

Armenia

Ancient ~ Amiable





Armenian Khachkar (cross stone) © Souren Manvelyan



Discover Armenia!

Armenia is a land with a mystical air that will at once capture your imagination, evoking past centuries while awakening your senses to the present. It has a rich and colorful history, interwoven with legends and lore such as the landing of Noah's Ark on Mount Ararat and Marco Polo's voyages along the Silk Road. Armenians are an ancient people with a strong sense of cultural identity. They have preserved their unique culture throughout the centuries, keeping Old World traditions alive by integrating them into a modern way of life, so that the two compliment and enrich each other.

Armenia offers something new for every explorer. From the Hellenistic temple of Garni and the rock-carved churches of Geghard to ancient cave dwellings, mountain monasteries, fortresses and thousands of unique khatchkars (stone crosses), Armenia's fascinating history is etched into its very landscape.

The wide range of natural beauty in this tiny country is astounding. You will encounter mountainous landscapes, whitewater river canyons, deep forests and fertile plains. With rugged and widely unspoiled landscapes, each region of Armenia offers a unique experience to nature-lovers, hikers, and anyone with a desire to explore.

Armenia's strongest charm lies in the hearts of its people. The kindness and hospitality of Armenians are sure to leave a lasting impression and make your visit an unforgettable experience. Come and feel the warmth of an Armenian welcome.

Come and discover Armenia!



Zvartnots Temple (VII cc.) © Hrair Hawk



Historic Nation, Reborn Republic

Armenians are one of the oldest ethnic groups in the Caucasus, having inhabited the Armenian plateau for thousands of years. The country is not known to its locals as Armenia, but as Hayastan. This name is derived from Hayk, the supreme god of Armenia during pagan times. The region was first called Armenia by the Persians, about 2600 years ago. The Greeks started referring to the region by its Persian name, and eventually, the rest of the European nations came to know the country as Armenia. The nation's biblical name is the Ararat or Urartian Kingdom, in Hebrew. The Urartians, ancestors of modern Armenians, were a highly advanced civilization.

In the 2nd century BC, Armenia underwent a renaissance, transforming into a major Hellenistic center. There was a sudden surge in art and literature, and Artashat, the capital, became an important cultural hub of the region. Situated on the Great Silk Road, Armenia was both a major center for commerce and a target for attacks from rival nations.

Armenia was able to maintain its sovereignty, even with the growing power of the rapidly expanding Roman Empire. It became a tributary state, with its own sovereign rulers. In 66 AD, Trdat I was crowned as King of the Arshaguni Dynasty (King of Armenia) by Roman Emperor Nero. This was followed

WHAT TO DO

- Learn more about the fascinating Urartian civilization with a trip to the Erebuni Fortress on the outskirts of Yerevan
- Hike up to the recently renovated and reconstructed 9th century Smbataberd Fortress in Vayots Dzor for a stunning panorama of the surrounding countryside
- Explore the awe-inspiring ruins of Zvartnots Cathedral at the foot of Mount Ararat, Armenia's main cathedral dating back to the 7th Century
- Walk around the old cobblestone streets of Gyumri, a living museum and the largest collection of 19th century houses in the Caucasus
- Visit the Genocide Memorial and Museum at Tsitsernakaberd to learn more about the 1915 Genocide and pay tribute to its victims.



Amberd Fortress (VII-XI cc) © Status Holding



by a period of peace and cultural development.

Located at the crossroads of East and West, Armenia has always been an apple of discord, highly sought after by its powerful neighboring empires. However, over the centuries, the nation has stubbornly withheld the constant threat of invasion and cultural assimilation from the Roman, Persian and Byzantine empires, and Arab caliphates.

Despite several military and political defeats throughout



Republic Square, Yerevan © Souren Manvelyan

its history, Armenia has always maintained a strong national identity and unique culture. The invention of the Armenian alphabet in the 5th century played a crucial role in maintaining Armenian cultural unity despite political division and foreign rule. From the 11th to the 13th century, Armenia resisted attacks from the Seljuk Turks and the Tatar Mongols. In the 16th century, it was divided between the Ottoman Empire and Persia. In 1828, part of the country

that was under Persian rule was taken over by the Russian Empire.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Ottoman Turks began executing massacres in Armenian towns and villages found within the Ottoman Empire. This process of ethnic cleansing reached its pinnacle between 1915 and 1918, when the Ottoman Turks conducted the mass deportation and massacre of 1.5 million Armenians, attempting to systematically annihilate the nation. Those who survived the





Armenian Genocide fled wherever they could find refuge. Most of them settled in the Middle East, Europe and North America, creating Diasporan Armenian communities throughout the world.

In 1918, at the end of the First World War, Armenia was declared an independent republic but, two years later, fell under the attack of the Russian Bolsheviks, becoming part of the Soviet Union in 1922.

In 1991, after 70 years under Soviet Rule, Armenia regained its independence and has since been growing and developing as an independent democratic republic. Today, approximately 3 million people live in Armenia, over 95% of who are ethnic Armenians. Other ethnic groups include Russians, Yezidis, Kurds, Greeks and Assyrians. Yerevan, Armenia's capital, is home to about half the population.

1. *Symphony of stones* © Souren Manvelyan;
2. Tatev Monastery (IX cc) © Vyacheslav Lennik;
3. Garni Temple (I c) © Vyacheslav Lennik;
4. Frescoes, Ereuni Fortress (785-753 B.C)



Agama Caucasian © A. Malkhasyan



Land of Rugged Beauty

Landscape

Armenia is a mountainous country in the South Caucasus that lies at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Today, the country spans 29,743 square kilometers. It is bordered by Georgia to the north, Iran to the south, Azerbaijan to the east and Turkey to the west.

Approximately half of Armenia is mountainous and arid and one third is pasture and arable land. 10% of the country is protected forestland, falling under national park or state reserve designation. Most of the country is over 1000 meters above sea level; the highest point being the north peak of Mount Aragats at 4090 meters. Lake Sevan, situated in the Gegharkunik province in the east, is one of the world's largest high altitude lakes.

Armenia is a small country, roughly the size of Belgium or Maryland. But this tiny landmass comprises a kaleidoscope of terrains, with snow-covered mountain crests, fertile plains, forests, turquoise lakes, dry subtropics, semideserts, alpine meadows, mountain steppe, and large fields of sun-blasted stone.

Seasons



Summer in Shikahogh preserve
© Souren Manvelyan

Armenia experiences two natural phenomena unique to mountainous regions: an “eternal spring”, with wildflowers blooming in valleys and mountainsides well into August, and an ‘eternal winter’ on the snow-capped crests of the country’s tallest mountains.

Spring begins early in the Ararat Valley, with irises, tulips and gladioli, blooming in March. Further north, at Tsaghkadzor, steady snowfalls allow for a lively ski season from the end of November to April.

By summer, the wildflowers in the Ararat Valley reach their peak. Spring rains give way to fair weather and by late June, Yerevan begins its hot season while the rest of the country, especially in the most mountainous regions, experiences a mild summer climate.

Autumn is truly a glorious season in Armenia. The fall harvest brings an abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables, such as grapes, pomegranates, blackberries, quince, walnuts and pumpkins. The climate is refreshingly mild. September and



Autumn in Dilijan
© Souren Manvelyan



Winter in Azat reservoir
© Souren Manvelyan



«Kari Litch» (Stone Lake)
© Souren Manvelyan

WHAT TO DO

- **Trek the gorge between Garni Temple and Havuts Tar Monastery**
- **Hike from Kari Lake to Amberd Fortress, built in the 11th century on the slopes of Mount Aragats, Armenia's highest mountain**
- **Stroll along the marked trails of various lengths in and around Dilijan National Park, which wraps around the picturesque town of Dilijan and extends along the Getik River**
- **Rock climbers; check out the Davitashen Cliffs in Yerevan, Arzni and Bjni Cliffs in the Kotayk region and Noravank Canyon in Vayots Dzor for an adrenalin rush and amazing scenery**
- **Experience the world's longest non-stop double track aerial tramway in Tatev, Syunik region.**

October are pleasant months, with warm days and cool nights.

As would be expected of most mountainous regions, winters in Armenia are cold. The country experiences heavy snowfalls, perfect for winter sports such as skiing and snowboarding.

Armenians enjoy the fruits of the autumn harvest during the winter months, in the form of jams, compotes and preserves.



WHAT TO DO

- Grab your binoculars and explore the over 100 species of birds that reside in Dilijan National Park, where you will also encounter the unique flora and fauna endemic to Armenia
- Spend a day at Khosrov Reserve at the foot of the Geghama volcanic mountain, where you can spot more than 1800 species of plants and diverse fauna, including over 30 varieties of reptiles
- Ski or snowboard at Armenia's prestigious and modern Tsaghkadzor Resort
- Relax by the healing and hot mineral springs of Jermuk
- Enjoy the hot natural baths in Hankavan (seasonal)
- Cool off by the Sevan lakeshore or try your hand at windsurfing.

Armenian flora and fauna
© Souren Manvelyan

Flora and Fauna



The wide range and complexity of flora and fauna in Armenia is truly astounding. This tiny country is home to most of the world's ecological zones; half of the flora found in all of Europe and two thirds of its birds.

Armenia comprises some of the world's most stunning mountain chains, valleys and river gorges. The country is a flower lover's haven, with 3500 species thriving on its mountainsides. 349 species of birds migrate through Armenia en route to Europe and Africa, several of which are rare or endangered. The country is also home to the rare Caucasian leopard, mountain goat, and ram.



Cafesjian Center for the Arts (Cascade)
© NCFA, photo by Status Holding / Arnos Martirosyan



Cosmopolitan Yerevan

Yerevan, Armenia's capital, is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was established in 782 BC by the Urartian King, Argishti I. Today, it is a thriving city, with the excitement, hustle and bustle of a modern capital. Yerevan is truly a fascinating place, with a fine balance of a fast-paced urban lifestyle, yet a keen sense of its history and ancient roots. The city is currently undergoing a major construction boom along with a cultural rejuvenation, with a vast array of plays, operas, concerts and cultural events year round.

Yerevan is more than a capital. It is the central point of a Diasporan people, a magnet for the eight million Armenians living outside the country. The city streets are lined with tiny boutiques selling the latest fashions, colorful street markets, and fine restaurants offering an assortment of traditional and international cuisine. While the city is always bustling with activity, one of the charms of Yerevan is that you can still sit for hours at a café, enjoy a cup of coffee and watch the world go by.

Armenia has a variety of festivals that take place in Yerevan and often in other cities and regions. The Golden Apricot, Yerevan's International Film Festival, is held every summer. The festival showcases both mainstream and independent films from around the world, and is attended by many of the most extraordinary talents working in cinema today. Though Yerevan is the headquarters of this festival, films



Erebuni-Yerevan Festival © PanARMENIAN Photo / Davit Hakobyan



also shown in major city centers throughout Armenia and Nagorno - Karabakh. The Erebuni - Yerevan Festival is an annual celebration of Yerevan's ancient history. The central square comes to life with concerts and festivities. HighFest International Performing Arts Festival takes place in October. This festival showcases all genres of performing arts including theatre, dance and musical performance.

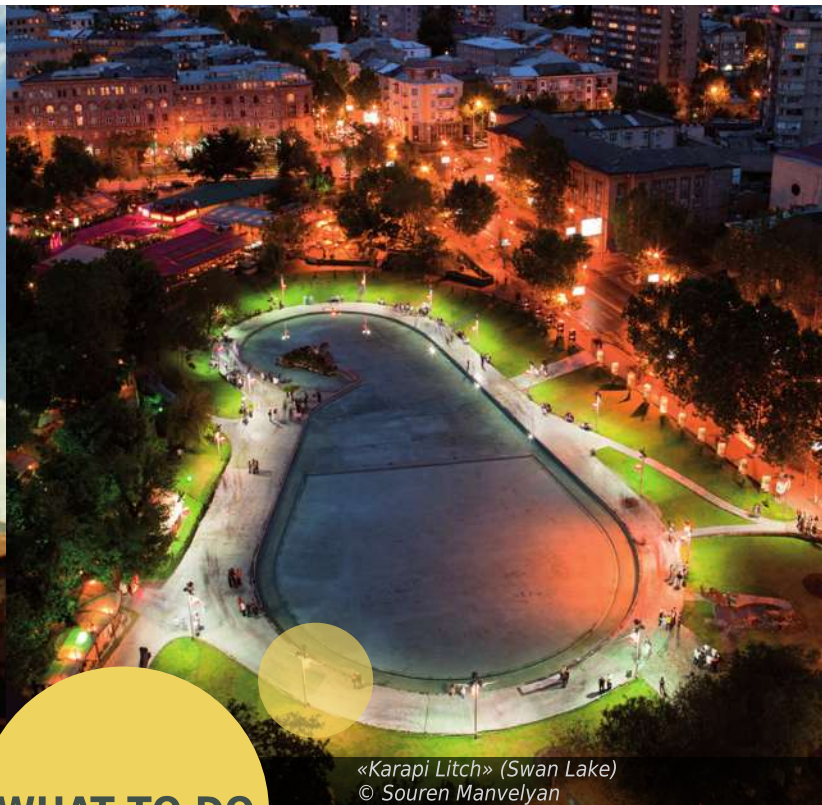
Yerevan has over 40 museums and galleries celebrating a fascinating history and rich artistic heritage. The city has





Republic Square, Yerevan © NCFA, photo by Status Holding / Arnos Martirosyan

a thriving nightlife, a lively contemporary art scene, and a youth culture of its own. Yerevan is ever-growing, ever-changing, ever-evolving. But despite its almost constant state of transformation, the city's soul remains the same.



«Karapi Litch» (Swan Lake)
© Souren Manvelyan

WHAT TO DO

- Attend a performance at Yerevan's renowned Opera House, the city's cultural hub
- Sit back and enjoy a coffee at one of the charming cafes on Abovyan Street, Northern Avenue or around Opera Square and Cascade Area
- On a clear day, climb the Cascade steps for the best view of Mount Ararat in the city
- For a great night out, enjoy live music to suit any taste at one of Yerevan's hip jazz clubs.



Haghartsin Monastery (X-XII cc) © Robert Kharazyan



Cradle of Christianity

Christianity has played an immensely important role in the shaping of the Armenian people for over 1700 years. Today, about 94% of Armenians are members of the Armenian Apostolic Church. This branch of the Orthodox Church has derived its faith directly from the apostles, Thaddeus and Bartholomew, who preached in Armenia during the first century.

The Christian faith has shaped the Armenian culture so intimately that it permeates the very landscape of the country, with khatchkars (cross stone carvings) strewn across even the most remote mountainsides and ancient monasteries nestled in breathtaking natural settings.

Before the introduction of Christianity, Armenia was largely pagan. Many temples dotted the country, but little evidence is left of them as they were destroyed by the early Christians. Today, only one pagan temple remains in Armenia; the famous Greco-Roman temple in the village of Garni. Other pre-Christian sites include Zorats Karer (Karahunj) - a 4200 BC astral observatory near Sisian, and Bronze Age Vishap (dragon) stones, that dot the landscape.

Armenia adopted Christianity as its official religion in 301 AD, and so was the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state

WHAT TO DO

- Spend a day at Echmiadzin, Armenia's Holy See, where you can explore the roots of the Armenian Church, see the seat of the Armenian Catholicos, and visit three other historic churches
- Take day trips to the monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin, all UNESCO World Heritage Sites
- Explore the pit at Khor Virap, where Gregory the Illuminator lay for 13 years, and emerged to lead the Armenian nation into Christianity
- Make a day trip to Garni, Armenia's only standing pagan temple and Geghard Monastery, carved within a mountain.



Gndevank Monastery (X century) © Souren Manvelyan



religion (79 years before the Roman Empire). Armenia's national conversion to Christianity began under King Trdat III. Legend has it that he was afflicted by madness for his virulent suppression of Christianity. He was cured by St. Gregory, who had been sent to die in a pit 13 years prior, because of his faith.

In gratitude and amazement, the King adopted the new faith, beginning the conversion of the nation. The pit where Gregory the Illuminator lay for 13 years is called Khor Virap (deep pit),



The door of St. Hovhannes Church (XVII century) © Souren Manvelyan

and is located in the ancient Hellenistic city of Artashat.

As the first Christian nation, Armenia is also home to countless ancient churches and monasteries. Echmiadzin is one of the oldest standing churches in Christendom. It was built in 303 AD over a pagan fire altar. The name Echmiadzin means "Descent of the Only Begotten". It was believed to have been designated in a vision where Christ

came to earth and struck the plains with a golden hammer. This sacred landmark is protected by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Over 1700 years after Echmiadzin, Christianity is still an important factor and a vital symbol in the Armenian cultural identity. In the Diaspora, the Church is the basis of every Armenian community. Across the world, wherever you find a group of Armenians, you will undoubtedly find an Armenian church.



Childrens' choir © PanARMENIAN Photo / Vahan Stepanyan



Cultural Treasure-trove

Armenians have always cherished their artistic traditions, which reflect a unique culture and landscape. Through various art forms such as carving, needlework, sculpture and music, Armenian artists express aspects of everyday life.

Architecture, particularly religious architecture, is a fascinating art form in Armenia. Armenian churches have a unique style developed from thousands of years of experimentation. Frescoes, carved motifs and decorations adorn church walls, many of them remarkably intact after hundreds of years. Frescoes and carvings from the 5th-9th centuries are particularly rich, as are the narthexes (church entrance halls) of the 13th century.

Armenian manuscripts are a distinctive art form. They are carefully illuminated with detailed miniatures and written in beautiful scripts that evolve from era to era. The Matenadaran, in Yerevan, houses an extraordinary collection of more than 17,500 complete manuscripts, fragments and miniature texts, some dating to the pre-Christian era.

Painting blossomed as an important cultural art form for Armenians in the 19th and 20th centuries, continuing an artistic tradition that began with 8th century frescoes. In the



WHAT TO DO

- Visit the Vernissage market and the painters' outdoor market every weekend in Yerevan for great local handicrafts in a traditional market setting
- Tour the many studios, pottery shops and carpet weavers, who are always more than happy to share their art
- Check out the National Art Gallery of Armenia, the most impressive gallery in the country, with an extensive collection of Armenian art and works from around the world
- Stop off at the Matenadaran, one of the richest depositories of manuscripts and books in the world, with over 17,000 manuscripts, some dating as far back as the 5th century.



Northern Avenue, Yerevan © NCFA, photo by Status Holding / Arnos Martirosyan

last two centuries, many internationally renowned and groundbreaking artists have emerged, such as Ivan Aivazovsky, Edgar Chahine, Hovsep Pushman, Arshile Gorky, Carzou, Jansem, Minas Avetissian, and Martiros Saryan. Their works and the works of several other modern and contemporary Armenian painters can be found on display in the galleries of Yerevan.

Armenian music is unique in its fusion of folk, secular and ceremonial rhythms. Armenian folk music incorporates

several unique instruments, the most distinctive of which is the duduk, a 2000-year-old woodwind instrument made of apricot wood. It has a soulful, haunting sound. Recently, the duduk has become a star of Hollywood soundtracks. Its quasi-holy sound has made it a welcomed guest in religious film epics such as "The Last Temptation of Christ" and Mel Gibson's 2004 film "the Passion of the Christ."

Usually, when film composers use it, they aim to relate to the distant past and distant lands. The duduk was the



«Sayat-Nova» opera premiere © PanARMENIAN Photo / Tigran Mehrabyan

central focus in the soundtracks of such films as “Gladiator”, “Alexander”, “Chronicles of Narnia”, “Syriana” and “Munich”.

World renowned Armenian duduk master, Jivan Gasparyan, has played a vital role in bringing this ancient, evocative instrument to the international spotlight.

Armenian ceremonial music includes sharakan

chants, dating back to the 5th century AD. A lively bardic tradition still thrives in Armenia, 300 years after its most famous minstrel, Sayat Nova, sang at the courts of the kings. Aram Khachaturian, Armenians’ most beloved and world-renowned composer, was directly influenced and inspired by Armenian folk music and the music of Sayat Nova. Khachaturian composed a significant collection of classical pieces including the ballets ‘Gayaneh’ (which includes the Saber Dance), and Spartacus. Contemporary Armenian musicians often combine traditional Armenian melodies with modern beats, creating a





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new genre while keeping the Armenian musical tradition alive with a whole new generation. The Armenian Diaspora has also produced several significant musical talents, such as Charles Aznavour, Cher, and acclaimed heavy metal band, System Of A Down.

Literature has always played a vital role in Armenia's cultural identity. Before the Armenian alphabet was developed in the 5th century, Armenian tales were passed down orally or written in foreign languages. In 405 AD, Mesrop Mashtots, an Armenian scholar and clergyman, invented the Armenian alphabet. Immediately upon the introduction of the new alphabet, there was a surge of new literature, which came to be known as the Golden Age of Armenian Literature. After centuries of withstanding foreign domination, the Armenian alphabet has stayed miraculously unchanged and Armenian literature still thrives.

One of the most prominent traditional and contemporary art forms in Armenia is rug and carpet weaving. The Caucasus region, Armenia in particular, has been cited by scholars as the birthplace of carpet weaving. Armenians are proud of this heritage and keep the artistic tradition alive. Many shops and markets specialize in exquisitely woven carpets, both in traditional and modern patterns. The art of weaving is not exclusive to carpets. It is also applied to clothing, bags and home furnishings, in a process known as kilim weaving.

In the street markets, such as the weekend Vernissage market in Yerevan, you will find many carved wooden miniature replicas of Armenia's ancient khatchkars (cross stone carvings). There are over 40,000 Armenian khatchkars, and no two are exactly alike. Ceramics and handcrafted pottery are also among Armenia's finest crafts, and can be found in abundance at the Vernissage market.

1. *Armenian females coming out of church* (V. Surennyants, 1905);
2. Vernissage flea market © NCFA, photo by Status Holding / Arnos Martirosyan; 3-4. Matenadaran © PanARMENIAN Photo / Tigran Mehrabyan; 5. Folk music concert © PanARMENIAN Photo / Vahan Stepanyan





Culinary Journey

It is said that Armenians express their love in their kitchens, and anyone who has dined in Armenia will agree. Armenian food is a fusion of scents and tastes from East and West, blending fresh vegetables, meats, fish and dairy with mountain herbs to create a unique cuisine.

Fresh ingredients form the basis of Armenian delicacies such as dolma, a meat and rice filling rolled into grape leaves, or stuffed into summer vegetables. No visit to Armenia is complete without a sampling of khorovats, succulent bits of beef, lamb, pork, fish or chicken marinated and grilled over a wood fire, along with eggplants, tomatoes, bell peppers and other vegetables. Khashlama (boiled lamb) is a staple meat, often served at events marking rites of passage. A must for seafood lovers is the Armenian Ishkhan (prince) trout, the pride of Lake Sevan.

There is nothing like the aroma of freshly baked bread. Bread is the most important staple in the Armenian diet, and there are plenty of varieties to choose from. Armenia's most renowned local bread is lavash, a thin flatbread which is prepared in a special underground clay oven called a toneer. The preparation of lavash is an age-old tradition and is a real treat to watch!

Armenian desserts and pastries usually incorporate fresh fruits and berries that are in season. In the fall, jams and

WHAT TO DO

- Embark on an exciting tour of the wineries in the village of Areni, or the Yerevan Brandy Factory, complete with taste tests of delicious local wines and spirits!
- Visit the toneer bakeries in the villages of Armenia, to watch the making of lavash bread and taste the delicious results!
- For a quick bite on the go, try a lahmajoun, a tasty treat also known as “Armenian Pizza”
- Check out closed food markets in Yerevan, where local merchants sell fresh and dried fruits and vegetables, spices, and delicacies.



Armenian apricot



preserves are made to be enjoyed throughout the winter and the rest of the year. Armenia is world renowned for its brandy and growing selection of wines. Winston Churchill was offered Armenian brandy by Joseph Stalin at the Yalta Conference, and was so impressed that he asked for several cases of it to be shipped to him each year. Churchill was definitely onto something. Armenian brandy is made from spring water and the finest selection of white grapes from the Ararat Valley.

Oghi (vodka) is another favorite among Armenians. In the



Armenian fruits



Armenian dolma

villages, a wide array of fruits are fermented and distilled into homemade oghi. Mulberry, apricot, grape and cornelian cherry vodkas are unique varieties, famous for their distinctive tastes and potency.

In Armenia, dining, especially in a family setting, takes on a warm festive atmosphere. Kenats (toasts) are made regularly throughout the meal. The host will usually start with a kenats to the

guests, and as the meal progresses, everybody around the table gets a turn to make a kenats (which translates to 'health' or 'life'). As you might imagine, the toasts usually get more elaborate as the evening progresses.

Sitting down to a meal in Armenia is about so much more than eating. All aspects of the meal – the aromas, the tastes, and most importantly, the good company – are savored to the fullest extent. Meals are not rushed. They are a time to slow down, sit down, and enjoy quality time with family and friends.

MAP OF Armenia

GEORGIA

TURKEY

Legend

- Borders
- Regions
- Regional Borders
- Armavir ● Regional Capitals
- Abovian ● Cities and Towns
- The borders of Nagorno Karabakh upon declaration of independence in 1991
- The de facto borders of Nagorno Karabakh
- The de facto territories of Nagorno Karabakh under Azerbaijan control

*THE BORDERS OF THE NAGORNO KARABAKH REPUBLIC ARE ADJUSTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 142 OF THE CONSTITUTION OF NKR WHICH SAYS: "TILL THE RESTORATION OF THE STATE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THE NAGORNO KARABAKH REPUBLIC AND THE ADJUSTMENT OF ITS BORDERS, PUBLIC AUTHORITY IS EXERCISED ON THE TERRITORY UNDER FACTUAL JURISDICTION OF THE NAGORNO KARABAKH REPUBLIC."





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