian governor Amirguna-khan, who was attempting to repopulate the area (which had been emptied of Armenians barely 10 years before by Shah Abbas I in the wake of Turkish invasion), and to revive the deserted town into a regional capital worthy of the Persian khanate. He did this at the same time that the church in general was in revial, first by commissars at Sahmosavank (under bishop Sarkis), Trabonzed (under Kirakos) and most importantly, the renovated monastery of Mets Arants (Mets Anapat) near Tatev, in 1608 under the patronage of Melik Hakas. This latter community inherited the university tradition of the 10th-13th cc, training priests, bishops and Katolikos, engendering the rebirth of the classical tradition and setting the ground for 18th-19th cc education revivals of the country. Among the founders was Vardapat Dovses Siunetsi (Khorenatsi, Tatevatsi), who became Katolikos and initiated the restoration of Echmiadzin.

Before this, involved in doctrinal conflict with the then reigning Katolikos Melikset and Sahak, Vardapat Siunetsi came to Yerevan en route to self-imposed exile in Western Armenia. There he was convinced by Amirguna-khan to stay and restore the deserted chapel of Ananias, turning it into a monastery. Siunetsi agreed, and the monastery was rebuilt.
Prominent manuscripts copied at the vank include "The Book of Sermons (1623), by Poghos, under the direction of Movses Siunetsi," "The great Service Book" (1625, Zakhrai, a pupil of Siunetsi), and manuscripts by the student, Essai, who copied the manuscript that has survived as No 1538 at the Matenadaran, and another, Minas, who began copying at age 60, copying "The Great Service Book and Phylon's Philosophy), who reconstructed "The Book of Sermons" in 1658.

Others include Movses Khorenatsi’s "History of Armenia" (1663, Matatia), a 1664 manuscript (No.6221 at Matenadaran) with an eloquent appeal for patronage of S. Astvatsatsin (at the monastery), S. Yerku-Yeresit (two-faced), S. Hakob, S. Katoghike and other Yerevan churches, and the 1686 “Great Service Book” by Grigor Yerevantsi, which gives a detailed description of the devastating 1679 earthquake that destroyed much of central Armenia, and collapsed one-third of Mt. Ararat’s dome.

The church was originally an open gallery built at the same time as the church, its thick square columns and arches still visible, the inner two elaborately carved with lacework, the gallery topped by a bell tower with an eight sided domed roof. The gallery was enclosed in the 1978-1980 renovation. The other entry is on the south side. The external eastern wall is decorated with two small cross windows set within a frame that is decorated with a cross design and four medallions. The walls are also decorated with five khachkars dated 1693, made in memory to the church donor, Khoga-Panos and his family.

The church and monastery, made of timber when reconstructed in 1615, were burned down during the second Turko-Persian war, rebuilt of stone in 1658, but burned in 1686, and again earthquake. After the 1686 earthquake, the church was reconstructed the church’s history, and can be detailed; the south inscription over the door records work done under the priest Sarkisian in 1889, which adding the mezzanine, windows and the space into three naves, the central nave slightly elevated from the side naves, all of them topped with three parallel domes covered over with two-pitch roof. The semicircular apse is set within the walls of the basilica, its dais reached by side steps and flanked by two annexes. In 1889 an iconostasis was placed in the apse instead of the traditional Armenian pedestal altar, an event recorded in an inscription on the left column of the church. The present altar is made of white felsite, with a painting of Our Lady with the Infant, by Yervand Kochar.
The church was destroyed by the 1679 earthquake, rebuilt in the early 20th c by a wealthy donor, only to be ruined again by Soviet genocide, its original home at the church of Lima in present day Turkey.

The mausoleum has a separate outer entry leading to the subterranean space (3x3m), the building measuring 5.2x5.2m. The small space includes the grave to S. Ananias, an altar and paintings.

NORK CHURCHES ▲

S. HOVHANNES AVAN (DD 40.21214 x 44.57774, 1298m), Marshal Khudiakov 5th Back Alley, Avan, is located N of Avan Cemetery, reached from Yerevan center via the Sevan Hwy/Miasnikian mix master at Masiv; from the exit ramp cross Gai onto Malian and follow up to the cemetery, skirting its W side then onto Khudrov skirting the short NW side and take a R onto Safarjan skirting the N side, the 5th Back Alley will be the 4th L turn, just before Vakhtangov p. The back alley runs parallel to Tamruch p. (B 20 / MV 32, 59, 61, 86, 121 – get off at the Bruisov Block and walk to the site, ask).

On of the most extraordinary holy days of the year occurs at Nork Astvatsatsin, the Feast Day of the Assumption of Virgin Mary (August 15), or blessing of the grape harvest. The church explodes with activity (not all of it spiritual in nature) as local vendors line the long walk to the church, selling flowers, trinkets, popcorn, candy, toys—you name it is probably on sale.

Hundreds of thousands crowd the narrow lane and crowd into the church to have a totem or dried flowers blessed, arguing with others in the crowd to get in first, or even with the harried priest for not blessing it "enough".

Candles burn outside the church in large metal tables that are literally on fire from the thousands of candles burning at one time. In a corner area, pieces of the old church are blackened with candle soot and leaping flames from lit candles. The frenzy, emotional pitch and sweltering heat combine to make this either one of the most dramatic events you may witness in Armenia, of the most frightening.

AVAN – NOR NORK CHURCHES ▲

S. MARIAM ASTVATSATSIN OF NORK, Nork-Marash p, Nork Marash district, enter via Armenakian p. is situated on a hill in Nork. The church has ancient foundations going back to the Pagan-Christian era when the area was a wilderness spot. Its exact founding is unclear, but it is known to have functioned in the 15th c, probably over the ruins of a 9th-10 cc church.

The otherwise simple hall type was topped with a wooden, then stone ribbed roof, its one elegant feature the stone work on the apron for the altar. The frontal piece is a series of early Christian crosses, with as a focal point a beautifully carved ornamental globe its top part deteriorated by wear leading to the subterranean space (3x3m), the building measuring 5.2x5.2m. The small space includes the grave to S. Ananias, an altar and paintings.

The church yard was once very large, given the extensive grave stones in the area, some in neighbor yards. The graves in front and back are flat stones, mostly early Christian (4th-5th cc) though a few look like pre-Christian. There are also a number of what I call "loaf stones", blocks with pointed arches, from the medieval period. On the N side of the church there is a khachkar shrine from the 13th c, with a large red tufa khachkar embedded in the framing. The carving is
exceptional, its lacework deeply incised into the stone with incredible detail, the cross framed by 14 square medallions, each in a different design, resting over a sun symbol almost as large as the cross, itself a masterpiece of carving. The three leaves of life is almost unintelligible, its form so wrapped up into elaborate ‘filigrees’ or ribbons representing the symbol. The same is for the two grape bunches flanking the top of the cross; they appear more like Celtic knots than the symbol of the blood of Christ they are. This is a masterpiece of art.

Next to it is a 9th-10th cc stele fragment, appearing to have been carved from an old Vishap stone, a common practice. It is out of place at the spot and sat somewhere prominently in the old church yard. The religious figures are obscured (scratched out by invaders), but common themes for steles were Biblical stories and those about a conversion of the area.

**AVAN KATOGHIKE** (DD 40.21494 x 44.57218, 1282m), Artashes Shahinian 1st back alley, Avan, is reached from Yerevan center via the Sevan Hwy/Miasnikian mix master at Masiv from the exit ramp cross Gai onto Malian and follow up to the cemetery, sketching its W side then onto Khudrov sketching the short NW side. At the bus stop opposite the WWII monument take the 2nd L alley into the warren of houses, which turns into Artashes Shahinian 3rd Back alley. Follow this around to the ruins. (B 20 / MV 59, 61, 86, 121 – get off at the WW II monument and walk to the site, ask).

**History** The 6th c church has a well documented—though conflicting—medieval history, built over a Pagan temple of some importance, given its substantial size and the materials used. A few gravestones in the yard appear to be Pre-Christian, and stele fragments carved from Vishap stones lie scattered about the extensive khachkar fragments.

The church itself was built at a time of competing churches; when two Katolikos were elected to lead the church, one pro-Byzantium and the other pro-Persia. While the Cathedral in Dvin served as the seat of the pro-Persian Katolikos, Avan became the seat for the pro-Byzantium Katolikos Yovhan (also Iovan, Hovhannes) Bagavanetsi (ca. 591-602), installed as prelate over Byzantine Armenia by Emperor Maurice.

According to the 7th c historian Sebeos, both the cathedral and an adjoining palace (N) were built for Yovhan (an inscription found at the site uses the old Armenian word “Yovhan” in commemorative stone), but the style of the structure and other inscriptions suggest an earlier construction date (582-584), the ambitious prelate simply taking an already extraordinary building for his seat of power. The great western door is altered at a later date to create a passageway from the new palace to the church. The church was ruined sometime after Hovhannes’ reign ended, its walls ruined by invasion and earthquake.

It remained in ruins until excavations in 1941 and 1965-1966 uncovered a number of ornamental stones belonging to much earlier constructions on the site, some from the Hellenistic era. Other stones, mainly in the western end, likewise showed an eye for detail and patterning. In the church yard there are a number of gravestones, mostly flat stones embedded in the ground. A few stele fragments unique to the 6th c also survived, tossed among other carved stones in the church and yard.

**ASTVATSATSIN AVAN**, (DD 40.22034 x 44.58358, 1268m), Babajanian p, NE Avan, is a tiny shrine-church on a main road that circles above Narekatsi and Hovhannissian apartment blocks (B 20 / MV 32, 59, 61, 86, 121 – get off at the WWII monument and walk to the site, ask). The small church was first built in the 5th c on more ancient foundations than S. Hovhannes or the Katoghike. It was worse of wear, facing repeated destructions and renovations; so much so that little of the original building survives, save a stepped pedestal for a stele (read: vishap stone whittled down to size). The church faces the large compound and home for Lalique Samvel (Lingerie Samvel), whose father started the family fortune in women’s apparel. The shrine was renovated with fund donated by the lingerie magnate.

Excavations also uncovered the Katolikos palace, which was built at the same time as church on the northern end. While its size is small as compared to other Katolikos’ palaces (Zvartnots, Aruch, Dvin), its layout is still elaborate and detail stones show an eye for detail and patterning. In the church yard there are a number of gravestones, mostly flat stones embedded in the ground. A few stele fragments unique to the 6th c also survive, tossed among other carved stones in the church and yard.
THE AVAN CEMETERY ("Lost Cemetery"), not to be confused with the large cemetery you skirt on the way to Avan churches, is on the west edge of Avan, between Alamti and Marshal Babajanian pta (B 17, 41 / MV 5, 16, 20, 32, 54, 56, 59, 81, 86, 102, 115, 121), has 13th-18th cc khachkars and across the road a 5th-6th cc stepped platform and pillar fragment for a grave monument, built for some wealthy soul wanting to proclaim his fame and piety; alas, only his piety remains the monument is not inscribed, and traces of its adorning images gouged out by invading troops.

GRIGOR LUSAVORICH (DD 40.18159 x 44.56630, 1369m), Nor Nork park, opposite 46 Galshoian p, enter from Mikoloj p. via Davit Bek pta or from Gai pta in 1st Masiv (B 22, 25, 28 / MV 32, 40, 58, 82) is situated in Nor Nork park, facing the 5th block (5th Masiv) of Nork district. The newly built church serves the outlying community of 5th-9th Masiv, a series of concrete apartment blocks that look onto Kotaik marz.

KHACHKAR SPRING / MONUMENT (DD 40.21889 x 44.53748, 1304m), Kanakertsi p. between Hasratian and Kanakertsi 2nd Alley is just uphill from the Abovian Museum on Kanakertsi (Bus 2, 4 / MV 24, 26, 40, 45, 95, 100, 101).

The khachkar shrine site is on the left side of the road, with an old looking (but modern) monument to the fallen Kanaker soldiers of the Great Patriotic War on the right, with spring. The khachkar shrine is part of a now missing 5th c hall church that stood to the north. What remains is a flagstone plaza of gravestones, scattered khachkar fragments, candle holders, a tree covered with torn rags (what I call the Armenian version of the "Burning Bush" from the bible), and the khachkar shrine itself, a gorgeous 1265 specimen of intricate detail and stone lacework. The khachkar has an inscribed dedication to a certain Petavan and his wife Avak't'kin in remembrance of their souls; a rather elaborate calling card for heaven.

The shrines are found throughout the country, in almost every village, many still used by locals performing matagh (sacrifice) of birds or small animals in supplication to a saint or the Virgin Mary, locals unaware of its pagan origins. They often sit next to a tree or bush covered with strips of cloth, the Armenian "Tree of Life" from pre-Christian lore.

The opposite Memorial, has a spring and despite its modern construction, looks rather like a khachkar on its own right, a feature not lost on locals, or the designer, who placed the monument to Kanaker's fallen soldiers in a spot facing the old church and memorial khachkar. The details, while secular (to get by Soviet censors), resemble Christian forms throughout, a clever device used throughout Armenia to thwart religious censorship while asserting Armenia's Christian traditions. The spring has cold fresh water.

The large structure (domed cruciform with four annexes) is built in a modified Zvartnots style, with the square supporting the drum of the dome and a circular sub roof. The spacious church is made all the more impressive by a large bell tower on its western façade. This is a beautiful church that glows an amber color in the setting sun, and represents one of the best of the new churches in Yerevan—if only the architects had designed this instead of the monstrosity by the same name in central Yerevan. There is a large yard with flower beds and good views of Kotaik marz around the church. Church closes at 6 each evening.

The missing church more than likely has pre-Christian roots, its footprint resembling the outline of a Tukh Manuk, one of Armenia's little noted (and less understood) legacies. Tukh Manuk ("Dark Youth") shrines can be found in almost every village of Armenia, its origins shrouded in the mists of time. The cult is an extremely popular but officially frowned upon pagan cult to a adolescent blood-drinking god-head somewhere between Mythra (the fire god of Zoroastrianism) and Jesus Christ. Some equate it to the Hindi god Shiva, who devours creation in order to restore balance.

S. HAKOB (DD 40.22027 x 44.53847, 1310m), 6th street, via Kanakertsi via 1st street from where Azatutian joins the Tbilisi Hwy (B 2, 4 / MV 24, 26, 40, 45, 95, 100, 101), is best reached by taking the third L after the Khachkar shrine and follow it around and left to the church, which will be on the right.

S. Hakob, like its nearly identical neighbor Astvatsatsin, is a large basilica with elaborate triple arched western façade, a N entryway and a small domed aperture atop the center of the hall. Save the tufa stone patterning and other minor details (Hakob has two large windows on the W façade and its N windows are not framed with motif designs), the two might be twins, and their original designs are certainly by the same architect.

According to legend James had a desire to climb Mt. Ararat and find Noah's Ark. Despite his old age, he set out on the journey, stopping to rest on the way, where he fell asleep. In his sleep an angel came and told him that he was too old for the quest and would never reach the summit, but as a reward for his faith, the angel gave him a piece of the Ark, saying, "Take this and satisfy your desire." He returned home with the relic, which is now housed in the treasury of Echmiadzin.

St. James was one of the 318 participants in the first ecumenical council in Nicea in 325 CE, and led his flock in resistance against Persian forces in 388. Another legend had it that wherever he laid his head, a spring would burst forth. A famous
The nearby gate dates to the same period as the 17th c renovation and has some wonderful architectural details, sadly obscured by political posters and graffiti. Beginning in 1868, the church served as a school for S. Sahak Partev Diocese, under the leadership of the certain Archimandrite monk Mesrop Smbatians. Closed by the Soviets, it served as a barn, like its neighbor, and was only recently restored, in 1990.

**S. ASTVATSATSIN KANAKER (DD 40.22143 x 44.53388 (1311m), 6th street 2nd back alley, enter via Kanakertsi via 1st Street from where Azatutian joins the Tbilisi Hwy (B 2, 4 / MV 24, 26, 40, 45, 95, 100, 101), is best reached by taking the third left after the Khachkar shrine and following it back to S. Hakob, then take the next R and up two blocks to Astvatsatsin.

The church is dated 1595, but was built over older foundations, possibly Pagan in origin. Like its neighboring “clone” S. Hakob, Astvatsatsin is a large triple nave basilica with triple arched western façade and elaborate carving from the middle ages. There is a N entrance and small apertures at the center of the hall roof, also identical to S. Hakob’s design.

Astvatsatsin was a walled monastic church with monk cells ringing the church yard. Its close proximity and equally important stature in the community suggest both Astvatsatsin and Hakob were once part of a large temple complex from pre-Christian times. Their design and layout suggest the same, though excavations have not confirmed this.

Like S. Hakob, Astvatsatsin was destroyed in the 1679 earthquake, and restored soon after, Astvatsatsin by local efforts. The church was used as a warehouse in Soviet times and only recently restored, with much work remaining to be done to fully restore the building.

The church is dated 1595, but was built over older foundations, possibly Pagan in origin. Like its

**S. ASTVATSATSIN MALATIA (DD 40.17525 x 44.45707, 988m), R. Melikian p, off of Armin Vagner p, enter via Sebastia p, behind school 92 and Malatia-Sebastia district offices (B 3, 35, 40 / MV 21, 37, 48, 56, 63, 70, 71, 83, 101, 107, 110, 117), is the older church in Malatia-Sebastia, situated in a park like setting that was the original church grounds. The church is next to a monument to the Malatian Heroes and a large fountain space with fascinating bronze figures that are diving in (or out) of the (missing) water.

The church, set within 18th-19th cc stone buildings in one of the oldest areas of Yerevan, is quite lovely, with newly renovated walls, windows and door. If the church is locked, the house immediately adjoining the yard has the keys. The church works Sundays and holydays, attended by a small group of dedicated parishioners who swell to a throng on the most popular liturgical days (Palm Sunday, Easter, Feast of the Assumption).

**MALATIA-SEBASTIA (BANGLADESH) CHURCHES ▲

**S. GEVORG (DD 40.11750 x 44.47314, 912m), 4th back street, Noragavit, deep south Shengavit, enter via Artashat (Masis) Hwy (B 38 / MV 57, 104, 105) is near Erebuni airport, in a working class neighborhood. Getting there requires some quick counting of alleys as streets and a few stops along the way to ask directions.

The church is part of a complex of religious buildings; the church itself, a nearby hall church used for funerals, and the ruins of a medieval church in the parking area. Nearby there are old graves the ruins of another small church (impossible to give directions, ask). The triple nave hall church is topped by a small aperture over the center of the hall, with a large western gallery and bell tower topped by a larger tent roof. The church, set within 18th-19th cc stone buildings in one of the oldest areas of Yerevan, is quite lovely, with newly renovated walls, windows and door. If the church is locked, the house immediately adjoining the yard has the keys. The church works Sundays and holydays, attended by a small group of dedicated parishioners who swell to a throng on the most popular liturgical days (Palm Sunday, Easter, Feast of the Assumption).

**RUSSIAN CHURCHES ▲

Once dominating the Yerevan skyline, Yerevan’s Russian orthodox churches were all destroyed or converted to storage barns in Soviet times. The grandest church, St. Nikolai, was torn down to make way for the Shahumian Statue and traffic circle. The remaining old church, survived by its relative obscurity, tucked in a corner of Kanaker District, opposite the Russian Military compound it once served. A new Russian Orthodox church is slated to be built in central Yerevan in the coming years.
MONUMENT TO CossACK SOLDIERS

To the SE of the church there is a small monument at the barracks across the street from the church and killed during the Russian-Persian wars in 1826-1827, which liberated Eastern Armenia from Persian rule and routed Turkish advances, also freeing large portions of the Western Armenian population to emigrate east. The inscription reads, "To the Cossacks of Russia from grateful Armenian people". Interesting design. Currently the west end of the church is open to the public, with icons and elaborate candelabras for lighting candles in, placed against a background of sky blue plastic tarp obscuring the renovation work on the other side. Parishioners (exclusively women it seems) are friendly if concerned when first seeing foreign visitors, careful to remind you that if you want to take picture, ask the priest to bless the camera first.

To the SE of the church there is a small monument to Cossack Soldiers billeted at the barracks across the street from the church and killed during the Russian-Persian wars in 1826-1827, which liberated Eastern Armenia from Persian rule and routed Turkish advances, also freeing large portions of the Western Armenian population to emigrate east. The inscription reads, "To the Cossacks of Russia from grateful Armenian people". Interesting design. Currently the west end of the church is open to the public, with icons and elaborate candelabras for lighting candles in, placed against a background of sky blue plastic tarp obscuring the renovation work on the other side. Parishioners (exclusively women it seems) are friendly if concerned when first seeing foreign visitors, careful to remind you that if you want to take picture, ask the priest to bless the camera first.

MOSQUES

There are but a handful of Muslim worshippers in Yerevan, a vast difference from the once majority community of Muslims in 18th-19th cc Yerevan, almost all Persians working in the city. Of the eight mosques that once served the city, only remains from the 8th that once reigned the 19th c city, the others pulled down by 19th c tsarist forces or 20th c Soviets.

ST. POKROV FORTRESS CHURCH (destroyed), Noy Wine Factory. After the capture of Yerevan fortress by Russian forces in 1827, and the Treaty Turkenchah in 1828 which formally ceded Eastern Armenia to the Russian tsar, the fortress was maintained by Imperial forces who were billeted inside. Authorities converted the mosque at the fortress into a church, but soon after it was decided to demolish the mosque in favor of a new church at the site. The mosque was torn down and construction of the new Russian church began in 1830, completed ten years later and christened St. Pokrov at its consecration. The church was distinct in that it was not in the Russian style; instead its rectangular plan was decorated in a neoclassic Greek style. The church had a short life. The captured fortress was not repaired and so fell into decay. In 1864 it was decided to demolish the walls and remove the soldiers to newer barracks elsewhere (one of which was in Kanaker, where the current Russian church resides). The church stood for a few years until it was in turn torn down and replaced by the large St. Nikolai in the (then) center of Yerevan.

ST. NIKOLAI RUSSIAN CHURCH (destroyed), Shahumian Monument. Kanaker Russian Church (working) (DO 40.22360x44.54583, 1308m), 119 Kanakertsi p. (B 2, 4 / MV 24, 26, 40, 45, 95, 100, 101), is situated in the middle of housing blocks, facing 19th c Russian barracks (occupied by Russian soldiers). The large basilica church serves the entire Russian community of Yerevan, until a promised new Russian church in the center is completed. The church is undergoing renovation, its exterior having been cleaned and restored and the interior slowly being restored to its former glory. The domes are re-giled, the stone gildes with its original red tufa cleaned, a reminder of what all the buildings of old Yerevan looked like before pollution dirtied their exteriors (tufa is not a dirt-friendly medium; it soaks dust and grime. An odd choice for semi-desert Yerevan). The outside yard is also undergoing renovation, but already several lovely flower plots have been planted and the entire yard is running with newly planted trees which will provide lovely shade on hot days.

The mosque—officially called a "Cultural Center" by Armenians does work and serves the Persian community, though there are no calls to prayer from the remaining tower. The site is open to guests on weekdays, and has an exhibition of photos of Old Yerevan. Closed for prayer, and guards are instructed to restrict certain areas from non-Moslem visitors.

SYNAGOGUE

The small Jewish community (several hundred) is made up of Russian immigrants and descendants from 18th-19th c immigrations into Russian and Armenian. The community has a number of mixed marriages, the wife Jewish, husband Armenian. The historic synagogue was destroyed in Soviet times, and the current still has services on the Sabbath. A recent attempt by the mayor of Yerevan to appropriate the synagogue’s land for an apartment building has been widely noted in the Jewish community.

TEMPLE

23 Nar-Dosi p. The Mordechai Navi Religious Community of Armenia was founded in 1992. Gersh Meir Burshtein is the Head Rabbi of Armenia. The community is active in religious education, translations, worship, funeral services and aid to Jewish families. There is also a soup kitchen medical equipment aid and entertainment for Jewish children. Other contacts are the Menora Jewish Cultural Center, Sa Vardenants, tel. 52-518-92, and the Jewish Community, 2/1 Griboyedov p, tel. 23-65-33, 53-49-24.

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it was acquired by Nikolai Shustov, a well-known

National Assembly (Azgaiyn Zhoghov) of Armenia, marshal Baghramian pta, tel. 58-82-25, 52-96-95, 58-82-65, is the legislative branch of the government of Armenia, a unicameral (single legislative) body, consisting of 131 members, each elected for 4-year terms, 56 single-seat district representatives and 75 proportional-vote representatives. Proportional- vote seats are assigned on a party basis, the minimum required to be represented in the assembly being 5% of the national vote. The building is the former party Headquarters of the Communist party, set within large park-like grounds, fenced and heavily watched after the murders of several members in 1999. The building is roughly across the street from the Presidential Office, neither open to walk-in tours. Pre-arranged visits have been a part of a few Diaspora Association groups visiting the homeland, but require contact with official representative.

Presidential Office, Marshall Baghramian pta, 58-87-26, 58-87-47, 52-23-30, are the offices of the president and his staff. Closed to walk in visitors.

Constitutional Court, 10 Marshal Baghramian pta, 58-81-30, 58-81-86, rules on the conformity of legislation with the Constitution, approves international agreements, and decides election-related legal questions. It can accept only cases proposed by the President, by two-thirds of all parliamentary deputies, or election-related cases brought by candidates for Parliament or the presidency. Because of these limitations, the Constitutional Court cannot ensure effective compliance with constitutional human rights safeguards. No entrance with invitation.

Noy Ararat Brandy/ Cognac Factory, 9 Admiral Isahakova pta, tel. 54-70-47, 54-70-48, www.noy1877.am, located in the old Yerevan Wine Trust, built on the location of the old Yerevan Fortress that was destroyed in 1887 by a wealthy 1st guild merchant Nerses Tairiants with the help of his cousin Vasil Tairov. Tairiants began distilling Brandy at the winery he had founded ten years earlier inside the former fortress of Yerevan. The enterprise reached its hey-day in 1898, when

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National Assembly of Armenia, 72 Terjan p, tel. 58-52-59, fax: 52-97-11, email: nia@arm.r.am, www.nia.am, open Mon-Fri 9-15, is located in the center of Yerevan. The oldest structure in the complex is the Tamanian Wing, built in 1939 following the city architect’s general design. The Book Storage Wing was built in the 1980’s to house 9 million volumes. Funds were not allocated to service the building, which remains mostly empty, the installation of utilities, services and books being done on a floor by floor basis, use of he library is free to all citizens of Armenia over the age of 17. Guest passes are generally granted with some type of introduction. The Special Collections Department is impressive, housing 45,000 items or rare books and items. Collections include Early Imprint, Rare and Archival Literature, and a Gifts Department.

Avetik Isahakian Yerevan Library, 2 Amiran p, tel. 58-96-10, 58-71-78, open Mon-Sat 9-5. The city’s main library. Includes an American Corner with books, periodicals and weekly presentations.

Biblical Society Library, 61-62. The Special Collections Department is impressive, housing 45,000 items or rare books and items. Collections include Early Imprint, Rare and Archival Literature, and a Gifts Department.


Children

Khkno aper children’s library, 42/1 Terjan p, tel. 52-12-22, email: karine@childlib.am, open Mon-Sat 9:30-16:30. Cut down from itself Cognac, won at the 1900 Pairs Exhibition when it was accepted as such in a blind taste test that fooled France’s pre- eminent brandy connoisseurs. Contact for possible guides. Not nearly as good as those at the old factory across the river.

Grand Candy Ponchikansots, Marshots pta at Koriun p, near Matenadaran, is a revival of an old tradition in Yerevan, a low-priced café specializing in freshly made ponchiks, Armenian-Russian “doughnuts”, chewy fried dumplings filled with sweet cream and dusted with powdered sugar. Oy! I’m getting a sugar headache just thinking of the delicious morsels of sweet doughy bread. Ponchikansots are an institution in Yerevan, a place where budget students and the well-heeled go head to head at the counter for cheap eats. Open 10-22, 7 days.

Libraries

Main Library, Sarkis and Marie Izmirlian Library, 1 Alex Manukian p, tel. 55-13-34, fax: 55-11-04, email: ashalex@ysu.am, has 52,000 items in its catalogue, including UN, OSCE material depositories and the Greek Embassy Library Center.

Yerevan State Brusov Linguistics Library, 42 Terjan p, tel. 53-05-52, email: vsbl@brusov.am, has over 400,000 books on social sciences, texts-books, on science and fiction in Armenian, Russian, English, German, Spanish, Italian and other languages. Facilities include 135 seats in the reading hall, a Xerox, printer and Internet access.

Parks

For a semi-desert city, Yerevan has a surprising number of green parks, each providing a shady respite from the host summer sun or a place to winter sun. The sad news is there were even more green spaces; the entire rim of the Nork hills below the TV tower once boasted one of the largest urban forests in the world, but the summer days of 1992-1995 when the country faced huge energy shortages and people needed the wood to heat their homes, the trees were never replaced (or indirectly by a corrupt local government), something of an embarrassment to the city.

The problems are worse in the summer, when the effects of pollution and ongoing desertification intensify. Still, people continue to plant saplings each year, and there has been noticeable gain in greenery in the last 10 years, some of it due to a controversial decision by the government to sell concessions to café developers, who have “taken” parts of the most popular parks (especially Ring Park). Yerevan’s cafes are anything but a few tables under umbrellas; they are large complexes combining nature and coffee, some adding live music and entertainment and indoor facilities. The loss of green space is decried by many, while others point out the cafes are the only trade that is preserving something of the parks while the government does nothing (cafes are required to maintain the greenery in their territory and pride themselves on their gardening).

Parks are popular by young and old alike, a chance to catch some cool evening air on a hot night, to catch up on local gossip, or simply to rest and watch the world go by.
The Botanical gardens are a pleasant spring time break in themselves, 80 hectares in the middle of the city that still bursts with blooming bushes and trees each year (May is peak bloom). Despite the obvious problems, the park is still a pleasant break from the hectic pace of the city.

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Pepo as he struggles to overcome adversity. The play was the basis for the first full-length film in Soviet Armenia (1935). The park is a part of the Old Abovian Walking Tour p. 18.

**RING PARK (OGHAKADZEV AIGI)**, stretches in an arc between Mashtots and Tigran Mets pts. at the massive Grigor Lusavorich church. Top and bottom roads are Isahakian/Manukian pts. (top) and Khajian p (bottom). The park is a delightful break, with trees, flower beds, fountains, cafes, children parks, tennis courts, a chess house, church—even an aviary.

**SHAHUMIAN PARK**, between Shahumian & Hanrapetutian (Republic) Squares, is directly behind the Stepan Shahumian Statue, its central feature a twp block long series of fountains with 2570 fountain heads, one for each year of Yerevan’s existence after the founding of Erebuni in 782 BCE, the city’s traditional founding date. The park has a couple of simple cafes under a canopy of trees with cool breezes skimming off the fountain creating natural air conditioning, a relief after the excesses of caffeine on Opera Square (though the young and hopeful will still throng the trendy cafes there). The park is a more pleasant place to sip coffee than the Meeting Point Café on the Marriott sidewalk just around the corner; much less on the noise and car fume factors.

**PUSHKIN PARK (LOVERS PARK)**, 2 Marshal Baghramian p. (M: Baghramian), is located opposite the Presidential Palace and just up the street from the National Assembly. The small park is free of crowds, its sidewalks navigating a course through a small forest of trees. The metro building houses a café and is a natural entry to the Musical Chamber Theatre, located at the SW end of the park 1 Ptolemaeus p, 1st Blind Alley, tel. 52-19-68, 52-19-69, 58-88-13.

**BOULEVARD / VERNISSAGE** are pale reflections of their former glory, when their huge fountains and canopies of trees provided natural air conditioning for the surrounding neighborhoods. The ca. 1970’s parks were part of Tamanian’s master plan, a grand promenade connecting the center road with Republic Square. Demolishing historic neighborhoods, the parks, designed by A. Zarian, were completed save 3 blocks of the most historic area which adjacent Armenian street. These plots have been targeted by downtown developers, who have completed demolition, replacing the old housing with high rise apartment buildings (the so-called “New Yerevan” area around Northern Avenue).

**BOULEVARD** runs between Arami and Karen Demirchian p (nee Pavstos Buzand, nee Sverdlov) streets, from about one block east of Mashtots pta (behind a café) and two blocks west (behind another Café). The western part leads to the Hrazdan Gorge and Children’s Park via a 250m tunnel.

**ENGLISH PARK**, Italian p, is the oldest surviving park in Yerevan, appearing on several lithographs of the city from the 18th-19th cc. Once covering a territory about twice its current size, the park is now hemmed in by The French and Italian Embassies, Sundukian Theatre, Congress Hotel and a number of apartment buildings. It is still a bit grand, with a large fountain and sidewalks ringing the park. There is a café at the entry from Italian p. Other entries are off Grigor Lusavorich pta.; between the French Embassy and Sundukian Theatre; next to Congress Hotel; and Movses Khorenatsi (Marx) p, next to the Gold market. The statues of G. Sundukian, founder of the Armenian school of realistic drama, and his literary character Pepo are both figured in the two statues in the park. Pepo is one of he first depictions of social injustice in Armenian dramatic literature, showing the life of a young man named donating to the museum. See Walking Tours: Ring Park p. 27.

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The park is a pleasant walk anytime of the year, but most come out in summer evenings to enjoy the evening breeze and visit with neighbors and friends. For details see Walking Tours: Ring Park p. 28.
The large park had its once thick forest decimated during the dark days of 1992-1995 when people cut the trees to heat their homes and cook. It is only now beginning to recover, with an annual tree planting. The park has also diminished in size, pieces sold off to local developers who have built on once public park land (a hotel near the entrance is the most glaring example). Outcry over the loss of green space has slowed development a small bit.

Despite its trials the park has regained much of its greenery and remains a popular spot with neighborhood locals who stroll down the tree lined sidewalks, sit a spell on a park bench, or visit the lively amusement park that sits at the E end of the park, under the Mother Armenia Monument. There are a number of fountains in the park, flower gardens that are often denuded by poor boys trying to impress their girl friends (not sure who to blame here, the boy or the situation), and the 12,000 square meter mamnade lake Anenj, which rents out paddleboats. The lake has a small bridge. There are cafes in the park and, at the main entrance, a restaurant with private cabanas.

The theme park has old carnival rides (children's rides, Octopus, Haunted House), games of chance and dexterity and a wonderful Ferris wheel with one of the best views of Yerevan (and a surprisingly breath-sucking experience as the wheel takes you up and over the canyon), with the commensurate sugary sweets and fried foods. It has a wonderful 1950s feel about it (there is even a cotton candy vendor!)

At the far E end of the park stands the Mother Armenia Statue, on a 36 meter base (sculptor Ara Harutunian, architect Rafael Israeliian) that is the six-story World War II museum, which has an extensive displays from the war plus the Karabakh conflict. A cenotaph to the Unknown Soldier is next to the monument. The museum is open Tues-Sun 11-6. For details see Museums: Mother Armenia /World War II Museum p. 56.

Another statue in the park is of an 8 meter high statue stretching into space, the hands sculpted to represent multiple emotions (fear, anger, loss, smug victory) and labeled by the artist Vahan Khachikian, "May there never be war, may nobody lose their son".

ARABKIR PARK, between Komitas and Zarian (N and S) and Komitas Passage (W & E), is a poor excuse for a park, once a pretty spot in the heart of Arabkir region, it is now bereft of friends and gardeners, its greenery mostly denuded of their leaves for lack of attention. The downsacle budget Arhabik Hotel it located on the western edge of the park (B 1, 4, 20, 27, 28, 43 / MV 4, 17, 93, 101).

NORK EAST YEREVAN PARKS

NORK GARDENS (NORK AIJN), Armen Arminian p. S of S. Astvatsatsin church (B 19, 48 / MV 22, 87, 109), is struggling to regain its regal status as Yerevan's largest forest. The gardens are actually a green belt that stretches from Nork to beyond the TV tower, before the early 1990's a thick forest of trees. Cut in those years by a population starved for heating and cooking fuel, the forest has yet to recover.

Valiant efforts to plant saplings have failed to restore the forest to its former glory, officials choosing tree species that require intensive watering in their early years. Some improvement has been made, as the Armenian Tree Project (www.armeniatree.org) and other NGOs assist in choosing trees suitable for Yerevan's dry climate, and locals take more initiative in restoring the forest. And despite locals' persistent cynicism over the fate of the forest, walking through the gardens is pleasant surprise to those expecting a wasteland; there is nothing of the kind. Wildlife scurry in the underbrush and trees are taking root. One of the most positive signs was this spring's crop of wildflowers; for the first time in memory the forest was blanketed with the deep red of a bumper crop of poppies, a sure sign of renewal. Plant more trees!

NORT NORK (MASIV) PARK & WINTER GARDEN, Gai pta, Masiv (Nor Nork), is a collection of gardens, parks and plazas on both sides of the broad street that bisects Masiv 1st and 2nd blocks. The park is the only green space in the massive area of apartment blocks, and well maintained by local initiative in return. Trees and bushes are replanted each year, and the park attracts a myriad of people throughout the day, from strollers and friends meeting up to teens and children dushing by on rented scooters and in-line skates. The amount of greenery in the area is a bit of a surprise for those who venture to the outlying area (above Water World and behind the Zoo), most expecting a decimated area of concrete and asphalt.

There is that, to be sure, but the trees are also lined with healthy tall trees that have already replaced those cut down in the early 90s, and flowering bushes and flower beds fill in the gaps, softening the harsh concrete surfaces of the buildings, and giving neighborhood locals a place to unwind. At the entrance to the neighborhood, on the L, the large Haik Nahapet Statue (1972, sculptor K. Nurijanian) is set just off the street and before the fountain park.

The largest part of the park begins at the large and energetic Monument to Gai (sculptor S. Nazarian). Gai (Gaik or Haik) Bzhishklian (1887-1937) was born in Tabriz Iran to a family of teachers. He joined the army of Imperial Russia as praporshchik (an officer rank similar to ensign) and fought in World War I. After the Russian Revolution he joined the Bolsheviks and became a Party member and military commander in 1918, when he fought against the Czech Legion ("White-czechs") and the Orenburg Cossacks of ataman Alexander Dutov.

He was twice awarded with the Order of the Red Banner: in 1919 for battles in Volga Region of 1918 and in 1920 for the Polish campaign. In 1922 he was appointed People's Commissar of the Armenian SSR Army and Navy. In 1933 he became Chair of the Department of War History and Military Art in the Zhukovsky Air Force Engineering Academy. On July 3, 1935 he was arrested, accused of "participation in an anti-Soviet terrorist organization" by the Military Collegiums of the Supreme Court of the USSR on December 11, 1937 (Ap 24, дела 413, No 252) and shot the same day. His books were declared politically harmful and banned. He was rehabilitated on January 21, 1956.

The park stretches out for several blocks behind the statue, in a thickly wooded area with a couple of cafes inside the greenery, and the Motherhood Statue (1975, sculptor H. Simonian).
Armenian equivalent for the Vishap or Dragon found throughout early mythology and on prehistoric stones places throughout the country at the sources of water.

At the end of the block, where Gai pta bends SE and meets Hovhannessian on the L, take Hovhannessian for about 100 m and on the left you will be confronted with a huge statue in a small canyon and grass field. The large *Tork Angegh statue* (1982, sculptor Nerses Charkhchian/K. Nurijanian), is striking, the ancient Armenian god manhandling a block of creation by drawing his bow. In mythology, Tork Angegh (Greek equivalent Aries, constellation Orion) was the god of power, bravery, war and the military. Armenian gods, like those of the Greeks, had human form, suggesting a level of social and intellectual development in which human consciousness, having mastered some of the secrets of nature, had ceased to attribute magical or godly powers to inanimate elements of nature.

Just to the south, the winter garden barely lasts in the face of privatization, as a super market takes over much of its digs. Beyond the supermarket, the outdoor park continues, with greenery and another café.

A little down from the winter garden on the other side of the road, more green space continues behind all those kiosk that face the street. Between them a staircase leads to a plaza with benches and a large *Statue to Tigran Mets*, newly installed, with oversized forearms and a grim looking face. Tigran Mets (a.k.a. Tigran II "The Great") is the closest thing to an emperor Armenia ever had, ruling between 95-55 BCE and forging an empire that stretched between the Mediterranean and Black Seas and current Armenia. One of the few threats to Rome, Tigran managed to fend off Roman legions for a while, eventually succumbing to the armies under Lucullus and Pompey in 68-66 BCE. He thereafter lived out his life quietly under Roman "protection," the first and last of Armenia's true Imperial lords.

Across the pta from the statue is a large *fountain*, built by Giumri metal artists. The large elaborate fountain is only the second of its type; the other is in the Ring Park in front of Chalet Café. This one is more elaborate and spread out through the plaza, its complex water system splashing over elaborately welded pieces of iron. A real beauty and a cool respite to sit by on a hot summer's day.

The last name for this god is intriguing, there being two suggestions of its meaning. One takes the standard substitution of the Armenian letter "gh" for "l" in Latin to translate the name into "angel", an enticing explanation, since the angel in Armenian religion is a vigilant force of God, not unlike Tork. Another source suggest the word is complex, formed by two words in ancient Armenian: "An" and "gegh". *Gegh* may be the Armenian equivalent for the Vishap or Dragon found throughout early mythology and on prehistoric stones places throughout the country at the sources of water.

A number of place names begin with "gegh", all dealing with water or the sites for the dragon/vishap stone. At least two medieval historians connect Tork Angegh's name with the name of the Hittite god Tarku, a manifestation of Ampropi. Now, Tork does not directly slay dragons in his legend, yet the second part of his name, "Angegh" alludes to an encounter with the dragon (vishap). An interpretation of his name can be linked to the prefix "An" (not or un-) and the root word "Gegh", or vishap/dragon. Therefore, Tork Angegh can mean Tork the un-Dragon, or "the dragon's enemy."
A low bridge crosses the river near the Hydro electric station, connecting the two banks. Taking this bridge form the tunnel side, a L turn leads in about 200 m of tree lined road to an exercise point, popular with locals who stop to do a few chin ups and push ups in mid-jog. The post is easy to spot—It is always busy with local men doing their reps.

Other spots include a pedestrian bridge spanning the river S of Hrazdan Stadium, which is in fact an aqueduct joining two parts of a canal which originates back 2700 years. The flow of water is hard to detect at first, so well built is the aqueduct, but on the R bank side of the bridge you can watch the sheer force of millions of liters of water drop suddenly into the aqueduct, giving you a little pause. Below the pedestrian bridge the tree forest thins a bit, though there are still some towering specimens reaching up from the river floor.

A little known and rarely visited part of the park sits at the highest point in the park, the ruined Tsternakavor p/s and settlement (officially, “Tsternakavor” or “Swallow Fort”), reached by taking a steep circular path from the lower sidewalk or the steps from the back of the monument. The scant remains once were a substantial fortress of the Urartian-Medieval periods, which stood guard over the Hrazdan River (then Armenia’s “superhighway”) approach to the Ararat valley. Though developed by Urartians, fortresses stood on the spot from at least the Bronze Age.

The most popular way in is still the Hrazdan Pedestrian Tunnel at the NW end of Boulevard Park (Karen Demirchian/Pavstos Biuzand and Arami pts) off of Mashtots pta (4 blocks from Abovian p.). The 250m tunnel runs under the Post Office Tower on Sarian and Kond neighborhood, opening onto the gorge next to the Hrazdan Gorge Children’s Park. A small decorated motorized “train” ferries visitors to the Children’s Park between Mashtots pta and the gorge using the same tunnel (100 AMD). Other entrances are from Dzoraghu (Proshian p.) via a long series of steps under S. Sargs Church; via an entry road across Haghpatan Bridge, and under Kivian Bridge.

From the tunnel, paved riverbank roads straddle the river, leading upward to Kivian Bridge (2.5 km) and an exit to Kivian p which, while a right bank road continues upriver for another 3 km to Davatchen district, where the gorge quickly deepens with canyon walls several hundred meters high as it continues for another 75 km to its mouth at Lake Sevan. To the south the river flows past Haghpatan Bridge (exits to Isahakian and Old Abovian) into Center Community where its green space is swallowed up by new housing.

The most visited part of the river is that between the tunnel and Kivian Bridge on the R bank, and Haghpatan and Kivian Bridges on the L bank, both sides having a concentration of restaurants and cafes attracting people escaping the heat above the canyon.

The park is also a favorite running trail for early morning joggers. See Sports & Fitness: Jogging. Running Routes p. 101.

HRAZDAN GORGE, courses through the heart of Yerevan, a conduit of water and trade for hundreds of thousands of years. The river flows throughout the length of the city, but its most developed (and accessible) parts lie just below the center, handy for taking a nature breather during your hectic tour schedule. Entrance to the park is via several points, all accessible from center.

A low bridge crosses the river near the Hydro electric station, connecting the two banks. Taking this bridge form the tunnel side, a L turn leads in about 200 m of tree lined road to an exercise point, popular with locals who stop to do a few chin ups and push ups in mid-jog. The post is easy to spot—It is always busy with local men doing their reps.

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The southern end of the park is still a bit of a wasteland, its trees not replanted after being cut in the early 1990’s and those remaining struggling to regain their former glory. This end, facing Tsitsernakaberd fort and settlement (1970, sculptor F. Soghoian) and the 40th Anniversary of WWII Monument (1985, sculptor S. Nazarian) and next to the Heroes of Malatia (Old and new Malatia) Statue (1973, sculptor F. Zargarian), is a Northern extension subplot.

The park is also a favorite running trail for early morning joggers. See Sports & Fitness: Jogging. Running Routes p. 101.

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West of Zoravar Andranik pta, the park is better tended, its focal point the newly built Holy Trinity Church. See Churches: Malatia-Sebastia, p. 82.

The OLD PARK is situated off of Sebastia p, at the Municipality Office (B 3, 35, 40 / MV 21, 37, 48, 56, 63, 70, 71, 83, 101, 107, 110, 117). The park is divided by several streets, its top most area the old vank yard for S. Astvatsatsin Church (See Churches: Malatia-Sebastia, p. 82, close to the Stepan Shabunian Statue (1970, sculptor F. Soghoian) and the 40th Anniversary of WWII Monument (1985, sculptor S. Nazarian) and next to the Heroes of Malatia (Old and new Malatia) Statue (1973, sculptor F. Zargarian), in honor of fallen fighters from Malatia. Western Armenia, present day Turkey. In ancient times, Malatia was also known by an older name Melitene, dating back to the Roman domination, when Melitene was the base camp of Legio XII Fulminata. An even older name (of a Hittite city) was Mildi. Old Malatia lies a few km from the modern city in what is now the villages of Arsalanfepe (Hittite) and Battalgazi (Byzantine and medieval). The region was one of the most important in historic Armenia, emptied of Armenians in 1915 by the Turkish Genocide.
once an Urartian stronghold. The military cemetery was created in 1888 to include Armenian soldiers who have lost their lives during the Nagorno-Karabakh struggle (officially an undeclared war, which truce was signed in 1995). The complex includes around 200 graves, monuments to Zoravar Andranik and Vaqzen Sargsian, a large memorial to the soldiers of Artsakh and a 27, church spire. Locally famous Armenian heroes buried in the cemetery include Vaqzen Sargsian, (Defense and Prime Minister of Armenia, 1992-1999), Monte Melkonian (popular military commander), and "Zoravar" Andranik Ozanian (Armenian general and freedom fighter in the 1910's). There are three graves to female fighters in the war, one of whom was decapitated by the enemy when getting water for her family. A recent addition is the grave for Lieutenant Guren Markarian, who was axed to death while asleep by an Azerbaijani participant of NATO's Partnership for Peace in Budapest, Hungary in 2004.

**SOUTH YEREVAN PARKS**

**KOMITAS (PANTHEON)** W side of Arshakanats (Ordzonikidze) pta, Shengavit District, 1.5 km south of Kino Rossiya (take Agatangeghos to Circus, then go S on Arshakanats), about 2 km from Hanrapetutian H'raparak (Republic Square) (B 1, 24, 31 / MV 8, 10, 20, 29, 39, 41, 42, 54, 65, 82, 98, 120, 123). The park is about 500 meters long with a children's amusement park on its S end (mostly defunct), a café, and overgrown greenery. The park stands behind some handsomely cast-iron fencing and is named after Komitas (Soghomonian, 1869-1936), one of Armenia's most famous composers, whose choral and vocal music is still part of the standard repertoire. See **Monuments; Pantheon** p. 70.

**ZOO** Yerevan Zoo, 20 Miasnikian pta, tel. 56-21-65, 56-23-62, 56-01-92, open 7 days 10-5, 500 AMD, is one of the saddest places in Armenia, the animals are kept locked in cramped cages and are obviously ill-kept. Locals seem to love taunting the animals to get them to strike out through the bars. The overworked staff receives virtually no support from the city, staff members feeding the animals from their own meager salaries. The fate of the animals is so severe when a beloved elephant died in the 1990's an offer from India to send a new one sparked protests by the population not to accept it until conditions improve. They haven't.

**SHOPPING**

**ART VERNISSAGE** Art Vernissage takes place in Sarian Park, anchored by the large white marble Statue to Martiros Sarian, off of Place de France and opposite Opera (Mashtots side). The sidewalks are taken over each weekend by local painters who display their wares, all on sale. Browsing is encouraged, and artists will strike up a conversation, hoping to make a sale, though none expect a quick sale.
Armenian souvenirs are unlike any other I have seen. Souvenir shops have few of the plastic shot glasses or “dancing cupie” dolls found in the west. The focus is on handcraft, and while some of it is quickly made and of marginal value, it is at least hand made, and really made in Armenia. For the types of souvenirs to buy, see Vernissage, this section.

ESSENTIALS

- soap, shampoo, toothpaste
- sanitary napkins

The largest selection of souvenirs is at Vernissage. Others are in shops and stores that proliferate around town, almost all of it the same as you can find at Vernissage, but at a markup. Walk down any street in Central Yerevan and you will see at least one shop offering Armenian souvenirs.

OLD ORIENT SOUVENIR SHOP (1 Pavstos Biuzand), tel. 52-40-42, an extension of Avarayr Adventure Tours.

High priced shops include

MADE IN ARMENIA DIRECT Store (Marriott Armenia Hotel, tel. 59-92-33, URL: www.madeinarmeniadirect.com) which sells high priced chochkies.

TREASURES OF ARMENIA (1/1 Abovian, tel. 52-76-92, 52-77-69) a collection of designer clothes and souvenir items at premium prices.

Others include LILI SOUVENIR STORE, (25 Nalbandian p, entrance on Sayat-Nova pta), 1-1 (34 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-21-73), and AR SOUVENIRS (14 Abovian p, tel. 56-45-73).

Woodworking A fine wood carver lives in far Yerevan, working out of his apartments. His work is pretty amazing and worth looking into if you have the time and patience to locate his place: Vahan Shiroian Wood-Art, 1 Khaghagh Don, apt. 91, tel. 47-35-18, E-mail: shirvaan@yahoo.com

Cognac is a popular souvenir for Diaspora Armenians, who value its cultural meaning and quality (the top end is among the best in the world). Unfortunately I have stopped buying, after I learned that the cognac factory (owned by French concern Pierre Ricard) has been cutting endemic trees in Armenia for their curing barrels, when they could import less endangered trees from elsewhere. Knowing this, your conscience needs to guide you on this otherwise good buy with prices as low as $3-10 for good quality brandy.

With crafts, particularly wood and stone carvings, there is a noticeable decline in quality with sometimes absurd rise in pricing. Khachkar quality has especially declined, and the prices stated are 30-40% higher than the work deserves. You are better off paying more in a souvenir shop for something of better quality. Other items are still a great bargain, especially embroidery work, ceramics and items made from carpet remnants. Jewelry is about the same for the substance (sellers know the spot market for gold and silver), but is cheaper on the work, which can be exquisite.

Tips on bartering: The worst time to try and bargain is in fair weather summer (sorry), and early in the day, when sellers only have dollars in their eyes. Later in the day they are a little more amenable, though not always. Sellers are not the artisans, who are tucked away in small workshops churning out production, so prices have become harder to crack. But you’d be a fool to pay anyone’s first price, and should offer 20-30% below their stated price as a rule. Don’t be afraid to walk away; it usually produces an immediate cut in price, and if not, well, there is always another stall of goodies to ogle.
MUSIC

The Yerevan music world has grown significantly even as its venues are relatively limited once you get past the Duduk players and Armenian-Russian ‘rabiz’ singers lamenting one more derivative pop ballad about love. Still working out the kinks of creating a genuine Armenian popular sound that does not simply copy Russian and Hollywood genres, the better singers show some genuine creativity in their music. Classical music fans will greatly enjoy the offerings on bill, with two rival orchestras and a number of instrumental and vocal ensembles performing throughout the year. The classical season is October-May, but occasional concerts in the summer (including a series of outdoor concerts at Cascade) give you some idea of the virtuosity on offer year-round.

Musical, opera and dance performances sell tickets at their respective box offices, or at the corner ticket office at the corner of Mashots pta and Tumanian (opposite Opera).

KOMITAS CHAMBER MUSIC HALL, 1 Isahakian p., tel. 52-67-18, is located in a small stone building inside Ring Park (between Abobian and Nalbandian). The hall is home to the Armenian Chamber Orchestra, regarded as one of the best in Europe with an adventurous repertoire of music and a penchant for performing in unique spaces (Garni, Geghard, Zvartnots). They post upcoming performances on the billboard outside the hall entrance. Tickets can be bought at the hall, 10-5, Mon.-Fri.

PHILHARMONIC HALL, 2 Abobian p., tel. 58-28-71, 58-27-73, 54-56-25, has been recently renamed in honor of the popular composer Arno Babajanian, and hosts a variety of concerts throughout the year, specializing in recitals and small ensembles. The elegant hall is located in a historic building, a 19th c school that once housed refugees orphaned in the genocide. Performances will be posted outside the hall, and at the ticket office at the corner of Mashots and Tumanian pts.

CONSERVATORY CONCERT HALL, 1a Sayat Nova pta, tel. 58-11-64, 56-35-40, gives recitals by students of the conservatory, as well as occasional concerts by other performers.

NATIONAL ART GALLERY THEATRE, top floor of the National Art Gallery, Republic Square, tel. 58-08-12, 56-18-12, email: galleryarmenia@yahoo.com, URL: www.gallery.am, has concerts by vocal and instrumental performers throughout the year. The gallery advertises upcoming events outside the top floor theatre. All performances are free.

CASCADE SUMMER SERIES, Cascade (Kaskad), hosts classical music along with jazz, folk and pop in a series of free performances at the bottom of the steps. The series stretches into the autumn, performances announced in a large board in the bottom park. The acoustics are amazing, as is the location. A wonderful evening.

OTHER VENUES to look for are occasional concerts presented by orchestral and vocal ensembles at historic sites near Yerevan. Past concerts have been at Garni Temple, Geghard Monastery and Zvartnots church ruins. Tickets go fast for these events, so if one is on offer when you visit, jump at the chance to hear great music in a world class setting.

FOLK, TRADITIONAL

Folk and traditional concerts perform throughout the year with most performances from September-May. Venues are the same as classical, with smaller groups also performing at a few clubs in town, including Naregatsi Art Institute (16/1 Vardanants p., tel. 58-01-05, email: suzy@naregatsi.org, URL: www.naregatsi.org) and Akump (40 Tumanian p. at the corner of Spenderian and Parapets p., tel. 53-13-61).

Watch for Dagharan, medieval instrumental and vocal group specializing in Armenian and European traditional and medieval music. Shoghakan traditional music ensemble specializes in folk music, while Jivan Gasparian is probably Armenia’s most famous musical export, a master of the duduk, whose music has been featured in numerous Hollywood films and who gives the occasional concert in Armenia. Others include the Armenian Song and Dance Ensemble.

JAZZ

There is some excellent live jazz in Yerevan with true virtuosity on display. Most advertise upcoming events at their place of business or on lamp posts and windows in the student area (Isahakian/Manukian between Mashots and Sayat Nova). Jazz venues often share their space with Pop and Rock performers, including a few concert halls, the Yerevan music world sharing spaces and musical tastes.

AKUMP, 40 Tumanian p., tel. 53-13-61, is a restaurant/café/gallery/concert hall/hang out that has several exhibitions a year, along with jazz/rock/ethnic concerts, video showings and gatherings. One of the trendiest spots in Yerevan, for good reason.

AVANTGARDE FOLK MUSIC CLUB, 34A Pushkin Street, tel. 56-14-97, email: ara@ara.am, URL: www.ara.am, offers jazz, blues and folk music performances, along with pop, rock and international strains (reggae, African).

DOWNTOWN/SUBWAY JAZZ CLUB, Sayat-Nova and Terian p. has regular jam sessions by out-of-work musicians along with regular performances.

MALKHAS JAZZ CLUB, 52/1 Pushkin p., tel. 53-53-50, 53-17-78, is strictly jazz, with some of the best jazz performers around playing nightly until 3 am.

ARAGAST/POPLOVAK CAFÉ-BAR, is located at the start of Ring Park on Isahakian, and features jazz musicians in the indoor-outdoor café-bar setting.

STOP CLUB, 37 Moskovian p., tel. 56-07-80, email: info@stopclub.am, URL: www.stopclub.am, hosts a variety of music performers, including jazz, blues, folk, traditional, pop, rock, heavy metal and the international scene. Every night at 9 pm.

CCCP, 2 Aram p., off Nalbandian p. and across from H'raparak metro station (Republic Square), tel. 56-08-66, hosts jazz, folk and rock groups in its basement space, which also hosts a load of Soviet kitsch and food from each of the former Soviet republics.

Watch for One growing fixture on the local scene are repeated visits to Armenia by the Armenian
Navy Band, led by Arto Tunchboyachyan, a Turkish Armenian whose compositions combine traditional Armenian/folk music with modern jazz and improvisation; quite a show.

Another is the Vahagn Hairapetian Trio, led by a piano legend, which concerts are usually sold out as soon as they are announced.

Time Report is one of the best and most popular jazz ensembles in Armenia, playing ethnic-jazz.

TANGO, ETHNIC MUSIC
Cadence (Armen Babakanian) the works of Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla (1921-1992), won over the critics in Argentina. Do not miss if you get the chance to see an exceptionally virtuosic group play exceptional music.

Hakob Japhetspianyan performs classical guitar, but he is renowned for his flamenco and Spanish music concerts.

POP, ROCK, ELECTRONIC

POP (RABIZ) venues include the massive Hamali Sport & Concert Complex at the lower end of Tsitsernakaberd Park (Kievian pta), tel. 39-99-13, 39-98-03, 39-00-01, email: s.c.c@arminco.com, which hosts most of the large concerts, along with the Old Stadium off of Charents p, a favorite for Voski Ashun (Golden Autumn) Pop concert, as well as other. Popular venue for free concerts are Republic Square and Opera Square. The latter two are guaranteed to have something on during major holidays (New Year’s, Victory Day, and Independence Day).

A new outdoor venue is CASCADE (Kaskad), the large series of steps that leads to Monument (above Place de France). Cascade hosts a series of summer concerts, from classical to folk and jazz to popular.

GIANI, Ring Park, tel. 57-88-99, 57-80-00, presents rabiz and pop singers in both its indoor and outdoor cafe. They ripped out some of the oldest trees in the park to erect the outdoor stage. Shows start at 9 p.m.

SAYAT NOVA (COLISEUM CLUB), 33a Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 58-00-33, email: sayatnovan33@yahoo.com, fax: 58-77-06, is part restaurant/part concert hall in the large underground Coliseum Club, where popular, jazz and other musicians perform in a more intimate setting. A very popular supper club reminiscent of the best 1950’s glamour spots.

ROCK clubs are much fewer in number, though their fans are no less fanatic about their “superior” musicianship. Concerts are announced by word of mouth and handbills plastered on lamp posts around Yerevan State University. Rock venues include AVANT-GARDE FOLK MUSIC CLUB (34A Pushkin Street, tel. 56-14-97, email: ara@ara.am, URL: www.ara.am), STOP CLUB (37 Moskovian p, tel. 56-07-80, email: info@stopclub.am, URL: www.stopclub.am), CCCP (2 Aram p.) and impromptu spots around town.

Watch for performances by local bands AlterEgo Lav Eli, Empyramid, Manic Depression (MDP) and Bambino, an experimental rock band, as well as other. Popular venue for free concerts is Republic Square and Opera Square. The latter two are guaranteed to have something on during major holidays (New Year’s, Victory Day, and Independence Day).

The most famous heavy metal band is the American-Armenian group System of a Down, which has yet to perform in Armenia. Local heavy metal groups that play on a regular basis are Sowder, Sowder (house and trance), and Armcore project (electronic).

HEAVY METAL fans are few but fervent, taking in occasional concerts at STOP CLUB (Moskovian p near Opera), and AVANT-GARDE FOLK MUSIC CLUB (34A Pushkin Street, tel. 56-14-97) and CCCP (2 Aram p.) and impromptu spots around town. Look for announcements at these venues and on lamp posts around Yerevan State University.

Watch for The most famous heavy metal band is the American-Armenian group System of a Down, which has yet to perform in Armenia. Local heavy metal groups that play on a regular basis are Sowder, Sowder (house and trance), and Armcore project (electronic).

Other Venues
NAREGATS ART INSTITUTE, 16/1 Vardanants p, tel. 58-01-05, email: suzy@naregats.org, URL: www.naregats.org, is a wonderful gallery/performance hall, with rotating exhibitions, concerts, film and video showings, concerts and speaker platforms. The Yerevan basement gallery is a counterpart to their art institute in Shushi, Karabakh. Run by an ambitious group of young artists and intellectuals, the institute has become a model of what all galleries should be in Armenia: open, welcoming and tolerant. They have an ambitious calendar of events, which can be found at www.naregats.org/DM/.

AKUMP, 40 Tumanian p (at the corner of Spendiarian and Parapetsi p), tel. 53-13-61, is a restaurant/cafe/gallery/concert hall/hang out that has several exhibitions a year, along with regular concerts, video showings and gatherings.

PERFORMANCE
Performances are advertised at each venue, on large playbills posted on the fence at Opera along Tumanian p. and Mashtots pta. and at the central box office at the corner of Mashtots and Tumanian. Other Venues are performed at the Yerevan State College of Choreography, 5 Byron p. (behind the conservatory), tel. 56-44-26, which advertises performances around the city.

FOLK AND MODERN DANCE are performed at the Opera theatre and occasionally at performance halls (State gallery, Yerevan State University, etc.), and include the State Dance Ensemble of Armenia (46 Mashtots pta, tel. 58-17-52).

THEATRE
The theatre in Yerevan can be challenging to watch if you do not speak the language and choose a piece based on word-play. However, the rewards of watching Armenian interpretations of well known classics (Shakespeare, Molière, Pushkin), or modern (Ionesco, Tennessee Williams, Eugene O’Neil) can be fascinating. There are occasional experimental productions that require no translation. Give one a try.

Performances generally start at 7 pm, Tues-Sun, though matinees or different times are possible; check before winding up late. Tickets run 500-1500 AMD, with a few special productions charging as much as 5000 AMD for choice seating.

ART CENTER OF AESTHETICS SMALL THEATRE, 11 Abovian p, tel. 56-14-38, email: vahanbadalyan@yahoo.com, performs a variety of productions by student actors, including an acoustic version of Jonathon Livingston Seagull, riveting.

Avanar p, tel. 56-14-97, email: suzy@naregats.org, URL: www.naregats.org, is a wonderful gallery/performance hall, with rotating exhibitions, concerts, film and video showings, concerts and speaker platforms. The Yerevan basement gallery is a counterpart to their art institute in Shushi, Karabakh. Run by an ambitious group of young artists and intellectuals, the institute has become a model of what all galleries should be in Armenia: open, welcoming and tolerant. They have an ambitious calendar of events, which can be found at www.naregats.org/DM/.

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PERFORMANCE
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Opera
ALEXANDER SPENDIARIAN OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE, 54 Tumanian p, tel. 58-63-11, 52-02-41, fax: 52-02-41, email: info@opera.am, URL: www.opera.am, balances a season of classical opera and ballet.

Watch for Anush (by Armen Tigranian, based on a poem by Tumanian), David Bek (also by Tigranian), Almast (by Alexander Spendiariov/Spendiarian), and Arshak II (composed by Tigran Chukhadjian).

BALLET, DANCE
The State ballet performs in the same hall as the opera; ALEXANDER SPENDIARIAN OPERA AND BALLET THEATRE, 54 Tumanian p, tel. 58-63-11, 52-02-41, fax: 52-02-41, email: info@opera.am, URL: www.opera.am.

Watch for Ballets to look for are Guyaneh (Gayane) and Spartacus, both by Aram Khachaturian. The saber dance in Guyaneh is one of the most famous strains in classical music.

Other ballet performances includes recitals at the Yerevan State College of Choreography, 5 Byron p. (behind the conservatory), tel. 56-44-26, which advertises performances around the city.

HAMAZGAJIN THEATRE, 26 Amirian p, tel. 53-94-15, performs for both children and adults in different genres.

MALIAN THEATRE AT ARMENUFILM STUDIO, 18 Vardanants p. (Cinema House), tel. 54-02-96, performs mainly comedies and experimental productions.

METRO THEATRE, Garegin Nzhdeh Metro Station, tel. 42-27-42, 42-96-79, performs a mixture of genres in its small space under Garegin Nzhdeh square.

MHER MTRKCHIAN ARTISTIC THEATRE, 18 Khorenatsi p, tel. 56-42-27, 56-57-09, performs a repertoire of comedy and drama.


STANISLAVSKI RUSSIAN DRAMA THEATER, 7 Abovian p, tel. 56-91-99, 58-36-81, fax: 52-62-67, 500-1500 AMD, includes Russian classical and modern works, plays by Armenian and foreign authors, and performances for children.

SUNDUKIAN NATIONAL ACADEMIC THEATRE, 6 G. Lasavorich p, tel. 52-76-70, 52-18-52, 58-96-22, is the oldest of the working theatres in Yerevan and presents mainly Armenian classical plays. If you don't speak Armenian, the play will be difficult to follow, though some interesting staging in plays like Shant's "The Ancient Gods" makes it worth seeing. Other plays include Albert Camus "Caligula", Anton Chekhov's "The Cherry Orchard", Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire", and Eugene O'Neil's "Love under the Elms".

YEYEVAN CHAMBER THEATRE, 58 Mashtots, tel. 56-60-70, 58-78-44, email: mailto:erkat@xter.net, URL: www.erkat.am, is one of the more popular theatres in Yerevan, performing mainly comedic, satiric works, but also musicals (Cabaret) and some quirky takes on classics (Hamlet, the Lincy Show). The theatre has a great lobby, with a gallery, film studio and jazz ensemble.

YEYEVAN PANTOMIME THEATRE, 36 Isahakian p, tel. 56-18-55, presents a number of challenging mime pieces in their imitate space. This is not your Marcel Marceau mime walking against the wind; productions tell complex stories in a variety of ways. Their newest venture is the fascinating "Sheranik", billed as the first ever "Armenian performance in the history of Armenian Pantomime, basing its movement from Armenian miniatures.

Experimental Theatre, Performance Art GOY THEATRE, Sundukian Theatre small stage, began by presenting plays by authors banned in the Soviet Union (Ionesco, Pirandello), and then branched into experimental productions unlike that at other theatres. The work is visually stunning. The theatre is on-again, off-again so look for playbills announcing performances.

NPAK ARMENIAN CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, 1/3 Pavots Buzand p, tel. 56-82-25, 56-83-25, email: accea@netys.am, URL: www.accea.org, presents Performance Art and solo performances in its large modern hall.

Musical, Comedy Theatre SONG THEATRE OF ARMEÑIA, 13a Khanjian p, tel. 56-67-90, 56-70-44, 56-77-92, 54-42-50, email: gordian@freemen.am, mainly performs concerts by pop star wannabes and the occasional performance by established pop singers.

PAROINIAN MUSICAL COMEDY THEATRE, 4 Vazgen Sargsian p, tel. 58-01-01, 58-03-09, 250-1500 AMD, has light fare, with focus on satiric, traditional comedy. If you don't know Armenian, the humor is mostly lost, though the jokes are often crude enough to get the gist and the comedy performed in broad strokes. A favorite of the Novi Armenii.

STATE MUSICAL CHAMBER THEATRE, 1 Proshian p, 1st Blind Alley, tel. 52-19-68, 52-19-69, 58-88-13 (M: Marshal Baghramian), presents a variety of musical productions, including the Hunchback of Notre Dame and Cats.

Watch for Dramatic Theatre's Macbeth; Chamber theatre's The Lincy Show, Armageddon, Hamlet in 20 minutes; Sundukian Theatre's The Ancient Gods, Goy Theatre's Six Character in Search of an Author and Eugene Ionesco's Rhinoceros; anything which is not crude enough to get the gist and the comedy performed in broad strokes. A favorite of the Novi Armenii.


STATE MARIONETTE THEATRE, 24 Bagheri p, tel. 56-24-50, 56-04-91, can be very creative in its plays, using found objects along with more traditional puppetry in its repertoire. The theatre also hosts adult plays in its intimate space.

TUMANIAN STATE PUPPET THEATRE, 4 Sayat-Novata pta, tel. 56-32-44, 56-32-43, performs mainly children’s tales, with the occasional adult puppet play. Repertoire includes Tumanian’s The dog and the cat, Hunter the fibber, and The invisible cock, Grimm Brothers’ Musicians against their will, Aghaiyan’s Anahit, Gorky’s The sparrow, and Pushkin’s The golden fish.

Theatre for Youth HAMAZGAJIN THEATRE, 26 Amirian p, tel. 53-94-15, performs for children and adults in different genres.

STATE YOUTH THEATRE, 3 Moskovian p, tel. 56-84-00, performs October-May, sometimes very challenging, inventive work especially the movement theatre.

YEYEVAN STATE THEATRE OF THE YOUNG SPECTATOR, 3 Moskovian p, tel. 56-30-40, 56-50-61, presents an ambitious repertoire of Armenian and international classics (Shakespeare, Schiller, Goldoni, Molière, Ostrovsky, Saltikov-Shedrin, and Sophocles), performed by young actors.

Circus YEYEVAN STATE CIRCUS, 1 Agatangeghos p, tel. 58-04-36, presents traditional circus acts in its one ring space from September-May. Occasional traveling circuses appear at the space. Kid favorite.

Other Venues NAREGATSI ART INSTITUTE, 16/1 Vardanants p, tel. 58-01-05, email: suzy@naregatsi.org, URL: www.naregatsi.org, is one of the more inventive around. Well worth looking for. The theatre is on-again, off-again so look for playbills announcing performances.

FESTIVALS, EVENTS A semi-annual INTERNATIONAL THEATRE FESTIVAL has been successfully recruiting theatre groups from over 40 countries to Yerevan for a week long series of performances in the autumn. Billboard announcements proliferate in the city announcing upcoming events.

An INTERNATIONAL SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL also appears during the season, with little advance notice. The productions by theatres from such countries as Georgia, Russia, Scandinavia, Italy, Britain and France are some of the more inventive around. Well worth looking for.

APRICOT) FILM FESTIVAL, an annual event started in 2004, has become a reputable regional festival with entries from around the globe with juried awards in two main categories: International and one reserved for film by artists of Armenian descent, with a combined total of around 120 films by 45 submitting countries. Part of the festival’s appeal is its small size and easy accessibility to film directors, the festival basically taking over the capital during the 5 day event. The festival’s opening coincides with the traditional blessing of the apricot crop (mid July), and For details visit www.gaiff.am/

The BRITISH FILM FESTIVAL is held each year, with showings of British made films or films with primarily British actors. A great way to see film in its original English, and a favorite of expats who pack the halls. Visit the www.britishcouncil.org/armenia-arts-film.htm for details.

FILM FESTIVALS

The YEREVAN INTERNATIONAL (GOLDEN APRICOT) FILM FESTIVAL, an annual event started in 2004, has become a reputable regional festival with entries from around the globe with juried awards in two main categories: International and one reserved for film by artists of Armenian descent, with a combined total of around 120 films by 45 submitting countries. Part of the festival’s appeal is its small size and easy accessibility to film directors, the festival basically taking over the capital during the 5 day event. The festival’s opening coincides with the traditional blessing of the apricot crop (mid July), and For details visit www.gaiff.am/

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Where the Y&P (Young & Poor) Have Fun
A few spots where students & budget weekenders go to have fun. Not all of these are so cheap, but our Y&P guides showed us how to economize by buying a cup of coffee here / sharing a dessert there; going to discos where women can enter free but not drinking (or sharing drinks), etc. Venues change, but these represent the choices of the current season for those who don’t let money get in the way of having a good time.

Indoor Cafes
JAZZVE - good desserts and cocktails
L’ORANGE - love the drinks

Outdoor Cafes
MELODY - try the Khachapuri w/mushrooms, cheap eats
FIRST - comfortable seats and good drinks

Karaoke
ARLEKINO - for good music and songs
MAMA MIA - good service, good songs and good times

Clubs
RELAX - good music, drinks and people
BB CLUB - good music and people

Cinema
MOSCOW - comfortable hall and big screen
NAIRI - perfect sound

Tea houses
CHAINIK (Teapot) - great tea and cakes
ARAX - good selection of teas

Swimming pools
HAYASTAN SWIMMING POOL - big, clean, comfortable changing rooms, cheap.

Bars
BOOMERANG, 32 Tumanian p, tel. 58-93-14, is a bar-restaurant in a smoky sub-floor setting.
BRAVO, 13 Hrachia Kochar p, tel. 27-06-10, email: art-zebra@netsys.am, URL: www.bravo-restaurant.com;
BUDDHA, 50 Mashtots p, tel. 56-55-00, is a lounge bar with kitsch on the walls and exotic drinks. Fun for a pre-disco drink.
BUNGALOW, 5 Koriun p, tel. 51-99-44, is a small, elegant space on the circle road where it intersects Herats/Miasnianik (Sevan Highway), has a nice trendy atmosphere and music.
CHEERS, 48 Nalbandian p, tel. 58-04-16, cell 093-49-89-85, email: cheerspub@yahoo.com, URL: www.geocities.com/cheerspub, is a small space that packs in the Spiurk Hai and expats on weekends. Has a small disco floor.
COFFEE BAR /CINEMA NAIRI, 50 Mashtots pta, 54-28-29, 56-61-80, has live music on weekends.
CUBE, 25 Tumanian, is the set for the Armenian version of Big Brother. The show didn’t last, the bar lives on.
CYCLONE, Alec Manukian on the River Getar (by Yerevan State U.) is lively on weekends, and handy to the cafés on Khanjian.
DOKA-BAR, 26 Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 586545
DUET, 47 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-02-15, cell 093-00-60-00
GREEN BAR, Vardanants p. opposite Film House (Kino Tun), still popular.
HOROSCOPE, 12 Parapetsi p, tel. 53-99-02, email: first@arfimicro.com
L’ORANGE LOUNGE BAR, 21 Tumanian p, tel. 52-82-93, is an upscale bar-restaurant with great decor and food.
LUCKY, 16 Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 58-15-42
SICILY CLUB CAFÉ, 33 Tumanian p, tel. 53-73-88, is across from Akump, a small café-bar that hosts the role playing game MAFIA, or Werewolf.

CAFÉ-BARS
Café-Bars serve drinks as a large part of its service, along with coffee, food and in many cases, live music. Some may have an outdoor space.

777, 16/1 Komitas pta, tel. 21-17-77, is located in Arabkir, north of Barekamutian Circle.
ANCIENT ROME, Ring Park, tel. 55-99-63, 55-99-62, is way over the top with poured cement statues and roman colonnades.
AKUMP (THE CLUB), 40 Tumanian p, tel. 53-13-61, has a bookstore, gallery, restaurant space with concerts and film showings.

Bars of the first type include the night clubs/strip joints PIONEER, PYRAMIDA, OMEGA and RIALTO. See Night Clubs below (p. 99)

Bars frequented by young and not so Oligarch:
2 x 2, 31 Khanjian p, tel. 54-20-70 has three floors of entertainment, with a bar on the first floor.
AMAZONKA, Moskovian p, opposite Chamber Hall.
ATLANTIDA, 27 Mashtots pta, 54-28-29, 56-61-80, has live music on weekends.

CYCLONE, Alec Manukian on the River Getar (by Yerevan State U.) is lively on weekends, and handy to the cafés on Khanjian.
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JAZZVE (Moskovian), 8 Moskovian p, tel. 56-15-08, 56-05-41, email: jazzve@jazzve.am, URL: www.jazzve.com, is a trendy indoor counterpart to the outdoor cafe on Opera Square. Nice wooden interior and kitsch decor compliment the menu of coffees and drinks. A favorite.

BOOMERANG, 32 Tumanian p, tel. 58-93-14, is a bar-restaurant in a smoky sub-floor setting.
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the role playing game MAFIA, or Werewolf. The café is packed on weekends with players, but the rest of the week it is a pleasant laid back café for reading, sipping and thinking of not much.

VIENNA CAFÉ, Republic Square, tel. 59-90-00, 59-92-50, email: armenia.marriott@hotelmall.am. URL: www.marriott.com/EVNMC, is inside the Marriott Hotel. Beautiful setting and great drinks, if pricy.

ZANGU, 1 Kevian p, tel. 27-60-21, 27-60-71, 22-50-30, email: andako@netsys.am.

PUBS/TAVERNS

SHAMROCK TAVERN, 1a Sarian p at Tumanian, email: theshamrocktavern@yahoo.ie, is a friendly Celtic pub with pretty good Irish coffee.

TEXAS, 19 Tumanian p, tel. 54-56-03, is gussied up as a saloon, replete with John Wayne posters. Swaggers in and down a few.

OUTDOOR CAFÉS

Yerevan’s outdoor cafés are anything but a few tables under umbrellas; many are large complexes combining nature and coffee, some adding live music and entertainment and indoor facilities. Most are located inside one of the city’s parks, (Opera Square, Ring Park especially), a controversial decision by the government to sell park concessions to local developers. The loss of green space is decried by many, while others point out the cafés have saved parks while the government does nothing (cafés are required to maintain the greenery in their territory).

The fact they only maintain the area where they work is not lost on those who watch trees die literally next to a manicured café garden. The Opera is perhaps the worst off, the huge cafés sitting where a grove of trees once stood and no space under the canopy for old age pensioners to sit and rest. It’s a tough call, but I prefer to avoid the obvious offenders and support those that care for green space around their café, or which have added to the green space.

Cafés can be found in every district of Yerevan. There are over 800 registered cafés in the center, with perhaps half as many in the other districts. Each summer, impromptu cafés pop up wherever they can. Quality varies from year to year, as does the popularity of each venue. As with eateries, if it is packed with locals, then it is probably good (or trendy as hell).

Across Mashtots pta from Opera, in Art Vernissage (Saryan Park), there are a couple of cafés worth investigating. Nothing fancy or trendy, but the atmosphere is nice and laid back. That on the southernmost corner café, KAZIROK, is frequented by Yerevan’s writers, artists and actors (the so called “Boheme Café”).

Tamanian Park just below cascade has been taken over by Santa Fe City Café, which takes the best care of its surroundings and is more spacious than other cafés. Service is so-so to bad. Cascade itself has no cafés in the park, they are on sidewalks off the two narrow streets that lead to the monument. STUDIO and CAFÉ MATE are nice little cafés, popular with expat Armenians. See Northern Ave–Opera–Cascade p. 85 for more details.

RING PARK

Ring Park is the daddy of all outdoor cafés, with over a dozen cafés to choose from. Local favorites include (from N to S) first block: POLOPOVOK/ARAGAST, MOSKOVIAN opposite, second block: CARRARA; third block: SIRO ARA HET (by the aviary); Fourth block: BARDINER (by Chess House); fifth block: CHALET (fountain), KARAP (fountain pond); sixth block: BOCHKA (by lagoon). See Ring park p. 86 for details.

REPUBLIC SQUARE AND SOUTH

If you are at the MEETING POINT café in front of the Marriott Hotel, you are either meeting someone, or there to be seen. Nothing special about this café except its address. Just around the corner there are a COUPLE OF CAFES built around the 2750th Anniversary of Yerevan Fountain (one jet for each year since the city’s “founding” in 782 BCE).

They are simpler, but much more pleasant, with trees and greenery, and less noise. Keep going south of the Shahumian Statue and on both sides of the center boulevard are a couple of cafés worth investigating. The one on the left, in English park, has the benefit of having parks on two sides, one facing the boulevard, the other English Park itself. The other side, Children’s park, has a COUPLE OF CAFES, the one at the southernmost end is the nicest for flowers and peace.

ABOVIAN STREET

The State History Museum has two cafés; one in the front portico facing the square and the other just around the corner on Abovian. The latter is the nicer of the two, though it is pricy. Marco Polo is one block up, in the unfinished Detski Mir building (green glass), has a nice atmosphere. Just above on the same side is SQUARE ONE, really a bistro but with sidewalk tables you can treat it like a café. Too close to Northern Avenue construction for my tastes, but once the rivets cool it should quiet down a bit. SALT SAK, at Pushkin and Abovian puts out a table or two in the summer. Coffee is made on hot sand, smoother taste. You can also browse through their eclectic souvenir store.

One block up is the Charles Aznavour Square (nee Zodiac Fountain, still called Kino Moskva Square by locals), with CAFÉS at Hotel Yerevan and in front of the cinema. Look for PALMYRA, an indoor café and Middle East bakery with the most incredible baklava I have ever eaten.

Cross Tumanian and a series of OUTDOOR CAFES line both sides of the street, along with the indoor ART BRIDGE CAFÉ AND BOOKSTORE, probably the trendiest on the street, with prices to match. There are tea houses on this and the next block, beginning with ARAX, fondly remembered from Soviet times but sadly lacking the service, with booming acoustics, followed by NATURA GOLD (both west side of street), and GALLERY CAFÉ at the SW corner of Saryat Nova and Abovian.
over and around the memorial with unforgettable taste (VIP tables are rung with faux marble columns in the shape of Greek women while Neptune bathes with the beauties in a replica Versailles central fountain. This deserves a cup of coffee just to look at. Even Ancient Rome in Ring Park can’t top this!

There are a few more cafes on the next block, all new, along with THOMAS TEA (east side) and CAFE DE PARIS (west), the grand père of sidewalk cafes in Yerevan, with beautifully maintained flower beds and greenery. The coffee used to be fabulous, they even started selling it retail, but of late it tastes rather stale, old.

TUMANIAN/NALBANDIAN
This intersection only has two cafes, but the atmosphere is lovely, with 19th c corner buildings (that look 18th c) and gracious fountain patios set off the street. Neither is fancy, but the one with the stork statues has a little more class (with plastic tables).

Further up Tumanian (across Mashtots Ave), the indoor AKUMP (downstairs 40 Tumanian) is still king of trend, but across the street the small SICILY has a few outdoor tables to compliment the charming interior, with reading, intelligent speech and three times a week, the Role Playing Game Mafia.

NORTH/ARABKIR
Go to the top of Cascade, then follow locals to the top of Monument and cross the busy Azatutian pta into Haghpatan Park, with its faded glory greenery, popular 1960s era amusement park, and a large lagoon, rung with cafes and eateries on the shoreline. AVETIK, which is also a restaurant-motel, has the prettiest space, it appears to be an extension of the thick stand of trees it cares for. On even the hottest day, the café is cool and inviting.

If you have a car, find your way to David Anhaght Plaza (corner of David Anhaght & Rubiniats pta), which is now KIRZA CAFE, built over and around the memorial with unforgettable taste (VIP tables are rung with faux marble columns in the shape of Greek women while Neptune bathes with the beauties in a replica Versailles central fountain. This deserves a cup of coffee just to look at. Even Ancient Rome in Ring Park can’t top this!

There is a number of CAFES on Gai p., in 1st and 2nd Masiv. Each a good cup of coffee.

WATER WORLD, 1ST MASIV
Once the king of northern cafes, DRAKHT (set inside the lower portion of the Botanical garden on Masnianik Hwy), no longer rules, but still charms with its natural setting and cool fountains. The colored neon lights are a little over the top.

There a number of CAFES on Gai p. in 1st and 2nd Masiv. Each a good cup of coffee.

KIEVIAN BRIDGE/GORGE
HAVANA CAFÉ was the first to go all out with design and décor, back in 1998 when the outdoor café idea was just taking off. The café is still a contender, with an indoor restaurant and club to compliment the patio café and exotic plants. Next to Hamalir Sports Stadium (Tsitsernakaberd).

In the gorge, the restaurants and cafes fight for attention with ever more elaborate décor or at least some kind of ‘hook’ to bring in the trade. Most arte bona fide restaurants, but don’t let that deter you; go by for coffee, dessert or a drink—they are so big so competitive you will not offend anyone. And worth it to see the menagerie of fantasies, starting with the least pretentious of the bunch, the CAFES at the Children’s Park (do take the train ride); followed by the Teutonic MONTE CHRISTO Castle, PARVANA Mountain Chalets, the PRINCESS MARIANNA SHIP, GEGHAMA and ARCHANOTS, with a live bear to sip coffee with. All of this is topped by the extraordinary fantasy that is called H’RASHALIK, with dinosaur bones for suspension bridge bracing and rhino tusks by your table.

Others are throughout the city, more popping up each day. Be on the lookout.

MUSIC CLUBS
AKUMP, 40 Tumanian p., tel. 53-13-61, is a restaurant/café/gallery/concert hall/hang out that has several exhibitions a year, along with jazz/rock/ethnic concerts, video showings and gatherings.

AVANTARDE FOLK MUSIC CLUB (34A Pushkin Street, tel. 56-14-97), email: ara@ara.am, URL: www.ara.am offers jazz, blues and folk music performances, along with pop, rock and international strains (reggae, African). COLISEUM CLUB (SAYAT-NOVA COMPLEX), 3a Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 58-00-33, email: sayatnova33@yahoo.com.

DOWNTOWN JAZZ CLUB, Sayat-Nova and Terian p, has regular jam sessions by out-of-work musicians along with regular performances. GIANI, Ring Park (opposite AUA Center on Alek Manuikian), tel. 578899, 578000, indoor-outdoor MALKHAS JAZZ CLUB, 52/1 Pushkin p, tel. 535350, 531778, has live jazz in its restaurant-bar.

STOP MUSIC CLUB, 37 Moskovian p, tel. 560780, email: info@stopclub.am, URL: www.stopclub.am.

CCCP, 2 Aram p, off Nalbandian p. and across from H’raparak metro station (Republic Square), tel. 56-08-66, hosts jazz, folk and rock groups in its basement space, which also hosts a load of Soviet kitsch and food from each of the former Soviet republics.

JAZZ, FOLK CLUBS
See Music entry (p. 92).

KARAOKE
Don’t laugh; taking a nod from Japan, this is still one of the hottest trends in Yerevan. Clubs are fun, considered safer for young women than discos, and a cheap way to hone your singing skill. Karaoke songs are 500 AMD, and on weekends you need reservations just to get in.

ARLEKINO, Arbat Steps between Isahakian and Koriun by Dramatic Theatre, tel. 53-96-94, is one of the old favorites.

CYCLONE DISCO, BAR, KARAOKE, Getar River, Alex Manukian next to YSU.

DISCO BOMBA, Abobivan Street (near Arar dead bridge), is a disco, bar, and karaoke joint rolled into one. Still a favorite.

FIESTA KARAOKE, 35 Khanjian p, at Tumanian.

KARAOKE, 12 Amirian p, tel. 53-44-55, is the one that started the trend, and still one of the best.


Rivera, Sayat Nova p, in the alley next to Levon Travel, has karaoke in its small space.

ROLE PLAYING, GAMING

SICILY CLUB CAFÉ, 33 Tumanian p, tel. 53-73-88, is across from Akump, a small café-bar that hosts the role playing game MAFIA, or Werewolf. The café is packed with players on the weekends, many of whom are fanatic about the game. Teams of players try to eliminate opponents in mental game of suspense. During a basic game, players are divided into two teams: ‘Mafia members’, who know each other; and ‘honest people’, who know only the number of Mafia amongst them. The goal of both teams is to eliminate each other. For more information about the game see Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werewolf (game)

PLAY CITY, 35 Acharian p, tel. 62-88-80, fax: 28-82-77, email: info@playcity.am, URL: www.playcity.info, has video gaming in its large complex opposite Karmir Blur.

CD/DVD HANGOUTS

These are places that come alive in the evening as teens and college students gather to compare titles, software and check out the opposite sex. Kind of like cruising the super market in the west, only with pulsing musak and without the fruit.

STAR CITY, 26 Abovian p, 54-49-69, 54-89-69, URL: www.starcity.myhaustan.am, is the CD hangout of choice, a large, modern space that would fit in with any mall in the west. CD’s are shrink wrapped and bar-coded—you would barely know everything was pirated except for the dirt cheap prices (1500-3000 AMD). Ah, capitalism.

Selection of movies and browsers.

ALSO CHECK: Around Barekamutin Circle there are a couple of good shops; by Yerevan State University (Alex Manukian, Isahakian pts), and TASHIR MALI (33 Tigran Mets), which has several shops and is popular on weekends.

INTERNET CAFES

Yerevan is full of Internet cafes; they seem to reside on most blocks, especially in the center. So many start up on top of previous incarnations it is useless to try and list them all. Ask around when you arrive. Most provide internet access (dial up, a few DSL), photocopy, fax and scanning. A few provide web cam, video viewing, print services and translations (English, Russian, and Armenian).

Most proliferate on Amirian p, lower Mashtots pta, Isahakian p, Alex Manukian p, East Tumanian and Sayat Nova pta, Barekamutin Circle/metro and Kotoriun pta.

SKYNET, 9 Mashtots (by Arayc electronic shop).

TEG, 7 Koriun p.

PEGAS, 8 Komitas pta.

Peg Master, 17 Abobivan.

THE ZEON CLUB, 31 Tumanian Street, open 24 hours.

INTERNET CLUB, 18 Abovian p (Kino Moskva), tel. 52-12-70.

MAX POWER, 3 Arami p, tel. 54-16-34, info@maxpower.am.

VAL SERVICE, 31 Moskovian p, tel. 53-87-37, 53-87-41.

CASINOS

Casinos are located on the outskirts of Yerevan, mostly congregated on the road to Zvartnots Airport (nicknamed Yerevan's "Las Vegas" for the garish neon signs crowding the road), the old road to Abobivan (Arinj) and the road to Garni (J'rvesh). Casinos run the gamut of Sigma games and slot machines to high stakes poker and roulette. Watch your wallet, your drinks and those around you. These can be dangerous places to lose in.

BLUE DIAMOND, Echmiadzin Hwy, tel. 77-05-35.

BORG, Echmiadzin Hwy.

CLEOPATRA, Sevan Hwy, 10th km, tel. 28-58-99.

EURO, Echmiadzin Hwy.

FORTUNA, Echmiadzin Hwy.

JINO, Echmiadzin Hwy.

JOY, Echmiadzin Hwy, tel. 77-05-14.

KAKADU, Echmiadzin Hwy, tel. 77-50-01.

NATIONAL, Echmiadzin Hwy, tel. 77-66-20.

PHARAOH, Echmiadzin Hwy, tel. 77-00-25.

SIGMA, Echmiadzin Hwy.

STAR, Echmiadzin Hwy.

STERLING, Echmiadzin Hwy.

TROPICANA, Echmiadzin Hwy.

YEREVAN, Echmiadzin Hwy, tel. 77-45-22.

NIGHT CLUBS

Night Club is a euphemism for strip joint, though these are gussied up for the event in some pretty outlandish designs. The strippers are almost all Russian, many available for private sessions. A lot of oligarchs, mafia types and Novi Armeni hang out here.

CHARLOTTE CABARET, 25 Baghramian pta, tel. 27-70-20, email: info@charlotte.am, URL: www.charlotte.am, open til 2 am; CLUB 12, Ring Park (between Abobivan and Terian pts), tel. 52-83-22, 091-21-24-39, email: club12@inbox.ru, open til 2 am; HOLLYWOOD, 15 Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 54-80-40, open til 3 am; Libido, 50 Mashtots pta, tel. 54-37-89, open til 2 am; OMEGA 9, 59 Terian p, tel. 58-25-49, 52-79-93, email: omega@omega.am, URL: www.omega.am, open til 3 am; PIONEER, 2 Baghramian pta, tel. 58-18-19, 54-18-19, open til 3 am; PYRAMIDA, 20/2 Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 52-69-02, 56-07-57, email: info@pyramida.am, URL: www.pyramida.am, open til 3 am; ROYAL, 1 M. Baghramian pta, tel. 56-70-02, open til 3 am; 5 CLUB, 6 Bazgen Sargsian p, tel. 54-04-70, open til 2 am; TIMES SQUARE, 1 Artsakh p, tel. 45-88-54, open til 2 am; V.V., 31a Khajqyan p, tel. 54-88-28, open til 3 am; Zebs, 39 Abobivan p, tel. 56-90-94, open til 3 am.

DRAG SHOWS

DREAM GIRLS TRAVESTY SHOW, URL: armeniantravesty.narod.ru once a part of the now defunct Meline's does their drag show at various venues in town (i.e. Stop Club, p. 92).

OTHER

BOWLING

ARENA BOWLING CLUB, 8 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-61-01, 53-01-11, 53-61-41, email: info@bowling.am, URL: www.bowling.am.

URENI SPORTS COMPLEX, 69 Koghbatzi p, tel. 53-10-23. 6000+ AMD per hour.

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ACHAPNIAK BOWLING, Halabian p, below Hamalir Sports Complex, off of Kevian (cross bridge and turn right, bowling is located in old movie house, signs galore).  8000 AMD per hour until 6 pm, 6000 AMD per hour until 6 pm, email: info@bowling.am. URL: www.bowling.am.

URENI SPORT COMPLEX, 69 Koghbatsi p, tel. 53-10-23.

BILLIARDS ▲

ARENA BOWLING CLUB, 8 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-61-01, 53-01-11, 53-61-41, email: info@bowling.am. URL: www.bowling.am.

BILLIARDS, 1/1 Artsakh p, tel. 45-27-00.

NO PROBLEM, 1 Glinkai p, tel. 55-49-19.

OPEN AIR BILLIARDS, Tumanian p, Opera Square.

OPEN AIR BILLIARDS, Ring Park, near Yerdidasarakan.

Z-BILLIARD BAR, 4 David Malian p, tel. 62-26-18, 62-44-60.

CHESS ▲

CHESS HOUSE, Ring Park at Sayat Nova, has gaming halls for the serious player, plus the park outside has a covered table for chess players (mostly older age).

CLUBS ▲

SPORTS & FITNESS ▲

LEISURE CENTERS, THEME PARKS ▲

CHILDREN'S PARK, Ring Park at Tigran Mets entrance (next to Lusavorich Cathedral), has kiddie rides in a well kept carnival setting.

PLAY CITY, 35 Acharian p, tel. 62-88-80, fax: 28-82-77, email: info@playcity.am. URL: www.playcity.info is a large complex with go-carts, bungee jumping, bowling, miniature golf, Videos, paint ball, laser shot, play zone.

STAR TIME COMPLEX, Abovian p, tel. 56-39-58, has video gaming, disco (includes times for younger ages), snacks and other games.

TASITS TAS, Yeghvard highway, 3rd ravine, part 1; tel. 56-39-58, has a shooting range (handgun, archery), darts, and horse riding, as well as a nice restaurant with outdoor area.

VICTORY PARK (Haghtanaki Aigi), Monument, Azatutian pta, has rides (adult and children), food, music and a good time for all.

WATER WORLD, 40 Miasnikian pta, tel. 64-97-30, 64-34-30, 52-40-00, email: waterworld@waterworld.am. URL: www.waterworld.am. Open Mon-Fri 12-7, Sat-Sun 11-7, is located across from the Botanical Gardens, and is a complex of swimming pools and water slides.

STADIUMS, CENTERS

HAMALIR, also known as the Sports and Music Complex, Tsitsernakaberd Park (enter Kevian bridge), tel. 39-98-03, 39-99-13, 39-00-01, email: s.c.c@arminco.com, hosts sporting events, conferences, shows, and concerts in its cavernous halls.

HAYASTAN STADIUM (SPARTAK), 6 Agatangeghos p. (enter opposite Circus), tel. 52-54-10, 56-31-66, hosts local football games and sporting events.

HRAZDAN STADIUM, 2 Bagratuniats pta, tel. 58-51-91, is the largest stadium in Yerevan, with a capacity of 75,000. The stadium hosts football, track and field, and concerts. Football crowds are enthusiastic and worth attending a game just to watch their interaction with players.

NAIRI STADIUM, 2 Bagratuniats pta (opposite Lake Yerevan, enter from Zvartnots highway), hosts impromptu games.

REPUBLICAN (SARGISIAN) STADIUM, 75 Vardanants p. (enter Charents p), tel. 55-22-10, 55-53-51, hosts local football games, concerts and parts of the Pan-Armenian Games.

FIELDS

Football (soccer) fields include

PYUNIC FIELDS off of Tsitsernakaberd pta. (by Pyunic disabled sports center) is often booked by local players, check for availability. Players welcome visitors (be ready to play hard).

REPUBLICAN STADIUM FIELD in Aigedzor, 6 Hrant Shahinian p. (enter from Vardanants, 1 block south of Alek Manukian) is used by school players, but available when empty.

GOLF


ARARAT VALLEY COUNTRY CLUB, 50 Gevork Chaush p, tel. 39-40-85, 39-70-69, email: general@hovint.am, is part of Vahakni Housing Development on the outskirts of Yerevan (Ashtarak/Giumri hwy), an upscale Diaspora Armenian community built by a New jersey developer. The country club has tennis courts along with its golf course and swimming pool.

UNIVERSITY (ARARAT) TENNIS COURTS, 2 Alek Manukian p, tel. 57-06-48, has six clay courts in good condition, available by the hour. There are floodlights for evening play. Good coaching staff available and there is a clubhouse and cafe nearby.

HRAZDAN TENNIS COURTS, Hrazdan Tennis School, Tsitsernakaberd Road near Hrazdan Stadium, tel. 56-56-65, has eleven clay courts most of which have reasonably good playing surfaces. They are lovingly maintained by a very dedicated staff and play well for about nine months of the year. Racquets and balls can be purchased or hired and there is excellent teaching staff that trains adults and children at very reasonable prices.
FITNESS CENTERS
Check at your hotel first; most have a small fitness center available to guests. If the equipment is not to your liking, or you want to work out with locals, try one of these. Most charge by the month but you should be able to work out something.
ARAX SPORTS CENTER, 39 Hakob Manandian p, is located in Shengavit, and worn at the tooth, but has a good gym and weight room. Fees reasonable, on sliding scale.
FLEX, 11 Tumanian p, tel. 52-01-20, URL: www.armandgroup.am, has exercise machines and classes. 16,000 AMD per month or 2000 AMD per session.
FITNESS CENTER, 10 Vagarsh Vagarshian p, tel. 22-45-77.

BELLA, 6 Yervand Kochar p, tel. 54-88-83.
YEREVAN HOTEL, 14 Abovian p, tel. 58-94-00.
DDD, 54 "B" Komitas p, tel. 23-70-40
HARMONY COOPERATIVE, 47a Hin Yerevantsi p, tel. 53-75-01, is a fitness center offering Aerobics, Classic Massage, Electro-stimulation, Gymnastics, Pilates, Sauna, Shaping, Training on Exercisers, Therapeutic Massage, Cellulite treatment, and nonsurgical weight reduction and posture correction.
HAYASA MARZATUN, 25 Pushkin p. tel. 53-82-07, 53-82-08, is a gym offering Aerobics, Body-Building, Classical Massage, Body Shaping, Step Aerobics, Tae-Bo and Training on Exercisers
HAYASTAN, Barekamutian Circle, is on the 3rd/4th floors above Hayastan market, with complete fitness equipment and swimming pool.

BELLA HOTEL-FITNESS CENTER, 6 Yervand Kochar p, Tel. 54-88-83, has a fitness center as part of the hotel.

JOGGING, RUNNING, BICYCLING TRAILS
There are no jogging/running trails in Yerevan. Runners marking out their own routes as they go. Jogging down streets is an option; early mornings are generally quiet in the city, most businesses not opening until 9 or 10. There are a number of green spaces worthy of consideration, though be careful of street dogs, some of which can be vicious. Women runners will also have to look out for street people and drunks, a few of whom can be threatening.

CONAN, Yervand Kochar, tel. 55-95-29, has modern equipment and classes.
ALEN-ELEN, 3/5 Abovian (next to Terra Nova), has a fitness center as part of its complex.

Streets
Before 8 am, most streets are quiet and relatively without traffic. From Hanrapetutian H'raparak (Republic Square) N on Abovian to Tumanian (left) to Opera Square it is about 1.2 km; from Hanrapetutian H'raparak west to Mashtots pta, then R on Mashtots up to Place de France in front of Opera it is about 1.5 km, or about 2 km if you continue N to Cascade.

One run starts from Hanrapetutian H'raparak S on Abovian (Sargsian/Beurit/Italian) to Miasnikian Square, then across Lusavorich and past Metropol Hotel to Hahtagan Bridge, across and right into the Hrazdan Gorge, following N to the first bridge across the river, and backtrack along the river through the tunnel to “Boulevard” (Demirchian/Pavotos Buzand) to Mashtots (Malibu Café), right on Mashtots to the next L (Amiran) back to Hanrapetutian H'raparak. This run combines streets and green spaces, for a total of about 5.8 km.

Green Spaces
Host joggers prefer the RING PARK that runs in a curve from just below Mashtots pta to Tigran Mets, about 2.8 km distance from end to end.

Another is the HRAZDAN GORGE, which can be reached via the tunnel below the Post Office on Sarian p. (enter via ‘Boulevard’ behind Malibu Café off of Mashtots). The gorge has pretty views, is quiet in the morning (watch for dogs and speeding), and the best cycling routes are outside the city (GARNI/GEGHARD, SEVAN HWY, with some steep climbs, ARARAT HWY with mashtots but a lot of off roads to villages). One little used road (car or truck) is the large ring road that circles Yerevan above Arinj/Avan and leads to Jrvesh, connecting with the Garni road.

There is a bike tour with guide that leads you around the city via the two-wheels (see Beau Monde below). Other bike rentals may be found by contacting a service, like HYUR SERVICES (50 Nalbandian p, tel. 56-04-95, 52-98-08, 52-24-14, fax: 56-04-95, Paris (33 6) 19 58 53 40, Los Angeles (1 626) 466 1073 email: contact@hyurservice.com, URL: www.hyurservice.com, or AVARAYR ADVENTURE TOURS (1 Pavotos Buzand p, tel. 56-36-81, 52-40-42, fax: 56-36-81, email: avaravr@arminco.com, www.avaravr.am), ENVOY HOSTEL (54 Pushkin p, tel. 53-03-69, email: info@envyhotel.com). AVARAYR ADVENTURE TOURS, Armenia Marriott Hotel, 2nd floor, tel. 59-99 65, 59-99-64, 091-50-27-27, fax: 59-99-65, email: bmsrentacar@hotmail.com.

BELLA HOTEL-FITNESS CENTER, 6 Yervand Kochar p, Tel. 54-88-83.
YEREVAN HOTEL, 14 Abovian p, tel. 58-94-00.
DDD, 54 “B” Komitas p, tel. 23-70-40
HARMONY COOPERATIVE, 47a Hin Yerevantsi p, tel. 53-75-01, is a fitness center offering Aerobics, Classic Massage, Electro-stimulation, Gymnastics, Pilates, Sauna, Shaping, Training on Exercisers, Therapeutic Massage, Cellulite treatment, and nonsurgical weight reduction and posture correction.
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HAYASTAN, Barekamutian Circle, is on the 3rd/4th floors above Hayastan market, with complete fitness equipment and swimming pool.

There is a velodrome behind Circus, Grigor Lusavorich at Agatangeghos pts, open Mon-Sat, though in rough shape.

SWIMMING POOLS
GRAMSKA INTERNATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER OF ARMENIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY, 47a Ashtarak hwyl, tel. 39-17-69, www.iptrc.am, is still the best pool in Yerevan, a part of the large rehabilitation center donated to Armenia by the Swiss Red Cross. The indoor lap pool is part of a fitness area that includes basketball court, weight room, machines, and sauna and massage (therapeutic). Welcome visitors.

HAYASTAN, Barekamutian Circle (4th floor) has a pool as part of the fitness center on the 4th floor of the Hayastan Market building.

HAMBARTSUMIAN SWIMMING POOL, Khorenatsi p. (Marx p, behind Gold Yarmaka), is clean, full of kids during daytime, but free early morning and late evening. 14,000 AMD per month (2000 AMD for medical check, required but cursory). Open 7:30-21:00.

ARARAT HOTEL SWIMMING POOL, 7 Grigor Lusavorich p, tel. 51-00-00, fax 51-00-01, email:...
AIYRUZDI RIDING CLUB, 2 M. Bagratuni p, Ashrar, tel. (0232) 34-628, cell 091-42-45-70, 093-37-62-68, email: v_hugous@yahoo.com, offers lessons and riding excursions into the nearby area. Canyon rides are among the most spectacular in Armenia.

REPUBLICAN HORSE RIDING CLUB (HOKIV HAIRAPETIAN RIDING CLUB), 39 Shirak p. (Karmir Blur), tel. 46-55-55, 46-50-00, offers lessons and riding excursions.

MASSAGE, SAUNA
These are places to relax and get a Swedish/Russian massage. All hotels have saunas and masseurs on call, for legit and "special" massages.

Masseurs
HASMIK, tel. 091-419152 (mobile), 42-23-78 (home) or 57-64-61 (studio), is a professionally trained massage and physical therapist as well as a certified Pilates instructor and Personal trainer. She works at SHAPING ZONE YOGA AND PILATES CENTER, 221/1 Charents St. (across from the German Embassy) or arrange for a personal session.

KALA, tel. 091-42-16-04, is a trained physical therapist and professional masseur in various forms of massage. She has studied locally, in Russia, Thailand and recently spent several months in California. Speaks English. Massage sessions 1 hour, except Thai massage, which is 90 minutes.

Massage Centers

OFURO JAPAN SAUNA (35 Pushkin Street, tel. 53- 41-18). What a combo! Get a massage form some of the best masseuse in Yerevan, then kick back and pig out on Japanese and Armenian food. 10,000 AMD.

TEN OUT OF TEN SHOOTING GROUND-CLUB, 3 Yeghvard Highway, Davashen District, has sauna facilities.

GRATISIA INTERNATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER OF ARMENIAN Red Cross Society, 47a Ashrarak hwy, tel. 39-17-69, www.jtrc.am, offers therapeutic sauna and massage as part of its large complex that also includes physical therapy, swimming and gymnasium. Welcome visitors.

YSMU CLINIC IN EREBUNI, 114, Muratsan p, Erebuni district, tel. 45-33-02, email: clinics@ysmu.am, provides rehabilitation services: physiotherapy, acupuncture therapy, and massage. This is serious physical therapy, useful if your treks result in muscular trauma.

HEALTH & BEAUTY
Wonder where those gorgeous girls and guys come from? Nature has something to do with it, but walk into any full service health and beauty center and you learn the secret to their drop-dead looks.

Day Spas and Beauty Salons proliferate throughout Yerevan, offering services as sophisticated in the west, but at a fraction of the costs. Services include hairstyling, manicure, nails, pedicure, laser-epilation, massage, and a host of other cosmetic services. Some offer mud baths, sun tanning, piercing and skin art (tattooing). Prices vary a lot, but figure 30-40% cheaper than the west

DAY SPAS & TREATMENT CENTERS
AVANTA Day Spa has two centers, on Yervand Kochar Street next to Bravo and on Mashtots next to the Blue Mosque. Offers a variety of health and beauty services, including manicures, pedicures, massage, aromatherapy, suntanning beds, tattoos, and non-surgical weight reduction.

LITTLE Day Spa (Marriott Hotel and Tumanian) is a trendy spa used by those wanting to be seen as well as see what they can do for their looks, with beauty salon, facial treatments, manucures and pedicures, massage, etc.

MEDEST, 14/2 Vardanants, tel. 52-08-02, 56-12-24, URL: www.medest.am, is a high-end Day Spa and Cosmetic treatment Center (no discounts here) with facial corrections (Botox injections), and cosmetic/treatment featuring Restylane© (Sweden), Dysport©, SkinTech©, Cellcosmet-cellmen© (Swiss), Pevonia Botanica© and Geghwoi© products.

TIENS MEDICAL AND BEAUTY CENTER, 50 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-08-02, 56-12-24, URL: www.tiens.com, medical, health and cosmetology center with Aromatherapy, Bioresonance Therapy, Hairdresser Services, Liposuction & Therapeutic Massage.

VITAK skin care & treatment, 10/6 Pushkin p. tel. 56-63-59, email: vitak@xter.net, variety of health and beauty services, including manucures, pedicures, massage, aromatherapy, suntanning beds, tattoos, and non-surgical weight reduction. Also performs cosmetic surgery.
MARINKA BEAUTY PARLOR, 26 Movses Khorenatsi p, tel. 56-32-32.
NN BEAUTY PARLOR, 16 Sarian p, tel. 58-50-29.
MARISHA, 40 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-11-81.
AIDA IMAGE CENTER BEAUTY PARLOR, 7 Movses Khorenatsi p, tel. 53-99-26.
VANILLA, 22 Maisian p. tel. 53-63-52.
SEPHORIA, 33 Tumanian p.
DOLCE VITA BEAUTY PARLOR, 37 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-48-38.
SOFIA, 18 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-01-12, 093-06-09-08.
FIGARO, 85 Baghramian p, tel. 22-81-81, 22-82-81.
KENTAVAR, 31 Khanjian p, tel. 54-25-36.
TOMA, 10 Kievian p, tel. 27-14-04.
EKO HEALTH AND BEAUTY CENTER, 26 Amiran p, tel. 53-98-27, 54-84-24, 091-45-77-00.
RENOIR, 23 Abovian p, tel. 54-05-30, email: renoir@armfarm.com.

COSMETIC TREATMENT & SURGERY CENTERS

There is an inherent risk in cosmetic surgery (you've seen "60 Minutes") and caution should be used in having any surgery, regardless of how minor it may seem. Perform due diligence beforehand and realize you do it at your risk. That said, cosmetic surgery is quickly becoming a growth industry in Armenian tourism, along with dental and other medical tours (see Medical Tours, p. 121).


COSMETOLOGY AND PLASTIC SURGERY CENTER, 56a Pushkin p, tel. 53-36-24.

DR. AKUNTS' HEALTH AND BEAUTY CENTER, 26 Amiran p, tel. 53-98-27, email: akunts@xter.net. URL: www.shahnaz-husain.com.

GALATHEA CLINIC OF AESTHETIC MEDICINE, 5 Yervand Kochar p, tel. 57-24-99, 57-25-99, email: info@galathea-med.am, offers aesthetic medicine and cosmetology, facial injections, including "Restylane", "Perlane", "Botox" injections, Nail extensions, including acrylic and gel nail extensions. Also offers Bioresonance, Cosmetology, Piercing, Epilation, Hairdresser services, Acupressure, massage, Homeopathy, Ultra Sound, Phototherapy, pedicure and manicures, Microsurgery and treatment for various skin diseases.


For dental work, see Practicalities: Medical: Dental, p. 131).
Airports

Travel Guide® – Special Edition

Area Code: 10
Long Distance: 010 + local number
From abroad: + (374) 10 + local number
Mobile Phones: 091 Armentel, 093/094 Viva Cell
International callers: Armentel + (374) 91 + number, Viva Cell + (374) 93 or 94 + local number

Unless otherwise noted, local numbers require the (010) prefix if calling long distance, or + (374) 10 if calling from abroad.

PRACTICALITIES

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IN AND OUT

Most people enter Yerevan by air, but it is also accessible by train from Georgia via Vanadzor and Gyumri, by Bus from Georgia, Iran, Turkey and Athens, and by minivan or taxi from Georgia and the Iranian border.

More independent travelers are combining modes of travel to enter, taking advantage of discount airfare from the UK, France and Germany to reach Istanbul or Athens, then traveling on via bus (Athens, Istanbul) or train (Istanbul to Kars, then minivan or bus to Georgia), for the final leg to Yerevan. These can costs significantly, though they are more time consuming and involve catching different connections. If you want to explore Western Armenia, Anatolia and Georgia as part of your trip, these are ideal cheap alternative means of travel. See our chapter Getting In for details on alternate routes into Armenia.

IN AND OUT BY AIR

Still the choice of arrival for the vast majority of visitors, arrival by air has gotten easier with the opening of a new terminal at Zvartnots International Airport.


ATLANTIS EUROPEAN AIRWAYS, YEREVAN: 29 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 54-47-42, 58-54-33, 56-86-19, email: info@atlantis.am, URL: www.atlantis.am, connecting via Austrian Airlines, British Airways, Czech Airlines, and Aeroflot to a worldwide network of 101 destinations.


BRITISH AIRWAYS (B-MED), UK tel. 0870 850 9 850, USA tel. 1-800-AIRWAYS, EGYPT tel. +20(2) 3 486 1565/483 6668, RUSSIA tel. (+7) 095 363 2525, YEREVAN: 10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-13-83, 52-82-20, email: simon.avagian@flybmed.com, URL: www.flybmed.com, connecting via British Airways to worldwide network.


DONBASSAERO, www.donbass.aero/m1/en/index, DON DON tel. +38 062 388 5 222, YEREVAN: Avitas, YEREVAN tel. 53-04-01, serves Donetsk, connecting to Kiev (connections to Europe, North Africa and Middle East) and Odessa (Munich, Istanbul, Middle East).


KLM NORTHWEST, NETHERLANDS tel. (+31) 020-4 747 747, YEREVAN: 10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 56-26-22, email: km@armircon.com, URL: www.klm.com, connecting via Amsterdam to worldwide network.


LUFTHANSA AIRLINES, GERMANY tel. 0180 - LUFTHANSA (0180 - 5 83 84 26), YEREVAN: Republic Square, Marriott Hotel, 1st Floor, tel. 59- 99-22, email: lufthansa@dlh.de, URL: www.lufthansa.com, connecting via Munich to worldwide network.

PULKOVO AIRLINES (ROSSIY AIRLINES), www.pulkovo-airlines.ru, ST. PETERSBURG tel. 7 (812) 333-22-22, YEREVAN: 4 Sarian St., tel. 56-64-73, email: plkz@arminco.com, URL: www.pulkovo.ru, connecting via St. Petersburg to Alma, Tashkent, Samarkand, Antalya, Beijing,
taxi, not per person, so you can economize by sharing rides.

There is a Bus to Yerevan (#50/201) that operates during the day (7:30-6, every 20 minutes, 150 AMD). It deposits passengers at the corner of Sayat Nova & Mashtots Avenues near Opera. The bus is parked outside the terminal a bit away, requiring a hike to the bus (this is deliberate; the taxis do not benefit from having such steep competition nearby).

Marshrutni Taxis (minivans) connect the airport with Barekamutiun (Druzhba Metro (#107) and the Rail Station (also a metro stop, #108), 200 AMD. Drivers will stop along en route, which passes through the center.

ARIVALS

**Current Flight Schedule** of flights serving Zvartnots Airport is at their web site at [www.zvartnots.am](http://www.zvartnots.am). Also check the Armenia Info web site ([www.armenianinfo.am](http://www.armenianinfo.am)).

Arrivals are in the lower level of the terminal, or via the VIP service offered in the first, old terminal.

Arrivals at the new terminal are in the lower level. After disembarking you are directed to Immigration, which has been somewhat streamlined from the old terminal, speeding up entry.

On Site Visa. If you are purchasing a visa at the border, ask a supervising immigration official to direct you to the proper window. Entry visas are around $30 for a 21 day tourist visa.

After immigration you are directed to **baggage claim**. The correct baggage carousel for your flight will be marked on electronic signs. Baggage delivery has been greatly improved, most repeat visitors delighted in the faster process.

Unless you have something to declare at customs (see Customs regulations under Customs chapter), pass through the official green line and exit the international sector into the arrivals lobby. If you have a party meeting you, they will be here. Otherwise proceed down the sidewalk to the older terminal parking area to catch a ride to town.

Outside the terminal there are **Taxis** ready to take you to town. They charge far more here than in town (where the official rate is 100 AMD per kilometer) starting around $20, but try and bargain down. $10 is still high but possible if business is slow. Note that the charge is for the taxi, not per person, so you can economize by sharing rides.

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**DEPARTURES**

**Current Flight Schedule** of flights serving Zvartnots Airport is at their web site at [www.zvartnots.am](http://www.zvartnots.am). Also check the Armenia Info web site ([www.armenianinfo.am](http://www.armenianinfo.am)).

Getting there The 50/201 bus connects Opera (Mashtots and Sayat Nova) with the airport, 150 AMD (7:30-6, every 20 minutes). Minivans #107 (Barekamutun) and 108 (Train Station) do the same for 200 AMD (8-7).

Departure procedures have also been streamlined, though you should allow 2 hours for immigration, customs and embarking. Special security checks have been implemented to comply with US FAA regulations, which have slowed the process.

**Carry On Limit** If you are connecting through London you are allowed one (1) carry on bag, regardless of its content. So a woman with a purse and notebook computer will not be allowed to exceed the carry on allowance.
to carry on both. Plan ahead by putting all items you ed to carry on into one bag.

**Weight Limit** You are also subject to a much reduced weight limit than that you had coming from the USA. This is an unfortunate money-grab by the airlines that was started in the UK and has spread throughout the Armenian sector. The charge for excess baggage is significant, up to $250 for one extra bag! Check with your airline BEFORE you leave for restrictions, and shop around to compare limitations. UK flights are the most restrictive.

**Airport Duty Tax** Currently there is a 10,000 AMD ($30) airport duty tax assessed against all departing passengers. The tax is paid before check in. Look for the airport duty tax window near the check in zone.

**Departure Procedures** With 4 gates, there is little chance of getting lost, but airline check-in desks are clearly marked at the departure zone.

Check in includes ticketing, seat assignment, weighing and paying excess baggage fees, and checking in luggage.

**Customs** will scan your luggage after it is checked, so if you have anything to declare, it will be faster and easier for you in the long run to declare it at check in. Even after it is checked, you can be called to open your bags to search for the officials. Unless you are exporting an antique, carpet or contraband, your chochkies and souvenirs are not subject to customs duty.

After check in you are directed to immigration. This is a formality for tourists.

**Overstaying visa surcharge** If you have overstayed your visit (easy to do with only 21 days on the normal visa), you will be taxed ca. $3 a day for each additional day you stayed, and possibly the purchase of a new visa, depending on the officer and your situation. If you have overstayed your visa, look for the visa office or contact a supervisor to arrange payment and get your exit stamp.

**VIP Arrival** This is a pricey but convenient way to arrive or depart. To use VIP (about $75 at current exchange), go to the old terminal, west of the new and round terminals (take the left through-road instead of the right exit to the new and round terminals). VIP staff does check in, baggage check and take you to the airline at boarding time. In the meantime you can enjoy complimentary coffee, juice and snacks while waiting.

Parties meeting you can arrange VIP arrival, or you can request VIP when exiting the airplane. Look for VIP arrival staff and tell them you want VIP arrival. You will pay at the VIP terminal.

Departures have the same services as arrival, tough you should arrive at least 90 minutes before departure. People seeing you off can wait with you in the outer lobby until you are called to go through customs and immigration.

Note not all airlines use VIP for departure. Check with your airline’s local office.

There are two types of trains running the rails between Yerevan and Georgia: Gnatsk (diesel locomotive, with open seating and overnight compartments) or Elektrichka (electric locomotive, open seating). Gnatsk trains run the entire distance from Yerevan to Tbilisi and Batumi. Elektrichka trains run intermediate distances between Yerevan-Giumri and Giumri-Vanadzor-Alaverdi.

**Tickets**

**Reservations** Call 57-27-22 or stop by the ticket office at the train station (M David Sasuntsi, B 7, 16, 18 / MV 11, 68, 72, 73, 84, 85, 111, 122).

Trains can be crowded, with compartments and the best seats going fast in summer. Yerevan, Tbilisi and Batumi stations ticket offices sell tickets for all classes. For coupe and SV class, go at least one day before the train leaves to reserve and buy a ticket, as they are very popular and sell out fast. Ticket offices are supposed to be open an hour before the train leaves, and from 09:00 to 19:00. If not, just get on the train when it pulls up and find an empty seat or compartment. The conductor will make the round and you can pay on board. This will be the case if you get on board at an intermediary stop.

**Seating** Gnatsk trains have four classes: obshli (open seating on wooden benches), plus (reserved seats, possibly on wooden seats, more often on padded seats) and two types of compartments: coupé (compartments with padded seating, sleeping berths for 4), and "CB" ("SV" in English) or "Lux", a compartment for two with shared bath between two adjoining compartments. All classes are available between Tbilisi and Yerevan, but only coupé is available between Batumi and Tbilisi.

**On The Train** Take whatever food and drinks you want with you. The train stewards can heat water for you, but there is no food service. Toilets are notoriously filthy, so you need to bring your own paper. Trains are not air-conditioned, though windows can be lowered. In the winter they are heated, but it takes a while for them to warm up the cars, so bundle up in cold weather. In coupé class you can pay an extra $1-$2 for spitalker (spit-tak-NERH; sheets and pillow case), it comes with SV class. From Giumri to Vanadzor it is only about 50 kilometers, but the train must wind its way up a mountain pass, so the going is slow. It is also a beautiful area, good for pictures.

**Getting Off and On** You can get off at any stop on the route to explore the region, but remember the next train in the same direction will be on the next even or odd day of the month. You will need to purchase a new ticket when reboarding. At such low prices, this is not an issue for most visitors, and train-hopping is a great way to see the area. There is a daily elektrichka between Giumri-Vanadzor-Alaverdi, good for exploring the northern districts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRAINS TO/FROM YEREVAN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To Yerevan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>371 16:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>odd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07:35</td>
</tr>
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### Seating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>STATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>06521</td>
<td>Karakert*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6521</td>
<td>17:10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6512</td>
<td>Yeraskh**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6512</td>
<td>16:30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Karakert is local train south, no border connection.  
** Yeraskh is on closed border with Nakichevan.
From Tbilisi The Train Station in Tbilisi is located at 43-Navtolughi. Train #675 leaves for Yerevan at 19:00 on even days of the month. They have four classes to Tbilisi (obshi, plas, coupé and SV), one class from Tbilisi to Batumi (coupe). The train stops at the border town of Bagrataashen-Airum, where Tbilisi wagon(s) are recoupled to the Tbilisi train. If you want to get off at Sadakhlo (in Georgia), buses and minivans can take you the rest of the way to Tbilisi (about 4 hours, $5). Hired cars take about 3 hours and cost around $60.

From Batumi Transfer in Tbilisi to #675 for Yerevan. The train between Batumi and Yerevan takes a day. The bus ride from Batumi to Yerevan takes about 16 hours. If you want to bypass Tbilisi, you can break the trip down into two parts: catch a bus, fixed-route van taxi or hired car from Batumi (central station) to Giumri, then take the Gatsk/Elektricka from Giumri into Yerevan (3-4 hours, 1000-2500 AMD).

To Batumi Take train #372 to Tbilisi and transfer to any train going to Batumi. You can also take the gatsk/Elektricka from Yerevan to Giumri, catch a bus, minivan or hired car to Batumi. Buses from Giumri to Batumi are available in front of the yerkatgitzi kiajeran (Train Station) and avtokayan (Bus depot) in Giumri. Buses and minivans take about 12 hours to Batumi and cost about 3000 AMD. Hired cars to Batumi are located in front of both the yerkatgitzi kiajeran and avtokayan. They cost about $150-200 per car load.

**TRAIN YEREVAN-TBLISI-BATUMI PRICES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Obshi</th>
<th>Plas</th>
<th>Coupé</th>
<th>SV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yerevan</td>
<td>615</td>
<td>921</td>
<td>1589</td>
<td>3249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masis</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>959</td>
<td>1650</td>
<td>3382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echmiadzin</td>
<td>703</td>
<td>1044</td>
<td>1784</td>
<td>3650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armavir</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>1216</td>
<td>2049</td>
<td>4192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giumri</td>
<td>1020</td>
<td>1516</td>
<td>2528</td>
<td>5131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spitak</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>1819</td>
<td>2988</td>
<td>6070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanadzor</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>2988</td>
<td>6070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shagghchi</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>2988</td>
<td>6070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kobehr</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>2988</td>
<td>6070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tounanian</td>
<td>1221</td>
<td>1809</td>
<td>2988</td>
<td>6070</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sanahin</td>
<td>1376</td>
<td>2032</td>
<td>3329</td>
<td>6749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaverdi</td>
<td>1376</td>
<td>2032</td>
<td>3329</td>
<td>6749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airum</td>
<td>1866</td>
<td>2516</td>
<td>4023</td>
<td>8111</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sadakhlo</td>
<td>2119</td>
<td>2859</td>
<td>4574</td>
<td>9219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tbilisi</td>
<td>5800</td>
<td>1000*</td>
<td>8000*</td>
<td>10000*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Estimated Price

**Basic Travel Times**

Every effort is made so that the train will leave on time, but it might be delayed, especially in the Winter. Travel times can take longer than indicated (i.e. in the winter), but are pretty much within the times indicated. Many trains are very late, do not set any dinner plans by this schedule.

Be at the station at least 30 minutes before the scheduled time for departure.

Yerevan to Giumri: 3½ hours
Yerevan to Vanadzor: 8½ hours

Yerevan to Airom: 11 hours
Yerevan to Tbilisi: 16 hours

**Yerevan Train Station**

Yerevan Central Train Station is located on Tigran Mets pta about 2 km S of Republic Square (M David Sasuntsi, B 7, 16, 18 / MV 11, 68, 72, 73, 84, 85, 111, 122). It is a handsome building made of Armenian tufa, and bears a spire capped with a Soviet Armenia Star. During the daytime the parking area is filled with buses, taxis and cars for hire to regions and Tbilisi/Batumi.

**Tickets (SNUU / Toms)**

The Tomsarkegh (Ticket office) is located just past the main rotunda, on your right. There are signs in English to guide you. The ticket office works until the last train has left.

**Food**

There is a restaurant and buffet in the station (the restaurant is on the right side of the building as you approach it). Both offer perhaps the cheapest coffee in town: 150 AMD for “Haikakan srj” (eastern coffee).

**Taking the Bus & Minivan**

There are many buses and minivans that carry passengers in and out of Armenia, and the price—though more expensive than taking a train—is much cheaper than traveling by air. Buses travel between points in Armenia and Batumi, Tbilisi, Stepanakert, Tabriz, Tehran, Aleppo and Istanbul. Most are direct to Yerevan, but you can arrange with the driver to let you off at any point on the route.

**On the Bus/Minivan**

Take everything you need to eat and drink. There are few Express buses (they are marked in Russian as КЭСПРЕС or in Armenian as բասապրես), so expect a lot of stops along the way. Buses travel some of the most scenic roads in Armenia, which make for good sight-seeing and photo opportunities. They do stop every so often for rests (the toilets are located behind the trees) and water, so you don’t get completely stir-crazy. People carry everything with them on buses and minivans, and they manage to cram it all in every nook and corner of the bus. With luck, one of those bags that tumbles out of its berth as the bus bounces along will hold cheese, fruit and bread. Enjoy!

**BUS & MINIVAN STATIONS**

There are officially two avtokayaner (av-to-kai-an-NER; bus stations) in Yerevan, but it may seem just about on every corner you will see buses and minivans lined up ready to roll to points both near and far. One of the results of the breakup of the Soviet Union has been a loosening of the regulations where buses must stop at the end of their journeys. Consequently passengers are as often dropped off in the center of town as at one of the more distant bus stations. We will cover the most common bus stops.

There are two official bus stations in Yerevan: the Kilikia Central Bus Station on Admiral Isahaakov Avenue (Istanbul, Tehran, Tbilisi, Batumi, regional buses), and the Northern or Kanakeri Bus Station on the Tbilisi Highway on...
the Northern outskirts of Yerevan (Northeastern regions and Gavar). Other places to catch both international and regional buses are at the Central Train Station (Tbilisi, Sadakhlolo and Ararat Valley).

Advance purchase tickets (“nakhnakan”) may be charged 100 AMD extra per ticket. Note baggage allowance is 20 Kg. Excess baggage costs 100-250 AMD per Kg.

**YEREVAN KILIKIA CENTRAL BUS STATION**

**INTERNATIONAL BUS SCHEDULE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO</th>
<th>DAYS</th>
<th>DEP</th>
<th>ARR</th>
<th>COST</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yerevan -</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>21:00</td>
<td>41 hrs.</td>
<td>$50 + $10 at border</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Istanbul -</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>41 hrs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yerevan -</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>08:00</td>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tbilisi -</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>08:00</td>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>$10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yerevan -</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>08:00</td>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>3300</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Batumi -</td>
<td>MT-T-S</td>
<td>07:00</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yerevan -</td>
<td>MT-T-S</td>
<td>07:00</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batumi -</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>08:00</td>
<td>6 hrs</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>minivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>08:00</td>
<td>6 hrs</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td></td>
<td>minivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>08:30</td>
<td>8 hrs</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td></td>
<td>minivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale (Turkish border, to Andara)</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>08:00</td>
<td>9 hrs</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>minivan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stopanakert*</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>08:00</td>
<td>16:00</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagorno Karabakh</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>09:00</td>
<td>17:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Border with Iran</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>09:00</td>
<td>17:00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Times and prices subject to sudden changes. Inquire well before departure to be sure.

The Central Yerevan Avtokayan (Bus Station) on Admiral Isahakavon Avenue (B: #18, 46, 113 TB: #20) is located one kilometer from the central Shuka on Mashtots Ave. (Go South on Mashtots past the wine factory, turn right and cross Hakhtanak Karmurj (Bridge) to the cognac factory, then left on Admiral Isahakavon pta. about 700 meters). The station is a large A-frame metal building that looks like a giant KOA campground office. It is worn at the edges but full of activity as passengers and buses vie for right of way.

Enter the bus station on the left side of the building as you approach the A-Frame, through the bus parking lot. There is a door about 2/3rd of the way along the platform. The dispatcher staff is friendly and helpful (they refused to let us go without a cup of coffee and some local gossip), and they were full of talk of opening a "VIP" section for tourists. Don’t expect it to begin anytime soon. They do promise to insure any tourist will be given a seat on a bus, no matter how much overflow of passengers there may be. The station works 24 hours a day.

Across the street from the main station is a parking lot with buses and vans that can take you to the surrounding areas of Yerevan.

**Tickets (SNUU: Toms)**

The Tomsarkegh (SNUU: Toms: Ticket office) is located within the main lobby, as are all other services. There are no signs in English to guide you, but the layout is fairly simple. Most of the activity seems to be on the boarding platforms outside the building, as when we were there, inside it was quiet, there was plenty of room to sit, with just a few passengers dozing while waiting for their bus. The dispatcher’s office is on the right as you enter the station from the platform.

**Food**

There is a buffet in the station (open 6 a.m. to 5 p.m.), which offers full meals at 1,000-2000 AMD. The tables and decor aren’t the cleanest we’ve seen, but the service and gossip is good. If the lobby office is closed, enter through the boarding platform to the side entrance.

**Spend The Night:** We found the cheapest place in town at the bus station. Though the station doesn’t have a hotel per se, they have room enough for up to ten people in a private building next to the station, at 500-1000 AMD per bed dormitory style. If you’re stuck arriving in the middle of the night, this is at least a place to crash until you can move on. Communal toilet, communal sleeping, communal gossip, but they have a shower. Ask at the Dispatcher office.

**Left Luggage:** Marked by a Russian Kamera (KAMPER XPAHHIIH), the left luggage is located in the main lobby. 150 AMD per day per item.

**Exchange Office**

One of the more reasonable exchange rates we have seen in Yerevan is at the exchange office in the Bus Station lobby. It is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

**Other**

There is both an emergency aid office and pharmacy located next to the buffet. They are open from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m.

**ATHENS BUS**

Athens is bus only.

**From Athens**

Tickets are 200 Euro and can be bought from the agent in Salonika (tel. 516-557). The bus leaves from Eleni Hotel, Sngru Str, Athens, takes 48 hours and arrives on Saturdays, dropping passengers off next to the Sputnik travel Agency on Moskovian.

**From Yerevan**

The ticket agent is in the basement office of the Northern outskirts of Yerevan (Northeastern regions and Gavar). Other locations: Giumri: (374-41) 2-23-11, 4-09-32, Vanadzor: (374-51) 4-52-75, 4-25-32, Vardazar (374-51) 4-52-75, 4-25-32, Trabzon: (0462) 325-55-22.

The Athens bus also departs from the Northern bus station, arriving at the Tbilisi bus station 6-8 hours later. The cost (around $10) is excellent, though the bus is worn and it can be crowded. If you want extra space, but a second class ticket and spread out. Arrange tickets at the

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station well before departure, preferably 1-2 days before hand to be sure there is space and when the bus is leaving.

The Batumi bus is likewise busy, departing early in the morning 4 days a week (See schedule). The fee (around $35) is still a bargain for the distance, though the trip is long and roads not in great shape. Yu will feel your bum after this ride to the Black Sea. Like the Tbilisi bus, confirm departure and buy ticket in advance.

TEHERAN BUS

Tehran is by bus only. The Tehran/Tabriz bus arrives and leaves from the Kilkilia Central Bus Station, six days a week. The bus is most often used by people conducting small trade between Armenia and Iran, so it may be stuffed to the gills when your travel. Tourists can take the bus (US citizens are not allowed to conduct business with Iran and it may cause problems on return to have an Iranian visa in your passport. It is also considered dangerous to travel as a US citizen in Iran at the current time). You must have a valid visa for Iran before going. Contact the Iranian embassy (p. 115) before buying a ticket.

From Tehran

The bus to Yerevan originates at the Tehran Central Bus Station. The bus for Armenia is managed by the Central Cooperative #15 bus company. The price is 13,000-14,000 AMD in Iranian currency. The bus leaves every day. See schedule.

To Tehran

The bus to Tehran can be caught from in front of Hotel Erebuti (behind Republic Square). The bus leaves every day at 10:00. Reserve 3 days in advance. Cost is 17,000 AMD. Tickets and bus information can be found in the Sima Safar, in the opposite new Erebuti Hotel off the parking lot (56-90-18).

TATEV TOUR AGENCY, 19 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-44-01, 52-44-02, 54-33-60, 54-33-61, email: info@tatev.com, URL: www.tatev.com also handles the ticket from Tbilisi to Yerevan. Passengers going to Tehran will be dropped off at the Russian Bazaar.

IN AND OUT BY TAXI, CAR

Two highway routes through Georgia that give connect to Tbilisi, Azerbaijan and the Black Sea Ports of Batumi and Poti. There is one southern route to the Persian Gulf via Iran. The land borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan are currently closed.

HIGHWAYS

Tbilisi: There are three Yerevan-Tbilisi routes; Yerevan-Aparan-Spital-Vanadzor (108 km), then following the M6 to Alaverdi (47 km) continuing to the border at Sadakhlo (40 km), which is 63 km from Tbilisi. The second route follows the (M4/M24) to Sevan (67 km), then Tsovagian (16 km), Zunin (14 km) on the same highway to Dilijan (26 km) before going west 40 km on the (A330 / M8) to Vanadzor to join the M6 to Alaverdi and Sadakhlo. Another route travels north 34 km from Vanadzor to Stepanavan on the (A328 / M3) then N 18 km to Tashir and another 15 km to the Georgian border at Gogavan (75 km from Tbilisi).

Black Sea: The Yerevan-Giumri-Bavana route follows the (A306/M1) highway 126 km to Giumri, continuing N for another 73 km to the border crossing at Nakhchalanak with Akhaltsikhe en route to the Tbilisi-Batumi Highway. It is 92 km from the Bavana border to Akhaltsikhe (Vale) and another 178 km to Batumi.

Iran: The Iran route follows the M2 for 253 km to Goris, another 68 km to Kapan and a final 74 km to Meghri. The border crossing is 8 km from Meghri, at Agaran. From there it is 150 km to Tabriz and 700 km to Tehran.

Hiring a Car

From Tbilisi cars can be hired at the bus and minivan stations for Yerevan. Some will take you all the way (most are Armenian drivers) or to the border (Georgian or Armenian). Prices vary by how the time of day, season, how busy trade is, and how desperate you look. Prices quoted are per car load. $60-150 are the prices of the moment.

Getting around by Taxi, Car

Taxi services are all provided by Levon Travel (10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, www.levontravel.com), Hyur Services (50 Nalbandian p, tel. 56-04-95, 52-98-08, 52-24-14, email: contact@hyurservice.com, URL: www.hyurservice.com), and Sider Travel (19 Sayat-Nova pta, Ani Plaza Hotel Lobby, tel. 52-29-67, 54-31-27, email: sider@arminco.com, URL: www.sidertravel.com) and Sabera Tours (32-38 Harapetian p, tel. 52-55-55, email: info@saberautomans.am, URL: www.saberautomans.am) among others.

GETTING AROUND BY METRO

The metro is so cheap (50 AMD) and so easy to use (one line, get on, get off), it is a pity it is so small. Begun in the 1970s, the subway system had plans to include the entire city, but had to stop work when the Soviet Union collapsed. There are still plans to complete part of an extra line west of Barekamutian (Ajanpiki District), but nothing yet.

The existing line connects the far southe with Shengavit and center, running from Charbakh (a factory area) with busy Barekamutian Square. The most likely metro stops for visitors are Train Station (David Sasuntsi), Republic Square (Hanapetutian H’raparak), Ring Park (Zoravar Andranik/Kino Rossiya, Yeridarsardakan), Marshal Baghramian (National Assembly, American University of Armenia) and Barekamutian.

Subway trains run every 3-10 minutes depending on the time of day. Central stations are deep underground (subbing as bomb shelters in the Soviet era) with little of the elegance found at the Moscow Metro, its granddaddy. The metro is open 7-11.

AROUND

Getting around Yerevan is easy on foot, by bus and minivan, and by taxi. For getting around by foot, see Navigating the City, p. 14.

TATEV TOUR AGENCY, 19 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-44-01, 52-44-02, 54-33-60, 54-33-61, email: info@tatev.com, URL: www.tatev.com also handles the ticket from Tbilisi to Yerevan. Passengers going to Tehran will be dropped off at the Russian Bazaar.

TATEV TOUR AGENCY, 19 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-44-01, 52-44-02, 54-33-60, 54-33-61, email: info@tatev.com, URL: www.tatev.com also handles the ticket from Tbilisi to Yerevan. Passengers going to Tehran will be dropped off at the Russian Bazaar.

IN AND OUT BY TAXI, CAR

Two highway routes through Georgia that give connect to Tbilisi, Azerbaijan and the Black Sea Ports of Batumi and Poti. There is one southern route to the Persian Gulf via Iran. The land borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan are currently closed.

HIGHWAYS

Tbilisi: There are three Yerevan-Tbilisi routes; Yerevan-Aparan-Spital-Vanadzor (108 km), then following the M6 to Alaverdi (47 km) continuing to the border at Sadakhlo (40 km), which is 63 km from Tbilisi. The second route follows the (M4/M24) to Sevan (67 km), then Tsovagian (16 km), Zunin (14 km) on the same highway to Dilijan (26 km) before going west 40 km on the (A330 / M8) to Vanadzor to join the M6 to Alaverdi and Sadakhlo. Another route travels north 34 km from Vanadzor to Stepanavan on the (A328 / M3) then N 18 km to Tashir and another 15 km to the Georgian border at Gogavan (75 km from Tbilisi).

Black Sea: The Yerevan-Giumri-Bavana route follows the (A306/M1) highway 126 km to Giumri, continuing N for another 73 km to the border crossing at Nakhchalanak with Akhaltsikhe en route to the Tbilisi-Batumi Highway. It is 92 km from the Bavana border to Akhaltsikhe (Vale) and another 178 km to Batumi.

Iran: The Iran route follows the M2 for 253 km to Goris, another 68 km to Kapan and a final 74 km to Meghri. The border crossing is 8 km from Meghri, at Agaran. From there it is 150 km to Tabriz and 700 km to Tehran.

Hiring a Car

From Tbilisi cars can be hired at the bus and minivan stations for Yerevan. Some will take you all the way (most are Armenian drivers) or to the border (Georgian or Armenian). Prices vary by how the time of day, season, how busy trade is, and how desperate you look. Prices quoted are per car load. $60-150 are the prices of the moment.

Getting out by Taxi, Car

Taxi services are all provided by Levon Travel (10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, www.levontravel.com), Hyur Services (50 Nalbandian p, tel. 56-04-95, 52-98-08, 52-24-14, email: contact@hyurservice.com, URL: www.hyurservice.com), and Sider Travel (19 Sayat-Nova pta, Ani Plaza Hotel Lobby, tel. 52-29-67, 54-31-27, email: sider@arminco.com, URL: www.sidertravel.com) and Sabera Tours (32-38 Harapetian p, tel. 52-55-55, email: info@saberautomans.am, URL: www.saberautomans.am) among others.

GETTING AROUND METRO

The metro is so cheap (50 AMD) and so easy to use (one line, get on, get off), it is a pity it is so small. Begun in the 1970s, the subway system had plans to include the entire city, but had to stop work when the Soviet Union collapsed. There are still plans to complete part of an extra line west of Barekamutian (Ajanpiki District), but nothing yet.

The existing line connects the far southe with Shengavit and center, running from Charbakh (a factory area) with busy Barekamutian Square. The most likely metro stops for visitors are Train Station (David Sasuntsi), Republic Square (Hanapetutian H’raparak), Ring Park (Zoravar Andranik/Kino Rossiya, Yeridarsardakan), Marshal Baghramian (National Assembly, American University of Armenia) and Barekamutian.

Subway trains run every 3-10 minutes depending on the time of day. Central stations are deep underground (subbing as bomb shelters in the Soviet era) with little of the elegance found at the Moscow Metro, its granddaddy. The metro is open 7-11.
Crown Hotel, Geologic Museum, Hotel Yerevan, Astafian Hotel, Kino Moscow, Russian Stanislawski Theatre.

Yeritasardakan: Ring Park 2nd Block, Terian p., Abovian p, Derenik Demirchian Museum, Dramatic Theatre, Opera Square, Chamber Hall. Buses to Sevan (Terian and Isahakian).


Other

Garegin Nzhdeh: Garagin Nzhdeh Square, Buses to Masis, Metro Theatre, Shengavit District.

GETTING AROUND BY BUS

Getting around Yerevan by bus or "marshrutni taxi" (minivan) is cheap (100 AMD per trip) and convenient. Buses run less frequently than minivans, but are less crowded. Minivans run the same routes as buses plus additional routes throughout the city. Minivans are so successful they have become a traffic problem, adding to the already over-congested streets. A movement has begun to add more buses and begin removing minivans. Until then, choose between the two for your trip.

The bus is one of the cheapest ways to get around Yerevan (100 AMD) if it is not so frequent. More are being added to replace the hundreds of minivans that now compete for passengers.

Pay when exiting the bus.

AROUND YEREVAN

This is a partial list that covers most trips to destinations in the center. A complete list of bus lines is at the Armenia Info web site (www.armeniainfo.am).

Route #1: TRAIN STATION/BAREKAMUTIUN: Train Station - Republic Square - Opera - Baghramian pta. - Barekamutiun (metro).

Route #2: KANAKER/TRAINE STATION: Kanaker (churches) - Azatutian pta. (Monument, Haghpatanak Park) - Abovian p. - Ring Park - Tigran Mets pta. (Kino Rossiya, Tashir, Cathedral, Ring Park) - Train Station.


Route #5: MASIV/RING PARK: Masiv (Gai pta.) - Miasnikian pta. (Water World, Zoo) - Abovian p. - Yeritasardakan Metro (Ring Park).

Route #8: EREBUNI/ABOVIAN: Erebusi Museum - Train Station - Tigran Mets pta. - ring park - Abovian Square.


Route #14: MONUMENT/TRAIN STATION: Monument, Haghpatanak Park - Abovian p. - Ring Park - Tigran Mets pta. (Tashir, Kino Rossiya, Cathedral) - Train Station.


Route #17: AVAN/TRAIN STATION: Avan (Avan churches) - Miasnikian pta. (Water World, Zoo) - Ring park - Tigran Mets pta. (Kino Rossiya, Cathedral, Tashir, Ring Park) - Train Station.

Route #19: NORK: Nork - Koriun p. (outer ring) - Ring Park (Alek Manukian p.).

Route #22: MASIV/RING PARK: Masiv (Gai pta.) - Miasnikian pta. (Zoo) - Abovian p. - Yeritasardakan Metro (Ring Park).

Route #23: BANGLADESH/ABOVIAN: Bangladesh (Yerablur Military Park) - Isahakov pta. (Bus Station, American Embassy) - Mashtots pta. - Ring park - Abovian Square.

Route #24: MONUMENT/PANTHEON: Monument/Haghpatanak Park - Ring Park (Terian/Moskovian) - Mashtots pta. - Grigor Lusavorich p. (French, Italian, Russian Embassies, English Park) - Circus - Pantheon.

Route #26: MASIV/TRAIN STATION: Masiv (Gai pta.) - Miasnikian pta (Water World, Zoo) - Ring Park - Mashtots pta. - Grigor Lusavorich p. - Circus - Tigran Mets pta. (Kino Rossiya, Cathedral, Tashir, Ring Park) - Train Station.

Route #30: TRAIN STATION/TSITSERNAKABERD: Train Station - Tigran Mets pta. (Natural History Museum, Tashir, Cathedral, Kino Rossiya, Ring Park) - Republic Square - Amiran p. - Mashtots pta. (Shuka, Blue Mosque, S. Sargis) - Cognac Factory - Tsitsernakaberd (back end).


Route #33: TSITSERNAKABERD/TIGRAN METS: Tsitsernakaberd (back end) - Mashtots pta. (Blue Mosque, Shuka) - Amiran p. - Republic Square - Tigran Mets pta. (Kino Rossiya, Cathedral, Tashir, Ring Park).

Route #34: TSITSERNAKABERD/VERNISSAGE: Tsitsernakaberd (Halabian pta.) - Baghramian Metro - Mashtots pta. (Opera) - Matenadaran - Outer Ring - Ring Park - Vartan Mamikonian/Vernissage.


Route #38: PANTHEON/ABOVIAN: Pantheon - Circus - Kino Rossiya - Lower and Upper Ring Park Abovian Square.

Garni bus is caught in Masiv, on the side of Gai Street, near the Mercedes Dealership. 8:45-9:30, 250 AMD. Taxis to Geghard are at the bus stop in Garni.

Sevan and Dillijan buses are caught in front of the Dramatic theatre on Isahakian p (Ring Park 1st block). Dillijan bus is at 1 p.m., 800 AMD; Sevan at 10:30 a.m. & 2 p.m., 400 AMD.

Kotaik Region:
Abovian bus is caught at Kilikia Station or the train Station. Buses operate 09:00-22:00, 150 AMD.
Charentsavan bus is caught at Abovian Square. Buses operate 12-5, 250 AMD.

Hrazdan bus is caught at the Raikom Station, Azatutian pt., between Nersissian & Aharonian pts.

GETTING AROUND BY MINIVAN
Minivans (Marshrutni Taxis) follow the same routes as city buses, adding a number of additional routes and areas of the city. Convenient, they are not comfortable, drivers squeezing passengers in beyond their posted limit. There is always a crush of people at rush hour, getting on can you’re your patience. Minivans are supposed to stop at bus/minivan stops, but in fact they will stop when hailed and at street corners (adding to the city’s street congestion). As with the bus, you pay when exiting the minivan. Minivans cost 100 AMD per trip.

### NORTHERN STATION REGIONAL BUS LINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aghberk (Shorsha)</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>12:00 pm</td>
<td>800 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dzoravank</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>11:00 am</td>
<td>1000 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gavar</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>2:15 pm, 3:45 pm</td>
<td>800 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martakert</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>8:30 am</td>
<td>800 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chambarak</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>2:00 pm</td>
<td>850 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanadzor</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>2:00 pm</td>
<td>700 AMD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TRAIN STATION REGIONAL BUS LINES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abovan</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9-10 (Every 15 minutes)</td>
<td>150 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ararat</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>7:50-7:30 (Every 50 min)</td>
<td>350 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arevshat</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9:00 am, 3:00 pm</td>
<td>300 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artashat</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>7:50-7:30 (Every 30 min)</td>
<td>200 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khor-Virap</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>9:00 am, 14:30 pm, 5:10 pm</td>
<td>350 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norashen</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>6:30-6 (Every 3 hrs)</td>
<td>300 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sovetashen</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>8:30-11 (Every 10 min)</td>
<td>100 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vedi</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>8:20-6 (Every 1 hr)</td>
<td>350 AMD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### GETTING AROUND YEREVAN

This is a partial list to the most popular destinations. For a complete list, see [www.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am).


Route #88, 117: TSITSERNAKABERD/TASHIR: Tsitsernakaberd – Barekamutian Metro – Baghramian pta. – Place de France/Opera – Ring Park – Tashir Mall.


Route #118: MASIV/MASTOTS/CIRCUS: Masiv (Gai pta.) – Monument – Terian p. – Place de France/Opera – Mashhtots pta. – Khorenatsi (English Park) – Circus.


Route #125: TSITSERNAKABERD/RING PARK/PEKAT: Tsitsernakaberd - Orbeli p. – Baghramian pta. – Place de France/Opera – Matenadaran – Outer Ring – Ring Park – Kochar p. – Petak Trade Hall.

YEREVAN REGION MINIVANS: Minivans to the regions depart from different stations, most of which are curbside bus stops on the street or in a parking lot. The two main bus stations (with terminals) are Kilikia Bus Station on Isahaakov pta. and the Northern Bus Station at the beginning of the Sevan Highway (See Bus Stations, p. 107). A partial list of regional buses from the capital (full list at www.armenianinfo.am):

**CENTRAL BUS STATION REGIONAL MINIVANS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jermuk</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>6:00 am - 7:00 pm</td>
<td>1800 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agarak</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>8:00 am</td>
<td>1000 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armavir</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>7:30 - 9:30 (every 15 min)</td>
<td>400 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artik</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>3:00 pm - 4:00 pm</td>
<td>2000 AMD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baghramashen (Vanadzor)</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>11:30 am</td>
<td>2000 AMD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many drivers do not give change for bills larger than 5000 AMD. Using a Call Taxi (Taxi Service) is the most convenient way to hail a ride. There are doze...
to ply the highways and byways. More advanced arrangements include European/Japanese made cars (used Mercedes and BMWs seem to be the preferred vehicles in Armenia), with a noticeable hike in price. Specialized travel (mountain trekking, nature tours, adventure tours) can use a Jeep or Niva. The Soviet Vlis (UAZ) is probably the best vehicle for mountain trails and off road explorations, and next to WWII vintage American Jeeps, the best off road vehicle period.

Comfort aside, my preferred all around vehicle is still the pre-1990s Lada, a version of which is still used by the majority of drivers in Armenia. It lacks charm and prestige, is as slow as hell, but makes up for it in being able to climb difficult terrains and (best of all) since it is still widely used throughout the country, it can easily be fixed at almost any village if need be. Parts are dirt cheap, the engine so simple almost anyone can work on it. If you take a Mercedes or a "Beamer" into the high hills of Siunik, good luck on finding parts if it breaks down. For mountain trekking, I prefer the Niva.

Another common feature of car travel is the number that now run on natural (LP) gas, something still in its infancy in Europe and America. The reason is cost; petrol costs more than $24 per canister now (about 200 km for a Lada), while gas is around $6.50 for the same. Petrol gives a little boost in climbing mountains, but for everything else, look for a car running on gas. Especially if you strike a deal to hire a car and driver where you pay for fuel.

Cars and drivers hired at more reputable travel agencies (see rent a car below) will have accident insurance, though seat belts are still a new idea.
**EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES**

A list of embassies and consulates in Yerevan. US and British embassies request citizens to register on arrival (especially if you are on an extensive stay). Embassies and consulates can help with lost passports and certain traveling situations while in country. Contact them directly to find out all services provided to citizens.

**EMBASSIES**

**BELARUS** (Respublika Belarus), 12-14 Nikol Duman p, tel. 22-02-69, 27-56-11, email: armenia@belembassy.org, URL: www.armenia.belembassy.org.

**BRAZIL**, 48 Pionerakan p, tel. 53-69-55, email: brasemb@yahoo.com.

**BULGARIA** (Republika Bulgaria), Nor Aresh, 16 Sofia p, tel. 45-82-33, email: bularm@arminco.com.

**PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC OF CHINA** (Zhonghua Renmin Gonghe Guo), 12 Marshall Baghramian pta, tel. 56-00-67, email: chiemb@arminco.com.

**EGYPT** (Jumhuriyat Misr-al-Arabiyyah), 6a Sepuh p, tel. 56-11-03, 22-01-17, email: eqyemb@arminco.com.


**GEORGIA** (Sakartvelos Respublika), 42 Aram p, tel. 58-55-11, 56-41-83, 56-43-57, email: geqemb@netsys.am, yerevan.emb@mfa.gov.ge.

**GERMANY** (Bundesrepublik Deutschland), 29 Charents p, tel. 52-32-79, 52-45-81, 58-65-91, email: germemb@arminco.com, info@erv.ipol.de.

**GREECE** (Ellinikí Dimokratía), 6 Demirchian p, tel. 53-00-51, 53-67-54, email: greemb@arminco.com, URL: www.greekembassy.am.

**INDIA**, 50/2 Dzorap p, tel. 53-91-73, 53-91-74, 53-91-75, 53-91-76, email: info@embassyofindia.am, URL: www.indianembassy.am.

**IRAN** (Jomhuri-ye Eslami-Iran), 1 Budaghian p, tel. 28-04-57, 23-29-20, 23-29-52, 23-49-00, email: info@iranambassy.am, URL: www.iranembassy.am.

**ITALY** (Italia), 5 Italy p, tel. 54-23-35, 54-23-36, email: segreteria.yerevan@esteri.it, URL: www.ambjerevan.esteri.it.

**LEBANON** (Al Jumhuriyah Al Lubnaniyah), Dzoraghiug, 1st p, house 13/14, tel. 52-74-63, 52-65-40, email: libarm@arminco.com.

**MALTA** (Sovereign Military Order of Malta), 1 Amirian p, tel. 23-69-32, 091-41-20-39, email: ambbasal@yahoo.com.

**POLAND** (Rzeczpospolita Polska), 44A Hanrapetutian p, tel. 54-24-93, 54-24-95, email: polemb@arminco.com, polcon@arminco.com.

**ROMANIA**, 15 Barbius p, tel. 27-53-32, 22-76-10, email: ambromt@netsys.am.


**SYRIA** (Al Jumhuriyah Al Arabiyah As Suriyah), 14 Marshal Baghramian pta, tel. 52-40-28, 52-40-36, email: syrem_ar@intertel.am.

**TURKMENISTAN**, Nork Aigerin, house #288, tel. 65-09-03, 65-09-07, email: tmembassy@netsys.am.

**UKRAINE** (Ukraine), Arabkir 2bldg 5/1, tel. 22-97-27, 22-65-41, email: ukremb@aatv.am.


**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**, 1 American pta, tel. 46-47-00, 49-42-00, email: usinfo@arminco.com, consul@usa.am, URL: www.usa.am.

**CONSULATES**

**CANADA**, 25-22 Demirchian p, tel. 56-79-03.


**HUNGARY**, 2 Zakian p, tel. 53-89-57.


**NORWAY**, 50 Khannian p, tel. 57-17-98, 55-15-82.

**SLOVENIA**, 22 Parpetsi p, tel. 53-87-96.

**THAILAND**, 1 Bagharman pta, apt. 10, tel. 56-04-10.


**URUGUAY**, 26 Parpetsi p, tel. 53-49-10.

**ASSOCIATIONS, NGO’s**

A list of associations and NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) for travelers interested in more than just touring.

The ARMENIAN NGO CENTER maintains a directory of local NGOs at their web site (www.ngo.am/dir/index.asp), has extensive coverage on HR issues in the country plus listings of local NGOs.

ECOTEME, email: ecoream@freenet.am, URL: www.ypc.am, has an online database of eco projects and local NGOs involved with environmental issues.

YEREVAN PRESS CLUB, 39/12 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-00-67, email: boris@ypc.am, misha@ypc.am, URL: www.ypc.am, for journalists and media contacts.

**INTERNATIONAL NGOs IN YEREVAN**

**ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA (AAA)**, 2 Republic Square, Ste. 101, tel. 52-70-52, email: info@aaaainc.org, URL: www.aaainc.org

**ARMENIAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**, 17 Charents p, tel. 57-01-70, email: info@ada.am, URL: www.ada.am.

**ARMENIAN GENERAL BENEVOLENT UNION (AGBU)**, 9 Alik Manukian p, Marshal Baghramian pta, tel. 51-22-50, 51-22-37, email: aol.agbu@aua.am, agbu@arminco.com, URL: www.agbu.am.


**ARMENIAN RELIEF SOCIETY**, 116/24 Nalbandian p, tel. 57-01-70, email: info@ardusa.am, URL: www.armeniarcs.org.


**BUSINESS SUPPORT CENTER LLC (BSC)**, 1 Charents p, 1st building, II floor, tel. 52-82-79, email: bsc@bsc.am.

**CARITAS ARMENIA**, 2 House 2a, Arabkir 38 p, tel. 26-20-34, email: caritasarmen@web.am, URL: www.caritasarmen.am.

**CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICE (CRS)**, 38 Arabkir p, 2/2 House, tel. 26-33-89, email: chamalian@emme.cms.org.


**EURASIA FOUNDATION**, 4 Karen Demirchian p, tel. 56-54-78, email: eurasia@eurasias.am, URL: www.eurasias.am.


**HABITAT FOR HUMANITY**, 4 Karen Demirchian p, tel. 56-54-78, email: eurasia@eurasias.am, URL: www.eurasias.am.

**INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS**, 21 Parpetsi p, tel. 53-36-30, email: redcross@redcross.am, URL: redcross.am.

FUND FOR ARMENIAN RELIEF, 630 Second Avenue, New York, NY, tel. (212) 889-5150, fax (212) 889-4894, email: far@farusa.org. URL: www.farusa.org.

France


TOUR AGENCIES, GUIDES
There are over 140 tour agencies listed in the Armenia Information web site (www.armenianinfo.org) with at least as many again that can sell air and bus tickets or arrange day tours. Knowing which is best is purely subjective, some times depending on how busy the agency is when you visit. All on my list have a solid enough reputation for at least basic services (air tickets, hotels, apartments, etc.) plus package tours and the “classic” day tours to the most popular spots.

For a complete list see the Armenian Tourist Information site at www.armenianinfo.org. As with any service, you need to conduct your own due diligence on the company, its track record and charges. And as with any trip abroad, you are ultimately traveling at your own risk.

This partial list includes some of the most popular agencies in categories I believe they best fit, but that does not mean others cannot provide the same service, even when it comes to specialized tours (Nature, Adventure, History, Archeology, Spiritual).

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IRELAND
MAYWELL'S TRAVEL D'Olier Chambers, 1 Hawkins St, Dublin 2, IRELAND Tel: (01) 677 9479 Fax: (01) 679 3948

*MER LERNER, Nalbandian p, tel. 54-33-70, cell: 091-38-46-77, email: contact@merlerner.com, URL: www.merlerner.com, has numerous worldwide contacts and professional guides for their adventure and nature tours. Contact Peirre Barsoumian, Tel. +31 793168618, email: setapierre@hotmail.com

NORWAY
WORLDWIDE ADVENTURES AS Nedre Slottsgate 12, Oslo, 0137, NORWAY Tel: (023) 5382 954 Fax: (023) 5384 744 Email: atc@euronet.nl

SWEDEN
FRAM RESOR AB, Kungsagan 55, 56, P.O. Box 64, S-101 20, Stockholm, Sweden, tel. 468 / 21-9534 - fax: 468 / 21-4969

UK
SUNVIL TRAVEL, Sunvil House, 7 & 8 Upper Square Old Islington, Middlesex W7 7JB, tel. (+44) 081 568-4999 - Fax: (+44) 081 568-8330, URL: www.armenia-holidays.sunvil.co.uk, works with various local travel agencies for its tour packages and tourist services.

Middle East
Iran
ARYA TOUR, 18, Amirian p, tel. 53-83-17, 53-83-18, 53-95-29, 53-95-49, email: armenia@aryatour.com, URL: www.aryatour.com, has their main office in Tehran (103/105 Ostad Nejatollahi Ave., Tehran, IR Iran P.O. Box 14335-144 Tel +98 21 88800943-7, 88800999, Direct Tour : (+ 98 21) 88805000 , 88809752, Fax : (+ 98 21) 88809546, email- info@aryatour.com, URL: www.aryatour.com

URAN DOOSTAN TOURS, No.15, 3rd St., Vali-e-Asr Ave., Opposite to Motthaheri St. Tehran - 14336 I.R. Iran P.O. Box 14335-144 Tel +98 21 872 29 75 ~ 77 fax: (+98 21) 871 29 27, Email: idt@irandostan.com, Arrange Classical, Adventure & Business tours, including archeological tours. Arrange visas, should be able to get you to Armenian border, or pick you up and take you into the Persian side of Armenia's history.

Kuwait
*MER LERNER, Nalbandian p, tel. 54-33-70, cell: 091-38-46-77, email: contact@merlerner.com, URL: www.merlerner.com, has numerous worldwide contacts and professional guides for their adventure and nature tours. Contact Yeghig Garbooshian, tel. +965 9453651, email: yeghig@hotmail.com in Kuwait.

Lebanon
CARAVAN TOURS LTD, contact Mr. Bedros Anserian, Lebanon, Tel: (+961-961-1) 56-28-71, Fax: (+961-961-1) 56-20-45, E-mail: anserian@cyberia.net.lb. Fine company that knows the ins and outs of Armenia.

*MER LERNER, Marash Str. Bourj Hammoud, Beirut, Lebanon, tel. +961-1-259411, cell: +961-1-207063, email: contact@merlerner.com, URL: www.merlerner.com, has numerous contacts throughout the world for its adventure and nature tours. Main office in Yerevan.

TANIA TRAVEL - Beirut - Lebanon - +961 616555 / 739682 Sodeco Sodeco Square, - +961 (1) 616555, Cell: (3) 611428 - E-mail: taniaatvl@cyberia.net.lb Hamra : Sidani street, facing Cinema Jeanne d'Arc, - +961 (1) 739682, I.R. 340471 - Cell: (3) 812375 - E-mail: taniaham@cyberia.net.lb.

CIS
Azerbaijan
CGTT BAKU, CASPIEN BUSINESS CENTER - 40, J. Jabbarli K Eeesi tel. (994.12) 97.37.43 - Fax: (994.12) 97.37.43, email: cgtt@voyages.baku.az

Georgia
ADVENTURE, 69 Kostava Street, Tbilisi, Georgia (995-32)-379400 Fax: (995-32)-379500 E-mail: else@caucasus.net

CAUCASUS TRAVEL 5-7 Shavteli Street, 380005, Tbilisi, Georgia (995-32)-987400 Fax: (995-32)-
987399 Email: georgia@caucasustravel.com.ge specializes in Georgian tours and can get you to Armenia or Azerbaijan.

ES GEORGIA TOURS, 4 Lesildzde Street, Tbilisi, Georgia (995-32)-999418 or (995-99)-500715 Email: vport@georgia@caucasus.net


ARARD TOUR, 12 Azatutian pta, apt. 35, tel. 25-67-93, email: arcarda@netsys.am, arcarda@web.am, URL: www.armena.com

ARMANE, 62/12 Hanrapetutan p, tel. 56-91-31, email: info@armane.am, URL: www.armane.am

ARMEN TOUR, 24, Mashtots pta, tel. 53-22-00, 53-49-15, 53-21-90, email: info@armanetour.am, URL: www.armanetour.am, provides tour packages and individual tour services (air ticketing, car/driver, apartments, hotels, guide etc). Also provides archeological tours (Aragak).

ELITAR TRAVEL, 7 Abovian p, tel. 54-33-11, email: klgm@armincos.com, URL: www.tourism.am, arranges day tours, package tours, individual tourist services. They are also the local dealer of hertz Rent a Car.

FESTA TOURS, 5 Spendiarian p, tel. 53-06-8, fax: 53-06-55, info@garnitour.com, URL: www.garnitour.com

ABP TOUR, 8 Moskovian p, tel. 58 60 30, 51 60 30, Fax: 58-60-30, email: info@ararat-tour.com, ararat-tour@mail.ru, president@arat-tour.com, URL: www.ararat-tour.com

GATEWAY TRAVELS Gateway Travels ( (512) 9745 3333, fax (512) 9745 3237 e-mail: gatran@maguna.com.au) at 48 the Boulevard, Strathfield NSW 2135, Australia, specializes in the Former Soviet Union, includes Armenia.

TRAVEL CAFE YEREVAN, 18 Amirian p, apt 63, tel. 53-03-97, email: gayane@travelcafe.am, URL: www.travelcafesydney.com.au

NEW ZEALAND

ADVENTURE WORLD, 101 Great South Road, PO Box 74008, Renmeura, Auckland, NEW ZEALAND Tel: (9) 524 5118 Fax: (9) 520 6629 Email: discover@adventureworld.co.nz

GENERAL TOURS


ANI TOUR, 50 Nalbandian p. (Hyurservice), tel. 52-78-34; FAX: 502-30-02, info@armino.com, URL: www.armino.com, works with a variety of partners for its package and individual tours. They have corresponding contact in Istanbul (Tower Travel, tel. 90 (212) 219 97 80, Fax: 90 (212)218 97 80, email: tower@towertravel.com)

APB TOUR, 64/4 Charentian p, tel. 57-84-15, 093-88-56-42, email: hm@apb.am, URL: www.apb.am

ARARAT TOUR, 8 Moskovian p, tel. 58 60 30, 51 60 30, Fax: 58-60-30, email: info@ararat-tour.com, ararat-tour@mail.ru, president@arat-tour.com, URL: www.ararat-tour.com

ARCARA TOURS, 12 Azatutian pta, apt. 35, tel. 25-67-93, email: arcarda@netsys.am, arcarda@web.am, URL: www.armena.com

ARMANE, 62/12 Hanrapetutan p, tel. 56-91-31, email: info@armane.am, URL: www.armane.am

ARMEN TOUR, 24, Mashtots pta, tel. 53-22-00, 53-49-15, 53-21-90, email: info@armanetour.am, URL: www.armanetour.am, provides tour packages and individual tour services (air ticketing, car/driver, apartments, hotels, guide etc). Also provides archeological tours (Aragak).

ELITAR TRAVEL, 7 Abovian p, tel. 54-33-11, email: klgm@armincos.com, URL: www.tourism.am, arranges day tours, package tours, individual tourist services. They are also the local dealer of hertz Rent a Car.

FESTA TOURS, 5 Spendiarian p, tel. 53-06-8, fax: 53-06-55, info@garnitour.com, URL: www.garnitour.com

*LEVON TRAVEL, 10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, 52-52-84, 58-31-93, email: km@armino.com, sales@levontravel.am, www.levontravel.com, has offices in Georgia and Los Angeles/Glendale (see their web site for details). Levon Travel is the largest tour agency providing tours and services in Armenia, specializing in group and individual tours, air ticketing, and allied services.

SATI, 21 Mashtots pta, 53-10-22, 53-11-20, 53-18-99, email: km@armino.com, info@sputnik.am, URL: www.sputnik.am

*LEVON TRAVEL, 10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, 52-52-84, 58-31-93, email: km@armino.com, sales@levontravel.am, www.levontravel.com, has offices in Georgia and Los Angeles/Glendale (see their web site for details). Levon Travel is the largest tour agency providing tours and services in Armenia, specializing in group and individual tours, air ticketing, and allied services.

SATI, 21 Mashtots pta, 53-10-22, 53-11-20, 53-99-00, email: km@armino.com, info@sputnik.am, URL: www.sputnik.am

*TATIAN’S TRAVEL, 14 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-53-67, 53-48-10, email: info@tatiandiscoveryarmenia.com, URL: www.tatiandiscoveryarmenia.com, has package tours to Armenia, Georgia, Karabakh and Iran. USA office: Box # 215, 501 W. Glen oaks Blvd, Ste 10, Glendale, CA 91202-4039, tel. (818) 550 6292, Fax: (818) 550 8108

TATEV TOUR AGENCY, 19 Mashtots pta, tel. 52-44-01, 52-44-02, 54-33-60, 54-33-61, email: info@tatev.com, URL: www.tatev.com

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TUFENKIAN HERITAGE TOURS, 21 / 1 Tumanian Street, tel. 52-09-11, 52-09-12, Fax: 52-09-13, has Christian Monasteries, Sevan and Armenian Capitals tours that include stays in its luxury hotels.

EARTH TOURS

AVARAYR TOUR COMPANY, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p., tel. 52-40-42, 56-36-81, email: avarayr@arminco.com, www.avarayr.am, has the first and still one of the best adventure, nature and ethnographic tour operators in Armenia. Excellent services, professional guides and personal attention.

FOLKTUR, 3 Agatangeghos p, tel. 52-92-24, email: info@folktour.am, URL: www.folktour.am

GEOGRAPHIC TRAVEL CLUB, 26 Parapetsi p, tel. 51-88-33, email: info@geotravel.am, URL: www.geotravel.am, has a large selection of Nature, Adventure, Mountain Climbing, Ethnic, Photo, Botanical, Skiing, bicycling and other tours that combine history and nature. Amazing tours include Extreme (you are left with only a pen knife and a change of underwear; survive!), Folk Tale Tours, Eureka! (scientific tours), Medical Plants and Folk Medicine and Stars over Armenia Hiking/Camping tours.

MASSTOURS, 8 Komitas pta, tel. 27-78-32, email: info@masstours.com, URL: www.masstours.com, are ethnographic, historic, archiological and regional tourist specialists. Among the best in Armenia.

NATURE TOURS

This overlaps with Adventure tours below, but also includes agencies with experience in providing Botanical (Flower) tours, Birding expeditions, Hikes into Nature Preserves, entomology, eco-touring and allied services for different levels of ability. ADVENTOUR, 39 Pushkin p, tel. 53-96-09, Fax: 53-80-17, Cell: 091-42-67-45, email: adventour@netsys.am, info@www.armeniaexplorer.com, URL: www.armeniaexplorer.com, arranges Adventure, Nature and Archeological tours catered to individual requirements.

APA TOUR, 8 Tumanian p, room 216, tel. 091-79-74-02, email: info@apata.info, URL: www.apata.info, focuses on their tour camp at Yenokavan, Ijevan, which is lovely, with tours in the area. Russian Language. Flower tour has list of flora per month of year. Nice.

ARMENIAN ECOTOURISM, 2 H Hakobian St. apt. 22, tel./fax 27-87-28, 27-40-12, email: zhana@netsys.am, has a number of nature tours (birding, botany, horseback riding, camping, hiking, climbing) led by professional guides and members of the ecotourism association, dedicated to protecting Armenia’s green zones through ecotourism.

ARMINIUS, 2a Arshakuniats p, 11th floor, tel. 54-56-58, email: arminius@ado.am, URL: www.arminiusreisen.com, offers study, adventure, nature-based, ecological and education tours to Armenia. Also offers regional tours to Georgia, Turkey, Iran, and Karabakh.

AVARAYR TOUR COMPANY, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 52-40-42, 56-36-81, email: avarayr@arminco.com, www.avarayr.am, the first and still one of the best adventure, nature and ethnographic tour operators in Armenia. Excellent services, professional guides and personal attention.

DA TOURS, email: incoming@da-tours.com, armenia@da-tours.com, www.da-tours.com, has a number of carefully crafted adventure and nature tours, and solid bios for their staff.


GEOGRAPHIC TRAVEL CLUB, 26 Parapetsi p, tel. 51-88-33, email: info@geotravel.am, URL: www.geotravel.am, has a large selection of Nature, Adventure, Mountain Climbing, Ethnic, Photo, Botanical, Skiing, bicycling and other tours that combine history and nature. Amazing tours include Extreme (you are left with only a pen knife and a change of underwear; survive!), Folk Tale Tours, Eureka! (scientific tours), Medical Plants and Folk Medicine and Stars over Armenia Hiking/Camping tours.

HAYTOUR, 17 Alek Manukian p, apt #6, Tel. 28-64-07, (091-32-00-24, email: info@haytour.am, URL: www.haytour.am, has devised Nature and Adventure/Extreme Tours for amateurs and professionals.

HIKE & GO, 12 Byron p, tel. 091-20-41-38, email: info@hikeandgo.com, URL: www.hikeandgo.com, specializes in caving combined with its culture and nature tours.

MASSTOURS, 8 Komitas pta, tel. 27-78-32, email: info@masstours.com, URL: www.masstours.com, are ethnographic, historic, archeological and regional tourist specialists. Among the best in Armenia.

MER LERNER, Naibandian p, tel. 54-33-70, cell: 091-38-46-77, email: contact@merlerner.com, URL: www.merlerner.com, has numerous worldwide contacts and professional guides for their adventure and nature tours.

SATOS TOUR, 34 Garegin Nzhdeh p, tel. 44-51-53, email: info@www.armeniaexplorer.com, URL: www.satostour.com

SPITAK RESCUE TEAM, 50 Halabian p, tel. 53-80-17, E-mail: spitak@moon.yerphi.am, are the nature tour and adventure tour experts in Lori, Aragatsotn, Tavush and Siunik.

TOURHM, Davitashen 4th dist, bldg. 23, apt. 10, tel. 36-37-55, 091-40-17-34, email: tourhm@netsys.am, URL: www.tourhm.am, tours to all destinations (except Karabakh) including small group treks and hikes to little known areas of the country.
to protecting Armenia’s green zones through ecotourism.

AVARYR TOUR COMPANY, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 52-40-42, 56-36-81, email: avaryr@arminco.com, URL: www.avaryr.am, the first and still one of the best adventure, nature and ethnographic tour operators in Armenia. Excellent services, professional guides and personal attention.

DA TOURS, email: incoming@da-tours.com, armenia@da-tours.com, URL: www.da-tours.com, has a number of carefully crafted adventure and nature tours, and solid bios for their staff.

EXPLORE, Nelson House, 55 Victoria Road, Farnborough, Hampshire, GU14 7PA, UK, tel. 0870 3334001, email: info@explore.co.uk, URL: www.explore.co.uk, is a UK based adventure tour packager working with local travel agencies and guides for their all-adventure package tours.

GEOGRAPHIC TRAVEL CLUB, 26 Parapetis p, tel. 51-88-33, email: info@geotravel.am, URL: www.geotravel.am, has a large selection of Nature, Adventure, Mountain Climbing, Ethnic, Photo, Botanical, Skiing, bicycling and other tours that combine history and nature. Amazing tours include Extreme (you are left with only a pen knife and a change of underwear; survive!), Folk Tale Tours, Eurekal (scientific tours), Medicinal Plants and Folk Medicine and Stars over Armenia Hiking/Camping tours.

HAYTOUR, 17 Alek Manukian p, apt #6, Tel. 28-64-07, 091-32-00-24, email: info@haytour.am, URL: www.haytour.am, has devised Nature and Adventure/Extreme Tours for amateurs and professionals.

INFINITY TRAVEL, 8 Kevian p, tel. 22-94-95, 26-94-95, email: incoming@travelarmenia.am, anka@arminco.com, URL: www.travelarmenia.am, provides package, pilgrimage, Wellness & Spa, wedding, adventure, biking, horseback riding and hunting tours.

INKAR, 115 Andranik p, apt #44, Tel. 57-44-26, 27-87-28, cell: 093-74-42-26, email: info@travelontour.com, URL: www.travelontour.com, is in Russian, but the tours can be done in English as well. Extreme tourism at its most refined. Moscow contact: Moscow: +7 (495) 789-43-19.

HISTORICAL FOCUS TOURS

AVARYR TOUR COMPANY, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 52-40-42, 56-36-81, email: avaryr@arminco.com, URL: www.avaryr.am, the first and still one of the best adventure, nature and ethnographic tour operators in Armenia. Excellent services, professional guides and personal attention.

*CARAVAN TOURS, 42/1 Terian p, tel. 56-52-39, email: caravani@netsys.am, URL: www.caravanyarmenia.am, has an office in Springfield, Massachusetts (see web site for details). Group and individual tour packages.

GEOGRAPHIC TRAVEL CLUB, 26 Parapetis p, tel. 51-88-33, email: info@geotravel.am, URL: www.geotravel.am, has a large selection of Nature, Adventure, Mountain Climbing, Ethnic, Photo, Botanical, Skiing, bicycling and other tours that combine history and nature. Amazing tours include Extreme (you are left with only a pen knife and a change of underwear; survive!), Folk Tale Tours, Eurekal (scientific tours), Medicinal Plants and Folk Medicine and Stars over Armenia Hiking/Camping tours.

INFINITY TRAVEL, 8 Kevian p, tel. 22-94-95, 26-94-95, email: incoming@travelarmenia.am, anka@arminco.com, URL: www.travelarmenia.am, provides package, pilgrimage, Wellness & Spa, wedding, adventure, biking, horseback riding and hunting tours.

INKAR, 115 Andranik p, apt #44, Tel. 57-44-26, 27-87-28, cell: 093-74-42-26, email: info@travelontour.com, URL: www.travelontour.com, is in Russian, but the tours can be done in English as well. Extreme tourism at its most refined. Moscow contact: Moscow: +7 (495) 789-43-19.

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SPIRITUAL TOURS

INFINITY TRAVEL, 8 Kievian p, tel. 22-94-95, 26-94-95, email: incoming@travelarmenia.am, anka@arminco.com. URL: www.travelarmenia.am. Provides package, pilgrimage, Wellness & Spa, wedding, adventure, biking, horseback riding and hunting tours.

NEW AGE TRAVEL, 10 Baghramian pta, 2nd pass, apt 43, tel. 26-21-84, 093-38-14-24, email: info@newage.am. URL: www.newage.am. Works with Psalm Tours on Spiritual tours.


TRAVELON, 21/3 Pushkin p, apt 6, tel. 52-62-26, 52-61-21, email: info@travelon.am. URL: www.travelon.am. Has a number of classical, historical, pilgrimage tours, as well as tours to Georgia.

MEDICAL TOURS

Dental, Spa and Skin treatments and other medical procedures are becoming an increasingly popular feature of tours in Armenia. The prices are a fraction of what they are in the west, and the treatment can be as good or better. HOWEVER, before embarking on one of these, you need to be exactly sure of the services provided and the risks involved. This is medical treatment after all, and you must be sure before plunging in for that cheap facelift. This list is not a recommendation or promise of service or results. At your own risk!

For Cosmetic and Beauty Centers, see Health & Beauty, p. 102.

INFINITY TRAVEL, 8 Kievian p, tel. 22-94-95, 26-94-95, email: incoming@travelarmenia.am, anka@arminco.com. URL: www.travelarmenia.am. Provides package, pilgrimage, Wellness & Spa, wedding, adventure, biking, horseback riding and hunting tours.

NAGORNO KARABAKH (ARTSAKH)

Tours to Artsakh can be arranged at local travel agents, among the largest being Hyur Service, Levon Travel, Menua Tours, Sabera Tours & Seldon Travel (see above for details on each). Others with specific focus on Karabakh tours include:

ARMINIUS, 2a Arshakuniats p, 11th floor, tel. 54-56-58, email: arminius@adq.am. URL: www.arminiusreisen.com. Offers study, adventure, nature-based, ecological and education tours to Armenia. Also offers regional tours to Georgia, Turkey, Iran and Karabakh. Web site of no help.


*LEVON TRAVEL, 10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, 52-52-84, 58-31-93, email: klim@arminco.com, sales@levontravel.am. URL: www.levontravel.com. Office in Karabakh is at 16a, Yerevanian p, Stepanakert, Karabakh, tel. 52-52-10, Fax: 56-14-83/


MUR AZ TOURS, 10 Aigestan p, apt. 51, tel. 55-13-21, 091-47-03-44, email: info@muratzoarts.com, muraz@web.am. URL: www.muratzoarts.com. Has dental service tours along with its package and individual tours.

PORTFOLIO, 5 Nalbandian p, apt 21, tel. 56-95-94, 56-53-44, email: portfolio@xter.net. URL: www.portfolio.am.


Several of the above offer Study tours, where you can learn traditional handicrafts while visiting the cultural heritage sites.

The ARTIST’S UNION (tel. 55-30-69, Contact: Evgenia) offers the most stimulating culture tour we know of: amazing sense of detail, with teas or dinners with renowned artists ... They bring a new meaning to civilized travel with their careful attention to detail and catering to visitors needs. Also offer Study tours, where you can learn traditional handicrafts while visiting the cultural heritage sites.

The SPECIALIZED

Contact ZARA at 54-34-63, who can coordinate a specialist guide from the Association of Museum Workers and Friends of Museums. These are working historians, archeologists, curators who specialize in specific fields of art, history and archeology. Not for the casual tourist, these folks are for those looking to go deeper into Armenia’s world.

VOSKEDZERIK (tel. 55-30-69, Contact: Evgenia) offers the most stimulating culture tour we know of: amazing sense of detail, with teas or dinners with renowned artists in their studios. They bring a new meaning to civilized travel with their careful attention to detail and catering to visitors needs. Also offer Study tours, where you can learn traditional handicrafts while visiting the cultural heritage sites.

The ARTIST’S UNION (tel. 55-45-70, 4, Marshal Baghramian St., is an excellent place to go and ask for a specialized tour about Armenian Literature. Apkar Apirian is the contact for arranging specialized writer’s tours. You will need a translator in addition to the guide. Fees vary.

The ARTIST’S UNION (tel. 55-45-30) 28 Abovian St. is a good starting point for guides for art tours. Go upstairs and ask for the director. Or visit the Art Institute at 36 Ishakian St. Probably need a translator.

ENTERTAINING, ENLIGHTENING GUIDED TOUR OF THE SITES.

He has excellent English, shaping tours to the group’s wishes. His tours are not for the miser, they are for those who want the most entertaining and accurate information.
ARCHEOLOGY
BORIS GASPARIAN, tel. 25-26-66, 093-41-14-59, is a working archeologist and participant in the excavation at Agarak which uncovered a 5000 year old temple complex covering 200 ha. He works each summer at various digs in Armenia, and can give expert/scientific tours to those interested in Armenia’s deepest history.

FLOWER TOWERS
NORA GABRIELIAN is Armenia’s preeminent expert on flowers in Armenia, personally discovering several new species of endemic flowers, the latest in 2006. She is the author of the upcoming Field Guide to Armenian Flowers, the culmination of 50+ years work in the field. This seventy-something still out-hikes the fittest members of her groups and combines expert information with humor, enthusiasm and great good will. She is not easy to book (she continues to do her research and is not for the casual tourist), but if you can arrange for her to take you on a 1 to 8 day flower tour, you will never see Armenia the same way again. You can contact her through the Botanical Institute (tel. 61-42-41) or at home (tel. 52-77-68). She can recommend a guide if she is not available.

NATURE-ADVENTURE
HAJK MELKONIAN, tel. 091-71-73-82, email: ajdahag@yahoo.com, organizes hiking/climbing/camping trips in Armenia with his team of professionals. The group specializes in Mt. Aragats and the Geghama Lehr, especially Mt. Ajdahak, with its unique eco-system, Crater Lake and petroglyph-covered stones. They also service nature trips throughout the republic. Melkonian is also a professional photographer, whose photos grace the pages of Erivan magazine.

ASHOT LEVONIAN (tel. 010 57 03 28, mob. 091 49 58 34), e-mail: levash77@mail.ru is an expert hiking/climbing/camping guide; his team arranges hiking, mountain climbing, caving, geology tours, churches and fortresses. They will arrange hotels in Yerevan, airport pickup, transport, sight-seeing, etc. Group support includes guide, translator, cook, rescue doctor and driver. Standard tour is a two-week hiking trip averaging 5-10 km walking a day: Yerevan - Mt. Aragats - Alaverdi - Ijevan - Dillijan - Sevan - Martuni - Yeghegnadzor - Kapan - Meghri - Jermuk - Yerevan. One of the most experience mountain climbers in Armenia is ANDREI CHESNOKOV, (tel. 010 57 67 57), 10 Vardanants p, Apt. #49, Yerevan, Armenia 375010, email: ruzan@aua.am, who has climbed most of the mountains in Armenia and is a recommend, reliable guide.
“Maps as well as versions from Ottoman and other Islamic centers.

“Armenia: A Historical Atlas”, by Robert H. Hewsen, is another coffee table book with historical maps divided into sections beginning with a chronology of important dates and a historical introduction to the period. Maps include maps of Roman, Cilician, Ottoman, and Soviet Armenia, concluding with maps of the Karabakh war and the new Republic. Bibliography compiles references to the historical, ethnological, and travel literature on the region.

MAPS

Online

Google Map (www.maps.google.com) has excellent resolution satellite images of Yerevan that leave little to doubt, as long as you have a map and can cross reference. They do not yet have a detailed map of the city, but with satellite imagery this detailed, you may not need one.

Soviet Military

The most detailed maps in Armenia are still the old Soviet military maps marked “Top Secret” and passed around hand to hand. The Digital Topographic maps Library (www.topomaps.eu/caucasus/armenia.shtml) has the complete file of downloadable maps, as marked in Russian. Files are large and you will need the ability to print in sections, then paste up. If in the regions, you may still be stopped for staring at one of these print outs by suspicious locals or gendarmes. I have not heard of anyone having one confiscated, but obviously it is not wise to pull out map while you are standing at the border (or taking pictures of same).

Basic maps of Armenia and Yerevan are available in Russian and English at most newspaper kiosks (”terteri kerpak”) in the center of town. City maps are called ”Karaki Kartez”, regional maps, ”Sherjani Kartez,” and for Armenia, ”Hayastani Kartez.”

Local Print Maps

There are the basic maps mentioned above, plus a detailed Yerevan street atlas (“Yerevan”, published by Collage LTD) that takes a bit of getting used to but is probably the most complete set of maps you will find, including the numbering of buildings on streets.

Others include English and Armenian maps mostly of the center, a few with surrounding regions.

Outside Print Maps

Yerevan Atlas (Paperback) by Various artists, available via Amazon.com for $30. The same her is around $15, but it is sometimes out of stock.

“Caucasus”, publisher: Reise Know-How Verlag, Scale: 1:650,000. A double-sided map covering the region, with a generous overlap of coverage. Covers the area around Armenia and Azerbaijan. Combines clear road and tourist detail with general relief indicated by contours, altitude tinting, mountain passes and peak heights. Road detail includes selected tracks and also shows intermediate driving distances on many roads.

International Travel Maps published the “Armenia and Azerbaijan Road and Travel Reference Map” by Roland W. Hardt. Scale 1:650,000. Size 27”x38”. International Travel Maps edition. Elevation and topographic features are shown by hypsometric color tints. English text and legends. Legend locates cities and smaller settlements; roads from international highways to unpaved tracks. Also airports and airfields; railways; ferry routes; canals, rivers, reservoirs, and other hydrographic features; mosques and other places of worship; historic landmarks; nature reserves; mountain passes (including height and months open).

Marcel Polo has the “Caucasus Region: Georgia Republic, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Black Sea, Road and Shaded Relief Tourist Map”. Scale 1:750,000. Size 33”x47”. Indexed. Mairs Verlag edition. This is an excellent large-scale map of the region, with a generous overlap of coverage. Covers the area around Armenia and Azerbaijan. Combines clear road and tourist detail with general relief indicated by contours, altitude tinting, mountain passes and peak heights. Road detail includes selected tracks and also shows intermediate driving distances on many roads.

Freytag & Berndt has the “Asia Road Map: Caucasus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan Map (Country Road & Touring)” Scale 1:1,000,000. Size 33”x47”. Indexed. English and multilingual legends.

“Gizi Caucasus Geographical: Armenia - Azerbaijan - Georgia”, 1:1,000,000, 000 geographical map with relief and elevation tints.

“Gizi Caucasus Road Map: Armenia - Azerbaijan - Georgia”, 1:1,000, 000 road map with shaded relief.

Map Link has the 1997 "Armenia, Georgia Republic and Azerbaijan, Road and Tourist Map”. Scale 1:1,000,000. Size 33”x46”. Indexed. Map Link edition. Another very detailed travel map with good tourist information. English text and legends.

“Armenia”, Publisher: Roskartografia, Scale: 1:500,000, text in Russian, showing physical relief and communication information - roads, railways, canals. Intermediate driving distances on roads are marked. General relief is shown through hill shading and elevation tinting. Other detail: national parks, administrative boundaries, irrigation channels, marshes, seasonal rivers, mountain peaks, names of mountain ranges. Latitude and longitude lines are at 30’ intervals.

“Caspian Sea Region Folded Wall Map (Including Afghanistan)”: 69302f (National Geographic, Folded Map, Scale 1:17 100 000) In 1999, National Geographic Magazine published a

Other Vendors

MAPS>VENDORS

MAPS AND BOOKS IN YEREVAN

NOYAN TAPAN BOOK STORE, Republican Square (Abovian side), tel. 56-80-84.


AVASA (KNIGI), 25 Abovian p. (just above Cafe de Paris), tel. 56-52-01.

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newspapers and magazines dropped off by visitors.

Other local sellers include the great BOOK STALLS UNDER RING PARK AND ABOVIAN STREET (take steps directly under the pharmacy), which have hundreds of Russian, Armenian and foreign language book along with old maps.

VERNISAGE is lined with book and map sellers along Hanrapetutian street (side nearest Republic Square), prices are high. Sidewalk sellers of large format maps detailed enough for most road tours of the country proliferate on Republic Square and lower Abovian.

Prices range from ca. 1500-6000 AMD depending on the map, the seller, and your disposition at the time of purchase.

MAPSWORLDWIDE (www.mapsworldwide.com) has a small selection of Armenian maps and travel guides.

ABRIL BOOKS (www.abrilbooks.com), has an extensive list of

AGBU BOOKSTORE (www.agbu.org/bookstore) has an extensive line of books and maps for online sale.

STANFORDS (www.stanfords.co.uk) has a huge selection of books and maps on their UK web site, some on Armenia. The largest map and travel book store in the world. Worldwide distribution.

USA

ABRIL BOOKS, 415 E. Broadway Ave. Suite #102, Glendale, CA 91205, tel. (818) 243-4112, Fax: (818) 243-4158, info@abrilbooks.com, URL: www.abrilbooks.com, distributes a large selection of books, music and maps from its store in Glendale.

AGBU BOOKSTORE (www.agbu.org/bookstore) has an extensive line of books and maps for online sale.

BORDERS (www.bordersstores.com), BARNES & NOBLE (www.barnesandnobles.com) and larger specialty book stores have Foreign Studies sections which carry books on Armenian subjects. Sometimes they carry the odd travelogue stuffed from and about the CIS/Russia. Armenia is usually stuck in another larger treatise or map.


In Paris

BRENTANOS (37 Avenue de L’Opera 75002 Paris, France, tel. + 33.1.42 61.52.50, email: brentanos@brentanos.fr, URL: www.brentanos.fr), “The American Bookstore in Paris since 1895,” has an extensive selection of travel guides and maps.

LIBRARIE ORIENTALE, 51 Monsieur Le Prince (M: Saint Michelle), opened in 1930, devotes 30% of its collection to Armenian books.

SHAKESPEARE AND COMPANY, on rue du Huchette (between rue du Saint Jacques and rue St. Julien, M: Saint Michelle), has a remarkable little collection of books about and by Armenians (in French and Armenian). Collector’s items, expensive, but you can browse at leisure.

NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES

There are over a dozen newspapers in Yerevan, each with its own particular editorial slant. They are printed in Armenian and Russian.

Online news in English is at ARMENIANOW (www.armenianow.com) and HETQ (www.hetq.am).

NOYAN TAPAN prints and distributes a weekly news brief in English, available at its office in the News Agency Building across from the Circus and Leicester Square tube stations), tel. 020 7832 8928, is the UK’s leading specialist retailer of maps, travel books and other travel accessories, having been established in 1853 by Edward Stanford. Our flagship store in Covent Garden, London, first opened its doors in January 1901 and can justly claim to offer the world’s largest stock of maps and travel books under one roof.

THEMAPCENTRE.COM (www.themapcentre.com), Hereford Map Centre, 24 & 25 Church Street, Hereford HR1 2LR, United Kingdom, tel. +44 (0) 1432-266322, Fax: +44 (0) 1432-341874, email: Enquiries@themapcentre.com, sells maps online for worldwide distribution.

COLLETS INTERNATIONAL SHOP (071) 734-0782, 129 Charing Cross Rd., London, for an exhaustive collection of books, magazines, maps and music and limited foreign language TV. Some hotel lobbies, the US Embassy and certain bars or restaurants have

ARMENIAN/ RUSSIAN TV

Armenian channels (H1 and H2) are the state controlled “main stations”) run everything from lengthy talk shows to copycat productions of “Who Wants to be a Millionaire”, “Dancing with the Stars”, “Big Brother”, and one show you have to see to believe, “Yerku Astgh (Two Stars)”, which pins professional and amateur of the language to Armenia that include Yerevan.

INTERNATIONAL NEWSPAPERS/MAGAZINES can be found at higher prices hotels and at ArtBridge Cafe, all at a significant markup. ArtBridge, The Club and Sicily (opposite The Club) have

TV, RADIO

While the invasion of capitalism clouds the viewer’s vision with funny to tasteless commercials between mediocre to so-strange-it’s-fascinating programming on the Armenian television networks, most people turn their channels to Russian Language channels, which have much better production values and are still favored by the majority of viewers weaned on Russian language. All channels feature popular entertainment, dubbed foreign films, news and in-depth talk shows.

Outside Sellers

Amazon.com (www.amazon.com) has the largest selection of maps to Armenia, including Yerevan.

Maps2anywhere (www.maps2anywhere.com/Maps/Armenia_road_map.htm) sells a large selection of maps of Armenia that include Yerevan.

Themapcentre.com (www.themapcentre.com), Hereford Map Centre, 24 & 25 Church Street, Hereford HR1 2LR, United Kingdom, tel. +44 (0) 1432-266322, Fax: +44 (0) 1432-341874, email: Enquiries@themapcentre.com, sells maps online for worldwide distribution.

Colleths international shop (0713) 0782, 129 Charing Cross Rd., London, for an exhaustive collection of books, magazines, maps and music and

Yerevan : 124 of 150 - TourArmenia © 2007 Rick Ney ALL RIGHTS RESERVED - www.TACentral.com
Despite the competitive setbacks (World bank where you?), there are still ways to save on communicating back home and locally, taking advantage of opportunities the monopoly cannot control.

**Armenian and foreign language Radio**

Most people think it’s an intercom, a battery charger, or a poorly disguised KGB bugging system. They are those boxes hung on the walls of older hotel rooms, offices and in people’s homes, and they are part of the largest radio network in the world, a vestige of the Soviet days when the State tried to control everyone’s access to the news. The network uses single wire connections, negating the need for wireless radios, which were outlawed. Variety of music ranges from classical to traditional to mild rock, with local, Russian and Voice of America news hours. It has quite a good range of entertainment and is worth listening to. If you are in a hotel without, too bad for what you are missing.

**FM RADIO**

Yerevan Radio stations include

- **69.77 - Armenia National Radio, First Program on FM** - Yerevan (public, www.armradio.am)
- **102.4 - RFI-Radio France Internationale - Yerevan.. news/info, 24h French, Russian, www.radiovan.am**
- **103.0 - Radio Van - Yerevan (Russian, Armenian, European Pop, www.radiovan.am)**
- **103.8 – Radio Jazz – Yerevan (Jazz of all types, ARMENIA VOLUNTEER BLOG, armenianvolunteer.blogspot.com/)**
- **104.1 - Evropa Plus - Yerevan (Russian, Armenian, European Pop, )**
- **104.9 - Russkoe Radio (Radio Alfa) - Yerevan (Russian Pop, )**
- **105.5 - Radio Hay FM - Yerevan (Armenian language, Pop, www.radiohay.am)**
- **106.0 - City FM - Yerevan (Russian, music, talk radio, jazz in evenings, www.cityfm.am)**
- **106.5 - Impuls-Mayak - Yerevan (www.impuls.am)**
- **107.6 - Armenia National Radio, First Program - Yerevan AM (public, www.armradio.am)**

**Short wave** freaks can find the BBC World Service at 9.410, 12.095 and 15.1 MHz (you have to fine-tune as the evening progresses); Voice of America at 15.2-15.5 MHz; and Iranian News at 13.7 on Sunday afternoons.

**ONLINE NEWS AND INFORMATION**

- **ARMENIANOW.COM, www.armenianow.com/**
- **HETO, www.heto.am**
- **GROONG NEWS AGGREGATOR, groong.usc.edu/, still the best news aggregator around.**
- **ARMENIA LIBERTY, www.armenialiberty.org/**
- **ARMTown, www.armtown.com/**
- **INTERNET NEWS ARMENIA, www.internetnews.am/**
- **ARAVOT, www.aravot.am/**
- **ASBAREZ, www.asbarez.am/**
- **ARMENPRESS, www.armenpress.am**
- **NOYAN TAPAN, noyan-tapan.am/**
- **ARMINFO, www.snark.am/**
- **GOOGLE NEWS ARMENIA, news.google.com/news?hl=en&gl=Armenia**

**BLOGS**

- **NOTES FROM HAIRENIK, www.noshairenik.blogspot.com/**
- **LIFE IN ARMENIA, www.cilia.com/armo_life-log.html**
- **ONEWORLD MULTIMEDIA, oneworld.blogsome.com**
- **ARMENIA BLOG, armoblog.blogspot.com/**
- **EAST MEET WEST, eastwestarmos.blogspot.com/**
- **ONE ARMENIAN WORLD BLOG, onearmenianworldblog.com/**
- **ARMENIA VOYAGER BLOG, armenianvoyager.blogspot.com/**
- **ARMENIA BRIX TIPS armeniabrixes.blogspot.com/**
- **ARMENIA PROJECT 2006, sonyavaryoulian.blogspot.com/**
- **ANOUSH ARMENIA, anousharmenia.blogspot.com/**
- **ARMYOUTH, armyouth.blogspot.com/**
- **UNZIPPED: GAY ARMENIA, minouchig.canalblog.com/**
- **L’AME ARMEINNE (French), lamearmenie.com/**
- **ARMENIAN FOOD BLOG, armenianfood.blogspot.com/**
- **LA VIE REELLE (French), dartag.over-blog.com/**

**COMMUNICATION**

**PHONE**

The local phone service is owned by Armentel (www.armenel.am), which also provides cellular service. Viva Cell (www.vivacell.am) is a cell phone competitor.

The result of monopoly has meant poor service and high prices in relation to neighboring countries and the west, something locals smoulder about if the subject comes up. An attempt by enterprising locals to take advantage of VOIP telephony for cheaper prices was squashed by Armentel who still charges upwards of $1 a minute to call the US.

Despite the competitive setbacks (World bank where you?), there are still ways to save on communicating back home and locally, taking advantage of opportunities the monopoly cannot control.

**Important Numbers**

- **Fire – 101**
- **Police – 102**
- **Ambulance service – 103**
- **Rescue Hot Line - 118**
- **Gas emergency service – 104**
- **Trunk Line – 107**
- **Telephone directory information – 109**
- **Exact Time – 110**
- **Weather Forecast – 186**
- **Information Service of Railway Station – 184**
- **Information for Zvartnots Airport – 187**

**LOCAL CALLS**

Your hotel phones will have a direct line or lobby access for local and international calls. Charges usually include a markup on the basic rate.

Blue and yellow Armentel Public Phones (Card-Phones) are located throughout the city, allowing local, national and international calls. The phones accept one of Armentel’s telecards (50-500 units, Armentel Public Phones (Card-Phones) are located throughout the city, allowing local, national and international calls. The phones accept one of Armentel’s telecards (50-500 units, 960-9600 AMD, local calls 1 min=20 AMD, calls to 400 AMD/min). The phone is easy to use. Blue and yellow Armentel Public Phones (Card-Phones) are located throughout the city, allowing local, national and international calls. The phones accept one of Armentel’s telecards (50-500 units, 960-9600 AMD, local calls 1 min=20 AMD, calls to 400 AMD/min). The phone is easy to use. Blue and yellow Armentel Public Phones (Card-Phones) are located throughout the city, allowing local, national and international calls. The phones accept one of Armentel’s telecards (50-500 units, 960-9600 AMD, local calls 1 min=20 AMD, calls to 400 AMD/min). The phone is easy to use. Blue and yellow Armentel Public Phones (Card-Phones) are located throughout the city, allowing local, national and international calls. The phones accept one of Armentel’s telecards (50-500 units, 960-9600 AMD, local calls 1 min=20 AMD, calls to 400 AMD/min). The phone is easy to use. Then you can try to fix any malfunctions by plugging in a new battery. Sometimes they are just malfunctioning.

They may refuse but you need to offer to pay, those minutes add up. They are charged nothing to receive a call.

**INTERNATIONAL CALLS**

The Post Office offers trunk line calls at 150 AMD for Russia and the USA.
Travel Guide® — Special Edition

Armentel Public Phones allow international calls using their telecards. Rates are around $1 a minute.

Armentel offers the Karmurch prepaid card for making international calls via VOIP telephony. Calls are 500-10,000 AMD. Calls are 29 AMD per minute to the US (land line) to 49 to Germany and France (land line).

**International Tele-Calling Cards**

You can use certain Telephone Calling Cards when calling abroad from Armenia. Rates vary, from $1-4.99 a minute. These are not cheap calls.

- **AT&T Calling Card** 0 800 111
- **AT&T Calling Card (Russian)** 0 800 112
- **MCI** 0 800 122
- **SPRINT Calling Card** 0 800 155
- **BRITISH TELECOM** (ask for local access number)
- **FRANCE TELECOM** (ask for local access number)
- **DEUTSCHE TELECOM** (ask for local access number)

**Ways to Save**

Callback is a popular option for locals saving on international calls. Callbacks are like prepaid cards, except that instead of calling a local number to initiate the call you place a call to an international number (usually the USA), and after the first ring hang up. The service detects your number and calls you back to initiate the discount call. Savings can be significant.

There are a number of discount calling cards for calling into Armenia, at discount rates (some as low as 6.5¢ a minute), and having your loved ones call you using these cards may be the best deal if you want to stay in touch while here.

**Text Messaging** is a cheap alternative to voice contact when staying in touch. Prices vary, but sending international text messages cost around 20¢ a message (Cingular network).

**VOIP Solutions** Internet Cafes with high speed connection allow you to use any of a number of VOIP telephony solutions (SKYPE, ICQ, MSN, GOOGLE-VOIP, etc.) all that allow you to place a call online from your computer to international phones. Some cafes do not allow this, or charge extra for the service, so check first. PC-to-PC calls are free on these services, but you may need to create an account to place calls to a landline phone. Check with your favorite VOIP service before coming.

**CELL PHONES**

Network Armenia is on the GSM network. Cell phones on the same network can make local, international voice calls and send text messages (with roaming charges). Check with your mobile phone company for roaming charges.

**Temporary SIM cards** If you are staying for a week or more, consider buying a local prepaid SIM card for Armentel or Viva Cell, then using their pay-as-you-go cards, for substantially reduced charges. You can buy SIM cards at the Post Office Building on Sararian p, in front of Yeridasardakan and at Post Offices, large Supermarkets and some Kiosks.

Both Armentel and VivaCell offer prepaid SIM cards for 1200 AMD (be sure you buy the one made for prepaid cards). Prepaid cards are 1500-4500 AMD. Charges vary, around 35-60 AMD to make calls, free to receive calls.

Armentel ([www.armentel.am](http://www.armentel.am)) has service centers at 6 Vazgen Sargsian (below Republic Square), and 28 Nalbandian p.

VivaCell ([www.vivacell.am](http://www.vivacell.am)) has service centers at 22/1 Isahakian p (opposite Yeridasardakan Metro), and 11/1 Klevian pta.

**Cell Phone Rentals**

**Hyur Service**, 50 Nalbandian p., tel. 56 04 95, 52 98 08, 52 24 14, email: contact@hyurservice.com, URL: [www.hyurservice.com](http://www.hyurservice.com) provides cell phones at 500 AMD a day rental.

**POST, TELEGRAMS**

The Central Post Office is on Republic Square, another is on Sararian p, above the tunnel to the Hrazdan Gorged (W end of Boulevard off of Mashtots) and another on Abovian p. See [Hay Post site for list](#).

The post office has trunk line phone service, sells phone cards and can deliver telegrams. Their post service is slow and unreliable.

**INTERNET**

**Hotels** are increasingly installing high speed connections for guests, some with WI-FI. Check when making a reservation or check in for the type of service offered and charges.

**Internet cafés** provide dial up, high speed computer usage and SMS/VOIP services. Popular hang outs for teens and young adults, the cafes are among the cheapest ways to communicate from Armenia, with prices at around 500 AMD per hour of online use. Cafes will show you how to set up an ICQ, SKYPE or other SMS/VOIP service so you can stay in touch with loved ones on the same service. (see VOIP solutions in previous column for cheap voice contact).

Most Internet Cafes proliferate on Amirian p, lower Mashtots pta, Isahakian p, Aleks Manukan p, Tumarian and Sayat Nova pts, Barekamutun Circle/metro and Komitas pta.

**SKYNET, 9 Mashtots** (by Araya electronic shop).

**TEG, 7 Korirn p.**

**PEGAS, 8 Komitas pta.**

**PEG MASTER, 17 Abovian, THE ZEON CLUB, 31 Tumarian Street, is open 24 hours.**

**INTERNET CLUB, 18 Abovian p (Kino Moskvka), tel. 52-12-70**

**MAX POWER, 3 Arami p, tel. 54-16-34, INFO@maxpower.am.**

**VALT SERVICE, 31 Moskvian p, tel. 53-87-37, 53-87-41**

**Internet Services** include prepaid dial-up and WI-FI services in the center. These companies focus on long term users and contracts, but do provide short term solutions that you can benefit from:

- **ARMINCO, 28, Isahakian p.**, (opposite Yeridasardakan Metro), tel. 52-43-51, 52-63-13, 52-63-26, email: [info@arminco.com](mailto:info@arminco.com), URL: [www.arminco.com](http://www.arminco.com)
- **NETSYS, 38 Abovian**, tel. 54-00-91, email: info@netsys.am, URL: [www.netsys.am](http://www.netsys.am)
- **WEB**, 22 Isahakian (opposite Yeridasardakan Metro), tel. 28-60-99, email: janna@br.am, URL: [www.web.am](http://www.web.am)
- **ITB**, 26 Abovian p, tel. 54-24-30, email: [info@itb.am](mailto:info@itb.am), URL: [www.itb.am](http://www.itb.am)
- **EXCHANGE**

The exchange rate is volatile. The dram is artificially inflated by the Central Bank and other forces, appreciating regardless of its actual value on the world market. It is so controlled the government has announced a year in advance what the dram will be trading at by the end of the year.
Cash, Travelers Checks or Plastic? Though credit cards are now accepted at some places in Yerevan, Armenia is still a cash economy. At the same time, the rampant hunger for the US$ (once the only currency merchants would accept) has declined with the inflating of the Dram. People still prefer to hedge their bets by holding their savings in dollars, and you can use dollars at some venues. However, the once-upon-a-time fantasy of knocking prices down by flashing your George Washington’s is a long gone dream. Armenians have a keen sense of value and trade, and know to the dram what something should cost. There are so many exchange offices and banks it doesn’t make much sense to try and sue your local currency.

Credit Cards are now accepted at major travel agents, higher priced hotels, restaurants and shops. Credit cards accepted include Visa, Master Charge, and EuroCard. The acceptance of credit cards is still a new occurrence.

Travelers Checks are accepted at major hotels in Yerevan and at banks. They are not yet accepted at restaurants and shops. Banks charge a hefty fee to cash them. Major company Travelers checks are the predominant kind desired. There is no American Express or Thomas Cook Agency in Armenia, and they will generally not be accepted outside of Yerevan, though ask.

In general, expect the lion share of your expenses to be paid with cash.

ATM
ATM machines in Yerevan use the Plus Global Access Network. Visa, Visa, and MasterCard systems. ATMS and Cash Points are widespread throughout Yerevan, many in restaurants, hotels and larger stores.

WIRE TRANSFER, WESTERN UNION
Major banks can accept wire transfers on your behalf. The cost of the transfer varies, but it is between 2 and 5% of the amount transferred. There is an additional service charge of around $10. If you are staying for a long period of time, it may be worth your while to open an account. Banks operate under International standards, and this may be your safest method of keeping your money. As a foreigner, you are freely allowed to transfer in and out as much money as you wish without restriction, as long as it is for your personal use. If you’re really stuck for cash and are willing to fork over up to 20% of the money sent, you can receive money via Western Union, which is located at the corner of Mashtots and Pushkin.

Clean Bills Please One of the legacies which we still cannot fathom, is that locals do not like and many times refuse to accept US currency notes that are torn, mended, or have excessive writing on them. They can be strict about it. This love of cleanliness does not carry over to the dram, which of someone else’s palm, and still accepted. Bring only crisp clean Hard Currency bills with you.

Change Hang onto your small bills, especially in the regions and at street markets. They may not have the small bills to give you your change. You might also get weighed down with 10,000 AMD in 100 dram coins. Try to always have a good range of notes with you.

Tipping on top of the service charge added to bills is customary; 10% as a basis.

FILM, BATTERIES
Film can be found at Camera and Film Developers throughout the city. Film purchased from a kiosk or out of the way shop is probably not as fresh. Film developing is good, but save it for snapshots and film you are not wanting to frame or send to National Geographic; it ain’t that good. Digital developing is widespread and more reliable in saving the original media. Digital developers accept camera cards, flash cards, CD’s, USB plug in. I would be careful of popping my camera memory card out and handing it over—if something happened replacements are very expensive here.

FILM DEVELOPERS
Locals report good developing at Jupiter on Baghramian just below Barekamutian Metro. A second Jupiter is off of Proshian, in the first left alley just S of the Marshal Baghramian Statue on Baghramian pta. There is a Konika Developer at the corner of Mashtots pta and Pushkin p. Good prints, can burn digital photos onto CD’s. A Kodak and a Polaroid duke it out on Zakian p, which is one block w of Republic Square off Amiran (across from the large drugstore).
SUPPLIES

**Bring or Buy**  If you travel in the summer, pack mosquito repellent, sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses; the Armenian sun is strong and little critters can be fierce.

 Carry a good supply of batteries (if rechargeable, check the charger works on 220V). Bring along the brand or specialized toiletries you need. It is possible to buy just about everything you need in Yerevan, but the price might be higher than at home, the brands not what you are used to.  Tampons and contraceptives are available at most apothecaries, but are more expensive than at home.  In the regions, you will need take all your toiletry needs.

 Public toilets do not have toilet paper, or else the attendant will dole it out two squares at a time. It is possible to buy softer toilet paper, Kleenex-type tissues at stores and outdoor markets throughout the country. Bring along moistened towelettes, a "starter pack" of tissues and a bar of soap.

 Basic supplies can be bought at your hotel or at shops and kiosks throughout the city. More complete selections will be found at STAR, SAS, YERITSAN and HAYASTAN supermarkets (See Super Markets this section for addresses) and at the KINO ROSSIYA and TASHIR Malls on Tigran Mets.

 Electronics are found at ZIGZAG (Sayat Nova near Hotel Ani) and Aray (Amirian and Mashtots) electronic stores.

 **BATTERIES**

 When I asked Kristine where tourists can buy batteries if they run out and are stuck, she replied, “the best batteries in Armenia are at the Costco in Irvine, California.” This is true. Batteries bought in Armenia are generally useless except for powering flashlights and wall clocks. I have gone through a dozen just to take a few pictures. Bring as many as you can with you. Better yet, bring rechargeable batteries, 110-240V charger and plug adaptor (Armenia is 220V, two prong circular posts).

 Slightly reliable batteries (expensive) can be bought at Zigzag (Sayat Nova near Hotel Ani) and Aray (Amirian and Mashtots) electronic stores.

 **TIME**

 Armenia is 4 hours ahead of Greenwich Mean or Universal Time (GMT + 4); 12 hours ahead of the Pacific Coast, 9 ahead of the East Coast, 4 ahead of London, 3 from Paris and Frankfurt. Yerevan is 1 hour ahead of Moscow. Armenia changes time one hour forward on the last Sunday in March (daylight savings time) and back one hour on the last Sunday in October.

 **ELECTRICITY**

 Armenia’s current is 220V, 50-60 Hz. Plugs are two prong, circular posts. Adaptors are available at hotel shops and electronic stores (Zigzag on Sayat Nova or Aray at the corner of Mashtots/Amirian).

 There is a wholesale market open to the public called “Petak”, on Kristopor one block east of Arshakuniats pta (about 1 km south of Circus).

 Outdoor markets include the area around Kino Rossiya and Firdusi outdoor market, entered from the east side of Tigran Mets between Republic Square and Khanjian (Ring Park).

 Tigran Mets is also referred to as “Persian Street” for the number of shops selling goods from Persia (though much comes from Turkey as well). This is especially true in the stretch of street between Republic Square and Nar Dos, where teeming crowds of people bargaining and combing through plastic and glassware, bolts of fabric, nick knacks, cheap toiletries, curtains, cookware, flowers and sweets—the selection is staggering, as is the atmosphere. If you haven’t yet felt like you are in the Near East a walk down this street will convince you.

 **SHOPPING LISTINGS**

 **SHUKA, YARMAKA**

 The main "Pak" (enclosed) Shuka is on lower Mashtots, one block south of Khorenats/Marx p (for details see Shuka, p. 35). The 2nd, and larger shuka is next to Tashir Shopping Mall on Tigran Mets pta. Other Shukas are in Malatia-Sebastia (Bangladesh), Arabkir, Masiv and Kanaker.

 The Gntsk Shuka is in the covered area to the N of the Train Station, and has the freshest produce at the cheapest prices in town (the other shukas buy from these sellers, who cart their produce in on the train each morning from their farms).

 The main Yarmaka (outdoor market) is at Hrazdan Stadium, reached by crossing Haghtanak Bridge at the bottom of Mashtots then taking the side road to the stadium. The yarmaka is in the covered area outside the stadium. This huge flea market sells everything from packaged food to clothes, furnishings, toiletries, electronics—you name it has to be here. Another yarmaka is at Malatia-Sebastia (Bangladesh) and in Masiv (Gai pta.).

 **SUPER MARKETS, MALLS**

 ARAGAST, 1a Tamanian p, tel. 58-04-01
 HAYASTAN, 2a Hrachaiha Kochar (Barekmamutun Metro), tel. 22-75-76
 KLAJK, 43 Sijrak p, 42-02-20
 SAS SUPERMARKET, 13 Amirian (at Mashtots), tel. 539399

 **GIFTS & SOUVENIRS**

 **ART SALON** 11 Abovian p, tel. 520953.

 **BAREV SOUVENIRS**, 1 Abovian, Sil Plaza, 52-20-69.
include the CIS in their policies. In fact, most International insurers have a primary limitation the territory of the United States (where medical costs have skyrocketed). Certain clinics and hospitals in Armenia cater to foreigners, and accept insurance. Get a policy covering theft, loss and flight cancellations and medical problems overseas. Be sure it covers the member states of the CIS, and

Medical facilities vary in quality and breadth, with many qualified doctors and dentists practicing in all specialties, some of the best not necessarily in the foreign or more expensive hospitals and clinics.

Payment Prices are vastly cheaper then the west for routine medical procedures. Surgery and care at foreign or specialized medical centers are still cheaper, but can be significant. Cash payments in local currency are required for health care at local health facilities. Virtually no hospital or clinic accepts credit cards.

Disclaimers I take no responsibility for the firms or persons listed herein, nor do I recommend or advice the use of any on this list. You make your own decisions and accept the risks for any medical treatment.

INSURANCE

Visitors are advised to carry traveler’s insurance that includes medical and emergency evacuation coverage. Medical costs are not as high as in the west, but they can still be significant if specialized or lengthy procedures are needed.

Insurance In Armenia

ARAJIN APAHOVAGRANKAN, 1 Charents p, tel. 57-51-18, URL: www.arajin.am/eng/index1.htm is a local travel agents and medical insurance provider.

“DIAGNOSTIKA” JSC, 6/1 Markarian St., Yerevan, - 34-32-47, 28-74-11, fax: 28-74-11, email: haik@diagnost.arminco.com, sells medical insurance to foreigners in Armenia. Check with them first, and get a complete policy description and exact terms before buying. Mr. Haik Nikoghosian is the President and CEO.

The Consulate at the US Embassy strongly recommends American citizens traveling abroad take out insurance. They can provide some information about companies that service Armenia.

Insurance From Outside Armenia

Insurance for traveling in Armenia is not that expensive, and there are many companies that include the CIS in their policies. In fact, most International insurers have a primary limitation the territory of the United States (where medical costs have skyrocketed). Certain clinics and hospitals in Armenia cater to foreigners, and accept insurance. Get a policy covering theft, loss and flight cancellations and medical problems overseas. Be sure it covers the member states of the CIS, and check the fine print: it may limit certain activities (like mountain climbing or hiking). If they don’t include the activities you have in your plans, get another, or ask about an amendment to your policy. Your travel agent should be able to find travel insurance for you which includes Armenia.

A good idea is to add or find medical evacuation coverage (also called MEDEVAC). If they have to take you out of the country for treatment, the cost can be high. Several companies sell medical evacuation insurance, and any reputable travel agent should know how to get it.

Carpets, Rugs


Medical, etc.

Immunizations are not required for traveling to Armenia. However, if you have special health needs, speak to your physician before traveling. Armenia has qualified physicians, but there is a language and cultural difference and you may not find the exact care you expect here.

Antiques, Handcrafts

1+1, 34 Mashtots pta, 53-21-73. HAYASTANI KANTZER, 1/1 Abovian p, 2nd Floor, tel. 56-17-80. MADE IN ARMENIA DIRECT, Marriott Hotel, tel. 59-92-33. SALT SACK, 3/1 Abovian p, tel. 56-89-31. THE CLUB (AKUMP), 40 Tumanian p, tel. 53-13-61. TUFKENKIAN SHOWROOM, 21/1 Tumanian p, tel. 52-09-11.
DELTA CONSULTING (not a part of Delta Airlines), Moscow: +7 (095) 240-9999; Dr. Rita Ariane Komissarenko +7 (095) 339-4307; 488-4406

LUFTHANSA AIRLINES, Penta Hotel, Moscow, Eduard Pfahler, Assistant Manager, tel. +7 (095) 975-2501, can configure an aircraft to accommodate a stretcher on 24 hours notice.

DOCTORS

INTERNAL MEDICINE: DR. ARMEN PIRUZIAN, tel. 77-30-79 or 77-24-58, is the US Embassy local Physician, based in the Internal and Intensive Care Unit of the Malata medical Center. Highly recommended by expats and foreigners who use his services. Excellent English.

PEDIATRICIAN: DR. KARINEH HAIRAPETIAN (tel. 091-48-20-66) is a pediatrician who works in the ARF Children’s Center in Zeitun District. She is highly recommended by expats and foreigners who have used her services. Limited English.

GYNECOLOGIST (PRIVATE): ARMENIAN FAMILY HEALTH ASSOCIATION, 29 Sayat Nova p, tel. 56-70-82. Contact: Dr. Mary Khachikian (speaks English).

PHARMACIES

There are registered pharmacies throughout Yerevan, carrying over-the-counter medications along with prescription medicines. Some carry toiletries, which can also be found along with basic over-the-counter medicines at larger hotels and supermarkets.

FARMEX (DRUGSTORE #1), 2 Zakian p (off of Amirian, behind Marriott Hotel), tel. 53-75-82, 53-48-67, is still considered one of the best (if not the best) in the city, with well trained professionals and reasonable prices. A lesson in how clean and basic with caring staff beats flash and glam every time.

There is another PHARMACY ON PUSHKIN between Sarian and Mashots, which sells quality medications at almost wholesale prices. 911 PHARMACY CHAIN, 36 Tigran Mets pta (tel. 58-14-54), 82 Hraparatutan p (tel. 58-51-41), 11 Azatutan pta (tel. 25-18-66), 19 Hrachia Kochar p (tel. 27-87-08), 22/2 Mashtots pta (Boulevard tel. 53-87-52).

GALEN DRUGSTORE, 65 Komitas pta (Arabkir), tel. 23-11-02.

MARGARIT DRUGSTORE, 39 Abovian p, tel. 56-59-87.

NATALI PHARM, 3 Mashtots pta (tel. 53-20-13), 10 Tigran Mets pta (tel. 52-35-57), 2 Kassian p (Arabkir, tel. 27-30-22), URL: www.natalipharm.am.


PHARM TRUST, 13 Moskovan p, tel. 54-34-14, 54-77-26, 54-40-79.

TROI FARM DRUGSTORE, 46-1 Abovian p, tel. 54-59-48.

EMERGENCY


EMERGENCY / TRAUMA PHYSICIAN: EREBUNI MEDICAL CENTER, 14 Titogradian p, tel. 47-35-72, 47-24-00. Contact: Armen Charchian, Traumatology specialist (speaks English).

EMERGENCY / TRAUMA PHYSICIAN: MASIV EMERGENCY HOSPITAL, 10 Giurjian p, 1st Masiv - Emergency Hospital, tel. 63-34-21. Contact: Dr. Ara Minassian, chief doctor of hospital (speaks English).

MASIV EMERGENCY HOSPITAL, 10 Giurjian p, 1st Masiv Emergency Hospital, tel. 63-34-21, 54-21-19. Contact: Armine Tadevosian (contact person, speaks good English always mention that the call is from the US Embassy).

TRAUMATOLOGY DEPARTMENT / MALATIA MEDICAL CENTER, 28 A Daniel Varujan p, tel. 77-35-54, 77-33-50. Contact: Arakel Minasian

Emergency Numbers

Fire – 101
Police – 102
Ambulance service – 103
Rescue Hot Line – 118
Gas emergency service – 104

HOSPITALS, CLINICS AND MEDICAL CENTERS

For personal comments about health care in Armenia, see one of the Armenian blogs (p. 125), especially those from “Life in Armenia” (http://www.cilicia.com/2007/01/chaos-beautiful-new-terminal-and-new.html) which compares care at different centers.

MEDICAL CENTERS, HOSPITALS

ARMENIA REPUBLIC MEDICAL CENTER, 6 Markarian p, Ajapniak district, tel. 34-50-83

DIAGNOSTIC DEPARTMENT: REPUBLIC HOSPITAL, Contact: Karineh Abajian, tel. 34-00-20, 34-11-01, 22-65-66 (office).

EUROPEAN MEDICAL CENTER, 3/1 Vazgen Sargsian p, Tel. 54-00-03, 54-05-40, 54-09-40, email: emc_ap2002@yahoo.com, URL: www.emcmos.ru.

YEREVAN CITY EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE, Contact: Dr. Ara Minassian, chief doctor of hospital (speaks English).

HOSPITAL # 8, 7 Nersisian p, tel. 28-38-37, 28-58-09.


MIKAELIAN INSTITUTE OF SURGERY, 9 Hasratian p, tel. 28-17-90, email: surgery@netsys.am, URL: http://www.medlib.am/mikaelian/index.html.

NORK-MARASH MEDICAL CENTER, 13/1 Vazgen Sargsian, tel. 54-04-03, 54-05-40, 54-09-40, email: emcap2002@yahoo.com, URL: www.nmmc.am. Contact: Robert E. Young, MD Professor Head of Family Medicine Department.


ULTRA MED MEDICAL DIAGNOSTIC CENTER, 76 Avet Arevissian p, tel. 27-25-26, email: doctorvovissian@yahoo.com.

CLINICS

CITY FIRST AID SCIENTIFIC MEDICAL CENTER, 10 Giurjian p, tel. 64-59-00, 64-11-00, 63-34-21, 63-99-04, email: alhaemer@arminfo.com

DIAGNOSTICA MEDICAL CORPORATION, 6/1 Margarian p, tel. 34-32-47, 35-11-05, 35-50-07, URL: www.dmc.am, email: info@dmc.am.

ERE BUNI MEDICAL CENTER, 14 Titogradian p, tel. 52-84-13, 47-11-02, email: errebuni@arminfo.com, URL: www.erebouni.am.

FAMILY MEDICINE: EUROPEAN MEDICAL CENTER, 3/1 Vazgen Sargsian p, Tel. 54-00-03, 54-05-40, 54-09-40, email: emc_ap2002@yahoo.com, URL: www.emcmos.ru. Contact: Robert E. Young, MD Professor Head of Family Medicine Department.

ANOSMOS DIAGNOSTICS, 3/1 Vazgen Sargsian p, Tel. 54-00-03, 54-05-40, 54-09-40, email: smos@arminfo.com, URL: www.smos.am.

MICHAELIAN INSTITUTE OF SURGERY, 9 Hasratian p, tel. 28-17-90, email: surgery@netsys.am, URL: http://www.medlib.am/mikaelian/index.html.


NORK-MARASH MEDICAL CENTER, 13 Armenia Medical p, tel. 65-58-20, 65-99-71, 65-59-30, email: heart@nmmc.am, ccca@arminfo.com, URL: www.nmmc.am, is located in Nork region, with departments the in treatment of intestinal and infectious diseases.

YEREWAN MEDICAL CENTER, 21 Paronian p, tel. 53-75-21, URL: www.nairimed.am, is a newly remodeled private hospital reputedly owned by the president’s wife. We have heard varying reports on service and care. Most foreigners will be referred here. Accept cash and credit cards, uncertain on which insurance plans. This is an expensive option.

WOMEN’S HEALTH

GYNECOLOGIST/OSTETRICHIAN: ARMEN MEDICAL CENTER, 39/12 Mashtots pta, tel. 52-00-99, 58-70-82. Contact: Dr. Mary Khachikian (speaks English).

NAIRI MEDICAL CENTER, 21 Paronian p, tel. 53-75-21, URL: www.nairimed.am, is a newly remodeled private hospital reputedly owned by the president’s wife. We have heard varying reports on service and care. Most foreigners will be referred here. Accept cash and credit cards, uncertain on which insurance plans. This is an expensive option.
GRAND DENT DENTAL CLINIC, 10 Azatutan pta, Tel: 25-29-34, 091-42-16-39.
INTELLECT DENTAL CLINIC, 26 Sayat Nova pta, Tel: 58-39-24, 58-65-76, email: intelect@netsys.am.
LASER DENT, 72/a Dzorapi p, Tel: 53-83-72, 091-41-57-62, email: info@laserdent.am, URL: www.laserdent.am.
MAESTRO DENTAL CLINIC, 24 Amirian p, Apt. 15, Tel. 53-09-95, 53-09-45.
NEW IMAGE DENTAL CLINIC, 6 Y. Kohgbatsi p, Tel: 53-99-81; 53-99-31, URL: www.newimage.am.
NORK CHILDREN'S DENTAL CENTER, 180 Nork Aigner p, Tel. 65-56-12; 65-56-22; 65-56-30, email: bcc@infocom.com.
ORTHOCONIC CENTER, 1a Nansen p, 1st Floor, Tel. 63-59-80, 64-00-80, email: thrant@netsys.am.
ULTRADENT DENTAL CLINIC, 13 Amirian p, 1st Floor, Tel. 53-40-63, email: ultradent@netsys.am.
VAN DENTAL CLINIC, 23 Tumanian p, Tel. 53-86-70; 53-85-71.
VITA DENT, Vardanants p. Passage, House 4, Tel. 54-07-87.

OVERNIGHT ▲

Overnight Link ups
Hotels/Motels
Center
Nork
North of Center
Northwest of Center
West of Center
South of Center
East of Center

Hostels
B&Bs
Apartments

Other than your airfare, overnight in Yerevan will be the most expensive part of your visit. In high season, hotels can (and will) raise and lower prices as fast as the next tour bus takes to arrive (or leave). With an annual influx of Spiurk Hai (Diaspora Armenians) each summer to visit their homeland, the hotels tend to price gouge, counting on a new supply of bulging pockets to pick from. It pays to shop around, and to be flexible. Your cheapest bet may be a motel that doubles as a
four-hour rental for businessmen and their girl friends, but so do motels all over the world. Most are clean, and staff courteous (and grateful for tourists).

**LINK UPS**

HOSPITALITY CLUB, [www.hospitalityclub.org](http://www.hospitalityclub.org) is an organization that links members of different countries who are traveling with others for free accommodation and cross-cultural contacts. The service requires sign up, and there is no guarantee you will find free digs, but it is worth the try, and you have the chance to live with local family in the offering.

**HOTELS/MOTELS**

**CENTER**

NOR DZORABERD, 19/4 Dzorapi, tel. 53-95-51, 53-81-27, is a gem! Located just off Proshian/Paronian pts in a large black tufa stone building overlooking the Hrazdan gorge with exquisite views of Mt. Ararat, this hotel is an extraordinary find, a modern, clean, comfortable space at reasonable prices! Amenities include TV, A/C, direct phone and room service. Attached to a huge banqueting hall, restaurant on multiple floors and outdoor café, all overlooking the gorge, the place is popular with locals, fully equipped and Immaculately clean, DBLs at 15,000/20,000 AMD. Get them while they last!

CROWN HOTEL, 8 Abovian, tel. 58-98-79, has 4 rooms with basic amenities and SGL/DBL at €35/45.

OLYMPIA HOTEL, 56 Barbius p, tel. 27-18-50, 27-18-26, 27-74-24, fax 27-18-26, email: info@olympia.am, URL: [www.olympia.am](http://www.olympia.am) is a relief; a clean, comfortable hotel with great views, friendly staff and reasonable rates. The hotel is situated near Kevian Bridge and Tsitsernakaberd (B 3, 11, 20, 25, 27, 34, 35, 40 Minivan 3, 5, 12, 13, 18, 21, 27, 28, 34, 46, 52, 56, 58, 63, 64, 71, 78, 83, 84, 88, 90, 101, 107, 114, 117, 125). Room amenities include climate control, satellite TV, telephone and minibar. Restaurant has excellent meals. The hotel is small, so book ahead.

DBL/B/DBL A/DEL/LUX//apt at 27,000/32,000/36,000/40,000/45,000 AMD includes tax and breakfast. CC

**SHIRAK HOTEL**, 13a Khorenatsi p, tel. 52-99-15, fax 58-33-93, email: shirak_hotel@cornet.am, URL: [www.shirakhotel.com](http://www.shirakhotel.com) is an extraordinary find, a modern, clean, comfortable space at reasonable prices! Amenities include TV, A/C, direct phone and room service. Attached to a huge banqueting hall, restaurant on multiple floors and outdoor café, all overlooking the gorge, the place is popular with locals, fully equipped and Immaculately clean, DBLs at 15,000/20,000 AMD. Get them while they last!

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& Russian Embassies, Circus and English Park. It is a five-star hotel, with a/c and telephone, but only basic furnishings and so-so clean. Way overpriced with manager asking 3000 AMD per hour, with a “discount” for overnights. At roughly 25,000 AMD without breakfast, this is a place only when everything else is full. Khorovats is good, though.

SENIOR HOTEL, 26 Vazgen Sargisian p, tel. 53-14-26, is well situated at the bottom of “Khorovats Street” but its rooms are geared toward hourly trade and not, as it should, to budget tourists. The small rooms have a/c and telephone, but only basic furnishings and so-so clean. Way overpriced with manager asking 3000 AMD per hour, with a “discount” for overnights. At roughly 25,000 AMD without breakfast, this is a place only when everything else is full. Khorovats is good, though.

HOTEL ASTAFIAN, 5/1 Abovian p, tel. 52-11-11, 54-11-11, 56-45-72, fax 56-45-72, email: astafian@netsys.am, URL: [www.astafian.com](http://www.astafian.com), has rooms in the large building that also houses Aten-Elen Disco. Rooms are basically clean though a little tatty, smoky and overpriced with SGL/DBL/LUX at €80/100/120.

AVIATRANS HOTEL, 4 Abovian p, tel. 56-72-28, 56-72-26, 56-72-30, 58-41-74, 58-41-39, 58-41-
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50, fax 58-44-42, email: hotel@aviatrans.am.
URL: www.aviatrans.am, is just 3 minutes from Republic Square off of historic Abovian street.

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Rooms are apartment style with air-conditioning, satellite TV, direct dial phone, minibar and room service. Provide email service for guests for contact from outside, a nice touch. Smoky.

SGL/DBL/TRP/LUX at 27000/36000/42000/50000 AMD. Tax and breakfast included.

BASS HOTEL, 3/5 Aigedzor tel. 22-26-38, 26-10-80, 26-27-51, fax 22-26-38, email: hotelbass@lans.am. URL: www.bass.am, is located in an alleyway off of Proshian p (BBQ street), below the American University of Armenia on Baghramian pta. is a 20-30 minute walk to most sites in town (metro: Baghramian, any Bus or Minivan between Place de France and Barekamutun). Rooms have balconies looking onto Mt. Ararat, satellite TV, International phone, minibar, complimentary fruit baskets. SGL/DBL/Jr. STE/Sr. STE/LUX at 36,000/44,500/56,000 AMD.

BELLA HOTEL, 6 Yervand Kochar p, tel. 54-88-80, 54-02-25, 54-80-69 fax: 54-88-83, email: info@bella.am. URL: www.bella.am, is opposite the circle park near Vartan Mamikonian Statue (Vernissage) and Grigor Lusavorich Cathedral. Close to the circle park cafes, it is about 15 minutes walk to Opera Square. The hotel has rooms with air-conditioning, private bathroom and shower, mini-bar, cable TV, telephone and Taxi service, airport transfer. Rooms are very clean and comfortable, deluxe includes private pool, sauna and Jacuzzi. SGL/DBL/DL at $60/70,200, includes breakfast.

EUROPE HOTEL, 32/8 Hanrapetutun p, tel. 54-60-60, fax 54-60-50, email: sales@europehotel.am. URL: www.europehotel.am, is located in an historic neighborhood near Vernissage, 5 minutes walk from Republic Square and Abovian p, and a 15 minute stroll to Opera. The small boutique hotel is one of the most highly recommended we have heard about, with room amenities (climate control, fully equipped bath, hairdryer, satellite TV, International Direct Phone, Internet and E-mail access, Mini bar), supplemented with sound Proofing and dining facilities, a large lobby and a bar. SGL/DBL/TWIN/1r. STE/Exe STE at $31,000/37,000/37,000/54,600/66,000 includes tax and breakfast. CC

GEGHAMA HOTEL, Hrazdan Gorge near Kneidian Bridge, tel. 27-05-07, 27-47-00, has been catering to visitors for almost 15 years, starting in the dark days of 1992. Its main trade is still tête-à-tête by the hour or for those sleeping off too much revelry in the large outdoor restaurant, but management welcomes tourists, if at a hefty price. Each motel room has its own garage and private entrance. Rooms are decent, clean but a little costly with DBL at 32,000 AMD (12,000/4 hours).

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Hotel Yerevan (Golden Tulip), 14 Abovian p, tel. 58-94-00, fax 52-82-91, email: info@goldentuliphotelerevan.am. URL: www.goldentuliphotelerevan.am is located on historic Abovian p. opposite Kino Moscow and opposite the Russian Stanislavsky Theatre. The hotel is the oldest in Yerevan, built in the 1920s as to house big-wig party members, its ground floor cafe the haunt of the Armenian intelligentsia. The hotel was revived as a “5-star” hotel (closer to 3 stars in the west) which saved the building from decay and possible demolition by Real Estate oligarchs. Rooms are all deluxe and the hotel boast a lobby atrium and a roof top swimming pool. SGL/DBL/DL at $54,000/64,000/72,000/83,000/99,000/235,000/32 9,000 AMD and stinky with breakfast included for only the last two suites. Tax not included.

HRAZDAN HOTEL, 72 Dzorap p, tel. 53-53-32, 53-66-01, 53-00-43, 53-01-44, 53-61-71, fax 53-84-28, email: info@hotelhrazdan.am. Hrazdan@aviatrans.am, www.hotelhrazdan.am, is located off of Proshian (BBQ) street overlooking the Hrazdan gorge and the Hrazdan (a small mountain range with BBQ) which saved the building from decay and possible demolition by Real Estate oligarchs. Rooms are all deluxe and the hotel boast a lobby atrium and a roof top swimming pool. SGL/DBL/DL at $54,000/64,000/72,000/83,000/99,000/235,000/32 9,000 AMD and stinky with breakfast included for only the last two suites. Tax not included.

NAIRI HOTEL, 250 A. Armenian p, tel. 65-20-26 (Director), 65-05-67, 65-23-40, has the cheapest rooms in Yerevan in a couple of floors of the large hotel, the rest of which are dedicated to refugee housing. The run down digs are 100% Soviet in style and décor (and plumbing), but the staff is very friendly and they actually have hot water on schedule! You can overlook a lot with DBL/LUX at 5000/10,000 AMD.

HOTELS NORK  Nork is reached by taxi (15 minutes from Opera Square) or mass transit ($ 19, 48, Minivan 22, 87,109). It has great views of the city from its hillside, and is several degrees cooler than the center.

Inexpensive
$20 per second person and $20 full board. Taxes and breakfast not included. CC

VALENSIA HOTEL & RESORT (WATER WORLD), 40 Miasnikian p, tel. 52-40-00, 54-35-73, fax 54-35-71, email: valensiahotel@valensiahotel.com, URL: www.valensiahotel.com/index-eng.html, is apart of the adjoining large water park (entry not included), and is a 10-15 minute taxi ride from Opera Square (B 5, 10, 17, 22, 46, Minivan 9, 15, 20, 28, 54, 55, 91). The hotel has a nice layout with a central courtyard surrounded by rooms. No prices, but expect it to be comparable to Green Palace and Valensia Hotels.

DGHIAK HOTEL COMPLEX, 38 Ajarian, tel. 61-69-00, fax 61-69-30, URL: www.tufenkianheritage.com/hotels.html, is located about 15 minutes by taxi to Opera Square. Public transport is a 10 minute walk from the hotel (B 19, 48, Minivan 22, 87). Rooms look out on Yerevan and the Ararat Valley, each room was designed with Armenian motifs, carpets and art work. The restaurant features home made Armenian food, with some dishes unique to the hotel. A complicated system of pricing has rooms priced between 31,000 to 52,000 AMD for SGL, an extra complicated system of pricing has rooms priced between 31,000 to 52,000 AMD for SGL, an extra

COXO – WATER WORLD

ARDIKHER HOTEL, 2/2 Azatutian pta, tel. 21-99-21, email: info@goldenpalacehotel.am, URL: www.goldenpalacehotel.am, was built inside Haghatsvanke (Victory) Park, one of the more controversial privatizations in the capital. Supposedly meant to raise funds to renovate the park, two years after its construction the park remains derelict, the hotel half empty save conferences and special events. Rooms are all advertised as deluxe, with Wi-Fi, air-conditioning, and “Internal & External Security”. This is not meant for the casual traveler, more for Oligarchs who want to flaunt their wealth. High season rates at 54,000/84,000/236,500/800,000 AMD. CC

Deluxe HOTEL COMPLEX, 32/1 Komitas pta, tel. 27-77-10, is a restaurant-hotel serving rooms by the hour or night. Clean rooms, TV, a/c, phone all available. Restaurant serves Armenian and Continental food. DBLS start at 20,000 AMD.

MODERATE-
REGINEH HOTEL, 235/1 Norki Aigner, tel. 65-40-20, 65-59-29, 65-16-19, fax 65-59-39, email: reservation@hotellerieharm.com, URL: www.hotelregineh.am, is located in Nork, a 5-7 minute taxi ride to Opera, 10 to Republic Square. The hotel is set above city center, with excellent views of the city and Mt. Ararat. Rooms are air conditioned, with TV, minibar, local and international phone lines, in-room safety boxes and hairdryers. Hotel has swimming pool and fitness center. Friendly staff are very helpful with tips for the visiting city. Econ SGL/Econ DBL/ SGL/DBL/ DEL/ LUX/ STE at 25,000 /30,000 /30,000/35,000 /45,000 /60,000 /80,000 AMD. Breakfast included. CC

GRAND PLACE HOTEL, 55 Miasnikian pta, was under construction when we visited, but due to open summer of 2007. Opposite Water World and 10 minutes by taxi to Opera Square (B 5, 10, 17, 22, 46, Minivan 9, 15, 20, 28, 54, 55, 91), the hotel has a nice layout with a central courtyard surrounded by rooms. No prices, but expect it to b comparable to Green Palace and Valensia Hotels.

ARINJ

DGFIAK HOTEL COMPLEX, 38 Ajarian, tel. 61-69-41, 62-69-61, 093-70-78-18, email:
HOTELS NORTHWEST OF CENTER

3rd Glugh

TERJAN HOTEL, 39/1 5th p, Silikian Neighborhood (3rd Village), tel. 39-03-88, 39-96-99, fax 39-86-99, email: terhot@arminco.com, URL: www.terjanhotel.am, is located next to Latar, with equally great views of Ararat. It is 15 minutes by taxi to Opera Square. The hotel is set inside a beautiful walled garden with an atrium, ginetin and Italian design furniture in the lobby. A comfortable place, all rooms are climate controlled, with shower, Jacuzzi (in Deluxe room), hair dryer, satellite TV, Internet access (in Business room), telephone with local and international access, radio/ CD player, mini bar. Shuttle to the city center, breakfast (English or Continental), sauna/fitness club facilities and taxes are included in hotel prices, with SGL/DBL/LUX at 28,000/36,000/41,000/50,000 AMD. CC

Expensive

LATAR COMPLEX, 58 5th p, Silikian Neighborhood (3rd Village), tel. 31-90-34, 39-47-59, email: info@latar.am, URL: www.latar.am, is about 10 km from center in a village, next to our old favorite deluxe hotel, Terjan, and is a incredible fantasy created by an Armenian oligarch who struck it rich in Russia. The complex combines village aesthetics with modern-Peterhof designs and probably the largest (working) swimming pool in Armenia, with stunning view of Mt. Ararat. A 20 minute taxi ride to Yerevan, the hotel provides transportation to and from Yerevan and the airport. Rooms are outfitted as you might expect the nouveau riche to decorate, which is much of the charm. It was new when we visited, and one never knows how these things weather. SGL/DBL/LUX at 40,000/60,000/80,000 AMD includes tax and breakfast.

WEST OF CENTER

Leningradian/Nor Sebastia

INEXPENSIVE

SEBASTIA HOTEL, 44 Leningradian p, makes no bones about what it is, a rent-by-the-hour hotel with minimum amenities (water by the hour, rooms not very clean) with hopes for better days. This is not your first choice, dangerous for women, but cheap with SGL/DBL at 5000 AMD (5 hours or overnight).

Moderate

VALEM PLAZA, 23 Leningradian p, tel. 39-95-04, is a restaurant-hotel that caters mostly to business men and weddings, but has some good rooms to let with stunning views of Ararat. Rooms are clean, décor totally Novii Armenii, but cheaper than downtown with SGL/DBL/LUX starting at 20,000 AMD.

Expensive

SIL HOTEL, 20 Tigiran Mets pta, tel. 54-07-08, 54-07-09, 54-95-95, fax 54-33-33, email: info@silhotel.am, URL: www.arminco.com, is located between the railroad station and Republic Square, in front of Tashir Shopping Mall and Shukha. It is a 10-minute walk from Republic Square, 20 to Opera. The hotel is in the thick of one of the busiest areas in Yerevan, with street-side kiosks, hawkers and shops vying for trade of all kinds. A real taste of the pulse of the city. Rooms defy the neighborhood with clean, smart furnishings, climate control, satellite TV, direct-dial phone with two lines, alarm clock and radio, work desk with a lamp, minibar, iron with ironing board. Pricy for the neighborhood with SGL/DBL/LUX at 33,000/40,000/47,000/55,000 AMD. Tax and breakfast included. CC

INEXPENSIVE-MODERATE

SIBERUN HOTEL, 11 3rd Giugh, 80 Burnazian p, tel. 64-34-60, is about 10 km from center in a village, next to our old favorite restaurant-hotel, Terjan, and is a incredible fantasy created by an Armenian oligarch who struck it rich in Russia. The complex combines village aesthetics with modern-Peterhof designs and probably the largest (working) swimming pool in Armenia, with stunning view of Mt. Ararat. A 20 minute ride to Yerevan, the hotel provides transportation to and from Yerevan and the airport. Rooms are outfitted as you might expect the nouveau riche to decorate, which is much of the charm. It was new when we visited, and one never knows how these things weather. SGL/DBL/LUX at 40,000/60,000/80,000 AMD includes tax and breakfast.

INEXPENSIVE-MODERATE

WHITE HOUSE HOTEL, 29 Aivazovski p, Nor Aresh (Erebuni), tel./fax 45-86-88, 49-90-99, email: info@hotelwh.com, URL: www.hotelwh.com, is located just south of Erebuni Square and museum, about 10 minutes ride by taxi to Opera Square (B 7, 8, 32, 42, Minivan 7, 14, 36, 45, 47, 67, 68, 73, 74, 76, 81, 86, 89, 95, 119) has 15 rooms, restaurant, summer garden and bar. Rooms have air conditioning, fully equipped bath, local/international telephone, satellite TV, minibar.

INEXPENSIVE-MODERATE

NIAGARA, 88 Bagravand, Tel. 64-34-60, has several private rooms available as part of the restaurant. Central Yerevan reached by any out to enjoy the stifling heat of the center, or stop en route to explore Kotasik and Sevan. An upscale tèté-à-tèté hotel with small but clean rooms with DBL/DEL/LUX at 25,000/35,000/45,000 AMD.

Echmiadzin Highway
On the way to Zvartnots Airport & Echmiadzin.

ARGAVANK RESTAURANT-HOTEL, Echmiadzin Highway at Bangladesh cloverleaf intersection, Argavand/Parakar, is at the beginning of a long stretch of furniture shops, casinos and bars, Yerevan’s “Little Las Vegas,” with clientele to match (may be uncomfortable for women travelers). Rooms are basically clean, and inexpensive with SGL/LUX starting at 10,000 AMD.

There is a business center (internet, fax, computer), 24 hour room service and laundry service. Reasonably priced with DBL/TRP/DBL STE/QUAD at 19,000/20,000/24,000/38,000 AMD.

HOTELS SOUTH OF CENTER

Tashir/ David Sasuntsi

INEXPENSIVE-MODERATE

AREG HOTEL, 80 Burnazian p, tel. 45-62-13, 45-61-27, fax 45-37-41, email: info@areg.am, URL: www.areg.am, is a B&B style hotel, rooms have clean facilities and air-conditioning, bar and sauna. Tour packages are a pretty good deal considering they include airport transfer and overnight.

Expensive

SIL HOTEL, 20 Tigiran Mets pta, tel. 54-07-08, 54-07-09, 54-95-95, fax 54-33-33, email: info@silhotel.am, URL: www.arminco.com, is located next to Latar, with equally great views of Ararat. It is 15 minutes by taxi to Opera Square. The hotel is set inside a beautiful walled garden with an atrium, ginetin and Italian design furniture in the lobby. A comfortable place, all rooms are climate controlled, with shower, Jacuzzi (in Deluxe room), hair dryer, satellite TV, Internet access (in Business room), telephone with local and international access, radio/ CD player, mini bar. Shuttle to the city center, breakfast (English or Continental), sauna/fitness club facilities and taxes are included in hotel prices, with SGL/DBL/LUX at 14,500 / 21,700 breakfast included.

Shengavit

MODERATE

BOLOERO HOTEL/MASSAGE, 17 Bagraturinals p, tel. 42-05-50, is well, you already know by the name what this place’s main business is, but surprisingly, this small boutique hotel near Shengavit Excavation on the other side of Lake Yerevan from the American Embassy, has clean comfortable rooms at a moderate price. Rooms have all the amenities (no pun intended), if the neighborhood is drab and the rooms fill up with hourly business. 5000 AMD for 5 hours or SGL/DBL/LUX at 10,000/20,000/25,000 AMD.

HOTELS EAST OF CENTER

Masiv / J'vresh

There are a number of Restaurants/Hotels between Yerevan Masiv and J'vresh. Many cater to wedding parties on the weekends and the dinner crowd the rest of the time. They provide clean, comfortable rooms for eating, tèté-à-tètes and sleeping off hangovers, and all welcome tourists for overnights. Treat these like you would any motel/hotel in the west and you will find a much cheaper alternative to the high-priced hotels in central Yerevan (which also cater to wedding parties, tèté-à-tètes and sleeping off hangovers).

INEXPENSIVE - MODERATE

NIAGARA, 88 Bagravand, Tel. 64-34-60, has several private rooms available as part of the restaurant. Central Yerevan reached by any out to enjoy the stifling heat of the center, or stop en route to explore Kotasik and Sevan. An upscale tèté-à-tèté hotel with small but clean rooms with DBL/DEL/LUX at 25,000/35,000/45,000 AMD.
JOVINEVYA RESTAURANT/HOTEL, Garni Hwy, J’rvesh, is a small place with 4 clean rooms with air-conditioning. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

ALGA RESTAURANT/HOTEL, Garni Hwy, J’rvesh, is a large complex with private dining/sleeping rooms. Clean with air-conditioning. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

KARADZOR RESTAURANT/HOTEL, Garni Hwy, J’rvesh, has several clean rooms to let with air-conditioning. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

VASPIR/UKAN RESTAURANT/HOTEL, Garni Hwy, J’rvesh, end sign for J’rvesh, is large complex on the left with a casino on the ground floor. Clean rooms, a bit noisy downstairs. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

HOSTELS

ENVOY HOSTEL, 54 Pushkin p, tel. 53-03-69, email: info@envoyhostel.com, URL: www.envoyhostel.com, has a great deal when opened and went for 5000 AMD per person and the exchange rate was better. Still a good price at 7000 AMD, it also competes with B&Bs and apartments that offer more privacy for the money. Hostel users are a die-hard breed, and Envoy offers clean, safe premises in the heart of the city, on one of the quieter streets a 5 minute walk from Opera Square. Climate control, 24 hour hot water, 24 hour reception, laundry room, Internet access, airport transfer, optional car/minibus services and tours. Dorm rooms are 7000 AMD per person, private rooms are a good deal at 18,000 AMD. Breakfast included.

These are mostly apartments with varying degrees of quality, most clean but lived-in. They also change often, closing, opening, renovating or just disappearing. You should be able to expect at a minimum the landlord to offer a fully furnished clean space and facilities, TV, radio, running (hot) water, and full breakfast. Less than this and the price should go down noticeably. Inspect before agreeing on any price, and certainly before paying. Landlords are getting as greedy as hoteliers, but for most you should not pay more than 5000-8000 AMD for SGL and 10,000-13,000 AMD for DBL.

B&B's

These are mostly apartments with varying degrees of quality, most clean but lived-in. They also change often, closing, opening, renovating or just disappearing. You should be able to expect at a minimum the landlord to offer a fully furnished clean space and facilities, TV, radio, running (hot) water, and full breakfast. Less than this and the price should go down noticeably. Inspect before agreeing on any price, and certainly before paying. Landlords are getting as greedy as hoteliers, but for most you should not pay more than 5000-8000 AMD for SGL and 10,000-13,000 AMD for DBL.

B&B Service

ARIES B&B

www.bedandbreakfast.am/Lists/Yerevan_List.htm

B&B's

ANAHIT STEPANIAN'S B&B, 5 Sayat Nova, apt 25, 5th floor, tel. 52-75-89, 091-50-20-71, email: stepanahit@yahoo.com, is located across from Opera. The apartment has shower and washing machine.

ANUSH ALEXANDROVNA'S B&B, 2 Baghramian pta, apt. 28, tel. 58-14-36, has rooms for up to 4 with 24 hour water tank, TV, air conditioner.

ARMEN'S B&B, 13 Aghaiyan p. (between Abovian/Tarian near Moskovian), tel. 52-52-15, has 5 rooms. Speaks Italian.

BAKKEN'S B&B, 17 Praga p. (Nor Kilikia), tel. 58-70-69, 56-43-61, has 4 rooms in a two story house, two baths, two kitchens.

GUANYEH SIMONYAN’S B&B, 5 Sayat-Nova Ave, apt. #22 tel. 52-75-88, has 3 guest rooms, bath, hot water, TV, telephone.

GHAR’S B&B, 8 Marx (Khorenatsi) p, apt. 23, tel. 58-52-80, has apartments on 4th and 5th floors.


IRENE’S B&B, 24 Sarian p, apt. #6, tel. 58-07-34, 56-77-44, email: chabyan@yahoo.com, has two bedrooms, hot water, shower, washing machine, TV, DVD player. Speaks French, English. SGL/DBL at 8000/13,000 AMD.

KARA’S B&B, 7a Verpel f. (Nor Kilikia), tel. 52-40-56, has 7 rooms in a 2-storey house, three bathrooms. Speaks English.

KARINHE’S B&B, 20 Amiryan p, apt. 19, tel. 53-61-61, has 3 rooms and hot water. Speaks English.

KARINHE’S B&B, 35 Pushkin p, apt. 17, tel. 53-08-49, has 2 bedrooms, kitchen, dining, bath with hot water, TV.

MANIKON’S B&B, 25 Charents p, apt. 39, tel. 57-88-08, 55-18-45, has 2 rooms for up to 3 people with 24 hour water (tank), TV, air conditioning.

NELI’S B&B, 25 Moskovian p, tel. 56-00-74, has 2 bedrooms, dining room, kitchen and balcony with air conditioner, washing machine, 24 hour hot water.

NISHAN’S B&B, 31 Pushkin p, apt. 12, tel. 53-37-76 has 3 a room apartment with hot water.

NYNEH’S B&B, 9 Moskovian p, apt. 5, tel. 58-94-57, has 2 bedrooms, bath with hot water, TV.

OPHELIA’S B&B, 28 Zarubian (old Plekhanov, behind Chinese Embassy, enter from Baghramian) p, tel. 52-05-05 has 3 rooms in a two-story house, kitchen, hot water, TV.

RUZANNA’S B&B, 16 Tumanian p, apt. 2, tel. 58-38-36 has three rooms, hot water, computer, internet and garden.

SOFA’S B&B, 25 Moskovian p, tel. 56-00-72, has 2 bedrooms, kitchen, dining room, TV.

SONA’S B&B, 10/1 Zarubian (old Plekhanov, across from Khachaturian museum, enter from Baghramian) apt. 10, tel. 52-79-49, has 1 room, 24 hours hot water, TV, speaks English.

SUNSET B&B, 65 Komitas pta, apt. 61 (at Azatutian), tel. 23-15-16, 62-74-42, fax 23-15-16, email: sunsetarm@yahoo.com, URL: www.bedandbreakfast.am, is in Kanaker-Zeytun District far from center (take any bus/minivan going up Azatutian and get off at Komitas/David Anhghtag overpass) and has 2 bedrooms with telephone, email and internet access, TV, minivan or bus going to Garni (110). DBLs go for 5000 AMD for 5 hours, double it for overnight at 10,000 AMD.

HYUR SERVICE

www.hyурсervice.com/gallery/all_apartments.php

YEYERAN RENTALS www.yerevanrentals.com
Eateries are divided by cuisine. We try to include as much variety as possible, in the cuisine and the cost. Except for cafes and street side kiosks, meals will set you back in Yerevan, with meals at restaurants typically costing 5000 AMD+. ** denotes venues we liked when we ate there.

Armenian “kitchen” (cuisine) restaurants often add Russian and Continental dishes to their menus. Some may better be considered Nouveau Armenian or Continental with an Armenian twist.

ARMENIAN

Armenian food served in traditional Armenian and Western Armenian dishes in a lively environment. $$$

Key
¢ - 1000 AMD and less
$ - 1000- 2500 AMD
$$ - 2500 - 5000 AMD
$$ - 5000 + AMD

Price for typical meal without alcoholic beverages. ** denotes venues we liked when we ate there.

Yerevan’s choices for food and drink are enormous, with even the lowest bistros and sidewalk cafés offering full course meals and sidewalk joints dishing it out with the swankiest joints in town. One thing is sure; you will not lack for variety in décor, though the menus remain fairly limited to Armenian & Russian cuisines, or exotic versions thereof, with those versions invariably coming out Armenian.

FOOD & DRINK

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And with Armenian grub this good, I am surprised people even try to bring in outside cuisines, though the variety is nice. Perhaps most revealing about local tastes is that Yerevan may be the only city in the world where Chinese restaurants close. Other cuisines do thrive here, but after your first taste of mouth-watering khorovats and buffalo yogurt, you may find yourself pining for more while staring at your Vichyssoise or cannelloni.

Finding a place that pleases the palate and pocket book is another matter, and has become the never-ending search for locals and foreigners alike, venues changing places as quickly as they grill a skewer of pork. Look around and ask around when you arrive. Your tour bus will take you to places

and just because a place is full does not mean it is all that great. Just popular. And maybe just on that day.

Note: Examine your receipt! There is an unfortunate rise in short-changing customers and over-charging. Either by design or sloppiness, you need to compare the bill with your menu to be sure you were properly charged.

Eateries are divided by cuisine. We try to include as much variety as possible, in the cuisine and the cost. Except for cafes and street side kiosks, meals will set you back in Yerevan, with meals at restaurants typically costing 5000 AMD+.

Center
Khorovats

Khorovats (marinated pork grilled on skewers) is sold by the “shish” (skewer) in a BBQ joint, or by the meal in a restaurant.

PROSHIAN POGHOTS, Paronian and Proshian streets. Khorovats is king of the Armenian cuisine, and the best places to eat it at are a) someone’s dacha, and b) on Proshian p (“BBQ Street”) where over 50 cafes, bistros and restaurants wrapped around their grills vie for your business. Almost any will suffice (but choose your meat before they cook—marbled fat is the best, no matter what your cardiologist says), and everyone has their favorite.

We like URARTU, 19 Pionerakan (at beginning of and facing Proshian), tel. 53-83-23. Shish cost 1500 AMD. $$

**NOR DZORABERD, 9/4 Dzorap p, tel. 53-77-

54, of Paronian overlooking the Hrazdan gorge, is an extraordinary 7 floor restaurant and hotel with feasts based around khorovats. Food OK, but view spectacular. $$-

CAESAR’S PALACE, 40 Pionerakan p (facing Proshian), tel. 53-92-41, has khorovats and the trimmings in a large space with live music. Hoop ah! $-

SCAVA, 7 Paronian p, tel. 53-05-63, serves khorovats. $$

**DOLMAMA, 10 Pushkin p, tel. 56-89-31, 56-13-

54, E-mail: dolmam@arminco.com, is an extraordinary 7 floor restaurant and hotel with feasts based around khorovats. Food OK, but

MER TAGH, 29 Baghramian pta, tel. 52-72-72. $$-

BASS, 3/1 Aigedzor p, Bass Hotel, tel. 22-26-38,

$ - 1000- 2500 AMD

GETAR, 19 Baghramian pta, tel. 52-72-72. $$-

GERAMB, 19 Baghramian pta, tel. 52-72-72. $$-

MER TAGH, 20/1 Tumanian p, 58-01-06, serves traditional Armenian and Western Armenian dishes in a lively environment. $$-

NOYAN TAPAN, 9 Parapetsi p, tel. 53-50-30, is a large restaurant between Pushkin and Tumanian (west of Mashots), with a large menu featuring

Arménien "kitchen" (cuisine) restaurants often add Russian and Continental dishes to their menus. Some may better be considered Nouveau Armenian or Continental with an Armenian twist.

**AMROTS, 122 Antarayin p (near top of Cascade), tel. 52-52-20. Good view and food, very expensive. $$$

ARAGAST, 39 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 55-32-20. $$-$

ARARAT, Republic Square, Government bldg. # 2, tel. 52-79-33, 52-73-82, 56-76-34. $$$-$

www.menuatours.com/Menua%20apartments/main.html


www.tatiantravel.am

www.marriott.com/EVNMC

www.bass.am

www.menuatours.com/Menua%20apartments/main.htm

www.visitarmenia.com

www.tatiantravel.am
primarily Armenian but also Russian and Continental dishes.

**CHEZ GAROS**, 48 Pushkin at Mashtots (take steps to lower floor, no sign). Western Armenian food, almost Mediterranean. $-$$

**THE COLOR OF POMEGRANATE (N’RAN GUIIN)**, 15 Tumanian Street, tel. +374 10 585 204, www.nran-quyn.narod.ru. Armenian and Georgian cuisine. Wonderful food in intimate setting. $-$-$

**THE COLOR OF POMEGRANATE (N’RAN GUIIN)**, 15 Tumanian Street, tel. +374 10 585 204, always seem empty). Good food, if chintzy on portions and a little too high for what you get. $$-$$$
Continental often combines Western, Russian and Armenian dishes into their menus, offering a more eclectic choice. The result can be surprisingly pleasant. You can order Armenian dishes at almost all of these restaurants as well.

ANI, Ani Plaza Hotel, 19 Satyan Nova pta., tel. 59-45-31, 58-95-00, email: info@anihotel.com, URL: www.anihotel.com. $$-$$$"
Cheese at 800 AMD. Pizza by the slice start at 500 AMD, pies at 3000 AMD. €-

**FRENCH**

**FRENCH RESTAURANT**, 30 Aram p, 54-46-44, looks like a sidewalk sandwich joint from the outside, with a green awning over metal tables and chairs. Inside there is a back room with wooden furniture, a much more pleasant place to eat. The menu is quite good, prepared in a French/European sort of way. Lunches are reasonable, but dinners expensive. $$-$$$  

**MEDITERRANEAN, MIDDLE EASTERN**

**AGU HAGOP**, 31 Khanjian p, tel. 54-28-42.

**AMAZON (SAYAT-NOVA COMPLEX)**, 33a Sayat-Nov a pta, tel. 58-00 33, email: sayatnova33@yahoo.com. Lebanese chef turns out European, Mediterranean and Arabic Dishes $$-$$$  

**ARYA**, 1/17 Tamanian p, tel. 56-80-13, 54-59-14, serves Persian food in dressed up space opposite Mokka Café. $$$  

**LAGONID**, 37 Nalbandian p, tel. 58-49-93, 58-08-04, is popular with locals, serving Arabic, Middle Eastern food featuring Lebanese, Greek and Persian dishes. $$-$$$  

**LAGUNA**, 5th Block, Ring Park, Alek Manukian p, tel. 55-11-94, has Kebab and shaurma at decent prices. €-$  

**LEBANESE RESTAURANT**, 3 Vazgen Sargsian p (one block south of Marriott on Shahumian park), tel. 58-42-32, has excellent Lebanese food at decent prices. €-$  

**PALMYRA**, 18 Abovian p (Kino Moskva plaza), tel. 52-13-02, URL: www.palmyra.am, features Middle Eastern pastries to go along with its strong coffees and teas. great atmosphere and food. $  

**PHOENICIA**, 3 Tamanian Street, tel. 56-18-94, URL: www.phoenicia.am is the place to be seen going in or out of in downtown Yerevan. Lebanese, Mediterranean dishes served with live classical music. Très, très, trés expensive. $$$  

**RAFFI'S KEBAB**, 50/1 Mashtots pta, tel. 56-34-21, has excellent Persian, Mediterranean, Lebanese food in its small lower level eatery. Good price too. $$-$$  

**RAFFAELO**, Congress Hotel, 1 Italia p, tel. 58-00-95, serves Italian pastas, fish and meat dishes in the hotel restaurant. Good. $$-$$$  

**GUSto, 11 Abovian p, tel. 58-11-21, is terrific!** A Trattoria restaurant with home made pastas topped with traditional cheeses and sauces from the open kitchen. Meat dishes are very good. $-$-$$  

**RAFFAELO, Congress Hotel, 1 Italia p, tel. 58-00-95, serves Italian pastas, fish and meat dishes in the hotel restaurant. Good. $$-$$$**

**CALIFORNIA PIZZA**, 21 Abovian p, 54-31-00, has decent pizza and sandwiches. €-$  

**DOKA PIZZA**, 38 Abovian p, tel. 55-55-55, has decent pizza at moderate prices. Sandwiches are forgettable. Pizza by the slice a good deal though crust too thin for my tastes. €-$  

**MAMA MIA PIZZERIA**, 74 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 53-81-18, has pizza, sandwiches and karaoke all wrapped in one. A fav of local teens. $$-$$  

**MR. TOASTER**, 25 Korjun at Mashtots, tel. 56-64-44, 58-03-21, has some of the best pizzas in town, and very good sandwiches (try the half Italian, with ham, salami, martadella sausage and cheddar cheese at 800 AMD). Pizza by the slice start at 500 AMD, pies at 3000 AMD. €-$  

**PIZZA DI ROMA**, 1 Abovian p, tel. 58-71-75, has excellent pizza by the slice or pie, and the best salad bar in town, 1500 per trip allows you to pile on the food for a complete meal in itself. €-$  

**PIZZA TUN**, 78 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 54-00-99, 52-90-69, has pizzas, sandwiches, full meals and a salad bar. $-$-$  

**SALAD BARS**

Salad bars combine appetizers and cold plate dishes with the lettuce and condiments. There are full meals in themselves if you pile them on. **PEPPINO PIZZA**, 23 Mashots pta, tel. 53-85-67, 53-11-99, has pizzas and a small salad bar. €  

**PIZZA DI ROMA**, 1 Abovian p, tel. 58-71-75, has excellent pizza by the slice or pie, and the best salad bar in town, 1500 per trip allows you to pile on the food for a complete meal in itself. €-$  

Salads, soups, stews and sandwiches are the main courses. Prices reasonable. $  

**TRAVEL GUIDE® – SPECIAL EDITION**

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**BACCHUS, 29 Tumanian p., tel. 56-46-00, 56-46-20, food in an art gallery with a vivacious host. European and Caucasian dishes. $-$$$**

**GOLDEN FORK, 73 Israelian p, tel. 53-90-80. large restaurant with live music. $-$**

**MALKHAS JAZZ CLUB, 52 Pushkin p., 53-53-50, has good Armenian food with European hints, unique and well prepared. $$**

**SAYAT NOVA COMPLEX (AMAZON), 33a Sayat Nova, tel. 58-00-33, email: avatnova33@yahoo.com has two eating spaces, and a roof top café. All nicely done, ok food. The coliseum room below ground has live performances from some of the best local talent around. $$-$$$**

**R’WEST BISTRO, 3/1 Abovian p., tel. 56-47-08. $$**

**RED (HEAVEN CLUB), 8 Moskovian p., tel. 58-40-07 at the beginning of Ring park is a small space with French and international dishes. $$**

**STEPAN & CO., 3 Khorenatsi (Marx) p., tel. 53-80-90, 091-41-28-46, open 10-6 is the cheapest you will eat other than free, and the food beats that at restaurants charging 10 times the amount. Great big portions prove the lie that Yerevan can’t feed its populace at an affordable price. Salads and soup from 300-350 AMD, cutlet 850 AMD, potatoes 350 AMD, fresh juice 250 AMD. Excellent cheap food. $-$**

**VERN ISSAGE, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p., tel. 56-40-54. $$**

**YEREVANIAN, 85a Hanrapetutian p., tel. 51-62-61. $$**

**ZANGU, 1 Klevan p., tel. 27-60-21, 27-60-71, 22-50-30, email: gndako@netysys.am. $$-$**

**BISTROS**

Bistros are small eateries that normally serve cheaper versions of the same fare found at restaurants.

**DIAMOND, 2 Biuzand p., tel. 54-34-34, has Armenian dishes and pizzas. $-$**

**HAT SATUN, 33 Pushkin off of Mashtots (Chinese looking sign), tel. 53-89-20, open 10-10, is a real find; this basement bistro/café serves good food at affordable prices. Soups at 330 AMD, side dishes 300-400, languet at 650 AMD and pork steak with potatoes at 1200 AMD. Pleasant atmosphere, great food, friendly staff, cheap eats. $-$**

**MOHAWK BISTRO PUB, 1a Sarian p., is strictly pub grub in a smoky beer hall. $$-$**

**MOSKOVIAN BISTRO, Spendiarian p. at Moskovian, has soups starting at 400 AMD, Meats at 1000 AMD. 20% discount before 6 p.m. Can’t be beat for the prices. $-$**

**CULES, PUBS**

Not all cafes are created alike! These are intimate places to eat a variety of food; Armenian, Russian, Continental and Nouveau Armenian cuisines. Prices vary from cheap to expensive.

**ABSERT, 38 Isahakian p., tel. 56-80-51. $$-$**

**ARCADA CAFE, 24 Terian p., tel. 56-89-99. $$-$**

**ARTBRIDGE CAFE, 20 Abovian p., tel. 52-12-39, is more of a coffee and dessert place, though they have a few dishes. Beyond the terrific atmosphere, there is not much more to write about except the desserts are ok. $$-$**

**BARDOLCE VITA, Hotel Yerevan, 14 Abovian p., tel. 58-94-00, Italian, Continental, and Armenian. $$-$**

**BEELOGA, 24 Sarian p., tel. 52-78-40, serves a variety of beers and food in its large, traditionally designed tavern. $$-$**

**BOOMERANG BAR, 32 Tumanian p., tel. 589314, eclectic menu favoring sandwiches, fried foods and snacks. $$-$**

**BUNGALOW, 5 Korun p., tel. 51-99-44, serves continental-Armenian-eclectic dishes along with their full service bar. $$-$**

**CAFE CENTRAL, 30 Abovian p., tel. 58-39-90, email: avart@rambler.ru, has a wide variety of dishes on their menu, mostly continental and desert oriented. Their salad bar is a big disappointment. $$-$**

**CAFE MATE, 1 Tamanian p (Cascade), tel. 58-76-77, serves sinfully wicked desserts, which is where many stop, but you should also try one of their signature dishes. $$-$**

**CRAYFISH BAR, 32 Tumanian, tel. 58-25-65, 091-35-22-75 (Mihran), serves steamed crayfish and beer in a subterranean pub that has to be the smallest in Yerevan. Great grub. $$-$**

**DEAUVILLE, 2 Baghramian p., tel. 58-59-85, serves a full menu in its indoor-outdoor cafe setting. $$-$**

**FORTE CAFE, 83 Terian p., tel. 56-42-40. $$-$**

**JAZZVE (Moskovian), 8 Moskovian p., tel. 56-15-08, 56-05-41, email: jazzve@jazzve.am, URL: www.jazzve.com, serves (gasp!) coffee, desserts and a surprisingly large menu of hot dishes, mostly continental. $$-$**

**JAZZVE (Tumanian), 32 Tumanian p., tel. 54-54-24, email: jazzve@jazzve.am, URL: www.jazzve.com, is ditto the above entry. Ditto the money.**

**KRUNK, 20 Khanjan p., tel. 520019, 520119, has a large menu favoring Continental-Armenian-Russian. $$-$**

**LE CAFE DE PARIS, 23 Abovian p., tel. 52-26-48, 56-45-34, email: pcoffe@arminco.com, URL: www.lecafedeparis.am, is exactly what it says it is, and does it very well. Coffees, teas and desserts, with light snacks. Their outdoor gardens are gorgeous, a lesson to locals in what the city could be. $$-$**

**LIVING ROOM COFFEEHOUSE, 21 Abovian p., tel. 543100, email: juil7@yandex.ru. $$-$**

**MANTASHOFF PUB, 37 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-16-51, email: info@mantashoff.am, serves international and continental food in it slower hall. $$-$**

**MOKKA CAFE-PATISSERIE, 3 Tamanian p., tel. 54-79-10, an intimate and friendly café-patisserie serving excellent food, Mokka has quickly become a local favorite. This is really good food, but a splurge with salad, one glass of wine, dessert and coffee costing 4500 AMD. Main course would have spiked it to 7000 AMD. $$-$**

**NINA HOVNANIAN TEA CAFE, 1 Abovian p., tel. 52-77-69. $$-$**

**OSCAR, 50 Mashtots pta, tel. 56-61-80, has a large eclectic menu of foods, teas and coffees. Its indoor setting behind glass walls is nice on a cold day. $$-$**

**OPTION, 14a Sayat Nova pta, tel. 58-08-52. $$-$**

**PALMYRA, 3 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 58-08-52. $$-$**

**PCHAK TAVERN, 1/3 Pavstos Biuzand p., tel. 54-24-40, email: pchak@mail.ru, has an ambitious menu: Armenian, Argentine, Austrian, Brazilian, Greek, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Caribbean, Latin American Cuisine. $$-$**

**PILSNER PUB, 52 Mashtots pta, tel. 56-00-04, serves Czech beer and pub grub. $$-$**

**Yerevan : 141 of 150**

Yerevan - 141 of 150 - TourArmenia © 2007 Rick Ney ALL RIGHTS RESERVED - www.TACentral.com
**GOLDEN TEA**, 11 Abovian p, tel. 56-90-91, has a large selection of herbal, green and black teas, as well as ginseng and other fruit recipes. Good desserts. Sells packaged tea out of its front room.  -

**THOMAS TEA**, 22 Abovian p, 54-33-30, has a large selection of teas, like Golden Tea, but in a food in an English pub setting.  -

**RONNEFELDT**, 12 Abovian p, tel. 58-06-58, serves as well as ginseng and other fruit recipes. Good desserts. Sells packaged tea out of its front room.  -

**SHERLOCK HOLMES**, 25 Baghramian pta, tel. 25-77-85, has good Khinkali, Khachapuri and Kupati.  -

**THOMAS TEA**, 22 Abovian p, 54-33-30, has a large selection of teas, like Golden Tea, but in a food in an English pub setting.  -

**PONCHIKANOTS**, 2/2 Azatutian pta, 105/1 Terian p, tel. 51-43-10, has a large selection of teas, coffees and hand-made Belgian chocolates to tempt you. Has a "girly-girl" feel to the place.  -

**STUDIO CAFÉ**, 38 Isahakian p (Cascade), tel. 54-05-68, is a small establishment near the cascade monument. Sunday brunch a favorite of expats.  -

**MY PAPA'S**, 27 Azatutian p, tel. 52-82-91, features a wide range of dishes that focuses on Italian, but quickly leaps to Armenian, Russian, and Continental. The mélange of choices whet the palate but disappoints in trying to be all things to all people. Expensive.  -

**POLOZ MUKUCH**, 24 Papazian p, 26-21-75, serves Georgian and Caucasus food in its Arabkir location. Good food.  -

**GIUMRI KITCHEN**, 56/4 Komitas pta, tel. 54-07-59, has one of the most eclectic Armenian menus in, featuring signature recipes based on Western and Eastern Armenian recipes. Expensive but fine dining at around $30 per person.  -

**H'RASHALIK**, Hrazdan Canyon, serves an eclectic menu of Armenian, Russian and European food in its mammoth complex overlooking the Hrazdan river. Live music, bungalows and "chalets" for private dining. Expensive like Monte Carlo and H'rashalik.  -

**ARAX (ARAKS) TEA**, 11 Abovian, tel. 54-47-87, is a large modern tea house with a good selection of teas but a cacophonous interior that defies any attempt to have a normal conversation. Their outdoor café is quite nice.  -

**ZODIAC CORNER**, 105/1 Terian p, tel. 51-43-10, has a large selection of teas, coffees and hand-made Belgian chocolates to tempt you. Has a "girly-girl" feel to the place.  -

**H'RASHALIK**, Hrazdan Canyon, serves an eclectic menu of Armenian, Russian and European food in its mammoth complex overlooking the Hrazdan river. Live music, bungalows and "chalets" for private dining. Expensive like Monte Carlo and H'rashalik.  -

**THEME RESTAURANT**

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**MONUMENT**
rarely well lit. Sidewalks are often uneven and other hazards are rarely marked so be careful where you walk.

MSHO TUN (Latar Complex), 4-th p, Third Giugh, House 58, tel. 31-90-34, 39-47-59, email: info@latar.am, URL: www.latar.am, serves traditional Armenian grill in a traditional setting with live folk music. Eating by the gargantuan pool is almost worth the price. The view of Ararat is. $-$$$$ LATAR RESTAURANT (Latar Complex), 4-th p, Third Giugh, House 58, tel. 31-90-34, 39-47-59, email: info@latar.am, URL: www.latar.am, serves Italian, Mexican and Indian cuisine. $$-$$$ TATOEWS’ 164, 1 Sazhumin p, Ashtarak City, tel. 31-954, 31-414, email: tatoews164@yahoo.com, is not so much a traditional Armenian eatery as it is a sojourn into a traditional family’s life, 171 years of history in the same stone home. The place is filled with memorabilia from the family’s time in Ashtarak, and the food is prepared according to family recipes. $$-$$

SOUTH

CARAVAN, 55/1 Tigran Mets pta, tel. 55-34-53, features Uzbek recipes, along with Armenian and Georgian fare. $$-$$$$ FAMILY ORIENTED WONDERLAND, 2 Arshakuniats pta, 52-48-36, has family-oriented food (international), music and a play hall with costumed staff. $$-

TSITSERNAKABERD/NORTHWEST

ARMENIAN KHRCHIT, 27 Leningradian p, tel. 39-59-59, serves traditional Armenian food, featuring Khash and Spas. $$-
LE CAVALIER, 39 Shirak p, tel. 46-50-00, 46-50-05, $$-$$$$

ARMENIAN, CONTINENTAL SHANT, 2 Janibekian p (off of Halabian), tel. 39-99-55, 35-16-16, caters primarily to large groups and weddings, but welcomes walk ins to its large Greek Acropolis style restaurant in the east end of the city. Large menu of Armenian and European dishes. $$-$$$$

NEAR YEREVAN

ARMENIAN, CONTINENTAL ARMANIAN, CONTINENTAL

ADVICE ^

Play it Safe. Even though Armenia is still one of the safest countries in the world, and random crimes such as muggings, robbery, etc. against tourists are rare, they can happen and you should always play it safe. Pick pocketing does occur in crowded areas, so keep your personal belongings tucked away. Avoid displaying large sums of money and using purses or backpacks which can be easily opened.

Be aware of your surroundings and of any suspicious-looking individuals. Keep to well-lit, main streets at night, take taxis anytime after 10 p.m. and travel with escorts or in groups.

You are asked to register at your Embassy in case of international emergency (some register this online). You do not need your original passport on you for identification; a copy is fine.

Streets and Sidewalks. Carry a small penlight or flashlight with you. The mains streets have lights, but most are poorly lit, and side streets are rarely well lit. Sidewalks are often uneven and other hazards are rarely marked so be careful where you walk.

Women Travelers. Some women travelers may find themselves the object of unwelcome attention, others will enjoy playful banter. It is doubtful you will ever dress more provocatively than local girls, but still, and especially if you look European, men may consider you “fair game” for wooing. Try taking it in stride and as a compliment. Armenian men are by nature gallant and romantically driven.

Right of Way. Automobiles have right of way, pedestrians do NOT. Be very careful when crossing streets. Something changes Armenians when they get behind the wheel. Normally polite, courteous people turn into red-eyed road hogs bent on cutting past everyone else. Even if you have the green walking light, cars will still cut across your path, often honking and cursing you for getting in their way. This is very serious.

Beggars. There are a number of street people and beggars in Yerevan. Many belong to “cooperatives” and are taxed by higher ups. Some even ‘rent babies from orphanages and dress up to look more desperate. They may follow you for a distance speaking in different languages begging for money. You do not have to give them anything. It can be heartbreaking to refuse, but each time someone suckers into this scam, they continue the cycle of begging and are mostly donating to wealthy individuals who organize begging on the streets.

There are truly desperate people also on the streets, and they can use your help. They will not be on the “tour routes” of the city, having been muscled out by professional beggars. It is not always easy to detect the difference between the two, so my best advice is to think twice, then follow your conscience in giving money or not. No beggar will harass you for long, and they are generally safe.

Litter. The other bane of the country is the enormous amount of litter on the streets, parks and public spaces of the city. No one knows what this is a legacy of; the city was once one of the cleanest in the Soviet Union. It seems everything broke down with the collapse of the Union, and Armenians have never looked back. It can be more than annoying, and I have found myself almost in a rage over the senseless litter. Fanatically neat & tidy in their personal lives, Armenians seem to almost revel in dropping wrappers and empty bottles on the sidewalks. There has been some improvement in the last couple of years but they are still miles away from fixing the problem. DO speak your mind and ask your driver/host to pick up after themselves if they carelessly toss litter out the window or on the street. They will at first think you odd, but if you then proceed to collect their litter for them, they will become embarrassed and get the point.

**Waiting.** No one waits in line. If you do, you may never reach the front.

**Call waiters and clerks to get served.** Service personnel often won’t wait on you unless prompted to do so. In some stores clerks may follow you around too closely, making you feel uncomfortable. They are trained to do this to prevent shoplifting and have yet to learn the fine art of surveillance. Then when you DO want them, they are rarely there or helpful. This is endemic and not personal. Just ignore it.

**Food and Water.** Food and water are both generally safe in Yerevan. That doesn't mean you won't get a case of the runs or have problems. Changes in diet, time difference, lack of sleep and the stress of traveling can cause temporary upset stomach and diarrhea, just as easily as eating bad food. Others may take a few days to adjust to the change in diet, which can be heavier and spicier than you are used to in the west.

Many avoid street vendors and hole-in-the-wall eateries of fear of getting “Arshak’s revenge”. But that does not mean that others will not be able to eat the same food and have no problems at all. The main cause of diarrhea and dysentery are poorly cleaned dishware, and careful observance will do much to prevent problems. My main rule of thumb is to look at the way something is prepared; if I don’t like what I see, I don’t buy it. Fruits and vegetables should be washed before eating. Water in Armenia is clean and safe, especially if you stick to bottled water, which is available at most kiosks and food shops. Outdoor fountains are as safe as they are in the west, with the same risks of spreading germs by touching the spout.

**Vegetarians** will find plenty of food to eat at restaurants and cafes; salads, bean and vegetable dishes are popular in Armenia and widely sold. By eating vegetarian you will also cut your food bill significantly; restaurants focus on the meat eaters in pricing dishes. Some are prepared using meat fat, so check ahead to be sure. **Vegans** will have a more difficult time of avoiding foods prepared to your needs.

**Parting Shots.** Take toilet paper or Kleenex, a penlight, extra batteries and film, traveler size soap, insect repellant and first aid kit, sunscreen, plenty of water, sunscreen, sunglasses and hat with you on your visit. Mostly, bring your sense of humor and open eyes.
Ecotourism in South Caucasus (excellent maps) eatsc.com

EcoTourism.com ecotourismarmenia.com

Eco Team Development users.freenet.am/%7Eecoteam

Weather Forecasts tacentral.com/weather.asp

Climate Change Info Center-Armenia nature.am/Index.htm

ERMC grida.no/en/nr/htmls/armenia/soe_armenia/english/ermcau/ermc.htm

National Academy of Sciences of Armenia scl.am

Protected Areas of Armenia grida.no/en/nr/biodiv/biodiv/national/armenia/prarea/oort.htm

Birds of Armenia Project cac-biodiversity.org/arm/index.htm

Plant Genetic Resources in the Caucasus and Central Asia www.cac-biodiversity.org/arm/arm_biodiversity.htm


Architecture

armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/

www.thais.it/architetture/default.htm

www.armenian.ch/armenia/Pages/ETHZ/

Information, Guides

Maps of Armenia (to buy) www.mapsworldwide.com/sec.asp?secid=29

Maps of Armenia (to look) www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/doc404?OpenForm&c=arm&c=3

ArmeniaGuide.com

Visa Information, Foreign Ministry www.armeniaministryofforeignaffairs.com

E-VISA

www.armeniaministryofforeignaffairs.com/eVISA

www.virtualarmenia.am

www.armgate.org

News, Books

www.ArmeniaNow.com

www.abribooks.com

www.stvartanbookstore.com

www.littlearmenia.com

Armenian House Literature www.cac-biodiversity.org/arm/index.htm

Armenia's deep history, amazing ecology, and making the country accessible for independent Armenia's entry into the open world. In 2000 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 ArmDesign 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!

Thanks to: Ashot Levonian for his information on hiking and caving tours in Tavush, to Boris Gaspanyan for detailed info and critique of the prehistoric material; to Tigran Nazarian and Christine Karapetian for their insightful comments, advice, trips into the wilderness and challenging ideas; to Gagik Gurjian from the Ministry for Historical Preservation, who has been showing me the intricacies of Armenia’s cultural monuments and their influences since 1992, leading me to some of the most amazing places and events I have been, as well as to the large vat of killer Voskevaz wine in his garden; to Stepan Ter-Margaryan & the folks at the Institutes of History and Archeology branches of the National Academy for their help on pointing me to original sources and exhaustive original information on destinations; to Sam Stepanian for his eternal support; to Armico, Grisha Saghian and Vahan Yerkanian for their support, the creation of the first edition on CD, link ups and links to culture and more. To ArmeniaNow.com for giving me the chance to share this material to their world. And to R and L. TMB.

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