

# EXPLORE!

## On Foot in Armenia

9 days

Armenia - Trip code WAM

## On Foot in Armenia

Sandwiched between Turkey, Iran, Georgia and Azerbaijan in the South Caucasus, Armenia is one of Eurasia's more mountainous countries and also one of the least well-known. This off-beat trip treks through spectacular natural wildernesses and landscapes, unspoilt mountain villages with biblical views of the Ararat Mountains and visits fascinating medieval monasteries. From the twisted rock formations of the Garni Gorge to high-altitude Lake Sevan and the magnificent UNESCO World Heritage Geghard Monastery, this beautiful country won't fail to impress.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Caucasus landscapes** - Hikes in spectacular mountain scenery
- ★ **Lake Sevan** - one of the largest alpine lakes in Europe
- ★ **'Wings of Tatev'** - Ride one of the world's longest cable car from Halidzor to Tatev
- ★ **Walks with history** - Explore ancient fortresses, medieval monasteries and a Silk Route caravanserai
- ★ **Natural wonders** - Discover the twisted basalt rocks of Garni Gorge and Devil's Bridge travertine

### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

#### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

### WALKING GRADE:

#### Easy To Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate level walks on the same tour. You'll be walking mainly on good paths and at low altitude, with occasional more demanding ascents or descents.

**GROUP SIZE:****10 - 16**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join trip in the Armenian capital Yerevan

The trip starts today in the Armenian capital Yerevan, a busy and cosmopolitan city, looking to the future but deeply rooted in its past. Find wide tree-lined boulevards, grand 19th century buildings and several museums as well as many street-side cafes, perfect for sampling a strong Armenian coffee while people watching.



**Accommodation: Minotel Barsam Suites** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - City tour in Yerevan including the Genocide Memorial Complex

Today we will discover the sights of Yerevan a city tour with our trip leader. Starting from Victory Park, we take in a panoramic view of the city at the Mother Armenia monument. On a clear day there are splendid views across the Ararat Plain to the silhouette of Turkey's Mount Ararat (5,165m), the legendary resting place of Noah's Ark, once part of 'Greater Armenia' and to many Armenians still symbolic of a glorious past. We then continue on to Republic Square, the Opera house and the Cascade. Driving along Baghramyan Avenue we pass by the Parliament building, the Palace of the President, and the National Academy of Sciences. We will stop to visit the Genocide Memorial Complex, dedicated to the memory of the 1.5 million Armenians who perished in the first genocide of the 20th century at the hands of the Turkish government. Our final destination is the Matenadaran Library, which hosts the biggest collection of medieval Armenian manuscripts.



**Accommodation: Minotel Barsam Suites** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 3 - Trek to Neghuts Monastery with views of Mount Ararat; drive to Lake Sevan

Leaving Yerevan behind this morning, we drive to the village of Bujakan from where we begin the first walk of the holiday, to the ruined 10th century monastery of Neghuts. Ascending to the ridge of Mount Teghenis, on a clear day we should have a breathtaking view of the highest mountain in Armenia, Mount Aragats (4,090m) as well as the distinct dormant volcanic cone of Mount Ararat in neighbouring Turkey. We plan to stop for a picnic lunch near the monastery ruins before descending to the village of Arzakan. From here we drive to our hotel for the night by the shores of Lake Sevan. This beautiful lake is situated at an altitude of approximately 2,000 metres and is the largest lake in the Caucasus. On the peaceful Sevan Peninsula we visit Sevanavank Monastery which dates back to the 9th century and from where we can enjoy a wonderful view of the lake.

Today's 10 kilometre walk is graded Moderate and expected to take approximately four hours with a total ascent of 450 metres and descent of 550 metres.



**Accommodation: Blue Sevan** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 4 - Mt Artanish hike; visit Noratus cemetery and ancient Selim Caravanserai

In the morning it's a short drive to the small village of Artanish from where we plan to hike to the top of Mt Artanish (2,461m), a steady climb of around 400 metres. All along the way there are beautiful views of Lake Sevan and the surrounding wild and empty landscapes. Later, we head south by bus to the village of Hermon, making a couple of stops along the way. The first will be at the village of Noratus where there is a vast cemetery known for its collection of unique and fascinating carved stone crosses known as khachkars. Covered by colourful mosses and lichen, the earliest date from medieval times. We then continue driving along an ancient Armenian silk route to the Selim Pass Caravanserai, a stopping-off point for caravan riders and their pack animals carrying good from the Orient to Europe.

Today's seven kilometre walk is graded Moderate and is expected to take approximately two hours with a total ascent and descent of 400m.



**Accommodation: Lucytour Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 5 - Walk to Smbataberd Fortress and through villages to Tsakhats Kar Monastery.

In the morning we drive to the village of Artabuynk, the starting point for our hike to the fortress of Smbataberd. Spectacularly located on the crest of a ridge between the villages of Artabuynk and Yeghegis, Smbataberd. is guarded by steep cliffs on three of its sides. We will explore some of the large ramparts and towers which are still relatively intact. The fort's origins date back to the 5th century although much of the fortifications date from the 9th and 10th centuries. Our walk continues with great views of the Yeghegis valley, to the medieval monastery of Tsakhats Kar which we will visit before continuing to our hike's end at Yeghegis village. From here it's around a two-and-a-half hour drive to Goris where we spend the next two nights.

Today's 13 kilometre grade walk is graded Moderate and is expected to take approximately five hours with a total ascent of 450 metres and descent of 500 metres.



**Accommodation: Hotel Mina** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 6 - Cable-car from Halidzor to Tatev Monastery; hike along Serpentine Road to Devil's Bridge

From Goris it's a short drive to Halidzor from where we take a ride on the breathtaking \Wings of Tatev\ cable car linking Halidzor with Tatev Monastery. Constructed in 2010, this is the longest (5.7 kilometres) non-stop double track cable car in the world. After our cable car journey we start walking along a route known as the Serpentine Road which leads us up to the 9th century monastery of Tatev, fabulously located on a plateau at the edge of the Vorotan canyon. With a depth of 800 metres, this is the deepest canyon in Armenia, carved out by the fast flowing waters of the Vorotan river. In the 10th and 11 centuries, Tatev was one of the most important Armenian medieval universities. After spending some time at the monastery, we walk down to the bottom of the valley, enjoying superb views all the while. In the bottom of the canyon we stop to see the Devil's Bridge. This amazing geological monument is a natural bridge some 30 metres long and 50 metres wide which spans the Vorotan River and has been formed from limestone travertine deposits built up from natural hot water springs.

After our hike we drive to the nearby settlement of Khndzoresk and walk through Old Khndzoresk, a large troglodyte village located on both sides of a deep canyon. Now abandoned, it was populated until the mid-20th century; we wander around some of the cave houses - some of them several floors high.

Today's seven kilometre walk is graded easy and is expected to take approximately two-and-a-half hours with a total ascent of 100 metres and descent of 500 metres.



**Accommodation: Hotel Mina** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

## DAY 7 - Walk to Karahunge; explore Noravank and Khor Virap Monasteries

This morning we take a short walk to the ancient standing stones of Karahunge - an ancient place of worship dating back 7,500 years; it's now thought it was once an observatory. We then drive to the snowy mountain peaks of the Vayots Dzor Province. This is an area of outstanding natural beauty, with flowing rivers, waterfalls and wild flowers. We visit the stunning 13th century Noravank Monastery, perched on the cliffs overlooking a magnificent gorge. We break for a picnic lunch and then continue to walk through the plains of Ararat with beautiful views of the biblical Mount Ararat.

In the afternoon our journey to Yerevan continues, stopping along our way to explore Khor Virab Monastery complex. This was the place of St. Gregory's imprisonment and today it is an important place of pilgrimage.

Today's one-and-a-half kilometre walk is graded Easy and is expected to take approximately an hour.



**Accommodation: Minotel Barsam Suites** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

## DAY 8 - Hike in the Garni Gorge to Garni temple and UNESCO Geghard Monastery

This morning we drive out of the city to Garni village from where we start hiking through a canyon to the impressive 1st Century AD Garni temple. This Greco-Roman colonnaded temple is believed to have been built as a temple to the sun god Mihr. Apart from the ruins of the royal complex, you will also see a bathhouse with an interesting mosaic. We then walk down through the Garni gorge to see the immense volcanic basalt formations known as the 'symphony of stones'. From here it's a short drive to Geghard monastery - a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The complex, surrounded by the towering cliffs of the Azat Valley, contains a number of churches and tombs, most of them cut into the rock, which are examples of the very best Armenian medieval architecture.

Today's three kilometre walk is graded Easy and is expected to take approximately one-and-a-half hours with a total ascent of 120 metres and descent of 100 metres.



**Accommodation: Minotel Barsam Suites** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 9 - Trip ends in Yerevan

The trip ends after breakfast this morning in Yerevan.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

# Walking and Trekking information

## DAILY DISTANCE



Optional Walks

### Walking grade

Easy to moderate

### Trek details

Walks on 6 days for between 1 to 5.5 hours each day. Please see website for more details.

### Max walking altitude (m)

2461



# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 8  
Lunch: 5  
Dinner: 6



## Transport

Bus



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)



## Accommodation

8 nights standard hotel

# Trip information

## Country information

### Armenia

#### Climate

Due to the fact that Armenia is on a high landlocked plateau the temperature extremes are pronounced: winters are cold and summers can be very hot, spring and autumn are widely regarded as the best times to visit.

#### Time difference to GMT

+4

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Christian

#### Language

Armenian

## Budgeting and packing

### Clothing

Take light and comfortable clothing that can be layered according to the temperature. Pack a waterproof jacket and trousers, fleece jacket, comfortable walking trousers, shorts, t-shirts and a sunhat. Please be aware that temperatures can change dramatically at altitude and at night. In remote parts of Armenia you should avoid shorts and vest tops; long trousers or skirts are ideal (your Leader will be able to advise you on appropriate dress in different locations). A headscarf is essential for visiting churches and mosques.

### Footwear

We recommend you bring lightweight walking boots with ankle support, make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. Also trainers or sandals for relaxing and general wear. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

You will need a water bottle (preferably 2 litres), torch, insect repellent, sunglasses and high factor sun cream. You may like to bring trekking poles if you normally use them.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 20. In order to make things easier for you, the Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

## Country Information

### Armenia

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

##### Lunch price

£6

##### Dinner price

£12.00 - 16.00

##### Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

##### Water price

£0.50 - 1.00

#### Foreign Exchange

##### Local currency

Dram.

##### Recommended Currency For Exchange

We recommend you take your money in undamaged mixed denomination US\$ notes issued post 1993.

##### Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

##### ATM Availability

Only in major towns.

##### Credit Card Acceptance

Very limited.

##### Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are difficult to change.



## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus

## Essential Information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

#### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa and Passport Information

Armenia: Visas are not required for EU nationals, US & UK citizens.  
Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

### Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

### Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

#### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

#### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

### Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom. Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Maximum altitude (m)

2461

## Armenia

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory but we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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