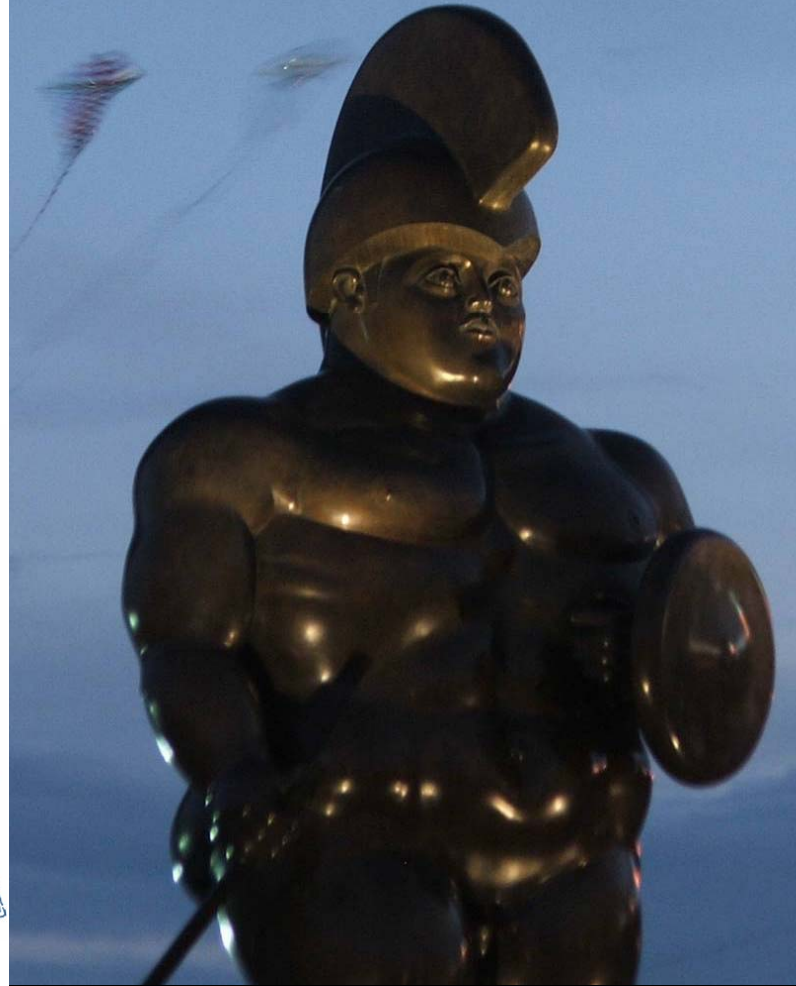


NOTES:

# YEREVAN

**TOUR**  
Armenia



## YEREVAN Երևան

By [Rick Ney](#)  
 Maps by [Rafael Torossian](#)  
 Edited by [Bella Karapetian](#)

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## YEREVAN

(DD 40.18431 x 44.51503, elev. 1016m)

Note about pronunciation: we transcribe words using local dialect, and substitute "i" for "y" as in Sarian for Saryan. "p." stands for poghots (street), "pts." For poghotsner (streets), "pta." for poghota (avenue), "plas." For poghotaner (avenues).

Note: GPS coordinates are in decimal degrees (DD) Latitude x Longitude. Elevation (elev.) is in meters.

NOTE: THE ARMENIAN CURRENCY, THE DRAM, IS APPRECIATING AT A VOLATILE RATE, THE DOLLAR AND EURO DROPPING TO RECORD LOWS. THIS, COUPLED WITH SOMETIMES UNANNOUNCED EXORBITANT PRICE INCREASES MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT THE COSTS FOR SERVICES WITH ANY SENSE OF CONFIDENCE, EXCEPT THIS: YEREVAN WILL BE THE MOST EXPENSIVE PART OF YOUR TRIP.

### INTRODUCTION

**Yerevan** (also spelled Erevan, Erivan, Jerewan, Jerevan) is Armenia's capital and the largest city.



### Highlights

- **Take the Old Abovian Walking Tour crossing 3000 years of Yerevan's History, p. 16**
- **Visit the Matenadaran, the world's largest collection of Armenia manuscripts, p. 36**
- **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**
- **Sip coffee in one of Yerevan's outdoor cafés, p. 90**
- **Visit the Sergei Parajanov (p. 53), the Near East (p. 52), and the Yervand Kochar (p. 55) museums**
- **Eat at one of the theme restaurants in the Hrazdan Gorge, p. 34**
- **Visit Opera Square (p. 22), then take the walking tour to Cascade, Monument and site of the Cafesjian Museum of Modern Art, p. 22**
- **Buy flowers and dried fruit at the Old Shuka on Mashtots, p. 31**
- **Stroll down Ring Park, with its tree-lined sidewalks and lavishly decorated cafés, p. 24**
- **Go to Artist Vernissage and browse the artworks on sale, p. 85**
- **Buy handmade souvenirs (or a new faucet to go with those Soviet medals) at Armenia's largest outdoor market, Vernissage, p. 85**
- **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**

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, advice and 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. Spanish, 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 caffeine 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, jewelry, 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, concert 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 Argentina calls Yerevan home. No matter the skill, Armenians 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 garrison town in the Near East. Looking westward for a hundred years, Armenians have six thousand years of being a part of Asia, and the mixture of the two is not always comfortable, though it can be 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.



It is not always clear where the lines are, but over riding everything is the Armenian code of hospitality, which overwhelms many first timers. Yerevan is a city, with a city's self-absorbed view, but it is also a collection of neighborhoods, ancient tribes and families, serious about their honor, also serious about how they treat guests. If you are invited to someone's home for coffee, expect a table full of sweets and cakes along with that cup, and if asked for dinner, you will think the table might break under the weight of so much food. This is par for the course.

Yerevan's cultural treasures are many if not always well displayed. Museums include the world prominent Matenadaran, which protects 25,000 of Armenia's most prized medieval manuscripts and miniature, a must on your visit.

There are over 30 museums in Yerevan, from the State History Museum and National Gallery (the largest of their kind in the Caucasus) to Art, Literature, Music, Natural History museums. Museums include excavations, woodworking, craft, children's art, film and literature, and the soon to open Cafesjian Museum of Modern Art, which will hold one of the most important collections of modern art in the world.

The city also thrives on its new modernity, shaking off the shackles of Soviet conservatism for some openly celebrated hedonism. Don't expect the excesses of Cannes or Lesbos (at least at regular venues), but you will be pleased at how cool the place can be, with discos, bars, clubs and cafés open all hours. Much of the night life doesn't begin until 9 or 10 p.m. and can last til dawn. Like most 'in-crowds' it can be incestuous, but it is always fun for those who want it.

The city is in the throes of enormous changes now, not just between Diaspora and local Armenians, but also between the old world and the new. Reflected by the destruction of historic neighborhoods and the new high rises dotting the landscapes is some serious soul searching about what kind of country Armenians really want. I have found even the most diehard hedonist to have real concerns of what they can expect in their lifetimes, and for their children.

For most, Yerevan is the first stop on their visit. This is not necessarily a good thing, since the city is experiencing a number of growing pains, starting with a building boom that has turned this semi-desert city into one big construction site, with

cranes, bulldozers and welders combing the rising structures of "New Yerevan". Locals are unhappy to hostile about the whole thing, seeing entire old neighborhoods disappear so that developers can reap a quick profit.

Never mind these neighborhoods were substandard and often lacked plumbing, or that in 20 years some of the new buildings will be hailed as "historic" structures not to be touched, Yerevantsi pride goes back thousands of years, and the new sits uncomfortably with memories of the old.



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 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 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.



Later settlements from the 4th and 3rd millennia BCE have been excavated at Karmir Blue and Berdadzor, also in Shengavit district.

**Urartu** The city officially marks its birth from the 782 BCE founding of Erebuni fortress (Erebuni district), during the reign of Argishti I, who extended the territories of the Urartian Empire (also called the Kingdom of Van) to the Kur River in present day Azerbaijan.

Excavations at Erebuni revealed a cuneiform stone built into the fortification wall by the gate, an inscription on which reads:



*"By the greatness of the god Khaldi, Argishti son of Menua built this great fortress, named it Erebuni, to the power of Blainili and the terror of its enemies. Argishti says: the land was waste, I undertook here great works..."*

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 (Teishebaini), founded about a century later and which served as a worship and administrative center expanding by an influx of survivors from the siege of Erebuni in 7th c BCE. Erebuni served as a military post, and the home for the governor of the region. 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 size and layout of Sushî matches that of the temple of Garni near Yerevan.



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.54), [Karmir Blur/Teishebaini](#) (p. 53), unearthed remains at Yerablur, [Erebuni](#) (p. 48), and the [Hrazdan Gorge](#) (p. 37) 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 eras. 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), Bagharan (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 goods (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, who 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 Artashes"), 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 be seen as one 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 and allowed him to finish his reign quietly in his erstwhile capital.

The era is punctuated by constant warfare between a waxing and waning Rome and Persia, using Armenia as the battlefield. The Armenian dynasties began the difficult struggle of obtaining autonomy and cultural survival, playing one power off the other for the next 500 years. Under Roman protection, the country grew at phenomenal rates, the new dynasty of Arshakuni kings (still related to Parthians), strengthening the Greek-now-Roman cultural effects in the country, which grew rich by serving as a transit point for Far Eastern goods en route to Rome and Persia. These "first" caravans had entered the area via Artashat (which had been rebuilt in 163 BCE 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 Armenian, Persian and Roman gods 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-Zeitun 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 began long before, but 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 Empire, where it became the most popular in 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, S. 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 Sassanids and Byzantium** Further struggles between the Roman Empire of the East based in Constantinople and Persia continued to use Armenia as the punching zone, though Rome's conversion to Christianity decisively put Armenia into the Roman column, encouraging revolts against the Sassanids, who continued to pressure Armenians to apotheosize. The last independent Arshakuni king died in 428, the country becoming a marzpanate of the Sassanid Empire. By the time of the 451 revolt against the Sassanid king Yazdgerd I, the country had already put its fate into Rome's hands, which—miffed at Armenia refusing to accept certain dictates of the Orthodox church—reneged on previous agreements and left Armenians to their fate. The battle of Avarair was far from Yerevan, but its result (the Armenians were defeated by Yazdgerd's Invincible Corp and cavalry of elephants) was felt. Persians swept through the Ararat Valley, taking the land for their own and slaughtering followers of the Christian faith. On decades later, as their power waned and Armenians continued a guerrilla war, did the Sassanids relent, giving them the right to practice their faith. The result in Yerevan was the reconstruction and enlargement of churches and vanks in the city, these same that were built of

wood (Poghos Petros, Katoghike, Zoravar, S. Sargis etc.) were now rebuilt of finely hewn stone, and were among the most impressive of their time. The cathedral at Avan, the only original 5th c structure in the city to survive in some sort of original state, shows how massive (the largest made in Armenia until the 21st c) and inventive these buildings were, that at Avan showing the experimentation of dome construction that led to later domed halls.

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 who returned to the empire. Yerevan grew 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 Hrazdan Caravan route connecting India 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 Ashot 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 fledgling Bagratuni kingdom.



**Bagratuni 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

repelled sending the Seljuks into Persia. Armenian nobles then betrayed the king and Byzantine eventually succeeded in its 100 year quest to gain control of the Bagratuni kingdom.

For about 20 years they ruled from Ani, imposing the Greek Orthodox faith and heavy taxation on cities like Yerevan. Yerevan fell to Seljuks along with Ani in 1064, and became a subject city of Alp-Arslan, who devastated most of the kingdom. What remained was a town of deserted houses and rotting corpses. Unlike Ani, Yerevan somehow rebuilt itself into an urban center, escaping Ani's fate which, after 250 years of successive Seljuk, Kurdish Emirs & Georgian rulers, was completely destroyed in the 1300 earthquake, and never rebuilt.



**Georgian Period** With the transformation of Georgia into a major military power at the end of the 12th c the political situation for Armenians improved decisively. Reaching its apogee during the reign of Queen Tamar (1184-1213) and led by the Armenian brothers Ivaneh and Zakareh Zakarian, the Armenian-Georgian armies smashed Seljuk control of the northern regions, including Yerevan in 1201, which was retaken along with Bjini, (Kotaiik), Dvin & Gegharkunik. Their kinsmen, the Kiurikians ruled over Yerevan, which saw a resurgence in church construction and culture, the "Second Golden Age." All the churches in Yerevan were enlarged, gavit added with shrines and magnificent khachkars installed in

their yards. The silk route expanded and enormous wealth poured into the country and city.



**Mongols and Timurids** The glories were short lived as Yerevan fell to invasion by Jalai-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 "Mair 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.

Changes occurred in the late 13th century as the Ghazan Khan converted to Islam and the Mongol nomadic way of life led to a severe depletion of the land and population. As fields lay fallow, second and third periods of famine occurred, prompting whole scale exodus of the population. Yerevan was again deserted of most of its citizens, who could be watched as Timur leng (Tamurlane or "Tamur the Lame") led three successive waves of attack in 1386-1387, 1394-1396 and 1399-1403. The attacks were brutal, enslaving local peasants and Azats alike, pillaging Yerevan and burning croplands and pastures as they passed. Famine occurred again, with widespread reports of cannibalism among the remaining population.

In the 15th c Yerevan's importance grew again as Iskander, the leader of Turkic tribes known as the Black Sheep (Kaya-Koyunlu) assumed the title 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 White Sheep, who were routed by the new boys in 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.

**Ottoman-Safavid Wars** Because to its strategic significance (and 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.

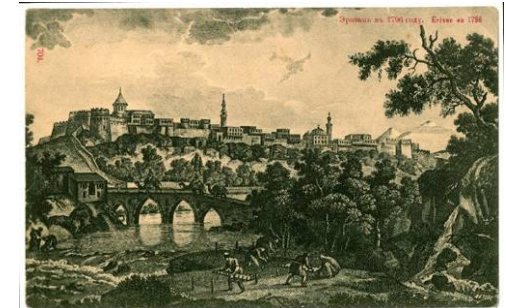


1679 Yerevan

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.

A second invasion of the Ararat plain by Abbas was thwarted by Turks, this time Abbas ordering the forced exodus of the entire Armenian population into Persia, where they settled at Isfahan and New Jhulfa. He had the entire region burned to prevent the Turks from supplying their forces. As a

consequence, Yerevan's population became 80 percent Muslim and 20 percent native Armenian. The Ottomans, Safavids and Ilkhanids all maintained a mint in Yerevan. 150 years of warfare between Turkey and Persia ended in 1620, when Armenia was divided between the two powers, Yerevan going to the Eastern (Persian) side. Yerevan became the capital of one of Persia's Armenian Meliks, semi-autonomous regions ruled of Armenian nobles.



1779 Yerevan

**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) Beglerbekate (province). The noted French adventurer, writer and jeweler for King Charles II visited Yerevan on his 4 year journey of the Safavid Empire (1671-1674), writing about the provincial city in his *Voyages de monsieur le chevalier Chardin en Perse et autres lieux de l'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. 37), a mostly Armenians neighborhood in Persian Yerevan set on a hill in the center of town. Kond was presided over by the Geghamian 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 of rule by Asian non-Christians, Eastern Armenia entered a new era of European integration through their new Russian ‘brothers’ who sparked an immediate and lasting change in the country. Exiled Armenians from began to return including a large number of Persians Armenians in 1829, a new quarter of the city was added and the process of rebuilding the city began, as the mud brick homes favored by the previous inhabitants were demolished to make way for and new European buildings erected in their place.



19th c Abovian Street

Descriptions of the period evoke an atmosphere somewhat like the burgeoning days of rebuilding Chicago after the Great Fire, with a cacophony of sounds and images; hammers pounding nails and strips of red hot iron, builders shouting to their workers for more masonry, carriages crossing dusty roads that were beginning to be repaved in stone, shopkeepers calling out their wares to passersby who marveled at the new two and three story elegantly carved buildings in the St. Petersburg style.

Despite this sudden burst of energy (the population grew to 12,500) and a transformation of the city’s center, when Tsar Nikolai I visited Yerevan on tour of his new dominions, he called the city “a clay pot”, and 60 years later the Russian historian, writer and social critic Daniil

Mordovtsev (1830-1905) found little difference in a treatise on how central control of the Russian Empire was stifling regional development: “Houses of clay and flat roofs, streets of clay, squares built from clay, all around clay; clay, clay, clay.”

Throughout the 19th c, Yerevan never became more than a provincial town and district administrative center, a backwater of the Russian empire, despite its first general plan in 1854, which added women’s colleges and the English Garden. Even before, in 1842, the Officers House was built on what is now lower Nalbandian p, considered one of the best neoclassic buildings in Armenia. It was recently sold to a local Oligarch and demolished to make way for a steel and glass high rise. The abandoned fortress had been torn down, along with its elegant Persian palace and gardens, in favor of the new Shustov cognac factory, and Russian churches were erected at the current Shahumian Statue and in Kanaker. Yerevan’s first printing press was installed in 1874 by a certain Zakaria Gevorkian and in 1879, the precursor to the current Kino Moskva was built next to Poghos Petros basilica in 1879, Yerevan’s first Russian theatre.

Outside of its main street, Astafian, which had elegant 19th c houses designed by the neoclassic architects Mirzozian and Meghrabian, the town remained a place of single story mud-brick homes stacked on top of each other, with Persian mosques, baths and outdoor markets. The only redeeming features of the dust-laden town were the sumptuous gardens laid by the Persians, which even Yerevan’s harshest critics praised.

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 with stone or cast iron fountains in the Peterhof mode. At the turn of the 20th c the town had over 29,000 inhabitants, 49% Turkic (described by Russian sources as “Azerbaijani Tatars”), 48% Armenian and 2% Russian. In 1902, a railway line linked Yerevan with Alexandropol, Tiflis and Julfa, the same year Yerevan’s first public library opened. In 1913, a telephone line with eighty subscribers became operational.

The 1915 genocide unalterably changed Yerevan, 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.



Some like to say that when the city architect Alexander Tamaian later made plans for a city of 200,000 it was considered a burst of Soviet bravado, a future projection. In fact at least half that number already resided in the city in 1917, at the time of the Revolution and formation of the Transcaucasus Federation of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan (immediately hostile to Armenia, threatening to “join hands” through Zangezur with their Turkish brothers in a new Pan-Turkic Empire).

More refugees came after the Tsarist Troops retreated across the Arax River to return to Russia. The city was now a teeming metropolis, twice the size of its neighbor Alexandropol, once the largest city in Russian Armenia. People begged for food, sold their trinkets and watched in despair as Turkish troops under the direction of Ataturk threatened to complete the genocide and wipe Armenia off the map. Citizens rallied in May 1918, pouring out of the city with whatever weapons they could find (many with only pitchforks or hammers) to rout the Turkish troops at Sardarabad, about 50 km distant. A second battle at Bash-Aparan defeated the Turks and they retreated to behind their current borders.

Due in part to its role as administrative center for the Russian Tsars, Yerevan was chosen to be the capital of the new Armenian Republic on May 28, 1918. The republic was short-lived; Turkey continued to harass the young republic, attacking the country at several points. The Bolsheviks began a campaign to retake the countries of the Russian Empire (and its resources), the Red army taking Georgia and Azerbaijan in 1919 before focusing on Armenia. Caught between the Turks



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.



11th Red Army entering Yerevan, 1921

**Soviet Yerevan** 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.



Tamanian's plan, 1924

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.



Poghos-Petros Demolition

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 Almast 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).

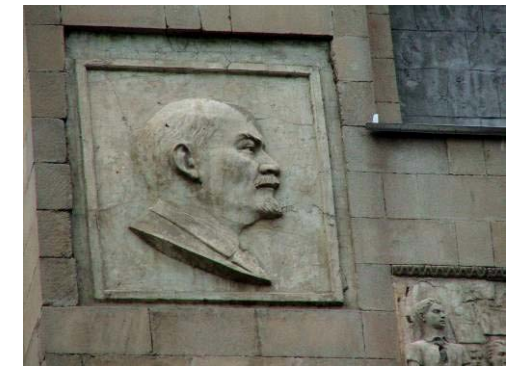
Tamanian's plan remained in effect throughout the Soviet Era, buildings gradually added as the budget allowed. Its main features which can still be seen today are the general layout of the center, the Ring Park, Republic and Opera Squares, Cascade, the East-West Boulevard (Vernissage and Post Office 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 Avana into the metropolis that by the 1980s 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 of artists and writers (Yeghishhe 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

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 Erebuni (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.



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 cornucopia 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 broke out in Nagorno Karabakh in the same year and intensified in the region in 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Azeris, some of whom had lived in Yerevan for centuries and had become friends with their Armenian neighbors were forced to flee Armenian aggression, abandoning thousands of homes.



1988 Demonstrations

Azerbaijan and Turkey closed their borders with Armenia, refusing shipments of fuel and humanitarian aid to pass through to Armenia. Azerbaijanis 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 in 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.



Its 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. Kocharian 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.



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 glowed 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, Armavir, Aragatsotn and Kotaiik marz.



The city's center is at roughly 1000 meters above sea level, the Hrazdan Gorge and Yerevan's Ararat valley districts (Malatia-Sebastia, Shengavit, Erebuni) are around 850 meters, while its northern neighborhoods (Arabkir, Davitashen, Kanaker, Masiv, Nork) top out at 1300 meters on the hilly landscape. The city center is surrounded on the east by "Sari Tagh" or mountain neighborhood, a circular ring of low hills that pre-1992 were topped by a thick forest, the trees cut by locals during the worst of the blockade winters. The north and northwest are the foothills for Mt. Aragats, Armenia's tallest mountain.

Northern neighborhoods are noticeably cooler than center, sometime by 3-5 degrees C. The rocky character of the area must be heavily cultivated and irrigated to bring vegetation, which is seasonal in the area. Southern neighborhoods are noticeably drier and hotter than the center, adjoining in the SE the marshlands of Masis which create a humid atmosphere that is unpleasant in the summer. To the SW, the area is drier and rockier, the apartment blocks of Malatia gradually giving way to the farmlands and vineyards near Echmiadzin. This is among the most fertile soil in the city, which locals take advantage of by planting small "victory gardens" in their yards or nearby public space.

The Hrazdan River cuts through the west of the city, dividing the older center from newer outlying districts, and has a unique ecosystem with several endemic plant species inhabiting its canyon walls. Its lower altitude (850 m) and shaded canyon cools the riverbed several degrees from that above the rim, allowing vegetation normally found several hundred meters higher than Yerevan to thrive on the river bank. Spring flowers are

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.

See When? below for more.

**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.

Yerevan experiences all the seasons of the year; sometimes in a single day. That day would be in March. I remember reading in my first guide to Yerevan (a Soviet book that remains one of my favorite pieces of propaganda) that Yerevan's weather is "continental." Ooooh, I thought, I like that, like a croissant and a demitasse in a Paris café. Then the book continued, "winters are terribly cold and summers worse hot." Well.



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.



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.

It is also the best time to visit the near regions in the Ararat valley, which are green and full of wildflowers until the end of May, a blessedly cool time to visit sites that by July bake in the sun. The upper regions will be cooler, cold at night, with freezes and snows common at the upper most elevations until mid June.

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Year
<b>Average High temperature [°C]</b>	0	5	10	16	24	27	31	32	25	18	9	1	17
<b>Precipitation [cm]</b>	3	3	4	5	5	3	2	2	2	4	2	3	39



Most people visit in the summer, which fits their work schedule perhaps but shows the city in its worst light. The rampant construction has created one big dust pit and Yerevan's notorious evening winds send funnels of dust and debris down its streets. No one is immune, the havoc wrought on clean clothes and primed hair is democratic and complete. Summers are hot and dry, the blessing being the dry, which tempers the heat somewhat. Plus the best time to visit nearby mountains, Lake Sevan and resorts at Dilijan, Tsaghkadzor and Lori are undeniably in the summer. There is a peculiarity in Yerevan of its shade; on even the hottest days, if you find your way to some shade (preferably tree shade), you are saved and it can actually feel a little cold. Go back into the sun and you melt. This is the definition of the term "killing sun" used by locals.

Still, a few rain showers punctuate the heat, and as the evening wears on the weather gets cooler. Locals pour out of their apartments to take the night air and visit neighbors. Cafes are crowded and those around a fountain are blessedly cool. Night life wears on to after midnight. Businesses and shops do not start until around 10. This is the definition of civilized living to me.

The worst heat comes mid July-mid August, when the day of Vardavar hails a 4 week period of summer heat. For about two weeks in August the evening breezes fail and people get very cranky. Those who can take off for Sevan or Lori, escaping the heat. The rest seek respite where ever they can, including invading Yerevan's large water park. But even at its worse, Yerevan is still no more hot 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 charms turn 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.

#### DO ▲

Explore Yerevan's Center with one of our [walking tours](#) (p. 17). Visit the world famous [Matenadaran](#) (p. 39). Spend time at the [Parajanov Museum](#) (p. 58). Sip coffee or eat out at one of Yerevan's elaborate [outdoor cafes](#) (p. 97). Visit [Erebuni](#), [Shengavit](#) and [Karmir Blur](#), Yerevan's Bronze Age birthplaces (p. 48). Eat some of Armenia's famous BBQ at one of the khorovats palaces on [Proshian street](#) (p. 137). Pay respects at the [Tsitsernakaberd Genocide Monument](#) and museum (p. 55). Visit the [Yervand Kochar Studio Museum](#) (p. 59), [Martiros Sarian Home Museum](#) (p. 59) and the [Folk Art Museum](#) (p. 60). Shop at [Artist Vernissage](#) (p. 90) and [Vernissage Craft & Flea Market](#) (p. 91). Buy Fresh fruit at the [Shuka](#) (p. 34). Dance the night away at one of the city's small but energetic [discos](#) (p. 95). Visit the [State History Museum](#) (p. 41), and then walk upstairs to the [National Gallery](#) (p. 47). Take a [Marshrutni Taxi](#) (minivan), ride the [Metro](#) (p. 109). Spend time at [Cascade](#), Armenia's new city center (p. 26). Take in a [music concert](#) or [folk dance](#) (p. 92). Dine at the eye-popping fantasy H'rashalik in the [Hrazdan Gorge](#) (p. 37). Take in a Jazz or rock performance at [Malkhas](#), [Akump](#) or [Avantgarde Clubs](#) (p. 92). Catch a [play](#) (p. 92), [movie](#) (p. 95), opera (Almast, Arshak I or Anush, p. 93) or a [gallery exhibition](#) (p. 68). Visit the 12th c [Katoghike church](#) and 4th c. [Zoravar](#) (p. 76). Spend an evening on a carnival ride at Mama Armenia ([Haghtanak Park](#), p. 86).

#### INFORMATION ▲

The **ARMENIA VISITOR INFORMATION CENTER**, 3 Nalbandian p (one block north of Republic Square), tel. 54-23-03, 54-23-06, email [help@armeniainfo.am](mailto:help@armeniainfo.am), URL: [www.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am), provides a much needed service, with friendly staff (for tourists anyway). They also have at least one of the most dedicated staff members I have met,

taking a personal interest in the well being of visitors. On the other side, one local found them to be almost hostile. Let's hope that is just a fluke. Their web site is a storehouse of information, in the process of being updated into seven languages. Truth in journalism: I am giving them information from this book for the update. If you don't like it, tell me as well as them!



**AREG ROUND-THE-CLOCK INQUIRIES**, 19 Nalbandian p, tel. 55-11-11, provides info about services and locations/numbers of main venues.

**NOYAN TAPAN**, 20 Isahakian p, tel. 56-59-65, has news and information about Armenia.

**SPYUR INFORMATION SERVICES**, 1/3 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 51-99-99, provides yellow page services.

Guests seem very happy with the tour information they get from [ENVOY HOSTEL](#) (p. 136), to be expected form an international hostel as one guests shares experiences with another. You can also try places like **ARTBRIDGE CAFE** (20 Abovian p, tel. 52-12-39, 58-12-84, email, [artbridge@netsys.am](mailto:artbridge@netsys.am)) and **AKUMP** (40 Tumanian p, tel. 53-13-61, [www.theclub.am](http://www.theclub.am)), which are popular with tourists and locals alike. Strike up a conversation and see what you can find. Failed? Try **Sicily** across the street (33 Tumanian p, tel. 53-73-88). Mostly locals but young and interested in meeting visitors—you may just hook up with a place to crash and some good info to boot.

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](mailto:info@anihotel.com), URL: [www.anihotel.com](http://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@saberatours.am](mailto:info@saberatours.am), [incoming@saberatours.am](mailto:incoming@saberatours.am), URL: [www.saberatours.am](http://www.saberatours.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 **Sati Tours** (21 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-10-22, 53-11-20, 53-99-00, email: [sati@arminco.com](mailto:sati@arminco.com), [armenia@satiglobal.com](mailto:armenia@satiglobal.com), URL: [www.satiglobal.com](http://www.satiglobal.com)) and **Hyr Services** (50 Nalbandian p, tel. 56-04-95, 52-98-08, 52-24-14, email: [contact@hyrservice.com](mailto:contact@hyrservice.com), URL: [www.hyrservice.com](http://www.hyrservice.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](mailto:klm@arminco.com), [sales@levontravel.am](mailto:sales@levontravel.am), URL: [www.levontravel.com](http://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 Airport) to the Matenadaran. It intersects with all major east-west 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, Opera, Place de France (connector streets West and East), the Conservatory, Tamarian Park and Cascade, Yervand Kochar Museum, Kino Nairi, Ring Park, State Marionette Theatre, Chamber Theatre, and the Matenadaran. See [Mashtots Ave Walking Tour](#), p. 33.

An **inner circle** is formed by **Ring Park** on the east (Isahakian, Alek Manukian, Khandjian and Moskovian streets), and **Sarian p.** on the west, all connecting with **Grigor Lusavorich pta.** on the south. **Ring Park** is where you find most of the outdoor cafes, the chamber music hall, chess house and most of its outdoor statues (see [Ring Park Walking Tour](#), p. 27). **Sarian** has the Tumanian and Martiros Sarian museums, the main post office and Stop Club, as well as entry to Kond Historic district. Just off Sarian on Tumanian are The Club, Malkhas Jazz Club, Sicily and Envoy Hostel. **Grigor Lusavorich** has the French and Russian Embassies, Sundukian Theatre and the Circus.

An **outer circle** is formed by **Paronian** and **Proshian** streets (Yerevan's "BBQ street") on the west, which connects with **Marshal Baghramian**, a large avenue leading to the NW districts of Aigedzor, Arabkir and Adjapniak. The north and east of the outer ring is formed by **Koriun** (Citadel, Medical College) and **Charents** pts.

Within these circles there are **two squares** that serve as axis for the city's main streets. The lower square is **Hanrapetutian H'raparak** (Republic Square), where government offices, the State History, Near East and Literature and Art Museums, National Gallery and the main Post Office are located. The Marriott, Erebuni and Senior Hotels are also located off this square.

H'raparak is intersected by North-South **Abovian street** which connects the Hrazdan Gorge in the south to Abovian Square and Nork and Arabkir Districts in the north. Abovian passes through the historic heart of the city and is the most popular street with strollers. Abovian is where you will find (from the south) the Yerevan Museum, Miasnikian and Shahumian squares, the Italian Embassy, the Small Philharmonic hall, Crown Hotel, the Geologic Museum, Hotel Yerevan, Kino Moskva, Russian Stanislavski Theatre, Art Bridge and Café de Paris, Ring Park, Folk Art Museum and a number of the most popular shops, cafes and restaurants (See [Abovian Walking Tour](#), p. 17). Another N-S street is **Nalbandian**, which runs NE to Ring Park, with Metro H'raparak, Armenia Information Center, Sakharov Square, AvantGarde Music Club, Alexander Spendiarian, and Ring Park.

**Amirian Street** runs west from H'raparak, connecting with **Mashtots pta.** and **Sarian p.** an outer ring street. Amirian has ArmAvia and Aeroflot Ticket Offices, Yerevan Central Library, and the Sos Sargsian Theatre. **Tigran Mets** runs east then south from H'raparak, connecting with the Ring Park at Khanjian and Kochar streets then continuing south to the Train Station and Erebuni District, eventually leading to the Ararat Valley near Masis. Here you will find (from H'raparak) Hotel Europe, entry to the Firdusi outdoor market, Kino Rossiya (minivans to Alaverdi, Artik, Bagratashen, Goris, Giumri, Kapan, Sissian, Vanadzor), Grigor Lusavorich Cathedral, Sil Plaza Hotel, Tashir Shopping Mall, Tashir Shuka, the Central Train Station, David Sasuntsi Monument (minivans to Ararat, Khor Virap and Artashat) and Erebuni Excavation/Museum.

The upper square is **Place de France**, a large traffic plaza that connects **Mashtots**, **Sayat Nova** and **Marshal Baghramian pta.** with **Opera** (and Opera or Freedom Square) and the large **Cascade** monument park. Here you will find Opera, Artist Vernissage, Tamarian Park, Sayat Nova park and Komitas Statue. **Opera Square** (popular cafes and discos) connects to the new Northern Avenue which connects with Abovian and Republic Square

(See [Northern Ave-Opera-Cascade Walking Tour](#), p. 24). **Sayat Nova pta.** leads southeast to Ring Park and Charents p. with the Tumanian Puppet Theatre, Katoghike, Abovian Street, and the Ani Plaza Hotel.



**Marshal Baghramian pta.** runs NW past the Chinese, Syrian and British Embassies, the National Assembly, Presidential Office, Metro Baghramian, the American University of Armenia, Proshian p (Hotel Bass) en route to **Barekamutiun Square** (Metro Barekamutiun, shops and mterks), which connects to **Kochar**, **Komitas pta** that run into the northern district of Arabkir, and **Kievian pta** that runs SW. **Kievian pta** runs past the Kievian Bridge entry to the Hrazdan Gorge, Olympic Hotel, Tsitsernakaberd, and the Hamalir Sports and Concert Hall, before turning into **Leningradian pta** which passes Hotel Sebastia, Valem Plaza Hotel, Tsitsernakaberd (west entry), Sebastia p (entry to Malatia-Sebastia District, a.k.a. "Bangladesh") before turning into the Ashtarak and Giumri Hwy.

#### Other major streets

**Azatutian pta.** connects lower Yerevan with Monument and Haghtanak Park in East Arabkir, beginning at Abovian Square. The street is not vehicle only (take the Cascade steps to reach the same spot from Place de France). Azatutian leads to Zeitun and Kanaker Districts (Khachatur Abovian House Museum, Medieval Churches) before turning into the Tbilisi or Sevan Hwy.

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 Kievian 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 ("Marshrutni 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 *zhaks*, local offices in charge of managing neighborhood issues and collecting fees. These were regrouped into twelve large districts ("hamaiynk," "shrjan," or "raiyon" in Armeno-Rus 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.



Center (called "Kentron" by locals) is the most developed of the districts, and under what seems to be a perpetual building boom that is realigning streets and demolishing historic neighborhoods in its wake. The new city may end up being modern, but few think it will be pretty; most believing it will destroy the unique character of the old city. Still, there is enough of the old to remind you of what it once was, and more than enough of Alexander Tamanian's 1924 master plan to still impress the casual viewer.

Central includes the inner circle everyone knows as Kentron, plus the old neighborhoods Kond Hill and Tsitsernakaberd (west), Aigestan (east), and Nor Kilikia and Noragiugh on the southern plains.

Center is where you will find most of the places you want to visit; museums, monuments and statues, parks, walking tours, shops and cafes are almost all located here. Hotels in the center are by rule exorbitantly priced, with a few exceptions (the Envoy Hostel and some of the low-rent places). 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 distance from the center of town. By bus or minivan it is 30-45 minutes, 20 minutes by taxi. The district is reached by Isahakian pta (Echmiadzin Hwy) or via Sebastia pta from its nearest neighbor Ajapniak district. The sad space is mostly high rise apartment blocks around built around parched green zones. One of the last districts to be built in Yerevan, the buildings are among the worst constructed, with little thought to placing them in the middle of lower semi-desert terrain, making the apartments sweltering in the summer and frigid in winter. Inhabitants are solid working class people, the area's major plus. These are salt of the earth people who work hard for what little they have, but freely share with visitors.

Malatia-Sebastia is made of Araratian, Shahumian, Zoravar Andranik, Nor Malatia and Nor Sebastia neighborhoods, with Nor Malatia and Nor Sebastia being the oldest, once independent villages.



The old area, in the north of the district there are a couple of interesting monuments and a renovated 19th c church. In the south there is a new characterless church, statuary and Yerablur military cemetery, but otherwise little reason to visit unless you have friends or want to see what it is like to live on the far edge of the Yerevan planet.

## AJAPNIAK

Northeast of Malatia-Sebastia is Ajapniak, 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 Kievian pta from Barekamutiun, just across the Kievian Bridge and north of Tsitsernakaberd (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, Mrgashen). Halabian ends at the Yeghvard Hwy.

Leninakan begins at Leningradian in the south, turning into Shiraz and Gevorg Chaush before meeting the Ashtarak 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 (Barekamutiun) 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 Haghtanak (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 (Barekamutiun) 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 Koriun (east border).



The district is a combination of old and new, with ancient churches and mud-brick houses crowding the old districts of Kanaker (including the "twin monasteries" of S. Hovhannes and Astvatsatsin and a glorious 13th c Khachkar Shrine) and others lining the Getar River gorge in Nor Zeitun. More modern 50s-60s apartment blocks and offices round out the older buildings. Kanaker also has a 19th c. Russian Army post across the street from a 19th c Russian church.

**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 Koriun, 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.



Its buildings are a lesson to architects in designing for people not an idea, and its parks green oasis in an otherwise rocky desert terrain. Masiv is divided into nine blocks (Masiv 1, Masiv 2, etc.); one and two in Avan district, the rest in Nor Nork.

Avan is made of Avan-Arinj (old Avan, north) and Avan proper or Masiv.

**NOR NORK**

Continuing the spiral of districts around center is easternmost Nor Nork, one of the farthest districts in the city. The district is an extension of Masiv, with blocks 3-9 built from north to south.

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.



**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 swampland far from the center of town. Suspects in their newly adopted countries, these heroes of the motherland endured hard lives and ostracism from 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.

**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, minivans to Alaverdi, Artik, Bagratashen, 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 minivans 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.





**SIGHTS** ▲



**PACKAGE CITY TOURS** ▲

Tours can be made from any of a number of agencies, including

**ERKIR NAIRI**, 1/31 Tamanian p, tel. 58-23-39, email : [info@erkirnairi.am](mailto:info@erkirnairi.am), URL : [www.erkirnairi.am](http://www.erkirnairi.am), gives day tours out of its offices facing Cascade Park.

**GREEN TOUR**, 57 Miasnikian pta, tel. 24-00-26, email: [tour@GREEN.am](mailto:tour@GREEN.am), URL: [www.GREEN.am](http://www.GREEN.am), provides day excursions at competitive prices.

**HYUR SERVICES**, 50 Nalbandian p, tel. 56-04-95, 52-98-08, 52-24-14, email: [contact@hyurservice.com](mailto:contact@hyurservice.com), URL: [www.hyurservice.com](http://www.hyurservice.com), has a number of day trips.

**SATI TOURS**, 21 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-10-22, 53-11-20, 53-99-00, email: [sati@arminco.com](mailto:sati@arminco.com), [armenia@satiqglobal.com](http://armenia@satiqglobal.com), URL: [www.satiqglobal.com](http://www.satiqglobal.com)

**SIDON TRAVEL**, 19 Sayat-Nova pta, Ani Plaza Hotel Lobby, tel. 52-29-67, 54-31-27, email: [sidon@arminco.com](mailto:sidon@arminco.com), URL: [www.sidontravel.com](http://www.sidontravel.com) offers day trips from its office in Ani Hotel.

**SABERA TOURS**, 32-38 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 52-55-55, email: [info@saberatours.am](mailto:info@saberatours.am), [incoming@saberatours.am](mailto:incoming@saberatours.am), URL: [www.saberatours.am](http://www.saberatours.am) offers a number of day tours.

**TATEV TOUR AGENCY**, 19 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-44-01, 52-44-02, 54-33-60, 54-33-61, email: [info@tatev.com](mailto:info@tatev.com), URL: [www.tatev.com](http://www.tatev.com), gives daily tours.

**WALKING TOURS** ▲

The best way to get acquainted with Yerevan is to do as the locals do; get on your feet and hoof it. This both saves time (parking is impossible and traffic jams are now par for the course, adding 20-30 minutes to what were once 5 minute jaunts) and allows you to savor the sights and sounds of the city. Since 90% of what there is to see is in the center, a concentrated circle of historic neighborhoods, museums, parks and monuments set teeth-by-jowl into a warren of restaurants, cafes and shops, a walking tour covers the most ground for the effort.



And the beauty of it is you get to set the pace; walking tours can take anything from a half hour stroll through the park to an hour or two taking in local sights to a half or full day visiting museums and galleries, stopping to eat or sip coffee, or shopping at a local store. For those unused to walking, take along a good pair of sneakers (though you may be surprised at how many women will pass you by in their sky-high stilettos) and persevere! No matter how tired your feet get, there is always a café or restaurant nearby offering rest and nourishment, and just remember you are seeing parts of the city bus-loaded tourists barely glimpse at. This is how the locals know their city, and you are now one of them!

**Combining walks** These routes are listed by popularity and are suggested as full explorations of their territory, but you can combine them (or parts of them) for longer walks that cover almost everything there is to see in central Yerevan.

**Combined Tour: Mashtots-Opera-Cascade-Ring Park-Abovian** One possible combined walking tour starts at **Republic Square**, going two blocks west to join the **Mashtots Avenue**

**Walking Tour**, then **Opera-Cascade Walking Tour** to Monument, backtracking to Isahakian p, 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 **Abovian Walking 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 section and indicated with their respective page number; statues and monuments are covered in detail as part of the tour.



✘ **OLD ABOVIAN WALKING TOUR** ▲

This walking tour is a must for anyone wanting to savor a bit of old Yerevan while strolling through some of its most interesting areas. Starting at the base of the old street at Haghtanak Bridge, the tour can be broken into parts for shorter walks or taken as a whole together for a half to full day visit. Along the way you pass parks, museums,

statues, cafés, hotels and restaurants; into the heart of the city.

**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 Astafieva, 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.



Astafian St. became a grand promenade, including plans for a Katolikos 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 Khanzatian's Saxon Imported Goods. It was finally renamed for the writer K. Abovian in the 1940s.

**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 impressive 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.

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.

Abovian reflects the essence of each period of Yerevan's growth, whether in the turn-of-century mansions between Republic Square and Hotel Yerevan, in the Art Deco buildings and signs that flow up to Isahakian 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 balcony over the front doors, "I wouldn't be here." During the 1915-18 genocide, the building was converted into an orphanage for girls. "My mother was an orphan, she stayed there," 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."



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, feeding the gossip grist mill with tales of money laundering, forced purchases by local mafia, rich *Akhbar* (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 Karmurch ("Red Bridge", due to its red tufa) and Khoja 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 a 3rd millennium 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-Wine Factory).

If you cross the street onto the other side of Haghtanak Bridge, you can see what the old city looked like. The black and red stone buildings with wooden balconies are part of a 1980s reconstruction effort meant to recreate the old city. This is the area of the city called "Dzoragiugh", and it includes the tall *St. Sarkis Church* above the canyon, and the old buildings, one of which houses the Parajanov Home-Museum.

The most characteristic type of construction up to the mid-19th century was a combination of mud-brick, rough-cut stone and smooth stucco. Roofs were flat, allowing inhabitants to store winter forage while insulating the house. The more wealthy peasants decorated their doors and windows with finely cut stone trim, but by and large the houses were hovels, quaint for 21st century Bed & Breakfasts, but nothing comfortable in the centuries leading to the Russian era.

Later, in the 18th-19th cc, pitched roofs became more common as farmers turned to the more lucrative crafts trade. These roofs were covered with

red clay tiles, giving neighborhoods a much more colorful look, something they lack now. Most homes were white-washed, though the wealthier used brick and stone with white stucco. Balconies formed an important part of Armenia's architectural legacy. The balconies were made from wood, with elaborately carved arches, finials and privacy screens, a legacy from the Turkish and Persian eras. The Russian introduced European designs, bringing back the flat roof (or modifying it to a slight pitch that was easily hidden from view by elaborate cornices). The mansions are huge, encompassing both large shops and offices on the first floor and family quarters above. But relatively few of these were built, concentrated on (then) Astafian street and the intersecting Arami and Biuzand, then called Tzar's street. And with the 20th c onslaught of metal and asbestos roofing and prefab construction, the character and flavor of the old world was lost forever.

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 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 Griboyedov 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.

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 Khojrdaran (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. 56.

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.



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 Stepanian, 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 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)**.

Follow the street closest to the park, **Italian street (6)**, named for the **Italian Embassy** which is supervising the care of the street and nearby parks.

The park facing Italian Street was Yerevan's first formal gardens, **English Park (5)**, names for its formal style and to add a little panache to the dusty town. It is about half its old size. In the 1920s it was renamed Communard Park, after the 26 commissars killed while trying to overthrow the government in Azerbaijan in 1917. 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". The play was so popular it ran for more than a thousand performances. The current building was completed in 1966 (architect R. Alaverdian). The upper floor houses Yerevan's **Experimental Theatre, a.k.a. Goy Theatre**. See [Entertainment: Theatres](#) p. 94.



Continue up Italian Street past **Congress Hotel** to the next intersection, cross the street to the left (W) and go to NW corner of the center strip of rose beds. There among the greenery is a small statue **Yerevan Water Boy (8)** (1970, sculptor H. Bejanian), one of the most endearing symbols of Old Yerevan.

Water boys used to walk along the streets of the old city with clay jugs slung over their shoulders, offering their water using repeated stanzas from an old song. No longer a part of the city's life, they are still remembered through the knife sharpeners, fruit vendors and matsun (yogurt) sellers that move through the courtyards of Yerevan calling out their wares, though in mechanized vehicles.



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.

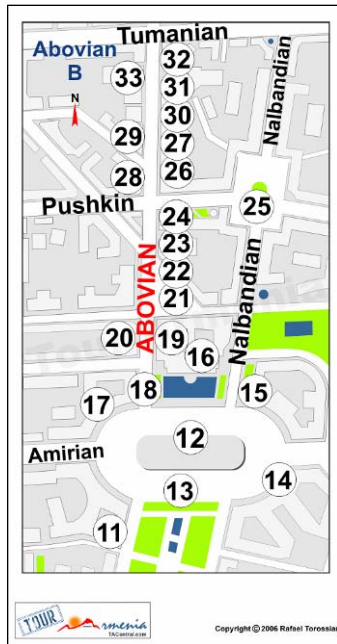
The **Central Bank, Ardshinvest and Armimpex banks** are on the right; the **Ministry of Justice and State Prosecutor** on the left, along with a couple of **BISTROS**, including a **LEBANESE BISTRO**. Both streets lining the park are called **Vazgen Sargsian p.**, named for an oligarch and Defense Minister 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 **HSBC**. 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.

**MAP B** Just north is **Republic Square**

**(Hanrapetutian H'raparak) (12)**, where most begin their visit to Yerevan. The square is really a traffic oval, centerpiece of the neoclassic architect Alexander Tamanian's 1924-36 master plan for Yerevan, which envisioned replacing a small feudal town with a major socialist metropolis with room for then fantastic population of 200,000. In fact, Tamanian was faced with a city already that size, its dirt alleys and grand promenade filled with refugees from the genocide, as well as repatriated Armenians from Russia. His plan carved avenues and parks out of the hodgepodge of Turkish and Persian *Baghs* (neighborhoods) that formed the town, creating ring roads and wide streets, plumbing and waste removal, and mechanized transport to the vast majority of the



population. It was a decided improvement over the feudal society that lived there before, though in creating his dream, the authorities demolished many historic structures, including churches and mansions.



**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, Vasilii'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 interpretive 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. 41).



The upper level was added later to house the **National Gallery of Art** collection (open Tues-Sun 10:30-6, 800 AMD), which includes Rembrandt, Titian and—together with the Russian Art Museum by Cascade—the second largest collection of 19th Century Russian Art in the world. In the back of the building are the **Literature and Art and the Middle Eastern/Marcos Grigorian Museums**. See [Museums: Literature and Art](#) p. 56.

In front are the **Singing Fountains**, a popular spot for evening strollers and open air concerts. The fountains are set to music, changing their design according to the type of music played (or so we are told). When working they add a pleasant atmosphere to the square, which is otherwise baking hot in the summer filled with the noise of traffic that swirls around the central **stone mosaic**, its poor construction from soft tufa stone

requiring yearly renovations (costing a small fortune). Early designs for a large gracious central fountain that would add grandeur and help clean the otherwise polluted air have been ignored by the government which reserves the space for a couple of annual rallies.

**Biuzand p.** heads off east and west from the square, just at the entrance to Abovian street proper and Nalbandian p. on the other side. **To the east**, the street lines **Vernissage**, Armenia's largest outdoor flea market for crafts, jewelry, souvenirs, tools and house wares, a weekly bacchanal in capitalism and bartering. The **part extending west**, was once a part of the **Old Abovian district**, with 18th-19th cc buildings and shops lining its streets. It has been demolished to make way for the new tenements taking its place. 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.



**Republic Square to Pushkin**

From Republic Square, left of the museum building, you enter contemporary **Abovian Street**. The first two blocks come closest to resembling **Old Abovian (Astafian) (18)** as it was at the turn of the century. Two architects shaped the old quarter's ambiance, and by looking back and forth across the street you can compare their designs.

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

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 Meghribian 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, escaping the dust and noise outside their homes. Combining red and black tufa, the buildings have flourishes of Art Nouveau details in the doorway and windows. The last building of the complex is 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 **PIZZA DI ROMA** restaurant with the best salad bar in the city and a **TREASURES OF ARMENIA SHOP** with high end souvenirs and couture.

The next cross street is **Arami p.**, another side street in **Old Abovian**, once graced with 19th c mansions and businesses, now demolished to make way for an oligarch's new Yerevan development. A few houses hang on for now, and

a walk through the swirling dust of construction with worth it for two architectural jewels, **Astafian's Brothel House** and the **stone workshop** for one of Armenia's last stone masons, a master of Khachkars.



The brothel is located one long block up Arami, past the **Georgian Embassy** and right in front of a beautiful corner 1900 Meghribian 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 fond inside.



The building is in front of the old **HyeFilm Studios**. Backtrack to Arami and turn R (W) and go to the end of the block (avoid the cranes and trucks), and on the left you will be rewarded with small **outdoor stone carving shop**, where a master and his apprentices create khachkar

markers and graves for 21st c clientele. The master is a bit gruff, but a few words and smiles usually leads to him talking with due pride about his work. Backtrack to Abovian.



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 CDS** (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 CAFE**.



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.*



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 Barsegh Yeghiazarian** in the 1880's, the **two buildings on the right (23, 24)** have strong Mirzoian Neo-classical 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.



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.



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](mailto:ara@ara.am), URL: [www.ara.am](http://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.

**Pushkin to Tumanian**

On the right are two 1870's buildings, one with salmon stucco and red trim with the **Geological Museum (26)** (open Tues-Sat, 11-4, 500 AMD) plus a Soviet version of "Washington Slept Here" plaque for the writer Maxim Gorky. The **museum** has a large collection of stones and maps, plus every kid's favorite, a life-size replica of a Woolly mammoth that was uncovered in the Shirak region. See [Museums: Geological](#) p. 67.



The **pink with white trim building next door (27)** dates from the same period and is the last of its kind in Yerevan.

Across the street at 3/1 is the **Khanzatian Mansion (28)**, designed by both Meghribian and Mirzorlian. 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.



Next door at No. 3 is the **Hovhannissian Mansion (29)**. Built between 1915 and 1916, Meghribian 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.

Next to it are a couple of modern structures, replacing historic buildings with a disco complex, clothing store and a **ASTAFIAN HOTEL**. Across from the first is the 1926 **Hotel Yerevan (30)** also called the Golden Tulip Yerevan Hotel designed by architect Nikoghos Bunatian and once the most elegant hotel in Yerevan. Charents, Alazan and Soghmontaratsi formed a kind of "Algonquin Trio" at the hotel restaurant, and the café was popular with artists, writers and musicians. The hotel is one of Yerevan's most expensive, but a look at the tarnished bronze lettering at the top of the building makes me wonder what they mean when they call it a 5 Star establishment.

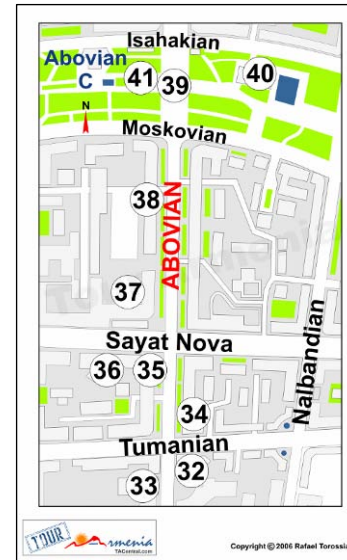


The hotel faces the **Charles Aznavour (nee Kino Moscow) Plaza (31)** with its Zodiac fountains,

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 Mscow)**, which hosts occasional films and concerts (architects S. Kntekhtsian, 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 street has a series of **shops** below the large apartment buildings, including **ART BRIDGE CAFE (34)**, **ARAX TEA HOUSE**, **GUSTO ITALIAN GASTRONOMI**, **SOUVENIRS**, **NATURA GOLD TEA HOUSE** and a couple of **OUTDOOR CAFES**. Across and running up the block is the **Children's Art Museum (35)** (open 10-4 Tues-Sun, 500 AMD), with the **Tumanian State Puppet Theatre (36)** around the corner on Sayat Nova.



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 Tamanian'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 CAFÉ* 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.



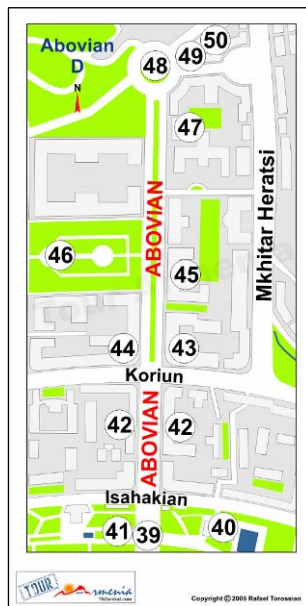
The next cross street is **Moskovian p**, with **Ring Park** beyond. Cross Moskovian using the

underground passageway. Under the street is a **department store** and several good **bookstalls**. As you come out of the passageway on the other side, you are surrounded by trees, part of a circular green belt designed by Tamanian and his colleagues, **Ring Park (39)** arcs central Yerevan from one block from Mashtots to Kino Rossiya, has ample shade, fountains, outdoor cafés, an aviary and even tennis courts by Yerevan University. See [Walking Tours: Ring Park](#) (p. 27) and [Parks: Ring Park](#) (p. 86).

To the right is **Chamber Hall (40)** which offers concerts by the Chamber Orchestra and performances by classical musicians, including organ recitals featuring Komitas and Bach. On the left is the **Avetik Isahakian statue (41)** (sculptor S. Baghdassarian). Isahakian is one of Armenia's most popular 19th-20th c poets, the author of a young man's soul searching "Abu Lalla Mahari" and 20th c social critic non parallel. His poems are lyrical, and many were set to music. He lived a long life of adventure, travel and struggle to build his ideal Armenia, free from Feudal precepts and restrictions, beliefs that led to additional struggles during Stalin's reign. For more information see [Museums: Literary Figures: Avetik Isahakian](#), p. 63.

**MAP D**

The next cross street is **Isahakian p**. Two blocks to the left is the **Yeridasardakan Metro stop**. Continue north, crossing **Isahakian Street** to enter Yerevan's "**Faubourg**" **district (42)**, a bustling area of textile **shops, exchange offices, cafes, bars** and **sidewalk vendors** hawking everything from shoes, clothing,



cassettes to bread, detergent and oranges. There is even an "Exchange Bar" for those wanting to quench their thirst while counting their money. The enterprising sellers crowd the sidewalk with customers looking for the cheapest prices in Yerevan. The left and right corners have the 1930's **Medical Institute and Armenergo (43, 44)**.

Halfway up the block on your right is a ca. 1880 building designed by Mirzorian, the **Guyanian Oriort School for Girls (45)**. It now houses the Faculty for Theology for Yerevan State University.

The next cross street is **Korjuni p**. Two blocks to the left is the entry to the **Matenadaran** on the right. Instead, cross Korjuni and continue north. Half way up on the left is a park and the **Yerevan Observatory (46)**, designed by Tamanian in 1930. The observatory sits mostly idle, Yerevan's pollution and night lights prohibiting clear views of the night sky. Further up on the right is a **hospital complex**, behind an intricate wrought iron fence with stone posts mounted with flower pots. Just past the fence is one of the jewels of Abovian Street: the **Mari Nubar Children's eye clinic (47)**. Built in the early 20th century by Nubar Pasha, prime minister of Egypt until 1904, the building's design includes a series of pyramids in the frieze just below the cornice. Nubar donated the funds for Sovietashen District in Yerevan, which has been renamed Nubartashen in his honor.



At the top of street is **Abovian Square and Statue (48)**, the statue by Suren Stepanian. On the NE edge of the circle (No. 64) is the delightful **Folk Art Museum (49)** (open Tues-Sun, 10-5, 500 AMD), which holds an extensive collection of

folk art, including carpets, ceramics, crystal, gold and silver and wood and metal work. See [Museums: Folk Art](#) p. 60.



Turn right past the museum and you are in the last block remaining from the old street. At the end of the block on the right is a large imposing building, which looks like a fortress. The ca. 1900 **Brazhnikov Building (50)** was designed by Mirzorian, and commissioned by Vladimir Brazhnikov, a wealthy lawyer. The charcoal black stone structure now houses the Geological Sciences Department. The interior of the building has little left of the original design, but it is still possible to imagine the spacious rooms Mirzorian. Visitors always welcome.



**NORTHERN AVENUE – OPERA – CASCADE -MONUMENT WALKING TOUR**

**MAP A**

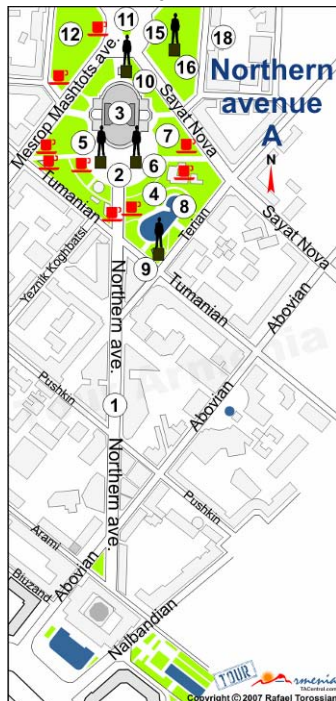
Start by going up the first two blocks of Abovian p (see [Abovian Walking tour, above](#)), then turning left at the new plaza that leads into **Northern Avenue (1)**. The Avenue ("poghota") has been carved from a warren of historic neighborhoods that were the heart of the old city, and is the most controversial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





The street was long planned for, a part of Tumanian'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 unexceptional 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 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, bistros and restaurants lining the sidewalks. 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)** ringed by trees and a large asphalt plaza. The building houses the **Alexander Spendiarian 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 Tumanian 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, meetings, 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 café complexes in the park, and where late-nighters dance in underground discos at Astral Club or the basement of Opera Theatre.



**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.

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 Spendiarov, respectively).

The figure on the right is **Alexander Spendiarov (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. **Spendiarian'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.



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 **Arno 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.

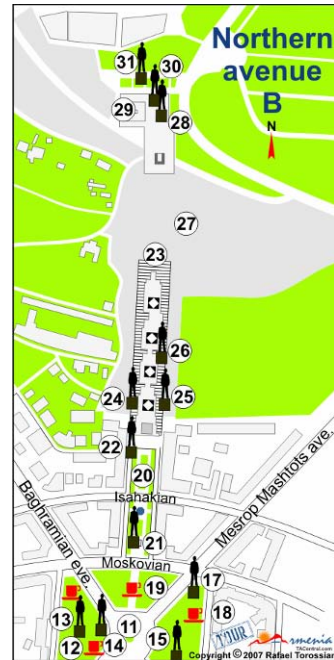


In front of the Philharmonic Hall side of the building (facing Place de France) is a statue of **Aram Khachaturian (10)** (sculptor Yuri Petrossian), Armenia's most famous classical composer, whose best known music is for his ballet's Spartak (a.k.a. Spartacus) and Guyaneh (music of which was used in 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 thoroughways 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



in Yerevan, **Kazirok**, a spot where Armenia's actors and artists gather to debate life and love of art. Gawking is allowed. The next on Mashtots, nearest the Sarian statue, is also unpretentious and pleasant, built around the **Erebuni-Sevan Tree of Life Monument (14)** (1970, sculptor H. Peliposian). For more about Martiros Sarian visit his [House Museum](#), p. 59.

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.

will stroke up a conversation, hoping to make a sale, but none expect you to buy. Open Saturdays-Sundays 9-dusk.

There are **two cafes** in the park worth considering stopping at to grab a cup of java and people watch. The one at the far S corner, unpretentious as all get out, is one of the most famous in



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 it 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.



**Cascade (23)** (architects J. Torossian, S. Gurzadian, A. Mkhitarian, engineers E. Hakopian, B. Geghamian) is the large series of steps and platforms at the north end of the park. The massive monument remained unfinished for many years before being taken under the wing of a wealthy donor, who is completing construction as part of a new center for the arts (read on).



As originally designed, the monument stretches 200 meters from Tamanian Statue to top, with absolute height of 100 meters and a surface length of 500 meters, width 50 meters. Escalators (enter left as you face the monument) take visitors to each of five levels, escalators inside, surface length is 500 meters, 50 each with its own distinct outer courtyard fountain and flower beds, and an interior gallery space, the fifth with a rotunda made from 15 columns. Each fountain wall has 15

jars or "springs", symbols from Armenian history. The second level outer wall has a sun dial, symbolizing eternal life.

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 Flannagan's **Hare on Bell (26)** (1983). Indoor escalator platforms display Barry Flanagan's **Acrobats** (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. 47.

The collection is so important no less than the Museum of Modern Art, Tate Modern and the Pompidou Center/Louvre attempted to obtain it, Cafesjian choosing to build a world-class museum in Yerevan instead. The Museum will be the first part of new the Gerard L. Cafesjian Center for the 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](http://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 embassy 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 hat 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

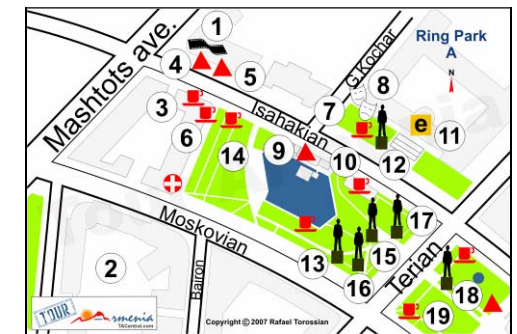
the most popular basic rituals known to humankind; watch the world go by.



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 Koriun 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 Hearty 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 **Poplavok/Aragast Café (9)**, which boasts blue sails for its top 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 **Arminco (11)**, Armenia's first and largest internet provider. It also faces the **monument to Hakob Meghapart (12)** (sculptor Khachatur Iskandarian), 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 Halabian (13)** (sculptor Romeo Julhakian), a Soviet era architect who died in 1959. Born 1897 in Elizavetpol, Halabian was schooled at the Nersissian School in Tflis before training as an architect. In 1929 he founded the Society of All Russia Proletariat Architects, became editor in chief of Arkitekturma SSR magazine, and quickly rose in communist ranks.

Yerevan work includes busts of Karl Marx and Armenian Soviet heroes Shahumian and Kamo, graphic illustrations for poems by Yeghise Charents, theatrical designs for the Sundukian theatre, the design for the original Russian Stanislavski Theatre on Abovian p (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 Geghama Lehr (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 Harutunian), 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).



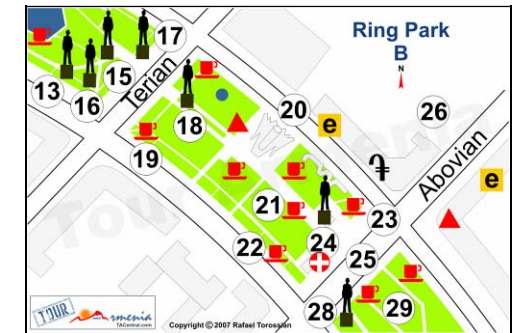
Vahan Terian (1885-1920) is a famous poet known for his sorrowful, romantic poems, the most famous of which are still read by misty-eyed girls and sung in their musical versions by people of all ages. Terian (also spelled "Derian") began his short life in the Javakh region of Georgia, a mostly Armenian populated area of the country. Schooled in Tflis, he then studied at the Lazarian College in Moscow, where he was exposed to symbolism and joined the Russian Social Democrats. He was jailed by Czarist police for his political activity. He published his first book of poems, "Dreams at Dusk", in 1908, which made him an immediate sensation, Hovhannes Tumanian calling him the most original lyric poet of his age.

He later published "Night Remembrance", "The Golden Legend", "The Return", "The Golden Link", "In the Land of Nairi" (where he substitute the word 'Nairi' for each instance where the word 'Armenia' would have suited), and "The Cat's Paradise". His poems are filled with images of rain, mist, pallid fields and shapeless shadows, symbols of sorrow, despair and eventually, peace. 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 (Akhaltshikhe & 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 **French Connection (FCUK)**, at the head of a block of trendy boutiques, as well as a good **Indian bistro (Tandoori)**.

**BLOCK 2 (TERIAN) (MAP B)**



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).



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 Internet** is opposite the Metro on Isahakian. Cafes continue to line the central walkway towards Abovian p., including **Partez (21)**, **Rialto (22)** and the large **Nirvana café-bar (23)**.

The walkway 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 endear him to Armenians. See Museums: Avetik Isahakian p. 63.

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 satire "Kach Nazar" and "Vardanank" (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.

**BLOCK 3 (ABOVIAN) (MAP C)**

Cross Abovian p. where **Statue of a Woman (28)** sits, right outside of **Café Modern (29)**. Head towards the **Komitas Chamber Music Hall (30)** (1 Isahakian p., tel. 52-67-18), home to the 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**.

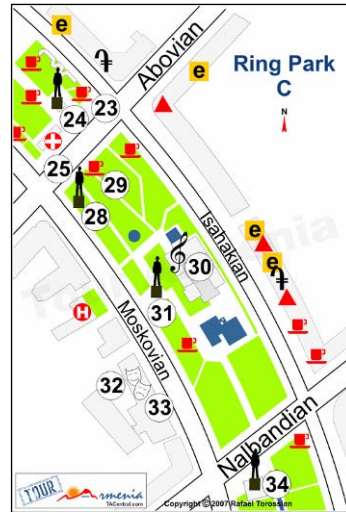
To the S of the hall there is a small square with a statue to **Hovhannes (Ivan) Aivazovski (31)** (sculptor Yuri Petrosian), a phenomenon of the 19th c art world, best known for his seascapes

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.



The French artists Eugene Delacroix revered his work while the English Turner called him a genius. In 1845, Aivazovski went to Istanbul by invitation of Sultan Abdulmesid, a city he was to visit eight times between 1845-1890, during which he was commissioned for a number of paintings as a court painter by the Ottoman Sultans Abdulmesid, Abdulaziz and Abdulhamid, 30 of which are currently on display in the Ottoman Imperial Palace and other museums in Turkey. The genocide of Armenians and Greeks by Abdulhamid in 1894 greatly affected Aivazovski; he threw the



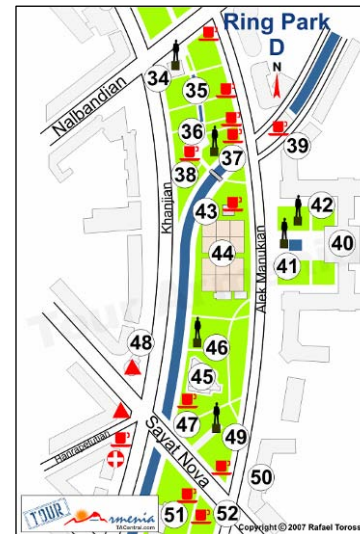
medal he received from the Sultan into the sea and began painting haunting scenes of the tragedy, including his last, unfinished work, "The Explosion of the Turkish Ship," in 1900.

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 Cafe**. On the SE side of concert hall is the **Aivazovski café** and **ping pong** tables.

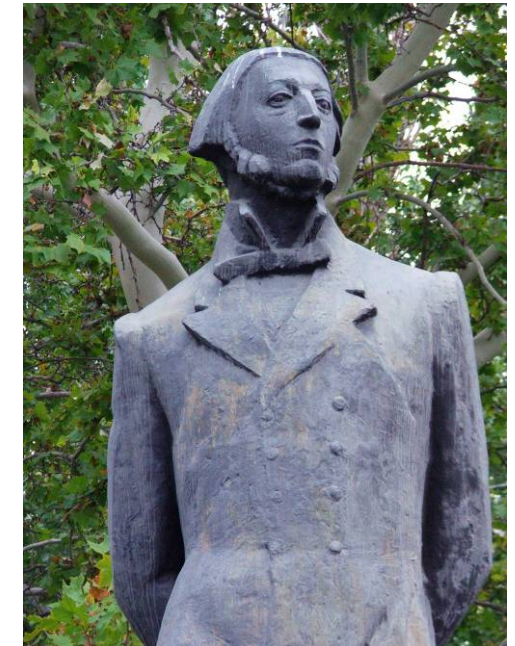
**BLOCK 4 (NALBANDIAN) (MAP D)**

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 Europe 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 *Sovremenik* (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 Hertenzen, 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 Victims* (37), the front cross panel carved as a door set ajar, flames leaping from the open crevice. On the right is the *Siro Arahel (Path of Love) Café* (38).



A foot bridge crosses the *Getar River*, a streamlet hemmed in by rock walls sadly strewn with litter, its spring water once a primary source of drinking water for the city (thankfully, not now). To your left, straddling the river is the large and popular *Cyclone* (39), a *café*, karaoke bar and disco. After the bridge, you enter a part of the Ring Park known as *Usanoghakan Aigi* facing the large *Yerevan State University* (40) on Alek

Manukian p (nee Isahakian p.). 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 to *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. You choose. 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 *café*.

Continue past the tennis club, where the park sidewalk winds through some trees and passes more *cafes* before ending 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." Hmmm. The Chess House supports the chess federation and a large *café-restaurant* on the ground floor.

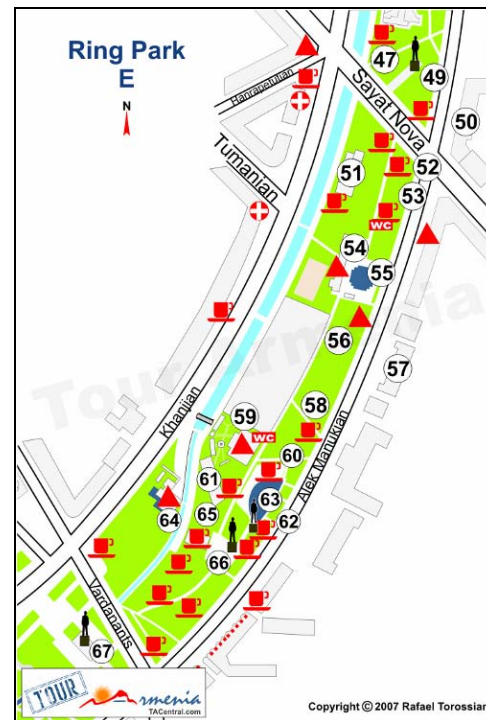
*Café Bardiner* (47) is at the SW corner of the block, just after the Chess House, and opposite the large *Sayat Nova Complex* (48) (33a Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 58-00-33, email: [sayatnova33@yahoo.com](mailto:sayatnova33@yahoo.com), fax: 58-77-06), at the corner of Sayat Nova pta. and Khanjian (nee Moskovian) 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.



**BLOCK 5 (SAYAT NOVA) (MAP E)**



Sayat Nova is one of the busiest streets in Yerevan, intersecting at the park with both 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 *cafés*, 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 *Tekeyan Center* (51) and one of many *cafés* to come, The Tekeyan 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 one and erased from memory.

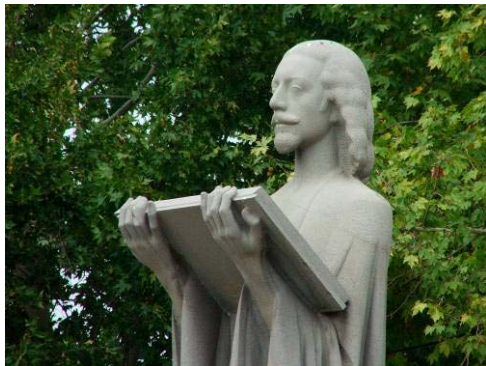


The opposite corner of the park from Tekeyan has the *Khachmaruk Café* (52), which faces a grand Candy store and the pricy *Mimino Georgian Restaurant*. Next in the park is *Flagman Café* (53) (WC), opposite First Café, then the large wooden *Chalet Café-Bar* (54), wrapped around a large, *beautiful fountain* (55), a must see spot to watch the sprays of water and neighborhood that pours into the fountain plaza on hot summer nights to catch a little outdoor water-sprayed air-conditioning. The fountain was built by Giumri metal craftsmen, renowned for their skill and artistry and it shows their work well.

There is one other like this; in Masiv. Behind Chalet on the Khanjian side, there is a playground, which faces a line of evening spots on the other side of the street; *Fiesta Karaoke*, *L&T Bar*, *Viagra Bar* and *999 Bar-Disco*. Continue past the fountain at Chalet where the large central

walkway narrows to a sidewalk, flanked by a construction site on the right where the old swimming and diving pool once was (*2x2 Disco* on other side of Khanjian p.) and *Giani (56)* café-bar and outdoor stage has taken over the park, squeezing nature into a side-thought. Surrounded by billboard advertising, this is one of the ugliest spots in Yerevan, catering to the nouveau riche.

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 sport with fountain and live swans in the summer, lined by trees, grass, behind which is a *Kiddy ride park* and *Riga Café (61)*, *Laguna Café (62)* on the south edge with a large stone *monument with a sundial and Armenian letters (63)*.



South of the pond you pass the large *Krunk Restaurant (64)*, behind *Venus Café (65)* and (opposite the park on Manukian) *Fresh Karaoke*, before reaching the large *Armen Tigranian Statue (66)* (sculptor Artashes Hovsepian) in a forlorn area of the park. Armen 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 choral 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, Liber, Jrahars, Lucky's, Edvar's Andorr, 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 *Vartan Mamikonian Statue (67)* (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 Avarair, 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 Avarair is called by Armenians the first battle in history over freedom of conscience, a claim disputed by many historians.

The statue faces *Cinema House (68)* wedged between two new apartment tenements and *Vernissage (69)*, a large weekend flea market/crafts and jewelry market, with everything from tools and hardware to fine jewelry, hand-woven carpets, embroidery, wood and stone carvings, ceramics and art work, antiques, china, books, soviet paraphernalia—you just about name it, you can find it at this long stretch of market capitalism. A few stalls work during on weekdays.



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](mailto: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@netsys.am](mailto:accea@netsys.am), URL: [www.accea.org](http://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: [suzu@naregatsi.org](mailto:suzu@naregatsi.org), URL: [www.naregatsi.org](http://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 Manukain 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 Torosi 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 Mastafal 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. Bejanian).

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.



Griboyedov saw only one performance of his work, in 1827, at the defeated Shah's palace in the Yerevan fortress, performed by officers of the garrison stationed there. This marks the beginning of Armenia's modern theatrical tradition. Griboyedov first visited Yerevan in 1819, returning as chief diplomat for his relative Count Ivan Paskevich during a campaign against Persia, and was sent to St. Petersburg with the Treaty of

Turkmenchai of 1828 (which guaranteed the right of Armenians to emigrate to Eastern Armenia).

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 (along 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 by trade halls with dozens of kiosks and knock-off production hawkers that is slowly going upscale. Under Kino Rossiya is the **Zoravar Andranik Metro** station, a 50 AMD ride to metro stops at Republic Square, Yeridasardakan, Baghramian and Berekamutiun to the north, or Sasuntsi Davit (train station) and Charbakh neighborhood to the south.

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 Bagratashen.

**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 **Firdusi 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 south on Tigran Mets** and in about 600 meters you pass the **Museum of Natural History** ending up in another 500 meter at the **David Sasuntsi Train Station (92)**.

**Head west** on the street that was Khanjian (now Agatangeghos) and in a block you will pass the **Circus (93)**, still working and 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 debate about his acts, at first condemned for not 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.





Critics praised Yengibarian for creating a character that was funny and sad at the same time, in short, human. One quote says, "He was a clown with an autumn in his heart." Yengibarian died in 1972 at age 37.



**MASHTOTS AVENUE (MASHTOTS POGHOTA) WALK** ▲

If there is a main artery to Yerevan, it is Mashtots poghota, a thriving promenade of street traffic, and crowds strolling along its sidewalks. Known as Haikakan Street at the turn of the century, the street became an important linchpin of Tamarian's master plan, widened into an avenue that runs from the Hrazdan Gorge to the Matenadaran (with Mother Armenia watching over the entire 3 km of humanity).

It is hard not to be impressed with a street that passes so much history, culture and commerce all in one stretch. In one block alone you pass 2800 years of history, from Yerevan's beginnings to the site of its 19th c transition to European rule, under the Russians.



Shops and eateries run chock-a-block among 18th, 19th and 20th cc buildings that add a bit of grandness to the street, though in rush hour your eyes are mostly fixed on oncoming vehicles. Museums, Yerevan's oldest shuka, its only intact mosque round out the shops, cafes, parks, bookstores, sharma stands, mterks, flower stands and electronic stores that are vie for your attention. There are so many restaurants, cafes

and shops it is impossible to list them all. Suffice to say, if you want it, and it ain't on Mashtots, then Yerevan doesn't have it.



Museums include the Blue Mosque, Yeghishe Charents Home Museum, Yervand Kochar and the Matenadaran, 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), **Amiryan p.** (Republic Square), **Boulevard** (Biuzand/Arami to Abovian and via the tunnel to the [Hrazdan Gorge and its walking tour](#) p. 37), **Pushkin p.** ([Northern Avenue](#) p. 24), Tumanian (Opera, Tumanian Home Museum, Abovian), **Place de France** (Artist Vernissage, Sayat Nova Park, Opera, Tamarian Park), **Sayat Nova** (Opera, Children's Art Gallery, Katoghike) & **Marshal Baghramian** (National Assembly, Avetik Isahakian & Aram Khachaturian Home Museums), **Moskovich & Isahakian (Ring Park Walk** p. 27) and **Koriun** (Abovian, Garni/Sevan Hwys) before its end at the base of Matenadaran.

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.

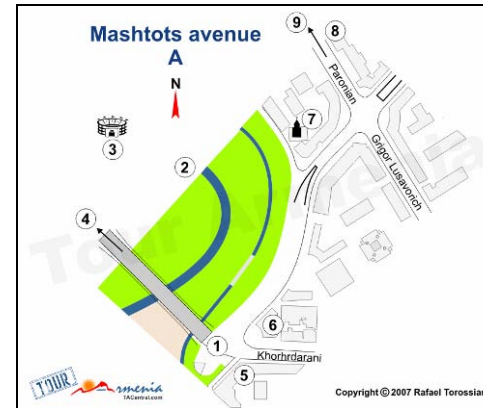
At least part of this walking tour is unavoidable if you go anywhere in Yerevan on foot, there are so many streets and places you will want to see that intersect with the avenue. Use this tour to familiarize you with the layout of Yerevan's center, and to locate particular destinations as you pass through.



**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**



Start the walking tour at the avenues base, **Haghtanak (Victory) Bridge (1)**, which is also the starting point for the [Old Abovian Walking Tour](#) (p. 17).

The bridge spans the [Hrazdan Gorge](#) (p. 37), 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)**).

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. 17).

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-1930s 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).

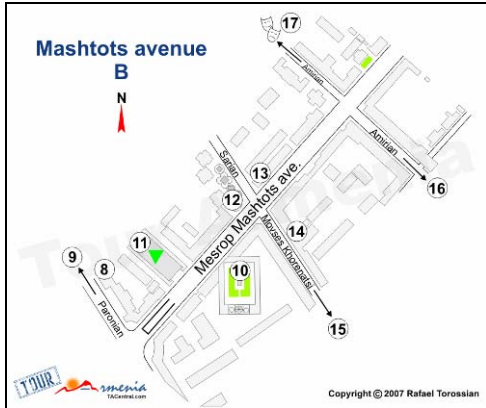


Retrace your steps to Mashtots and head N to the top of the overpass, and the intersection with Grigor Lusavorich (E) and Paronian (W) streets.

**Side trip:** A right turn will lead in a block to English Park, and the Russian, French and Italian Embassies; a left turn leads in a block to the **Woodcraft Museum (8)** (See [Museums: Woodcraft](#) p. 61) on the right; and in a couple of more blocks in an alley on the left the remarkable **Parajanov Museum (9)** ([Museums: Parajanov](#) p. 58).

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: کبود مسجد)** or the "Goi 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

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 frontal 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, sujuk* (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 entire from dried fruits, nuts and t'tu lavash.



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

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. 68). 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. 58). 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. 17).

Return to Mashtots and continue north. The next street is **Amirian**, a right turn of which takes you to **Hanrapetutian H'raparak (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).

**MAP C**



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 Ashkhrar/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.

Pale 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 neighboring park). If you turn L into boulevard to the end of the park, there is a pedestrian tunnel that will take you to Hrazdan Gorge (for details see [Hrazdan Gorge walk](#), p. 37).



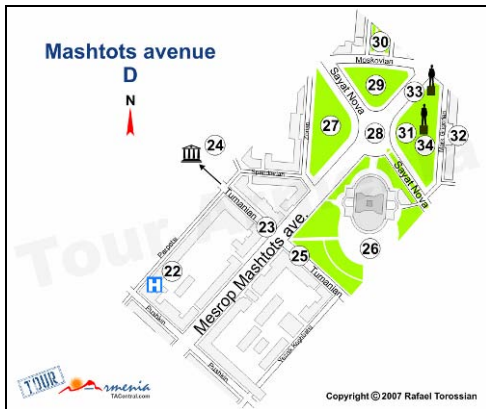
Boulevard is bordered by the next two cross street; Pavstos Biuzand (S) and Arami (N). The **Yeghishe Charents Home-Museum (20)** is at the NW corner of Arami and Mashtots (across from the **Maternity Hospital (21)** on the other side of the street).

**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. 64.

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](mailto:info@envoyhostel.com), URL: [www.envoyhostel.com](http://www.envoyhostel.com)).

**MAP D**



The next street is **Tumanian (23)**. A left on Tumanian leads to several excellent eateries and clubs, beginning with **Akump** (40 Tumanian), a

basement restaurant, souvenir shop and music hall, one of the trendiest spots in Yerevan, the upscale **Ai 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 rage 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. 58-12-71, 56-00-21, open 10-6 Tues-Sun), one of the best house-museums in Yerevan (for details see [Museums: Tumanian](#) p. 61).



**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)** (Azatutian 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.



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.



**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. 59). 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. 26). 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.

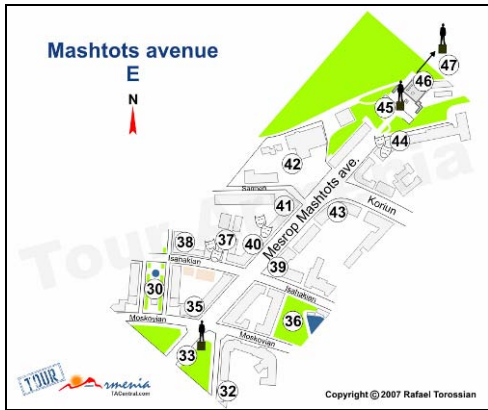
Just north, also facing Opera and serving as a fulcrum for Mashtots, Baghramian and Sayat Nova Avenues is **Place de France (28)**, a large traffic circle with a small flower bed in the center. The otherwise unprepossessing ring of cars and buses is encircled by four important parks; Opera Park to the 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 gorgeous 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. 26).

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.

**MAP E**



Continue up Mashtots, and cross **Moskavian p**, the next cross street. Immediately on your left facing Moskavian is the remarkable little **Yervand Kochar Studio-Museum (35)**, dedicated to one of Armenia's most important artists (if anyone rivaled Sarian on the world stage, Kochar surely did, a friend and cohort of Pablo Picasso, Jean Miro, Alexander Calder and the Duchamps whose works are displayed at the Louvre and Pompidou museums in Paris).

Kochar led a terribly difficult life in Armenia, forbidden to see his wife after he emigrated to Soviet Armenia (he was forbidden from even communicating with her), facing harassment and hostility from a cowed artist union that was supposed to look out for his well being. The museum includes some of his later works plus models and drawing for his famous monumental sculptures in Yerevan (Vartan Mamikonian and Davit Sasuntsi). For details see [Museums: Kochar](#) p. 59.

**Side Trip:** Take a R onto Moskavian 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. 27.



Backtrack and continue N on Mashtots. The next cross street is **Isahakian**. A left turn takes you past the Yerevan **Pantomime Theatre (37)** (36 Isahakian p, tel. 56-18-55) and at the end of the block, the **Russian Art Museum (38)** (See [Museums: Russian Art](#), p. 59). A right turn takes you to Ring Park. For details see [Walking Tours: Ring Park](#), p. 27. 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: [mailto:erkat@xter.net](mailto:mailto:erkat@xter.net), URL: [www.erkat.am](http://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](http://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. 39.



**End Mashtots Avenue Walking Tour.**

✦ **HRAZDAN RIVER GORGE WALK** ▲

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.



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 Haghtanak Bridge (between the Cognac and Wine factories) in the south and just above Kievian

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*.

There is also a popular children's park with its own 1 km train ride and some kiddie rides in a newly redone park with stone carvings.

The canyon has a couple of early morning **running trails**, combining sidewalks, aqueduct and the paved road into a 2.5 to 5 km route, most of it shaded by trees. There is an exercise stop on the L bank, with chin-up bars and a place to stretch, do sit-ups and pushups. A new phenomenon is the growing number of **bicyclists** that take to the canyon, continuing on the R bank road that follows the canyon to Davitashen bridge (2.6 km). [See Sports & Fitness: Running, Jogging, Bicycling](#) p. 101.

**WALKING TOUR**

The walking tour takes about 2 hours, more if you stop at the children's park or to eat at one of the restaurants. Begin at Boulevard Park, on Mashtots pta.

The park is two blocks from Hanrapetutian H'raparak (Republic Square). To get there from the Square, go NW on Amiryan 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.



Described in an 1860 travelogue, Kond was one of seven districts in the dusty eastern town of Yerevan; the old district, or Shar, in the center of the city, Shen, Dzoragiugh, Kond or Tapabash, part of which was called the apricot center, and the New District, where immigrants from Atrpatakan lived. The streets in Yerevan's old neighborhoods were three or four feet wide, with irrigation ditches on either side. Today, Kond is all that's left of these old neighborhoods, and for most it is the heart of the city center, for hundreds of years a home to a mixture of Persians, Turks and Armenians (the Turks and Persians left long ago, though there are still the ruins of a Persian mosque and Turkish baths in the neighborhood).

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 Bohemian sector (the chief architect comparing the plan to creating a "Yerevan Montmartre").

Other architects have proposed varying designs for upgrading infrastructure while preserving the eastern character of the neighborhood, but most fear the same fate that happened to historic Pavstos Biuzand and Arami pts, which were completely torn down to make way for the high rise tenements going up.

Take the chance now to visit the last piece of old Yerevan, when homes shared walls, balconies and sometimes rooms, and you can still find 15th c timber ceilings and wrought iron, priceless carpets hanging on the walls of otherwise unprepossessing dwellings, and a close knit community bound by

hundreds of years of joys and tragedies, peace and adversities.

**Gorge** 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 **Children's Park** has been completed revamped, with brand new sidewalks, beautiful flower beds and a new fountain. The small park as a few kiddie 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 and flower beds. Lovely.



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

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 R side in a concrete grotto of sorts. It may or may not be flowing.



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.

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.



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 between restaurants or cafes. It takes 300 m to reach the river bridge entry to **Archanots Café**, and another 100 meters to the large and well maintained **Parvana** Restaurant and Cottage complex. The cottages begin at \$100. Though pricey, they are really, really nice with great views.

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 met on the other side of river, and can cross back to return via the tunnel, or continue to the Hrazdan Stadium and the Dzoragiugh 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 "cabañas" 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!

The road starts to rise towards **Hrazdan Stadium** at H'rashlik (its supports and one of the gates is across the road from 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.

Cross the river via the aqueduct bridge to explore **Dzoragiugh**. 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 Dzoragiugh, with a series of steps in about 200 meters below S. Sargis Church, at the base of Mashtots and Old Abovian pts.



**MUSEUMS ▲**

**NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL MUSEUMS**

✂ **THE MATENADARAN ▲**, 59 Mashtots pta, tel. 58-32-92, 56-25-78, [www.matenadaran.org](http://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 Matenadaran (architect M. Grigorian) collection includes almost all the areas of ancient and medieval Armenian culture and sciences; history, geography, grammar, philosophy, law, medicine, mathematics-cosmography, the study of time, alchemy-chemistry, translations, literature, chronology, art history, miniature, music and theatre, as well as manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Greek, Syrian, Latin, Ethiopian, Indian, Japanese and others, many of which no longer survive in their original language, surviving only through the Armenian translations in the collection.

The collection dates back to the early 5th c when Mesrop Mashtots engineered an Armenian alphabet, establishing the Golden Age of letters in Armenia. Tens of thousands of manuscripts were created by monks and priests, during a period of over one thousand years. As late as the 19th c manuscripts were being hand made in remote areas of the country. The greatest period was during the 5th-11th c, when Armenia's Medieval Chroniclers, Historians, scientists and theologians worked.

Held by the See of Echmiadzin through most of its history (the first collection is mentioned in the 5th

c), in 1920 the collection, held at the headquarters of the Armenian Apostolic Church at Echmiadzin was confiscated by the Bolsheviks, combined with other collections and, in 1939, moved to Yerevan. On March 3, 1959 the Matenadaran Institute was formed to maintain and house the manuscripts and in 1962 it was named after Mesrop Mashtots.



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

**Outside** The first statue is of Mesrop Mashtots and his disciple Koriun (sculptor Chubarian). Statues of famous manuscript writers line the outside façade; Movses Khorenatsi, Toros Roslin, Grigor Tatevatsi, Anania Shirakatsi, Mkhitar Gosh and Friik. The text over the entry is the first sentence produced using the Armenian language, "To know wisdom and gain instruction; to discern the words of understanding..."

**Collection** 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 Biuzand, a contemporary of Agathangelos who covered the historical period of 330-387; a "History of Armenia" by Movses Khorenatsi, 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 describing the struggle against Sassanid Persia in 451; "The History of Armenia" by another 5th c historian, Ghazar Parpetsi; A History of the Arab invasions by the 8th c historian Ghevond; The 11th c history of the Turkish and Byzantine invasions by Aristakes Lastivertsi; and 12th - 13th manuscripts by writers who created the Second Golden Age: Samuel Anetsi, Mkhitar Anetsi, Matheos Urhayetsi, Mkhitar Airivanetsi, Vartan Arelveltsi, Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Grigor Aknertsi, Vahram Rabuni, Sembat Sparapet, 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 Dionysius 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 Koghbatsi, Movses Kertogh (5th century), David Anahgt (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 Tatevatsi (1346 - 1409), Arakel Sunetsi (1425), and Stepanos Lehatsi (1699). "The Definition of Philosophy" by David Anahgt (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 (989), 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 divided into "schools" each with a distinct style, those from Ani-Haghbat, Gladzor, Van, Metsop, Tatev, Yerzenka, Carin - Erzurum and the Crimea being among the most famous. The later Cilicia school, with its 15th century master Toros 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), Khosrovidukht's 8th c hymn to Vahan Goghntetsi, 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 53 BCE Euripides' "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 Mekhitar Gosh, the first collection of the Armenian civil 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 c, flourishing during the 11th - 15th cc when Mekhitar Heratsi (12th century), Abusaid (12th century), Grigoris (12th - 13th

centuries), Faradj (13th century), and Amirdovlat Amassiatzi (15th century) practiced. The first autopsy was performed in the 12th c, 400 years before Europe. Mekhitar Heratsi (12th c) in his work "Consolation of Fevers" introduced 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 "Dipsacus" was used for general and local anesthesia and Zedoar, Melilotus officinalis and other narcotic drugs were used to anaesthetize births.

**Mathematics** The most famous manuscript on mathematics is the 7th c "Arithmetics" by Anania Shirakatsi, the oldest preserved complete manuscript on mathematics. Shirakatsi also wrote "Cosmography", "On the signs of the Zodiac", "On the clouds and atmospheric signs", "On the movement of the Sun", "On meteorological phenomena", and "On the Milky Way", through which his theories of planetary motion, lunar phases and solar eclipses are explored.

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 night in one half, it is day in the other. He considered the Milky Way "a mass of densely distributed and faintly luminous stars" and agreed with scientists who believed that "the moon has no natural light and reflects the light of the Sun".

He explained the phenomena of a solar eclipse as the result of the Moon's position between the Sun and the Earth. He also attempted to explain the phenomena of rain, snow, hail, thunder, wind, earthquake and other natural events.

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

**Entrance**

As you approach the museum from the steps, the huge **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).



**Side Porticoes** There are khachkars and other ancient carved stones in the side porticos. These include (from left as you face the main entrance) a 7th c BCE **stelae** for Urartian cuneiform, a Bronze Age **Vishap Stone** from the Geghama mountain range (placed at the headwaters of rivers or at springs), **fragments** of stones and **cornices** from a Yeghegnadzor grave monument for victims of the 451 war against Persia, **fragments and khachkars** from 13th c Yeghegis in Vayots Dzor, Khachkar (next to the gift shop) from same area. On the other side (right as you face the entrance) there are additional **khachkars** (including one by the master Kiram), and a **tomb stone** from Noradus on Lake Sevan.

**Entrance Hall** The entry hall has a mosaic of the **Battle of Avarair** (May 26, 451) by Hovhannes Khachatrian. The painting depicts a romantically imagined moment when Vartan Mamikonian, leader of Armenian forces fighting Sassanid Persians who had been trying to apotheosize Armenians to the Zoroastrian faith, charging headlong into the fray. Mamikonian was killed in the battle, which turned into something of a rout for the Armenians, but continued resistance and guerilla tactics by Armenians, as well as internal

struggles in the Sassanid empire, eventually led to them permitting Armenians to continue to practice their Christian faith openly. The battle is referred to by Armenians as the first battle for freedom of conscience.

In the **main stairwell** there is a large fresco, also by Hovhannes Khachatrian, a **trptych** depicting three different periods in the history and culture of the Armenian people; (left) the Urartu/Assyrian era; (center) Mashtots and his disciples discovering the alphabet, with its natural offspring of science, architecture, khachkar design, literature and art; (right) Hellenistic and older precursors to Mashtots' alphabet.

The **main landing** has a display cases with maps showing the extent of the Armenian people historically, recent publications and documents, one of which shows that a star with the name "Mesrop Mashtots" was registered in 1998.

There are **two doors** right and left; the left leads to the **reading room** and the right to a **display hall** that is opened to visitors using a guide. This room has some wonderful artifacts on display; 18th c talismans, maps, statuettes and a collection of old books using the Armenian script. One map shows the literary centers of Armenia before its division by invading Turks: Kilikia, Pokr Haik, Mets Haik, Upper Haik, Tsopk, Turuberian, Airarat, Gugark, Utik, Artsakh, Siunik, Vaspurakan, Paitakan, Bardsr Haik, Korchaik and Aghbznik.

**Main Display Room** The center doors lead to the main display room, where examples of Armenian manuscripts are housed. Display cases are arranged in a circular pattern around the room, in three "rings", starting with the oldest manuscripts in the first display case on the L against the wall, followed by translations of other original texts, the only copies of which survive in their Armenian versions (Philo of Alexandria). Displays are translated into English, though explanatory cards in the cases are in Armenians and Russian only.

**Displays** are arranged to show some of the most valuable manuscripts in the collection, including Histories (look for David Anhakht, a wonderful miniature), Exact Sciences (includes a treatise on the humors and medieval anatomy books), medicine (replete with extensive lists of herbs and the illness they treat), Calendars (gorgeous tables) and books of prayers and services (one my Mesrop Mashtots himself), Hymnals, 5th-18th cc philosophies and meditations (Grigor Narekatsi,



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.



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.

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

✂ **THE STATE HISTORY MUSEUM** ▲, Republic Square, Tel: 58-27-61, 56-58-12, open Tues-Sat 11-6, Sun 11-5, 1000 AMD (free last Sunday of each month) is in the same building as the National Art Gallery, occupying the first (ground) and second (next) floors. Maps or brochures are not available.

Its collection covers Armenia's history from 250,000 BCE to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The museum has some incredible items on display, though the best artifacts were shipped to the Hermitage

Museum in St. Petersburg during Communist times. Unlike other world museums, which protect their items behind barriers, the State History Museum has exhibited most artifacts within reach (dangerously so for the priceless Bronze Age vessels, some of which are without peer).

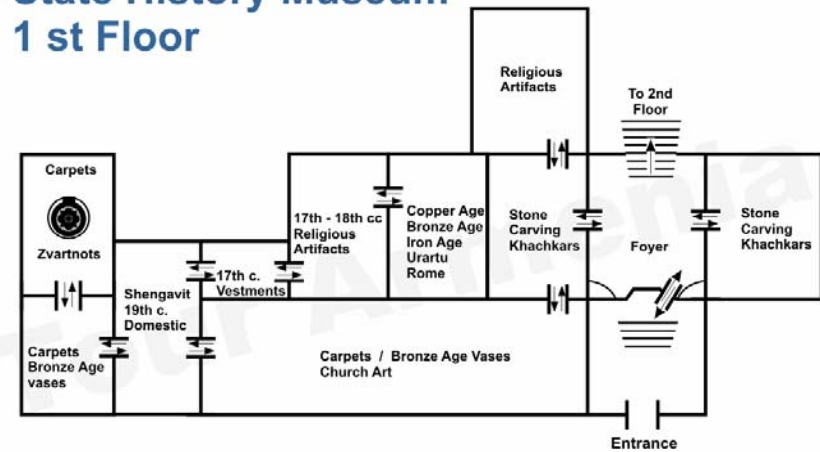
Unfortunately the collection is at times a mish-mash of items from different eras, without explanation or context: in some rooms the displays appear to have been assembled by a fashion designer rather than an historian. Upstairs there is a sense of context, but downstairs artifacts are displayed hodgepodge,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



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.

## State History Museum 1st Floor



Republic Square

There is an over-priced book of old color photos for 15,000 AMD, but you won'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.

### 1ST FLOOR

#### MAP 1-A

#### Foyer gallery

- A. Keystone from arch with portrait of craftsman, Zvartnots, 7th c.
- B. Architectural detail, Zvartnots, 7th c.
- C. Keystone from arch with portrait of craftsman, Zvartnots, 7th c.
- D. Roof plate, unknown, 11th-12th cc.

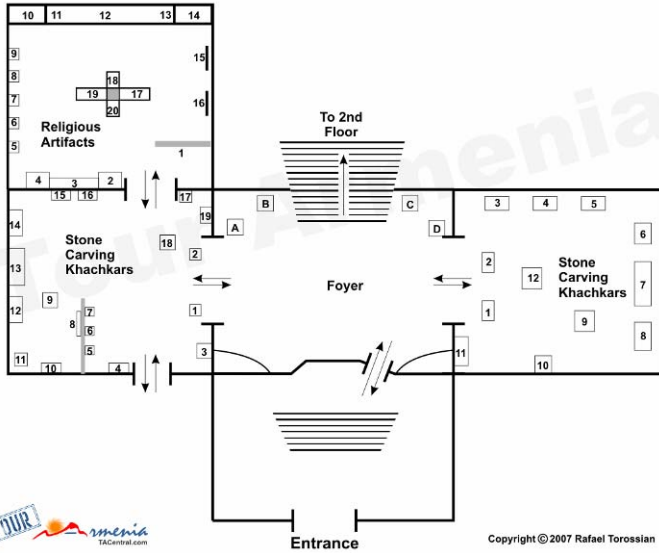
#### Right Gallery: Stone Carvings, Khachkars

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

Memorials like this and #9 were quite common in the fifth-seventh centuries. The capital—placed on top of a tall column in the main square, was used to commemorate an important event. The front part of the capital is adorned with a cross the upper arm of which is replaced by a symbolic representation of Christ; to the right, there is a figure of a saint, presumably John the Baptist. On the other side there is another figure of a saint, probably St. George, on a horse trampling a serpent. Only the front part of the horse and the rider's right hand, holding the rein, have survived.

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

## State History Museum 1 - A



15. Khachkar fragment, Kecharis, 1280. I
16. Wing Cross, Sevan, 1448
17. Model, Angeghaght, Sissian, 5th-7th cc
18. Column capital, Dvin, 7th c
19. Lion, Aiyutzavan Village, 14th-15th cc

### North Gallery: Religious Artifacts

1. Carved wood door, Tatev, 1614
2. Miter collars, 17th-19th cc
3. Staff ornament, 1747 Note Vestment, Constantinople, 1601 & Myrrh vase, bird, 19th c
4. Collars, 15th-18th cc
5. Stole, 1819
- 6-9. Bibles, curtains, crosses, 15th-19th cc
10. Candelabra, Ani? 13th-14th cc
11. Lectern, Ani, 13th c

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 w/serpent, Dvin, 10th c BCE
- 12-19 Carpets
20. Vessel with female or cosmic symbols,

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 Mkrtych, 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

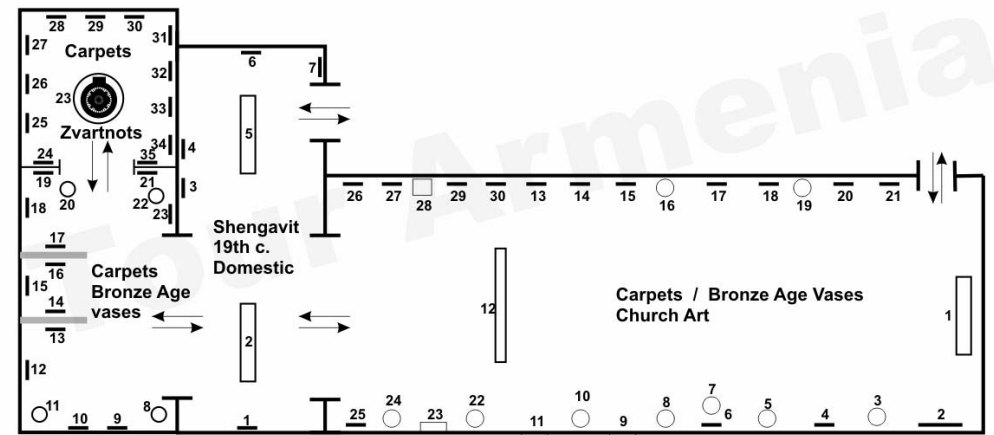
12. Curtain, Tiflis, 18th c
13. Lectern, Ani, 13th c
14. Vestments, 17th-18th cc
15. Altar cloth, Van, 17th c
16. Altar Cloth, Zmorinia, 1723
17. Silver crosses, chalices, 18th-19th cc Note Relic, 1794
18. Meron lid ornament, 1798
19. Staff ornaments, 18th-19th cc Note Ornaments, Jarjaris, 12th-13th cc, & Censor, oil lamp, 11th-12th cc

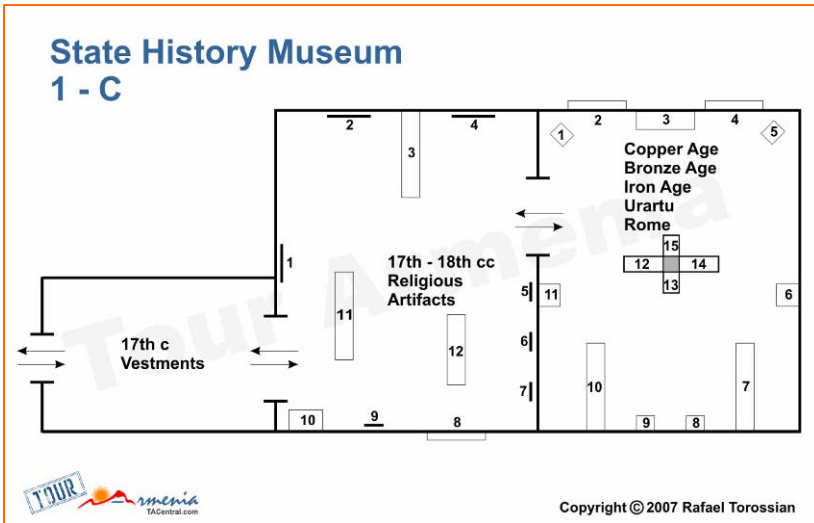
### MAP 1-B

#### 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

## State History Museum 1 - B





**MAP 1-C**

**Gallery: 17th c. Vestments**

**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-

Shengavit, 4000-3000

21. Carpet
22. Red Vessel, Garni, 3rd-1st cc BCE
23. Model of Zvartnots
- 24-35. Carpets

96 BCE, & (52) Levon I, Cilicia, 12th-13th cc), (b) Gold Coins, (c) Bronze head, Anahit, 4th c BCE, Satagh 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, Airum, 6th-5th cc, (6) Figurine, Nor Bayazet, 6th-5th cc, (7) Female figure, Parakavar, 6th-5th cc, (8) Female figures, Airum, 6th-5th cc, (9) Raft, Lori-Tavush, 10th c BCE, and (10) Horse, Zangezur, 13th-12th cc.
11. Urartu god and goddess
  - (a) Arubaini goddess, Van, 8th-7th cc, (b) Teishiba, Karmir Blur, 7th c BCE
12. Gold, Silver, jewelry
 

Among the items, note (1) Gold cup, Vanadzor, 2200 BCE, (2) Cup, Karasham, 2200-2100, (3-10) Jewelry, 2200-1000, (14) Lid with Pomegranate tassel, Argishti I era, 8th c BCE, (20) Lion necklace pin, Lori, 7th-6th cc
13. 3000-2000 BCE
 

Note (30) 2200-2100 BCE necklace, Karasham
14. Sissian
 

Among objects, note (31) Necklace, 11th-13th cc, (22) Medallion, "Nike", Sissian, 1st c BCE, (23) Medallion, eagle, Sissian, 1st c BCE, (24) "Artimis", Sissian, 1st c BCE, and (25) Staff ornaments, Sissian, 1st c BCE
15. 4000-3000 BCE
 

Note (1) Female figure, Mokhrablur, (2) Female figure, Shengavit, (3) Jewelry, Shengavit, (4) Medallion, Shengavit, and (5) Ring, Shengavit.

**2ND FLOOR**

**MAP 2-A**

**Center and Left galleries**

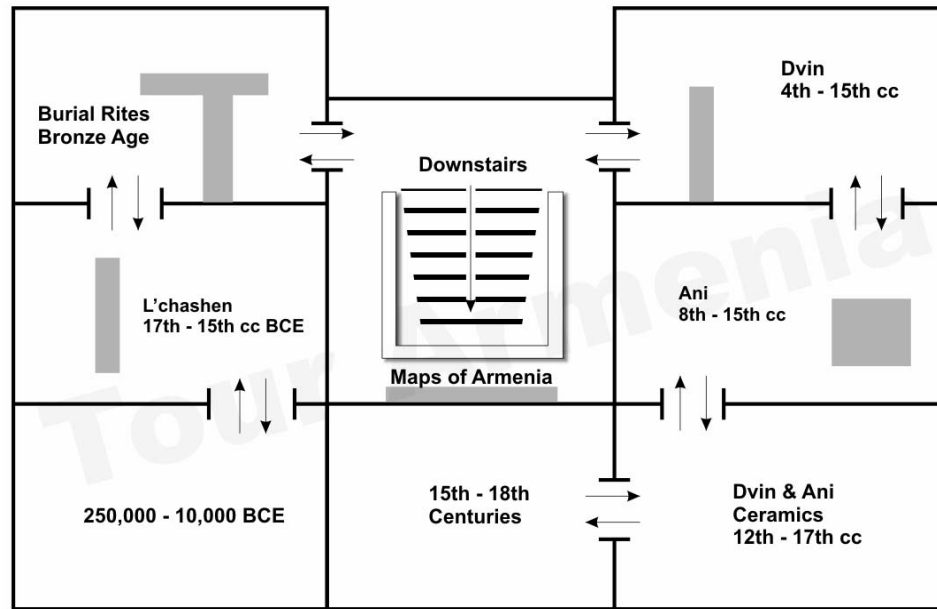
- A. Black decorative Pot, Urartian period,
- B. Black decorative pot, Urartian period,
- 1-11. Armenia in Historical Maps. Collection of 6th-19th cc Eastern, Greek, Roman, Christian historic maps (copies).
- 12. Armenian Highland Topographical Map/Model Shows locations of the Armenian Highland and the Armenian peoples throughout history. At its greatest extent, Armenia stretched from the

Mediterranean to the Caspian Sea  
 13-24. Armenia in Historical Maps. Collection of 6th-19th cc Eastern, Greek, Roman, Christian historic maps (copies).

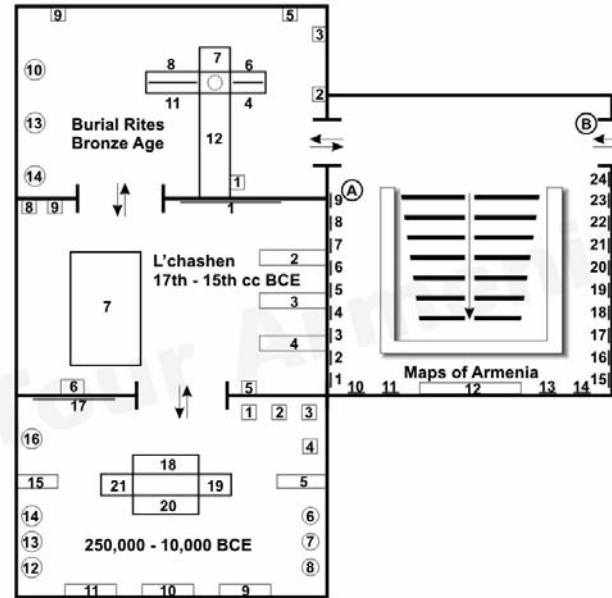
**Left Gallery: Burial Rites**  
*English language placards give some thoughts on burial rites in Armenia. Mostly conjecture, the ideas are still intriguing: the seat of the soul in the head, the pot design based on the woman's breast (ah the comforts of misogyny), orientation of the burial site and reason for objects.*

*NOTE: the times used here are spurious and do not take into account findings of the last 15 years that have pushed back the timeline by thousands of years. Add 1000-3000 years to each item in*

**State History Museum  
 2nd Floor**



**State History Museum  
 2 - A**



*this room for a more current view of age.*

- 1. Fragment, Man's Head, 9th c BCE, Vagharshapat (Echmiadzin)
- 2. Fragment, Man's Head, 9th c BCE, Dvin
- 3. Fragment, "Wife", 10th-9th cc, Vagharshapat (Echmiadzin)
- 4. Idols of the Metsamor period

The Metsamor period (first settlement ca 5000 BCE, active as metallurgical center ca. 4000-1000 BCE) is perhaps the most important of the period. Named after the location of its largest excavation, *Metsamor is the largest metallurgical center uncovered from that time, an example of dozens of similar settlements and cities built on the metal industry. The Metsamor People were among the first to forge bronze and the first known to forge*

*iron. Thanks to the epic struggles of people like Professor Emma Khanzatian, the museum's work was saved and has continued. Now retired, Prof Khanzatian and her colleagues have done much to bring the importance of the Metsamor People to the development of the ancient world, and to correct Soviet-dictated timelines to more accurate figures. (a) Idols, 5th-4th cc, Zangezur, (b) Idols, 13th-12th cc, Metsamor, (c) Ritual vessel, 11th-10th cc, Sanahin*

- 5. Fragment, head, 10th-9th cc, Dvin
- 6. Aries figure, 3rd millennium BCE, Harich
- 7. (a) Ritual Vessel, ca. 4000-3000, unknown, (b) Ritual clay Hearth, 3rd millennium BCE, Karnut
- 8. (a) Clay Vessel, 15th-14th cc, Artik, (b) Bronze figures, 15th-14th cc, L'chashen, (c) Ritual vessel, 12th-11th cc, Noyemberian
- 9. Female Idol, 10th-9th cc, Oshakan

- 10. Fragment, head, 9th-8th cc, Oshakan
- 11. (a) Hair Ringlets, 12th-10th cc, Sevan, (b) Birds, 15th-12th cc, L'chashen, (c) Vessel, 12th-11th cc, Dvin
- 12. Clay vessels, 19th-11th cc BCE Representative vessels from various locations in Armenia. Note the details on the clay vessels: birds, water birds, mountains, serpentine designs and cosmic symbols.
- 13. Head, 9th-8th cc, Oshakan
- 14. Large black vessel with sun/star details, serpentine, 10th-9th cc Dvin

**Gallery: L'chashen, 3000-2000 BCE**

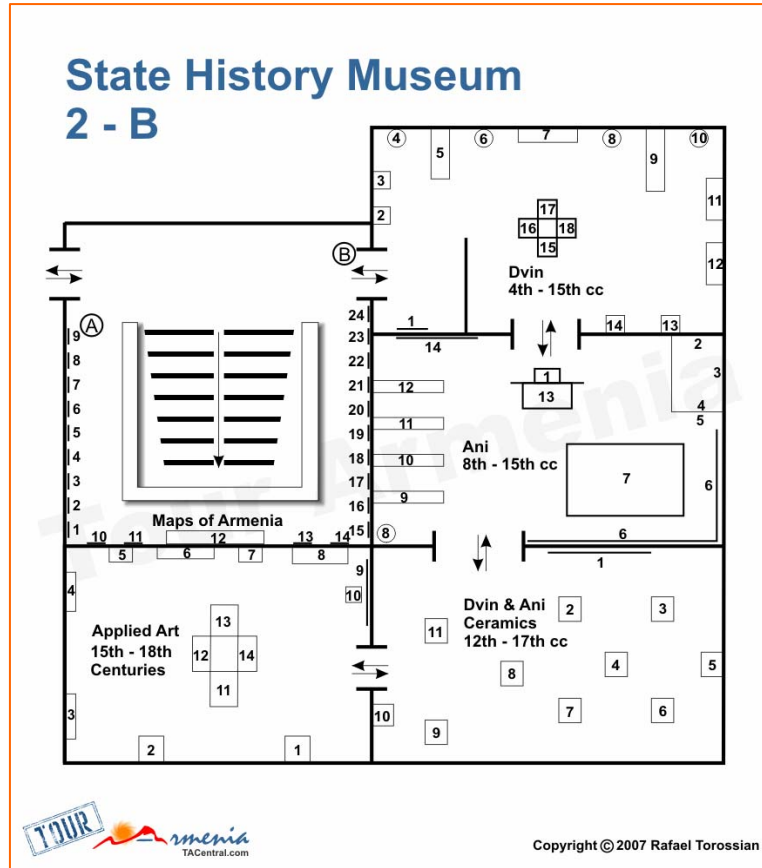
- 1. Photo Story of the excavation. L'chashen was discovered when the waters of

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. Totems
  - (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, 15th c BCE, (g) (opposite side of case) Sun symbols
3. Weapons
  - (a) Belt, 11th-10th cc, (b) Swords, daggers, 17th-13th cc, (c) Flagellant tips, 11th-12th cc, (d) Belt, 11th-10th cc, (e) (opposite side) Fork, 13th-12th cc, (f) Sword tips, 19th-12th cc, (g) Axe heads, 13th-12th cc
4. Ritual 3-color clay vessel, 15th c BCE  
Bow & Arrows, 15th-14th cc
5.
  - (a) Bronze Bull figurine, 15th c BCE, (b) Vessel, 15th c BCE
6. Hearse Carriage, 15th-14th cc
7.
  - (a) Silver cup, 22nd-21st cc, Karasham, (b) Gold necklace, 15th-14th cc, Vanadzor, (c) Necklaces, 22nd-9th cc, various locations
8.
  - (a) Bronze deer, 12th c BCE, (b) 3-color vessel, 15th c BCE

**Gallery: Stone Age to Iron Age**

1. Idol, 11th-10th cc Aigeshat
2. Female Idol, 11th-10th cc, Aigeshat
3. Idol, 11th-10th cc, Aigeshat
4. Fragment, 11th-10th cc, Aigeshat
5. Vessel, 18th-15th cc, Sissian, Oshakan
6. Geometric Vessel, 18th-15th cc, Sissian
7. Geometric Vessel, 18th-15th cc, Sissian
8. Geometric Vessel, 18th-15th cc, Oshakan
9. Tools and Implements of the Stone Age
  - (a) Left: 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. 3000-1000 BCE
  - (a) Left: Weapons, 3rd-2nd millennium, (b) Jewelry, 21st-7th cc
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
  - (1) Pot, 3000 BCE, Gegharord, (2, 3, 4) Pots, 17th-15th cc, Oshakan, (5, 6) Pots, 21st-19th cc, Lori Berd
16. Black vessel, 21st-19th cc, Nor Naver

- 15th cc, Oshakan, (2) Jewelry, 15th-13th cc, Aghavnatin, (3) Gold Leaf, 21st-19th cc, Nor Naver, (4) Necklace, 21st-19th cc, Nor Naver, (5) Necklaces, 21st-15th cc, Nor Naver, Lori Berd, Kankor, (6) Ear Rings, necklaces, 2nd m BCE, Nor Naver, (7) Pot, 18th-17th cc, Sissian, (8-9) Weapons, 17th-16th cc, Oshakan, Kuchark, (10) Spearhead, 22nd-19th cc, Lori, (11) Spearhead, 17th-16th cc, Oshakan, (12) Spearhead, 21st-19th cc, Lori Berd, (13) Spearhead, 15th-14th cc, Kanakert, (14) Implement, 2nd m BCE, Nor Naver, (15) Implement, 17th-16th cc, Oshakan, (16) Vessel, 17th-16th cc, Lori Berd

MAP 2-B

17. Photo Display of new excavations
- 18.

(a) Necklace made of bronze, silver, chalcedony, 3000-2000, Gegharord, (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, Gegharak, (7) Totems, 3000 BCE, Agararak, (8) Mortar, 3000 BCE, Agararak, (9) Stamp, 3rd millennium BCE, Tatev, (10) Cup, 3rd millennium BCE, Shengavit

20. Hellenistic Period

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

21. Metal, Gold

- (1) Bronze Lion, 17th-15th cc, Oshakan, (2) Jewelry, 15th-13th cc, Aghavnatin, (3) Gold Leaf, 21st-19th cc, Nor Naver, (4) Necklace, 21st-19th cc, Nor Naver, (5) Necklaces, 21st-15th cc, Nor Naver, Lori Berd, Kankor, (6) Ear Rings, necklaces, 2nd m BCE, Nor Naver, (7) Pot, 18th-17th cc, Sissian, (8-9) Weapons, 17th-16th cc, Oshakan, Kuchark, (10) Spearhead, 22nd-19th cc, Lori, (11) Spearhead, 17th-16th cc, Oshakan, (12) Spearhead, 21st-19th cc, Lori Berd, (13) Spearhead, 15th-14th cc, Kanakert, (14) Implement, 2nd m BCE, Nor Naver, (15) Implement, 17th-16th cc, Oshakan, (16) Vessel, 17th-16th cc, Lori Berd

**2nd FLOOR, Center and Right galleries**

**Right Gallery: Dvin**

1. Explanatory Plaques
    - (a) *Story of Dvin, 332 CE – 1236 CE.* Dvin and its rival city Ani, represent the height of Medieval Armenia development. Parallel to the rise of the Bagratuni Dynasty of Nakerars and kings, the cities became rich and powerful, able to repel Seljuk and Arab domination for long periods of time. For 400 years these cities were two of the great trading centers of Western Asia, and both created a stunning civilization based on world trade and Christian hegemony. The ceramics are the most famous examples of this civilization, combining imported technology from China and Mongolia with an inherently Armenian symbolism from both its pagan and Christian pasts.
  - (b) Medieval Armenian City construction. Construction was based on the citadel, or high point, as in earlier epochs. The church, built over pagan temples, held ritual presence, expanding in Dvin's time to the most powerful position in daily life. Workshops and homes rang around these central points.
  - (c) 3000 BCE Dvin. Excavation of pre-historic Dvin shows a city based on agriculture and trade.
  - (d) 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
    - (5) Tonir cover
  8. Red clay pot with belt, 10th-11th cc
  9. Green Glaze Ceramics, 11th-13th cc
    - Note (1) Multi-handled pot, (2) Serving bowl, (3) Tea Pot, (4) Wine server.
  10. Red clay belt pot, 10th-12th cc

11. Iron tools, 9th-13th cc  
12. Coins, 8th-14th cc

[ A ] [ B ] [ C ]  
[ D ] [ E ] [ F ]  
[ G ] [ H ] [ I ]

A. Arab Caliphate, B. Byzantine, C. Mahmoud, D. Armenian Arabic, E. Georglan, F. Euphrates Seljuk, G. Lori, H. Sultanate, I. Mongolian

13. Glass, 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cc.  
(1) Bracelets & ring, (2) Cup, (3) Fragments, (4) Small vessel, (5) Drinking glass, (6) Jug, (7) Vase, (8) Blue and gold vase fragment, 11th c.
14.  
(a) Clay fragments, 10th-13th cc, (b) Oil lamp with totems, 9th-10th cc. Even in Dvin's heyday, pagan imagery and superstitions abound. This lamp is an example of the way domestic items continued to emulate pre-Christian beliefs while public displays were blatantly apostolic. Lamps were often made in memory of the departed, the imagery representing their souls, the fire to clean their way to the next world.
15. Ceramic Bowls, 9th-13th cc  
Note Angel, Winged Lion "king" imagery
16. Ceramics with bird symbols  
(1) Bowl, 9th-10th cc, (2) Cup, 12th-13th cc, (3) Jug, 13th c
17. Glazed Clay, 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cc  
(1) Plate with horse design, (2) Vase, (3) Bowl, (4) Bowl with bird design.
18. 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 merely shows the difference in importance between that for 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 ascendancy 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](http://www.virtualani.freenet.am) and our chapter on Shirak: Ani)*  
(1) Igadzor gate, 989, (2) Kars gate, 989, (3) Main gate, 989, (4) Chess gate, 989, (5) Baronats Palace, 12th-13th cc, (6) S. Grigor (Gagarshen), 1001-1015, (7) Sarkis Palace, 12th-13th cc, (8) Baghdaghik church, 12th-13th cc, (9) Baths, 10th-11th cc, (10) Oil workshop, 10th-13th cc, (11) Kaghedon (Chalcedonic) church, (12) Church, (13) Hostel, 12th-13th cc, (14) Arekelots, 10th c (Gavit 12th c), (15) Aboghamar S. Grigor church, 10th c, (16) Horom church, 968, rebuilt 1217, (17) Katoghikheh Cathedral, 989-1001, (18) Chess church, 13th c, (19) Amnaprkitch, 1036, (20) Tiran Honentz church, 1215, (21) Virgin Monastery, 13th c, (22) Bridge, 11th c, (23) Minukhihr Mosque, 12th c, (24) Oil workshop, 10th-13th cc, (25) Khambugh church, 10th c, (26) Ashot wall, 964, (27) Bagratuni Palace, 10th c, (28) Church, 10th c,

- (29) Kamsarakan tower 6th-7th cc, (30) Cemetery (31) S. Grigor (Girl's fortress), 12th-13th cc
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. "Lusatapantz" 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

✂ **NATIONAL ART GALLERY** ▲, Republic Square, tel. 580812, 582161, email: URL: [www.gallery.am](http://www.gallery.am) (web site is often offline), open Tues-Sun 10:30-6, 800 AMD. The national Art Gallery will surprise you: its collection, while not the largest or richest in the world, still has a remarkable depth of art work, especially in its collection of 19th century Russian masters, the second largest in the world when taken together with the Russian Art Museum at Cascade. Unlike the History Museum, the galleries are multi-language, and follow a basically chronological flow, with galleries dedicated to origin, themes and types.



Formed in 1921, the museum benefited by transfers of paintings from Moscow's Tretyakov Gallery (owned by wealthy Armenian merchants in the Tsarist days), Echmiadzin (17th-18th cc Armenian and Russian masters), and the Lazarev collection of Armenian and Russian art (prominent Moscow Armenians, the Lazarevs founded the Lazarev Institute of Oriental Languages in 1815, a training ground of many of Armenia's 19th century literary masters). One section is dedicated to the art of Spiurk Hay (Diaspora Armenians) and locals living abroad. Among these Russian-Armenian paintings, a scattering of Titian, Rembrandt and other European artists give some sense of proportion to the museum's collection, though there are far fewer than you would expect in a museum of this stature. Taken together, the art on display forms a broad display of the history of Armenian Art from its beginnings in the medieval period through its tumultuous changes in the 19th c and the development of the "Armenian modern school" in the early Soviet period. The current era is scarcely covered here; a better look is at the [Museum of Contemporary Art](#) on page 58.

The gallery has sections on **Armenian art** (medieval miniatures, frescoes, sculpture replicas, 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 art, 19th c Romanian 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 Arug 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 Akhtalin monasteries (10th-14th cc).

**European galleries** include Italian (Di Bicci, Garofalo, Bassano, Tintoretto, Strozzi, Lanfranco, Guardi, Kanovi, Guercino, Benvenuto, Tiepolo); Flemish (Rubens, Van Dyk, Jordaens, Feit) Dutch (Berham, Dujardin, Netcher, Kodde, G. Flinka, Teniers, Neefs, Claesz, Van Goen) German and French (Boudin, Courbet, Monticelli, Fragonard, Greuze, Drouais, Robert, Diaz, Vernet, Rousseau) masters. Look for *The Mystical Marriage of St. Catherine* (Di Bicci school), and work of the *Barbizon school of landscape painting* (Narcisse Diaz de la Pena, Rousseau, Boudin, Monticelli and Van Gogh). The name comes from Barbizon village in northern France where most of the school's painters lived.

**Russian galleries** include work by the Classical Russian artists I. Argunov, D. Levitsky, V. Tropinin, V. Vereshchagin, I. Repin, I. Shishkin, A. Kouinjii, I. Levitan, V. Surikov, V. Serov. K. Korovin, M. Vrubel, A. Golovina and others. Soviet-Contemporary include A. Golubkina, S. Konenkoy, Nesterov, I. Mashkov, A. Kuprin, P. Konchalovsky, K. Petrov-Vodkin, P. Falk, and I. Tyrsa, who began their work before 1917. Those after the revolution include I. Shadr, Z. Serebryakov, S. Gerasimov, V. Lebedev, P. Korin, A. Plastov, A. Deineka, M. Manizer et al. Russian art also includes 17th-19th cc icons and a display of 18th-19th cc porcelain.

**Armenian Galleries** cover the period from Medieval to modern times. Medieval art includes work by the miniaturists Toros Roslin, Sarkis Pitsak, Grigor Tatevatsi 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 Hakob Hovnatanian, Stepanos Nersissian, Hovhannes (Ivan) Aivazovski and Gevork Bashinjaghian. In addition there are landscapes by Isaac Levitan, Mikhail Vrublev's graphic works and portraits by Victor Borisov-Musatov. Of special note are Bashinjaghian's landscapes and Aivazovski's impressive seascapes. The National Gallery has the second largest collection of Aivazovski's works (the largest is at the Theodosia Memorial Museum). Others are the emotional depictions of mythic figures by Vartkes Surenians, 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-Melikian, Gabriel Gurjian, Georgy Yakoulov, Yervand Kochar, Gregorio Sciltian, Leon Tutunjian, Arshile Gorky, Carzou, Girardo Orakyan, Bedros Kontradjian, Jansem, Harutyun Galents, Minas Avetissian, and Hakop Hakopian.

**Periodic Exhibitions, Concerts and Films** The museum also hosts period guest exhibitions (past exhibitions 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/](http://www.armtown.com/events/en/) and [www.armeniainfo.am/calendar/view.php](http://www.armeniainfo.am/calendar/view.php).

✂ **GERARD L. CAFESJIAN MUSEUM OF ART** ▲, Cascade, Cafesjian Museum Foundation, 2 Tamarian p, Suite 48, tel. 54-19-32, 54-19-34, fax: 568-550, email: [cmf@netsys.am](mailto:cmf@netsys.am), URL: [www.cmf.am](http://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 taken 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.



All media are represented in the Cafesjian Collection including large-scale works in bronze by Lynn Chadwick, Barry Flanagan, and Fernando Botero. Included are works by Joseph Albers, John Altoon, Milton Avery, Howard Ben Tre, Georges Braque, Marc Chagall, Nicki de Saint Phalle, Jim Dine, Jean Dufy, Helen Frankenthaler, Arshile Gorky, Adolf Gottlieb, David Hockney, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Franz Klein, Roy Lichtenstein, Joan Miro, Louise Nevelson, Pablo Picasso, Robert Rauschenberg, Man Ray, David Sultan, Wayne Thiebaud, Maurice Utrillo, Victor Vasarely, Andy Warhol, and Tom Wesselman. Armenian artists represented include Sarkis Hamalbashian, Karlen Hovsepian, Anatoli Papanian, Armen Vartanian, Gervasia Vartanian, and Zadik Zadikian.

The collection is so important and so complete, no less than the Museum of Modern Art, Tate Modern and the Pompidou Center/Louvre attempted to obtain it, Cafesjian choosing to build a new world-class museum in Yerevan instead. The Museum will constitute the first phase of the Gerard L. Cafesjian Center for the Arts. The site has sweeping views of Yerevan and encompasses several monuments dating from the Soviet era, including the monumental staircase (Cascade) rising sixty meters from the city floor to the site of the new museum.

The Museum complex 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.



The Cafesjian Museum Foundation has selected New York Architect David Hotson (URL: [www.hotson.net](http://www.hotson.net)), whose clients include the United Nations, Eyebeam Atelier, Architect Santiago Calatrava, and United States President Bill Clinton.

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.

## ARCHEOLOGICAL MUSEUMS ▲

☒ **EREBUNI MUSEUM** ▲, 38 Erebuni pta, tel. 45-82-07, open Tues-Sun, 10-5, 1000 AMD, is located in the south of the city (Metro: Sasuntsi Davit, then a 15 min walk up Erebuni p. (Bus 7, 8, 9 / MV 11, 6, 7) in a working class neighborhood. The staff can be friendly to indifferent, depending on who you get. At 1000 AMD, this is one of the most expensive venues in town, and not really

worth the extra 2500 AMD for a personal guide, unless you are in a group and split costs.

The museum is at the foot of Arin Berd, site of a 1970s excavation that uncovered a fortress-settlement with beginnings in the Bronze Age but its real development was in the Iron Age when the Urartian Empire (also called the Kingdom of Van) used the site to guard the area. Not as large as the now desolate Karmir Blur about 10 km to the west, Erebuni is older (2790 years old in 2008) and lasted longer, prompting officials to claim it as the birthplace of Yerevan, one of the oldest cities in the world (there are even older settlements in Yerevan; a 250,000 BCE stone age settlement below the US Embassy, and 4000-2000 BCE sentiments at Shengavit, Karmir Blur, Karmir Berd and Berdadzor).

**History** Often called the first kingdom or empire in Armenia's history (the "Kingdom of Van"), the Urartians are actually one of a long line of powerful entities that cultivated the Armenian Plateau and created the borders called "Greater" or "Historic" Armenia.

Beginning about 2000 BCE, the Assyrians used the term "People of the Nairi" to describe the peoples on the Armenian Plateau. The territory and people both were 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.

Assyrians first mention Urartu during the reign of the Assyrian king Shalmanaser I (1280-1266 BCE), under the name "Uruatri". Shalmanaser's texts describe a campaign against 8 countries collectively called the Uruatri. The size of the country is not described, but it is likely other tribes living in the area around Van were included in the alliance, since the Assyrian name Uruatri had no ethnic significance but was probably a descriptive term (perhaps meaning "the mountainous country"), since reference to the Nairi is still made

This early slave-holding state first occupied the territories lying around Lake Van, on the Eastern

Shore of which lay its capital, Tushpa (present town of Van). This was the same territory inhabited by the Nairi which gradually disappeared in Assyrian cuneiforms.



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 Urartians 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 Biainili (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 Shargun II built Dur-Sharukin, he incorporated 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.

Often at odds with the Assyrians, their history parallels the rise and fall of the Babylonian and Assyrian empires, but at their height in the 8th c BCE, they capture entire Assyrian provinces, invaded Babylon, going as far as the river Diala, and usurped Assyria's trade routes. exacting tremendous tribute to allow passage.

War between the Urartians and the Assyrians include that during the reign of the Assyrian king Shalmanaser III (860-825 BCE), who recorded initial victories against the Urartians on the bronze gates at Imgur-Emil southeast of Ninevah (British Museum). The bronze gates were an early form of "billboard advertising," hung where all could see them, and "updated" with bronze impressions after each Assyrian campaign. By the end of his reign the bronze billboard no longer recorded victories, as the Urartians regained their foothold and began attacks into the heart of the Assyrian kingdom.

**Menuas, Argishti and Sardur I** The real rise of Urartu is centered around three kings: Menuas, Argishti and Sardur I. Menuas in particular established the outlines of the empire, enabling his son Argishti and grandson Sardur II to extend the empire to its furthest reaches. Menuas spent much of his efforts in internal organization of the empire, fortifying the citadel of Tushpa and establishing cities and strongholds throughout the empire. Fortified cities were placed so that communications between the farthest reaches of the empire and Tushpa could raise an invasion force within a matter of hours. Menuas developed extensive irrigation within the Urartian Empire, some of which are still operating.

Argishti, Menuas' younger son, a brilliant tactician and general, succeeded to the throne in 786 BCE, his armies countering an Assyrian invasion by conquering provinces and invading Babylon itself. Argishti I crossed the Arax River and penetrated the Ararat Plain. He and his son, Sardur I expanded the empire as far as both shores of Lake



Sevan, up to the edges of modern Georgia, incorporating most of the territory of the current Republic into its reaches. He ordered the building of several key outposts, among them Erebuni in 782 BCE and Argishitinili (present day Armavir).



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 mountainous region rich with 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 declare 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 Armavir, calling it Argishitinili ("built by Argishti"). The city boasted cyclopean 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 Erebuni was used primarily as a military fortress.

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 area and the interior of Asia Minor. Urartian artifacts and design were used not only on mainland Greece but also as far away as Italy.

Argishti I's son, Sarduri II continued his father's external policies and strengthened the existing administration and economic centers, erecting a stele that mentions the land of Armehe in the upper Tigris Valley, the nucleus of an alliance of city-states later called the Armenians. Sarduri's reign also coincided with another revival of Assyria, which under Tiglath-Pileser III in 745 BCE laid waste to much of Urartu, invading the capital. This weakened the empire, and by the reign of Rusa I (735 BCE), Urartu was in continual threat of attack from Assyria to the South, internal dissension among feudal states within the kingdom, and a new threat from migrating Cimmerians from the North.

In 722 BCE, Sargon, overthrew his brother and seized the Assyrian throne, invading Urartu in 714 BCE, thwarting a counter move by Rusa's army and annihilating the Urartian army and capturing the important Urartian city of Musasir. Rusa committed suicide, ending Urartu's empire period.

**Untold Treasures** A small sample of the Urartu's enormous wealth in Urartu can be found in the accounting ledger of the treasures captured when the Assyrian King Sargon took Musasir (713 BCE):

In the palace storerooms alone they found more than a ton of gold (34 talents, 18 minas); nearly five tons of silver (167 talents, ½ mina); and over four hundred precious objects, broken into 44 types, including gold and silver swords and daggers, silver cups, cups with gold handles. Among the primary objects listed were:

*"6 gold shields, flame-red in color, which hung in his chamber on the right and left sides and shone*

*with dazzling brightness; in the middle of them are the heads of dogs with bared teeth; they weighed 5 talents and 12 minas (about 140 lbs.)... one gold door bolt in the shape of a man's hand, the fastening on the door in the shape of a monster; 2 gold keys in the shape of lamassus (winged demons) wearing tiaras... weighed 2 talents and 12 minas (about 145 lbs.) of gold...25,212 brazen (bronze) shields both heavy and light...; 1,514 brazen javelins both heavy and light; heavy brass spear heads...; brass lances with brass supports; 305,412 swords...; 1 large sword, a weapon worn at his waist, to the making of which went 26 minas and 3 su (about 30 lbs.) of gold; 96 silver javelins... silver bows and silver spears, inlaid with gold and mounted; 12 heavy silver shields, the bosses of which are made in the form of the heads of monsters, lions and wild bulls...; 33 silver chariots."*



The total ledger lists 61 different types of items taken and a total of 335,000 objects in all. Mind, this was not the main capital, but an outpost of the kingdom. Even this partial listing is staggering in its proportions. Very few of the items were manufactured outside of Urartu, giving a good idea of the enormous wealth in the empire and why it was so coveted by the outsiders.

**Urartu's End** 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 Rusahinili, 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 Erebuni 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), Argishikhnili (Armavir), Giumri, Vanadzor and Sissian, three fortified cities on Lake Sevan (L'chashen, 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 museum, with galleries exhibiting finds from Erebuni, Karmir Blur and Karmir Berd; and the excavation itself, which was reinforced and renovated for the museum's 1968 opening and slightly repaired for its 1998 celebration, but mostly desolate and ill-kempt. 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.

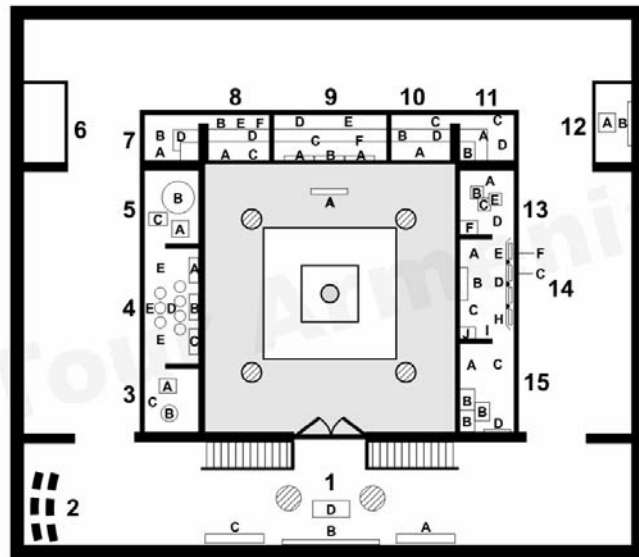
**MUSEUM** The museum has a large collection of items on display; jewelry, idols, tools and implements used at the fortress and at Karmir Blur and Shengavit. This is the most completely collection of Urartian artifacts in the world (12,235 in all), arranged in a way to show how the fortress operated 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.

**Front of Museum, Street-side** The two **brass figures** are copies of Urartian deities found in excavations in Armenia. They bear a striking likeness to Babylonian and Assyrian deities, combining human and animal attributes.

**Downstairs Inner Lobby** The **inscription** on the wall facing the front doors commemorates the opening of the museum and excavation directors.

## Erebuni Museum



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on the left (1A) is the god Teisheba and the one on the right (1C) depicts the god Khaldi. There were 79 gods in the Urartian pantheon (14 female, and 65 male). The three main deities were Khald (or Khaldi, the supreme god, symbolized by a man standing on a lion), his wife Arubani, and Teisheba (a fighting god symbolized by a man standing on a bull). Others in the pantheon included Khuba (the god of war), Shivini (the sun god, depicted as a fireball) and Tushpue (the god of the Urartian capital Tushpa).

**1B. Map of Urartu Empire.** In the center of the two bas relief is a large wall map of embossed metal showing the Urartu Empire at its greatest extent. On the map, towards the right, you can notice three lakes. The largest lake is Van, the others Sevan and Urmia. Urartians called their country (and themselves) Biaini

(Biainili). The words "Biain" and "Van" are not that far removed: several centuries of dialect pronunciations have softened the "b" to a "v" and changed the diphthong "iai" to a short "a" sound. The name "Urartu" comes from Assyrian and Babylonian descriptions of the Urartians, using their own coined term, and archeological and historical researchers adopted it in the modern age.

**1D. Model of Erebuni.** Underneath the map is a model of Erebuni as it was first built, including the temples of Sushu and Khaldi, a Ziggurat (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 stones 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 could find artifacts. Discovery of a piece of 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 majority at Teishebaini (Karmir Blur, Yerevan) and Argishtikhinili (Armavir). 20 were found at Erebuni. The focus of the cuneiform room is 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.**

#### Section 4

**4A. Picture (left) of excavated Cattle shed.**

**4B. Picture (center) of Urartian Brewery**

**4C. Picture (on right) of Wooden plows.**

**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.

**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.

### 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 terusi 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 Erebuni 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

The museum was officially opened to the public in 1968, the 2,750th anniversary of the founding of 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.

Note 1A & 1C: The two bas relief's in tufa stone are contemporary carving based on fragments found at the excavation. The one

- 8A. **Weapon** Fragments include Arrow Heads, Quivers and breastplate Fragments.
- 8B. **Weaponry** include helmets, spear, small sword and word fragments, slings, arrows.
- 8C. **Stone Vessel.**
- 8D. **Stone Ax Head.**
- 8E. **Poultice Stone** for grinding paint pigments.
- 8F. **Polishing and Grinding Stones** used for sharpening and polishing weapons and metal or stone items.

### Section 9

- 9A. **Drawing** of Erebuni
- 9B. **Drawing** of King's raiment
- 9C. **Fragments** of Uartian clothing and Sewing Artifacts include fragments from aristocratic household, needles, 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 Wings** 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** where ashes 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 Uartian 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.
- 11C. **Stamp.** The black stone seal depicting a griffin holding a snake in its beak. Scenes of fighting birds and snakes are thought to depict the concept of the Universe's eternal struggle between good and evil, current in Uartian mythology. Four types of seals have been uncovered in Uartian excavations: cylindrical, bell-shaped, animal-shaped figurines and weight-shaped, as in this example.
- 11D. **Agate and Quivers.** The collection includes 28 finely polished and drilled, 12 bell-shaped agate beads and 3 disk-shaped bead partitions; a bronze pin adorned with a bas relief of four ram heads; large bracelets decorated with the heads of snakes (broken into pieces and twisted before being placed into the grave). The bronze quivers are unusual for the region, shaped as tubes with two rings affixed to each. The remains of a wooden bow are the bronze bow ends on display.

### Hall Three, Section 12: Burial

**The Bains 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 from the Armenian Academy of Sciences uncovered a sepulcher in the graveyard from the Uartian period, stone-coffins from the Early Bronze and barrows from the Middle Bronze Ages. Pottery 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 dark-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 slabs at the western end of the tomb, three caches were found, one holding **bronze quivers**, a **bowl**, **agate beads**, a weight-shaped **seal** 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 sharp **sword**, **knife** 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 of which was adorned with 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. Uartian 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 tomb, 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-life-death-afterlife, with the "dwelling" of the soul making up the most significant element of burial.

It is believed that the Uartian god Adaruta was the symbol of birth, Irmushini 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", Uartians 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 humankind'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 Khaldi, 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 make-up of individual regions. Three basic types of burial have been uncovered: burial of an intact body, cremation and dismemberment.

**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 dromos; 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 dromos, or directly in the ground.

**Dismemberment:** Also originating in the Armenian Plateau in the Bronze Age, this rite persisted until the early Middle Ages. 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 places in a wall niche of a stone burial cell with dromos.



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 hydrogenous

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.



The graves at Nor Aresh and Erebuni show the variety of Indo-European and neighboring cultures predominate in the area in the 8th century BCE, many of whom were resettled during the reign of Argishti I (280,000 settlers) and Sardur I (197,000 settlers).

The resettlement had a profound affect on the local culture, which had been separated from the west after the fall of the Metsamor Kingdom (date unknown), and during the Nairi confederation. Artifacts and burial rites uncovered from the earlier period show a striking similarity to that found in the western Armenian Plateau, showing a much earlier and closer tie within the entire area as early as 5000 BCE.

#### Section 12

12A. **Stone Carving** of an unknown god. This piece is simple in design and possibly dates to the early or middle Bronze Age. It is evocative through its full-face depiction, the first known frontal depiction of a god, which were rigorously shown in profile.

12B. **Picture of 4 Stone Idols** found in the excavation.

#### Hall Four: Religion And Power Section 13

13A. **Decorative Bronze Shield** (wall above figurines). Made from 30 kilograms of bronze (about 64 pounds), the shield's diameter is 70 cm to 1 meter. The shield is one of many that hung on the walls of the temple to Khaldi.

13B. **Ceramic Vessels.**

13C. **Boxes with carved covers.** On the third pedestal are two stone boxes with carved coverings. One cover depicts sun rays, the other has a ring of carved lions.

13D. **Egyptian Amulet**, on the pedestal below Khaldi, made of bronze. Urartu traded with Egypt, and this amulet would have been accepted as a good luck charm, possibly belonging to an Egyptian settler in Erebuni.

13E. Small bronze statuettes of **Teisheba** and **Arubani**. Teisheba was the god of war, Arubani the goddess of fertility, wife to Khaldi.

13F. **Bronze Musical Bowl.** Musical bowls or bells of various shapes were found during excavations. Used in religious or formal rites, the varying sizes create a startling ringing sound when struck together or in sequence.

A **brass bell** and **Argishti stamp** are located in small cases below the musical bowl.

#### Section 14

14A. **Bone Amulets.** Amulets were worn by both sexes, though this type was used primarily by men to ward off evil on expeditions and in battle.

14B. **Jewelry** includes necklaces of agate, obsidian and amber and ear-rings. Note **Marble Wall Hanger**

14C. **Small Ceramic Figure.**

14D. **4 Bronze Tureens** with inscriptions to King Menuas in cuneiform.

14E. **Four Stone fragment drawings** on blue stone. Three are animal figures, while the fourth is in a geometric pattern. The right animal drawing represents a horse (religious icon), the left a bull image (everyday life scene). The style is unique for combining Mesopotamian and Mycenaean imagery.

14F. **Amulet.**

14G. **Coin** from Augustus Caesar imprints (2 CE) and **Militian Coins**. Urartu continued as a small military outpost until the end of the Roman period, and many artifacts from later periods were found at the site. These represent a few.

14H. **Sarduri II Helmet:** Thought to be worn by Sarduri himself in battle, the helmet is an embossed bronze and metal helmet with unique iconography. The picture on the wall above highlights the details on the helmet.

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 excavators.

15A. **Bronze buckle** from belt and Iron Sword

15B. **3 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 spear rising from it. The symbols of the tower with a spear have become Yerevan's coat of arms.

#### Central Courtyard

##### Section 16

The courtyard in the center of the museum is a reconstruction of the palace courtyard at the excavation site. The first use of peristyle (using columns to surround a building or enclose a central court) found in the eastern Urartian empire, the courtyard provided covered walkways to connecting rooms in the palace and the temple of Sushi, worshipped

by Argishti and Sarduri. The covered ground suggests the polished stones used in the palace, with a central hole for fires.

16A. **"Argishti II" Khachkar.** Found at Tanahat Vank near Sissian, this cuneiform stone dedicated to Argishti II, was carved on one side into a khachkar in the eleventh century CE. Cuneiform inscriptions can be found on the surface of the cross.

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 large 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 shaved to their current form by builders.

Urban dwellings rang 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. Looted when Xerxes and Darius took control of Erebuni, the temple was razed.

5. **Adana.** The Adana or temple to fire deities, was constructed during the Persian Epoch (ca. 4th-3rd cc BCE).

6. **Store rooms.** Several dozen mammoth vats were partially submerged in the ground in the store room to preserve grain, wine and oil. An example of a vat is in the museum, which held about 250 liters of wine.

7. **Palace Entrance.** A dedication stone is placed in the wall of the entrance.

8. **Palace Courtyard.** A reconstruction of the peristyle courtyard is in the museum.

9. **Temple to Sush.** Argishti I dedicated the temple to Sush, 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.

10. **Banquet Room.** 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.

11. **King's Chambers.** The chamber walls were also decorated with frescos, and the reconstructed ones you can see have withstood the test of time a little better.

12. **Servant's Quarters** were immediately adjacent to the palace quarters, with an open courtyard. The palace kitchen and workrooms lined the courtyard.

13. **Soldier Quarters** were also used by palace officials, and lay on the outer edges of the citadel.

✚ **KARMIR BLUR EXCAVATION ▲**, (40.15105x44.45440, 900m), above Karmir Blur Cemetery, Shirak p, Karmir Blur, Yerevan, open Tues-Sat (summer) 11-5, 300 AMD, is located in Shengavit District and reached by going S on Bagratuniats off of Echmiadzin highway, then turning R (SE) on Artashisian p. and R again (NW) on Shirak p, following it to the cemetery, turning R again at the Horse Center/Play City. The large hill looms above the neighborhood (Bus , 2, 12, 15 / MV 25, 39, 41, 54, 65, 97 - 15 min. walk up Shirak p.).

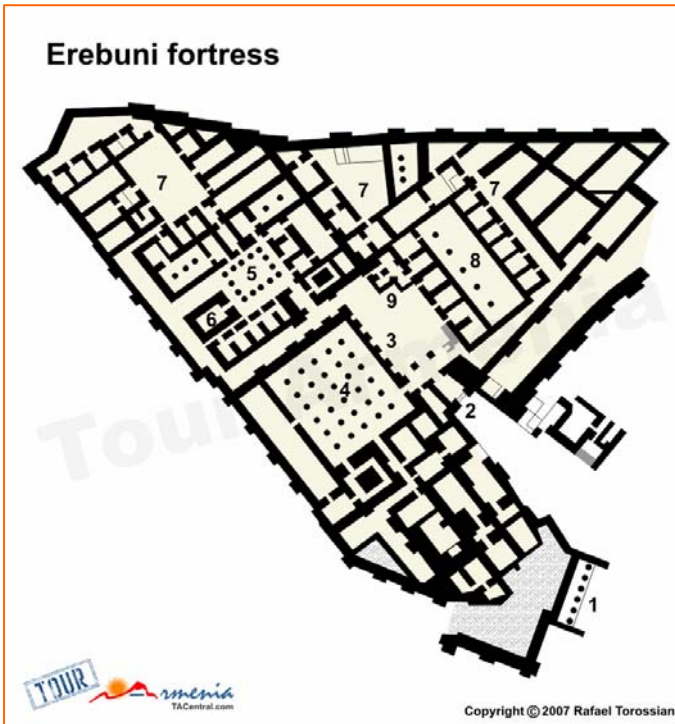
The tiny but well-presented museum at Karmir Blur is a solid compliment to the massive excavation above. The museum is in a rather badly-preserved building that will remind some of a shack. The treasures inside are real, though, and a shame on the Culture ministry that is in charge of their preservation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



The site sits on a bluff overlooking the Hrazdan River and is downstream from Shengavit, It's name "Karmir Blur" ("Red Hill") comes from the huge pile of decomposed red mud-brick used in its construction, some of which still sits atop the impressive stone foundations of the city wall (foundations that may have their origins in an earlier Bronze Age fortress).

Its Urartian name was Teishebani, and it was built for the Urartian king Rusa II, who rejuvenated the empire for a short time before its final collapse in the 6th c BCE. The city was called *Teishebai URU* (City of the God Teisheba) by its inhabitants, who relocated there from the charred ruins of Erebuni, which had fallen during Scythian attacks in the period before Rusa II's ascendancy.

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.



**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.

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 the rooms could hold 9000 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 while 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 overhanging 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 vaults. 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 Bagratuniants S from the Echmiadzin Hwy, then immediately after passing 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 Erebuni.



**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 Geghama Lehr. 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.

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 Dari Blur (Armavir), Aratashen 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 Aigevan, 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.

Excavators say the site has yielded some of the richest finds in the region and shows a highly developed society, findings 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 Kurash 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, when builders hastily constructed their buildings using whatever they had at hand, not paying attention to the look of the structure or its seismic stability. Others showed greater attention to detail and strength.

The layer above held communal structures, used by families or groups that shared common areas or courtyards, their round houses forming mini-compounds within the larger city. The lower level structures are not as connected, and were rectangular and polygonal, as well as round in shape.

Principles of town planning and construction suggest Shengavit was a city at a very early age and one that had developed a specific hierarchy of society, one at odds with earlier interpretations of the top layer of communal housing. Houses were built with a variety of materials, some made from stone blocks and basalt, mortared with grass and weeds dipped in liquid clay, making the walls better able to resist earth tremors. Some of the more refined buildings had onyx, marble and granite staffs, something unexpected to find from this period.

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,

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.

## HISTORY, MEMORIAL MUSEUMS ▲

✦ **TSITSERNAKABERD GENOCIDE MUSEUM ▲**, Tsitsernakaberd Park, tel. 39-14-12, 39-09-81, open Tues-Sun 11-6 B 11, 33, 34, 35, 40, MV 18, 21, 27, 46, 50, 64, 74, 88, 117, 125), is officially named "The Museum-Institute of Armenian Genocide". It was established in 1995 as a part of a [Genocide Memorial](#) (p. 74), and is located on the SW corner of the monument in a large underground bunker-like premise.

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, horseshoed, 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 recordings of factual events, they become at this memorial testament to the suffering and courage of the all genocidal victims people in the face of tyrants. To date the Turkish government refuses to admit the fact of the genocide, 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 firsthand 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 preservation department safeguards 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 de Morgan (French scientist), Valerii Brusov, Russian Poet, Fa'iz El-Ghusein (1883-1938), councilor to King Feisal I, friend of Lawrence of Arabia, Armin T. Wegner (1886-1978), German soldier, photo-documenter of the Genocide, Albert

Einstein, Baron Hans Freiherr von Wangenheim (1859-1915), German diplomat, Vladimir Gordlevski, Joseph, Jacques Anatole Francois Thibault (Anatole France) (1844-1924), French poet, critic, novelist and playwright, and Arnold J. Toynbee (1889-1975), British historian.

The upper floors (main floor) of the museum presents a permanent exhibition of documentation of the Genocide, something sadly needed to defend against Turkish denials of the murders, which has taken some absurd turns lately (the accompanying web site to the museum is under constant attack by Turkish hackers bent on closing any web site that does not agree with their revisionist views).

The first gallery shows key areas of Western Armenia (Oriental Anatolia) and Ottoman census figures 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 two million Armenians 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 condemned it during WWI, only to renege on their words immediately after). Britain and France were especially outraged at the genocide, 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 passage has some disturbing 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 cities emptied 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 space with 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 made available to visitors; 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 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.

✦ **MOTHER ARMENIA /WORLD WAR II MUSEUM ▲**, Victory Park, 2 Azatutian p, tel. 25-14-00, 25-06-77, open Tues-Fri 10-5, Sat-Sun 10-3, is located at the base of the large Mother Armenia Statue that looms over the Center of Yerevan from its perch in Arabkir. A visit here is

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 complex includes the museum, a cenotaph of 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 Sergei 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

as the statue was toppled, landing with a gigantic crash heard "as far as Moscow". Two soldiers died during the event, prompting locals to say that even in stone Stalin takes his victims. The current statue, by A. Haratunian, was erected in 1967. Perhaps not as fierce, the statue nonetheless continues to face Western Armenia, present day Turkey.

The museum (officially called "Mother Armenia Museum of the Ministry of Defense") is located in the pedestal for the statue, a mammoth structure that, regardless of its outward severity, was a bold design for the Soviet times, its interior designed to represent a church, most comparing it to 7th c. Hripsimeh in Echmiadzin. Displays include exhibitions displaying artifacts related to WWII and a floor dedicated to the Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh) conflict.

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. Armenians distinguished themselves in the war, receiving more honors than any other ethnic group (106 earned the Soviet Union's highest rank, the Soviet Hero, three became Marshals and one an 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 (Mayor's 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 exhibitions, 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 be

insistent 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 Teishebani), Arin Blur (Erebuni), and isolated sites in Avan/Arinj, among others. Pots, arrow heads, jewelry and religious totems are part of the display. Most of the "good stuff" are copies of originals held at Erebuni and the State History Museum, which provide a far better sense of perspective. The central pyramid display has coins from various periods of Yerevan's history, which for some strange reason are not displayed at eye-level, but sunken into a pit, forcing you to bend over to try and spot the coins on display.


The 3rd Floor focus on 19th c/ early 20th c Yerevan, with furniture, costumes and personal items of the city, as well as pictures and paintings from the period. There is a model of the old fort, which does not match the historic painting on the wall next to it.

The 4th Floor focuses on 20th-21st century items, with some good photographs of old Yerevan and a large display of awards given to Yerevan sports champions and products.

**Outside** The building has 13 columns lining the front facade, with 12 listing Armenia's capitals: Van (908 BCE -1021 CE), Armavir (4th-3rd cc BCE), Yervandashat (220-20 BCE), Artashat (founded 189 BCE, destroyed 163 BCE, revived in same decade, transferred to Dvin ca. 428 CE), Tigranakert (95-55 BCE Tigran Mets capital), Vagharshapat (ca. 163 BCE – 5th c), Dvin (Built by

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).

## CULTURAL MUSEUMS

**☒ MUSEUM OF LITERATURE AND ART**  1 Arami p, tel. 56-36-41, 58-16-51, 56-79-70, open Tues-Sun 10-6, 300 AMD. The Charents State Museum of Literature and Art is reached by the same entrance as the near East Museum, on the back side of the History and Art Museums. The museum is not to be mistaken for the Charents Home-Museum, in much better digs on Mashtots pta. The Literature and Art Museum attempts to tell a chronological history of Literature and the Arts beginning with the 18th c bard Sayat Nova through the late Soviet period. Displays include pictures, paintings, busts, letters, books, playbills and other artifacts from authors, musicians, singers, actors and film makers who shaped the modern Armenian literary, performance and film culture. Not knowing the subjects of the displays is a handicap, and a shame, since there are some real treasures on display, if you know what you are looking at:

**Room 1** focuses on early modern literary figures beginning with the Armenian bards Sayat Nova, Akverdian, Abrahamiz, Nersissian, and Galistian. Sayat Nova's Kamancha (a sort of violin) is a part of the display. The displays continue around the room, and among the figures to look for include Khachatur Abovian (champion of modern Armenian "ashkharabar" dialect and the first to write in the modern idiom, also a champion of modern education principles and often at odds with the church and Russian establishment. Abovian disappeared one morning in 1848); Mikhail Nalbandian (1829-1866), one of the first Armenian writers to promote revolutionary democracy, an idea that ended in his imprisonment and death in exile; early theatre artist Arusik Papasian; Armenia's first feminist writer Surpuhi Tusap; Raffi (Hagop Melik-Hagopian), author of Salpi, Jalaeddin, and Davit-Bek, and the wildly popular Khent (The Fool); the "father of Armenian drama," Gabriel Sundukian, and the founder of Armenian opera Tigran Chukhadjian (Arshak II).




**Room 2** features performers, composers, musicians and writers such as Petros Adamian (Armenia's first great actor, renowned for his 'Hamlet'); the actress Siranush; Yekmelian, Muratian; 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 Hovhannessian, author of *Araxes Came Devouring* 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 (*Armenisa*), Melkon Kiurdjian (*The Emigrant's Life*), Tikatintsi (*The Village and the Winter*), Smbat Biurat (author and first Armenian member of Turkish parliament), Yerukhan (*Crayfish*), Artashes Zardarian (*The Seven Singers*), Tigran Cheokurjian (*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 compose 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 Tekeyan to Varuzhan); the actors Levon Kalantar, Hasmik; the Rustaveli Theatre in Tflis; the actor Vahram Papazian; the Sundukian Theatre of Yerevan; the composer Aram Khachaturian who wrote the ballets *Spartak* (a.k.a. *Spartacus*) and *Guyaneh* (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".

**NEAR EAST MUSEUM / MARCOS GRIGORIAN COLLECTION**  1 Arami p. (Republic Square: History & National Gallery building, entrance in rear of building), Tel: 56-37-14, 39-42-74. 300 AMD.



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 the American Armenian painter Arshille Gorki.



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.

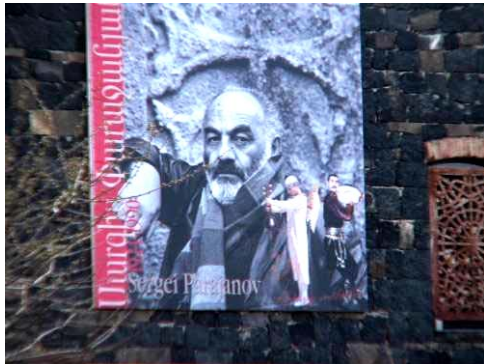
A third area of the museum is devoted to Grigorian's carpet weaving. A natural extension of his earth works, his carpets are each a radical re-interpretation of the millennia old art form. Grigorian was an avid collector and the bulk of the tiny museum is devoted to his collection of Iranian artifacts and art, prehistoric Armenian artifacts and Russian and European art and objects, a quirky

collection of Persian tiles, door knockers, faucets, pre-Islamic art, sewing machines and gramophones.



**ART MUSEUMS, GALLERIES ▲**

✂ **SERGEI PARAJANOV MUSEUM ▲**, 15/16 Dzoragiugh p. (off of Paronian p, two blocks from Mashtots), tel. 53-84-73, URL [www.parajanov.com](http://www.parajanov.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.



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 Pomegranate*, 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).

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.



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.



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 imprisoned again, for one year, but in 1984 he was allowed to direct *Legend of Suram Fortress*, which was his Georgian masterwork. In 1988 he directed *Ashik Kerib*, a Azerbaijani film based on the work of the Russian poet Mikhail Lermontov,

which won the European Film Academy's Felix Award. He began another film in 1989, but, already sick, he did not finish it, and died in 1990.

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 the gallery dedicated to his prison art. The rest are collages and assemblages from various periods. Each collage is a work onto itself, some staring at them for hours deciphering the minute details for messages from the "maestro". Of particular interest are the designs of famous masters using broken china ware, glass, beads and baubles. The effect is striking, and in some cases, more beautiful than the original. Everywhere there are signs of Parajanov's great humor and dramatic timing.





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...



✂ **MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART ▲**, 7 Mashtots at Sarian (in alley across Hai Art behind the strip mall), tel. 53-53-59, open Tues-Sun 10-6, 500 AMD, has been reduced in size since the city took over the marble clad galleries across Sarian p. The city is slowly finishing additional space in front of the current digs. The museum has a solid exhibition of modern art focusing on its beginnings through the 1980s with a scattering of 1990s and 2000s.

The galleries are larger than it outwardly appears, and the collection has artwork by Elibekian, Minas Avetissian, Galstian, Shiraz, L. Bazhbeuk-Melikian, H. Minassian, A. Hovhanessian, A. Chamakchian, H. Kalents, H. Karalian, V. Shakarian, Giotto/G. Gevorgian, D. Babanian, V. Elibekian, Jansem, Papovian, Zh. Oragian, M. Petrossian, V. Petrossian, O. Petrossian, G. Khachatryan, E. Kazaz, A. Zakarian, A. Sargsian, Pstikiana, K. Gianjian, Adilkhanian, Gevorgiants, Ananikian, Nina, Hakobian, A. Alekian, Muradian, S. Stepanian, H. Elibekian, A. Hunanian, Hamalbashian, Bayanur, Gevorkiants, G. Khanjian, Carzou, R. Elibekian, Karganian, Adalian, Godjabashtian, Podpomogov, R. Khachatryan, H. Hakobian.

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

**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, Grigoriev, and Fiodorov. 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 work shows 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-palm 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 Tbilisi, 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 iconic in their design: "Armenia", "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 from 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 poem "Shah-Nameh" by Firdawsi. He continued his monumental painting, and dabbled in theatre design. Portraits include Yeghishhe Charents, Alexander Tamanian, Toros Toramanian, K. Igumnov, R. Simonov, A. Akhmatova, M. Lozinski, G. Ulanova, Stepan Malkhasian, and Hrachia Ajarian.

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 Avetissian, who set the artistic world onto a new course of experimentation and style. Sarian was fascinated by Avetissian, 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**  , 9/12 Mashtots 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 Chagall, 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 (Tbilisi) 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" assemblages Kochar experimented with throughout his life. Kochar was one of signatories (along with Vassilli 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 - 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.

Other works include sculptures, drawings and sketches, including one of Avetik Isahakian, while they were both in Venice (1922). The guides (English, Russian, French and German) are well informed, worth the 2500 AMD.

**✦ ARA SARGSIAN AND HAKOB KOJOIAN MUSEUM**  70 Pushkin p, tel. 56-11-60, open Tues-Sun 11-4, 300 AMD, is a branch of the National Gallery, a home-museum featuring the work of two 20th century artists. Each artist created iconic images in Armenia that live on today; with Sargsian, it is in his monumental statues that adorn the front of Yerevan State University (Sahak Partev and Mesrop Mashtots), Giumri (Mother Armenia), and numerous town and village WWII memorial; with Kojoian, it is in his multi-faceted work as a painter, sculptor, illustrator and graphic artist.

The **ground floor** is dedicated to Sargsian, who emigrated to Armenia in 1925, developing a style compatible with the Socialist Realism promoted by Stalin, catapulting him to the top ranks of

sculptors in the USSR. He is considered Armenia's first professional sculptor, and founded the Art School. His sculptures include the statues of Tumanian and Spendiarov on Opera Square, the statue of Sahak Partev and Mesrop Mashtots in front of Yerevan State University (which was meant for the Matenadaran, but the church objected to a piece by the artist) and the monumental 10 story Mother Armenia in Giumri.



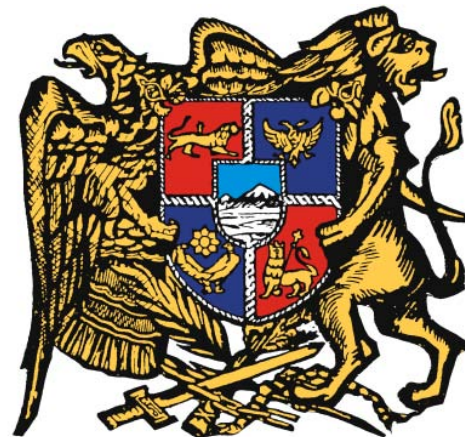
His early work is pictured in a series on the wall of the museum's hallway, showing an energy, daring and imagination he seemed to have lost in his later years, judging by the work on display. Especially compelling is his sculpture "Suffering" (1920), and portraits held at the Vienna Mekhitarian Library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



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.

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.



Kojoian and Alexander Tamanian designed the original Coat of Arms for the First Republic of Armenia.

The **upper floor** is dedicated to the work of the painter and graphic artist Hakob Kojoian, based on donations by his family and friends (sadly, his family has squirreled much of his work away, doling them out at auctions a piece at a time). The four halls of the exhibition display more than 250 artworks, as well as personal belongings and illustrated books.

Kojoian was born to a family of jewelers in Akhaltsekha and studied at Vladikafkas, moved in 1900 to Moscow to work at the Brusov goldsmith workshop before leaving in 1903 to study art in

Munich. 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!

In the main hall, Kojoian's paintings, ceramics and drawings are on display. Paintings include his "Self-Portrait", "Aparan Village", "Garni Canyon", the "Birth of David of Sassun", and the grotesquely compelling "Birth of Vahagn".

The second hall features his illustrations and graphics, including books, posters, pamphlets and stamps. His original illustrations for books included those by E. Charents, A. Bakunts, M. Gorki, A. Vshtuni, and S. Zorian.

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!



**✦ FOLK ART MUSEUM**  Abovian Square, 64 Abovian p, tel. 56-93-83, 56-93-87, 56-93-80,

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 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. 58), the museum shows handcraft in its most personal and naïve form.

✂ **CHILDREN'S ART GALLERY** ▲, 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.

Especially 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 ▲**

✂ **HOVHANNES TUMANIAN HOME MUSEUM** ▲, 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.



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 Tflis (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 Briusov 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 Armen 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'muk" (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 the 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.



Hovhannes Tumanian was born in 1869 in the village of D'segh in Lori marz, then called Lori-Gugark. 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 Armenian 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 Tflis (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 Tflis (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 Khrimian Hairik 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-Haikasian 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 "vernatun", or upper room, the first Armenian literary salon. Tumanian's friends included Avetik Isahakian, Ghazaros Aghaian, Levon Shant and Derenik Demirchian.



The fourth hall follows 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 Tflis 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 setting 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 papers he dashed the 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 alleys and shuttered courtyards, and at its topmost point sits a large stone structure perched over Abovian's tiny village house, looking a 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 Kanakertsi 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.

Khachatur Abovian was born in 1805/1809 into a wealthy family, allowing him to study in Echmiadzin (one of the few education centers in Armenia), then at the newly formed Nersisian academy in Tflis (Tbilisi). A profound change occurred in the otherwise classically-trained Abovian when he met and became friends with the German Dr. Friedrich Parrot from Dorpat

University, who—with Abovian—became the first explorer in modern times to reach the summit of Ararat (1829), imparting his views on Natural Philosophy to the young Abovian. In 1830 Abovian then began his studies outside Armenia, at Dorpat and Tartu (Estonia), where he studied philosophy and languages (German, French, English and Latin), graduating in 1836 and returning to Armenia to begin his work transforming the education system of a feudal society. He met hostile reaction from dogmatic church and Tsarist authorities, but succeeded in founding modern curricula, becoming supervisor of the Tflis Uezd (district) schools before transferring in 1843 to the same post in the Yerevan Guberniya.

Abovian's literary works were of enormous importance to the development of a modern Armenia. They include novels, stories, descriptions, plays, scientific and artistic compositions, verses and fables. He is the first author of children's stories in Armenian. Abovian wrote in modern Armenian (Askharhabar), and was a staunch promoter of democracy and European cultural ideas.



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 1840, 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 Gevorg Bashinjaghian, Yervand Kochar, Isabekian, and Hovhannes Zardarian 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.

The total museum collection consists of 650 items, 350 of which are on display, among them displays about the famous 1829 climb on Mt. Ararat by Abovian and Parrot, documents and items from his formative years, the Russian period, and his late period when he tried to assert more forcefully his ideas of Armenian Nationhood.

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.

**AVETIK ISAHAKIAN HOME-MUSEUM**  
 ▲, 20 Zarubian p, tel. 56-24-24, 58-73-80, Tues-Sun 11-4, 500 AMD, is just down the street from

the Khachaturian museum, an easy 2 block walk up Baghramian from Place de France (Opera).

The museum was established in the home where Isahakian lived during the last ten years of his life (1947-1957), and was used by the poet as a Yerevan "town house" and office. Along with his birthplace and family home in Giumri, the museum provides an excellent glimpse into the life of one of Armenia's most revered poets, and a man who led an adventurous life, and who defied the odds to live life pretty much on his own terms, in a restrictive society. This was a poet who—under the harshest of Soviet rule—managed to live a fairly bohemian life for the times, to come and go as he pleased, and to write what inspired him, without much interference from the authorities.



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 Tzarist 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 Ghaziabad, 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 Tflis (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 Tflis, 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.' Knowing 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 Hokin" (My Soul), "Mairikis" (To My Mother), "Kisher" (Night), "Kuzes Linem" (You Want Me To Be), "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

photographs related to the various phases of the poet's life; his childhood and student years; his time in Switzerland and Italy; his professional years (1913-1945); Post War; and his 80th Birthday. Of special interest are copies of letters Isahakian wrote to Tumanian and Yeghishe Charents, the latter of whom came to Isahakian on 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 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 he loved to sit there, sipping coffee.

**✚ 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.



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.

Yeghishe Charents (real name Soghomonian) was born in Iran in 1897 in Iran before they relocated to Kars. At seventeen Charents enlisted as a volunteer in an Armenian regiment, which reached the city of Van. His experiences in the war and hopes of freeing Historic Armenia appear in his early works, "Danteesque Legend" (Danteakan Araspel, 1916), "Three Songs to a Pale Girl" (Yerek yerik tkhradaluk aghjik, 1914), "Blue-Eyed Homeland" (1915), and "Rainbow" (1917).

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 struggle. 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 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 Germany. After his return 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 (Yerkir 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 Lussapats,

1930), and Book for the Road (Girk Janapari, 1933). The last included a famous poem 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.



^ 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

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 of those affected by his 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, "Danteesque Legend" (Danteakan Araspel, 1916), "Three Songs to a Pale Girl" (Yerek yerik tkhradaluk

aghjikin, 1914), "Blue-Eyed Homeland" (Kaputachia Hairenik, 1915), and "Rainbow" (Tsiatsan, 1917). Pictures of Van, Komitas and his Moscow university are included. There is a portrait of the poet by Minas Avetissian on the wall.

The second room is upstairs and covers the Revolution period, when Charents became a member of the Futurist circle and grew close to Mayakovsky and his ideals; prompting Charents to write the "Declaration of the Three" (along with Azat Vshnuni and Gevorg Abovian), and the events leading to 1925's "Lawless Romance" and satirical "Land of Nairi" and 1933's "Book for the Road", which led to his ostracism and arrest.

Other displays include his relationship with Ruben Simanov, founder of the Vaghtangov Theatre, and quotes by literary figures, including Nikolai



Tikhonov ("his poetic honesty is wonderful"), Martiros Sarian (portrait and quote, "Nairi gave life to Charents. Charents is a legend. What can you write about a legend? A symbol of suffering and hope"), William Saroyan's "(the poem) 'Yes Im Anush Hayastan' is like the 'Our Father' for Armenians." At the end of the hall is a large collage of Istanbul with the Charents quote, "One Name you have Stambul (Istanbul); Intellectual BORNIK (prostitute)".

The third room is further upstairs, with further displays of his Yerevan life, his desk and personal belongs, a bust of his first wife, who he dedicated his poem "The Land of Nairi" to, calling her "my muse". The next room is further up, with perhaps his most famous poem, "Yes Im Anush Hayastan" penned on the wall above the steps. The displays combine portraits, illustrations, photos, documents and manuscripts of Charents and his compatriots in his last period, as well as those revolving around his arrest and imprisonment. The first case around from the stair landing has a document penned in Charents hands where he promises not to leave Yerevan during the pending case against him, dated 1936. Another is his last great work, "Requiem Aeternum", about Komitas, and a display at the end of the rooms with the doors of the prison hospital where he died, and photos of artists from Charents circle of friends who also perished during Stalin's 1937 purge. This last display includes documents related to Charents and his wife's arrest and imprisonment, the CHEKA papers for his wife reading she was imprisoned for being a "socially dangerous element." She spent 5 years in Siberia. There is also a portrait of Charents inscribed on a grain of rice in the corner.

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

**✳ DERENIK DEMIRCHIAN HOME MUSEUM** ▲, 29 Abovian p, apt. 4, tel. 52-77-74, open Tues-Sun, 11-4, 300 AMD, has the collection 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 the novel "Vardanank", both written in Soviet times by an author who believed wholeheartedly in the Communist vision.

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 Akhalkalaki), 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 Tflis (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.



Nazar the Brave

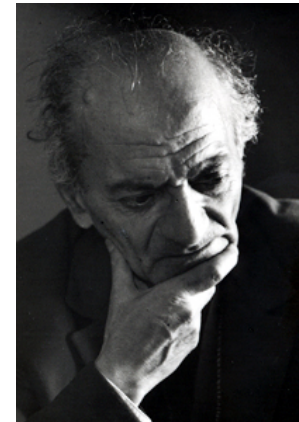
The next room is the author's study preserved as it was at the time of his death, including the author's desk and a bust of Sayat Nova. Gevorg Bashingjaghian's painting "Dawn" hangs on the wall.

The third room features Demirchian's life and work after the October Revolution, an event he strongly 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 work, 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.

**✳ GURGEN MAHARI MEMORIAL** ▲, Kassian p, Bldg 3, Apt. 36, tel. 27-15-92, no set days or hours but call first, free, is not an official museum, but rather the self-made memorial by the writer's wife, Antonina, of one of Armenia's most extraordinary writers, and the museum-apartment is dedicated to both his work and her life, both of whom suffered under Stalin's rule in the Gulags. The museum is in a large apartment building on the left just up from Berekamutiun metro/circle. Metro Berekamutiun Bus 1, 3, 4, 20, 25, 27, 28, 32, 45 / MV 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12, 17, 24, 26, 40, 34, 36, 39, 49, 58, 63, 66, 71, 76, 78, 83, 86, 90, 93, 94, 100, 101, 107, 120).

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 Gurgun 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 author forced to rewrite the book for its audacity in

mentioning Armenians antagonizing Turkish

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 Pariur 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 Dirzhenski, where she met Mahari). They were both released in 1954, following Stalin's death, and moved to Armenia. In 1966, Antonina was exiled again, for her husband's "The Burning Gardens," and he died in 1969, leaving behind his wife and a son who developed mental illness. Mahari has been twice rehabilitated, 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 Antonina and her son, in a building built by the Soviets and allotted to writers. The collection includes the writer's furniture, personal items, 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 stories of life in captivity and Siberia as it is in 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, together covering his life in Van, the exodus to Eastern Armenia and his experiences in the early years of the young Republic. If you visit no other museum of an Armenian writer, visit this one.

## MUSICIANS, COMPOSERS MUSEUMS ▲

**✳ SPENDIAROV HOME-MUSEUM** ▲, 21 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-12-99, 58-07-83, open Tues-Sun, 11-4:30, 300 AMD (guided tour 1500 AMD), is located on one of the prettiest intersections in Yerevan (Tumanian and Nalbandian), in an Art Nouveau plastered building were the composer spent his last years. The museum is in the building across from the café with the stork fountain. The museum is the last

Alexander Spendiarov (Spendirian) is most famous for his opera, "Almast," founding the

Yerevan Conservatory and posthumously lending his name to the Opera and Ballet Theatre. Along with Komitas, Spendiarirov 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.



Spendiarirov 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.

Spendiarirov 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. Tsaturian. Others included Maxim Gorky and the composers Rimsky-Korsakov, Glazunov, Lyadov and Arensky. Immigrating to Armenia in 1924 and immediately acclaimed, Spendiarirov 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. Spendiarirov died in 1928.

The museum consists of the three room communal apartment from which Spendiarirov 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 suit. Other exhibits show photos of the composer with his friends and colleagues, a hand written composition of the romance “Ai, vard!” (Oh, Rose!), the symphony Spendiarirov composed to M. Lermontov’s poem “Three Palms”, extensive displays about his work with Hovhannes Tumanian on the opera “Almast,” and is work to establish the conservatory and symphony orchestra. The composer’s bedroom and study is the most interesting 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, 11-4, 500 AMD, is located off of Marshall Baghrmian 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.

Aram Khachaturian was born in 1903 in Tbilisi to a poor family. As a boy he was fascinated by the folk music he grew up with, but was unable to play and did not study formally until he joined his brother in Moscow in 1921, where his raw talent gained him admission in 1925 to the prestigious Gnessin Institute, where he studied cello under Mikhail Gnessin and studied composition. In 1929, he transferred to the Moscow Conservatory where he studied under the composer Nikolai Mayakovsky, sometimes referred to as the “father of the Soviet symphony”.



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. They would later each be denounced by the very same committee that supported them.

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 is 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. Khachaturian died in 1978.

Khachaturian’s works include concertos for violin, cello and piano (the latter originally including an early part for the flexatone), concerto-rhapsodies for the same instruments, three symphonies – the third containing parts for fifteen additional trumpets and organ, and the ballets Spartak (a.k.a. Spartacus) and Guyaneh (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”.

He also composed film music and incidental music for plays such as the 1941 production of Lermontov’s Masquerade. “Spartacus” was used as the theme for the 1970’s BBC series “The Onedin Line,” while both Spartacus and Guyaneh (Saber Dance) were featured in Joel Coen’s “The Hudsucker Proxy.” Khachaturian composed the state anthem for the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The museum has a central courtyard with galleries overlooking it exhibiting the composer’s personal belongings, musical compositions, photos and documents of his life and friends. The research center holds manuscripts, documents, printed scores, books, etc. and a record library contains over 3500 CDs and tapes available to music students.

**ARCHITECTURE, URBAN DESIGN MUSEUMS** ▲

✂ **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN LIFE** ▲

Government Bldg #3, 1st Floor (Nalbandian at Arami, Vernissage), tel. 52-46-30, E-mail: [archmuseum@web.am](mailto:archmuseum@web.am), 500 AMD, is just off Republic Square next to metro H'raparak. 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, plans and models 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 Toromanian imagined it.

✂ **ALEXANDER TAMANIAN MUSEUM** ▲

Government House, 3rd Building (large building at Arami and Hanrapetutian in Vernissage), tel. 58-57-73, open Wed-Sun, 11-5, free, 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 beguile (or bedevil) developers.

Alexander Tamanian (1887-1936) was born in the Russian city of Yekaterinodar (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 (Gyumri), 1925; Nor Baiyazet (Gavar) and Ahtahpara, 1927, and Echmiadzin, 1927-1928. His most famous city plan was the first master plan for Yerevan, approved in 1924.

Sometimes called "Neoclassic monumentalism", Tamanian's designs softened otherwise massive hulks 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—remember, this was the Soviet Union, which transformed mundane work spaces into Proletariat Palaces and hung crystal chandeliers in the Moscow metro), the Spendirian Opera and Ballet Theatre (1926-1953), and Lenin (now Republic) Square (1926-1941). This last went through several design phases, documented in drawings that hang on the museum walls. My favorite was the gigantic pedestal with a huge statue on top. Like the massive Hall of the Soviets Stalin planned to replace the All Saviors Cathedral in Moscow, it was so fantastical it would have been great no matter how it turned out.

**SCIENCE, NATURAL SCIENCE MUSEUMS** ▲

✂ **BOTANICAL 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 off of the Sevan highway (Miasnikian/Acharian cloverleaf), opposite Water World and the 2nd Masiv turnoff to Garni/Geghard. Bus 5, 10, 17, 22, 46 / MV 9, 15, 20, 28, 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 allowed the gutting of the herbarium for its glass windows and even some exotic plants (taken for area cafes and restaurants). Self described fanatics, long-time staff and Botanical Institute professors have somehow wrested a miracle from

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.

✂ **NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM** ▲, 34

Tigran Mets pta, tel. 52-79-42, 56-77-91, open Tues-Sun 11-4:30, 300 AMD, has been recently installed in its current building, its exterior cleaned up a bit, with galleries inside that look right out of a 1950's Scientific American magazine. The foyer has a large fish tank (gold fish) and hosts temporary exhibitions. When we visited there was an interesting photo exhibition of the country, some of nature, others of cityscapes, a few of trash laden nature spots.

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 flowers, two-thirds of Eurasians 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 (Dilijan) 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

museum. They are due to move to new digs at the Academy of Sciences, which probably won't change the displays too much, which is a bit of all right, these have an interesting kitsch quality for their soviet-style presentations (a rock is after all, a rock, but somehow, here, they become building c=blocks for a bright socialist future). Until someone comes along to create a better presentation (I'm not holding my breath considering what they did to the Natural and Yerevan History museums), these will do quite nicely. Catch it before it moves from the 1870s building in Old Abovian, due to be torn down to make way for the "New Yerevan".

The museum was founded in 1937 by the Soviet geologists H. Karapetian, whose name it bears. The museum has about 900 items on display, taken from more than 12,000 in their collection, over 98% of which were collected in the Armenian Republic. Cramped into two long galleries, section displays are divided into General Geology, Paleontology, Petrology, Volcanology, Metallic and Non-metallic Mineral Resources, Construction Materials and History of Geological Science. The Paleontology section is especially popular, its fossil collection including a huge reconstruction of a "baby" Trogonterian elephant (wooly mammoth), the guide happily demonstrating by hoisting the fossil of an adult knee cap next to the little tyke's knee joint.

Displays are in Armenian with English and Latin descriptions, and staff are helpful, delighted almost that someone came by to visit. Exhibits include an overview of Rocks in Armenia and their strata, the variety of tufa, felsite and marble in Armenia (surprising considering most only use red and black in new construction), including shades of green, blue and black marble, and several types of granite. There is a large display of sliced agates along with native amber, obsidian and a gorgeous blue multi-faceted quartz stone that is as rare as it is big.

A model near the entrance shows several climbs up Mt. Ararat from Armenia, beginning with the famous climb by Khachatur Abovian and Dr. Friedrich Parrot in 1829, the first explorers in modern times to reach the summit. A major earthquake in 1840 centered on the Akhori Chasm collapsed part of the mountain, creating the large black "gash" on the Yerevan side of the volcano. Several expeditions in the same period are shown on the model, including the 1845 Abikha climb. Ararat is just the largest of the 600 volcanoes in

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 Fourth Era. The variety of volcanic formations is impressive, from the simple tufa stones found throughout the country to specialized stone 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 wide range of obsidian stones (volcanic glass), perlite (expandable volcanic stone often used in potting plants), molybdenum and tempered tufa. There is also a meteorite on display from Siberia to round out the section.



Further displays show copper, gold and clays, plus one last nod to the Soviet period, a bust of Lenin in felsite, an igneous rock embedded with crystalline formations. Scattered among the displays in this section are clay models made by children at the museum's youth institute. Another display shows the effect of permeating water on stone (sandstone, travertine) and fossils. There is one glass beaker with some "Texas Tea (oil)" in it, the result of extensive searches to find the fabled font of wealth in Armenia. It was discovered near Giumri, between 3474-3589m below the surface, still too deep to be economically viable to extract (a relief to Green Peace).

Further displays include mineral springs, diatomite and coal, and the piece de resistance, the Fossil reconstruction of a Trogonterian elephant, found SW of Giumri (Shirak marz) in sub tufa sandy deposits in 1932. The fossil dates to the Upper Pleistocene Era (700,000-60,000 BCE), showing a far different climate (warm and moist with volcanic activity) than that Shirak experiences today.

**ZOOLOGICAL MUSEUM** ▲, 7 Sevak p, off of Azatutian pta, (Bus 1 / MV 4, 12, 90, 111, 113), open Institute working hours only, 11-3 (but often closed), is in a sad state: dispirited staff have seen some of their best exhibits pilfered by the Natural History Museum, the rest left in disrepair without the funds to maintain or preserve their items. Like the zoological institute that houses the museum, they need some real support to bring them up to anything close to international standards. They staff is enormously friendly and forth coming with information based on what they have. If you have a particular zoological interest, they can contact someone e 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: [hvgaacad@sci.am](mailto:hvgaacad@sci.am), open 11-6.

**AKANAT GALLERY**, 28 Amirian p, tel. 53-99-64, URL: [www.akanat.am](http://www.akanat.am), open 11-6.

**AKUMP**, 40 Tumanian p (at the corner of Spondiarian and Parapetsi p), tel. 53-13-61, open 7 days 10-23, is a restaurant/café/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](mailto:ira.isabekyan@yafa.am), URL: [www.boyajiangallery.am](http://www.boyajiangallery.am), open 12-5.

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

**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](http://www.hayarvest.am).

**FIRST FLOOR GALLERY**, 75 Yeznik Koghbatsi p, tel. 53-37-99, email: [ffgallery@hotmail.com](mailto:ffgallery@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](mailto:info@gevorgyangallery.com), URL: [www.gevorgyangallery.com](http://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. A lot of construction going on will close off the ground floor that gave the building its distinctive design. No one will say its end result, but the most likely is as a shop or café.

**MKRCHIAN GALLERY**, 44 Isahakian p, tel. 52-67-94, email: [mgallery@freenet.am](mailto:mgallery@freenet.am), open 10-8.

**NAREGATSI ART INSTITUTE**, 16/1 Vardanants p, tel. 58-01-05, email: [suzu@naregatsi.org](mailto:suzu@naregatsi.org), URL: [www.naregatsi.org](http://www.naregatsi.org), open 10-7, is a wonderful gallery/performance hall, with rotating exhibitions, 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 intelligentsia, 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.naregatsi.org/DM/](http://www.naregatsi.org/DM/)

**NPAAK GALLERY/ARMENIA CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY EXPERIMENTAL ART**, 1/3 Biuzand p, tel. 56-82-25, 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.

**VALMAR GALLERY**, 53/55 Biuzand p, tel. 58-07-69, 091-45-60-59, email: [valmar@freenet.am](mailto:valmar@freenet.am), URL: [www.valmargallery.com](http://www.valmargallery.com), open Mon-Sat 11-8.

**VERNISSAGE 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 Erebus supporting the entry column. Good selection of basic artwork.

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.



**MONUMENTS, STATUES ▲**

These are in addition to monuments and statues covered in one of the [walking tours](#) p. 17, listed below the respective tour.

✂ **CASCADE**, between Opera and Monument off of Tamarian p, See [Walking Tour: Northern Avenue- Opera-Cascade](#) p. 26.

✂ **SASUNSI DAVIT (DAVID OF SASUN) STATUE**, Train Station, (1959, sculptor Yervand Kochar), in front of the Central Train Station on Tigran Mets pta. (M Sasuntsi Davit, B 7, 16, 18 / MV 11, 68, 72, 73, 84, 85, 111, 122), depicts the Armenian folk hero on horseback, at full gallop, his hands pulling his sword out of its hilt, ready to strike his enemies.



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 lightning while riding his steed Dzhallali. 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 before being confined to a cave in suspended animation, may come from the Greek myth of Alcestis and the epic of Zariadris.

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.

✂ **MARSHAL BAGHRAMIAN MONUMENT** (Sculptor Norait Karghanian), Baghramian pta (M: Marshal Baghramian B/MV any going up Baghramian pta), is a large statue showing the hero of the great patriotic War (WWII) sitting on a horse. The statue has its back to the American University of Armenia (once the Communist House of Political Education in Yerevan) and faces Proshian p, once a leafy residential street, now a haven for khorovats. The irony of both spots is not lost on locals.

Hovhannes Baghramian (1897-1982) was a Soviet Armenian military commander and Marshal of the Soviet Union. During World War II, Baghramian was the first non-Slavic officer to be allowed to command a front and was one of an elite group of Armenians to hold the highest rank in Soviet military during and one of fifty Armenians who attained the rank of General in the war. He was given his first command of a unit in 1942, receiving his most important command in November 1943 as head of the First Baltic Front, where he led offensives that pushed the German army out of the Baltic republics.

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) Khristoforovich Bagramyan. He was widely regarded as a national hero in the Soviet Union, and continues to hold such esteemed status among Armenians.

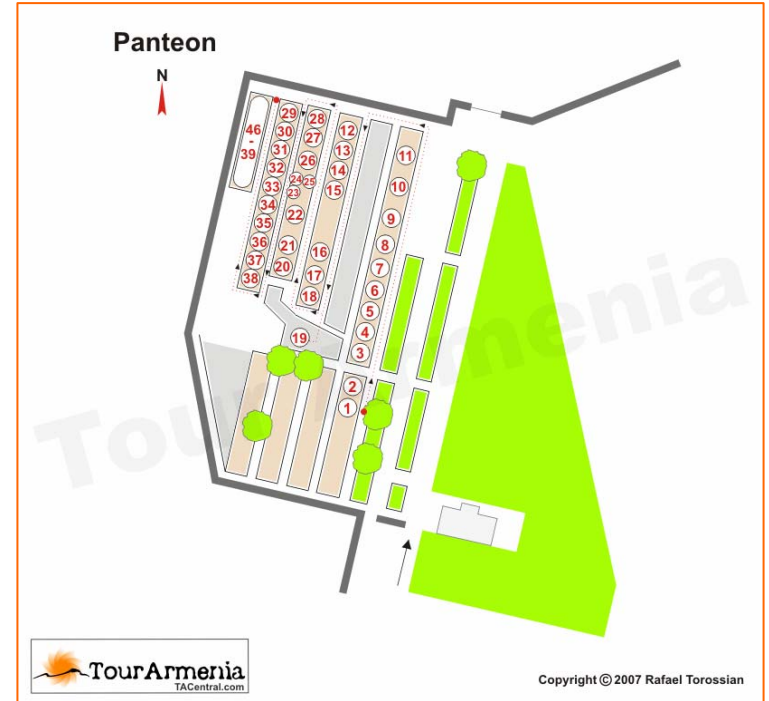
✂ **PANTHEON**, Komitas Park, W side of Arshakuniats (Ordjonikidze) pta, Shengavit District, 1.5 km south of Kino Rossiya (take

Agatangeghos to Circus, then go S on Arshakuniats), 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 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 internments of politicians in recent years. The first pantheon was a small space, hemmed in by a fence. When Sergei Parajanov (filmmaker, artists, 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 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 in operas 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 Kaputikyan** (1919-2006), poet, writer. Kaputikyan 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.



**3. Aram Khachaturian** (1903-1978), Armenian Composer, People's Artist of the USSR, composer of the ballets Spartacus and Guyaneh, the latter for which has perhaps his most famous movement,

the Saber Dance. See Museums: Aram Khachaturian p. 66.



**4. Sergei Parajanov** (1924-1990), filmmaker, artist, sculptor, "enfant terrible" of the Soviet Art world. His museum is arguably the best in Yerevan. See Museums: Sergei Parajanov p. 58.

**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 Mkrchian** ("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, Mkrchian 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".



**8. Sero Khanzadian Nikolai** (1916-1998), writer, author of "Mer Gndi Martik" about the survivors of the defense of Leningrad, "Hogh" about villagers after WWII and "Mkhitar Sparapet", a novel set in the eighteenth century, and, as a member of the USSR Congress of People's Deputies, in 1977 wrote a letter to Brezhnev calling for the annexation of Karabakh.

**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".

**10. Khoren Abrahamian** (1936-2004), actor, director, popular Soviet film actor whose performance in the 1958 Soviet film "First Love Song" made him an instant celebrity.



**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 disaffected Armenians.



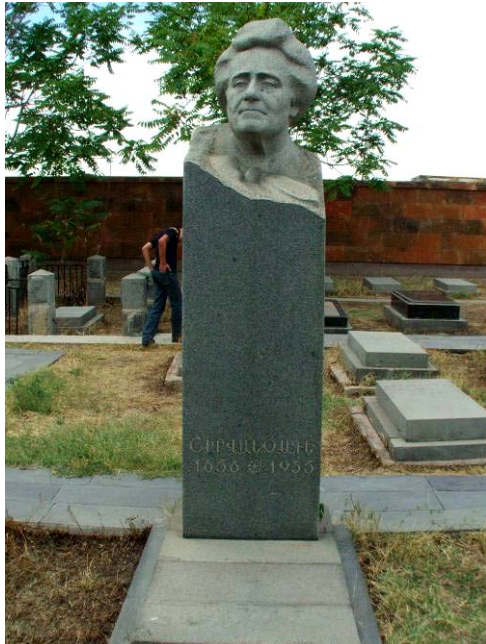
**ROW TWO (N TO S):**

**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. 28)



**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.

**14. Hovhannes Artemi Abelian** (1865-1936), painter.



**15. Shirvanzade** (1858-1935), (Alexander Movsesian), 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 girls 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 Arzumanyan** (1919-) is an odd choice for the Pantheon, Arzumanyan had not artistic merit and produced no literary work of significance. His brother, the famous academician Anushavan Arzumanyan 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.



**ROW THREE (S to N):**

**20. Hrachia Ghaplanian** (1923-1988), actor, director, artistic director of Sundukian theatre, founder Yerevan Dramatic Theatre, National and USSR state awards for Coriolanus, Richard The Third and Seven Stations. Other famous productions include The Optimistic Tragedy, War of the Roses / Henry The Sixth, Othello, Richard The Third, and Much Ado About Nothing.





**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. 59.



**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 be 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. 63.

**(28) Tikin Sofia Isahakian** (1882-1966), Isahakian's wife.



**ROW FOUR (N to S):**



**(29) Hovhannes Shiraz** (1915-1984), poet, born Hovhannes Onnig Garabedian in the city of Alexandropol (Gyumri), his first work "Beginning of Spring" was published in 1935. The novelist Atrpet 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.

**(30) 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 the old city, a warren of mud brick and stone homes, creating grand promenades and avenues lined with buildings designed in the "Armenian Monumental Style" synonymous with Tamanian's work. Republic

Square and opera are a result of his vision. See Museums: Tamanian p. 67.

**(31) Vrtanes 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 Tbilisi, moved to Yerevan in 1921. Work includes industrial art, paintings, and illustrations.

**(32) Toros Toramanian** (1864-1934), 19th c archeologist 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 Yesaiyi 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.

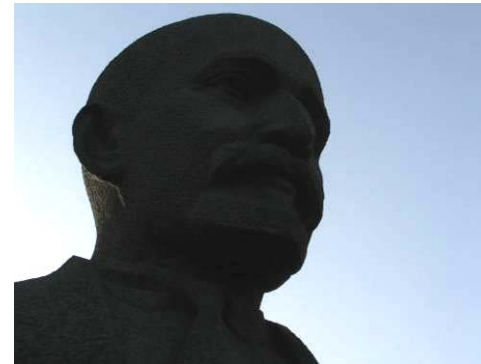
**Arus Asrian** (pronounced Aserian), Ajemian's wife, buried at the same spot. Asrian was a popular actress in theatre and film, roles include many dramatic roles at the Sundukian National Theatre and roles in the films Kach Nazar (1940), Davit Bek (1944) and My Heart is in the Highlands (1976).



**(37) William Saroyan** (1908-1981), 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:

*"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** (1907-2006), 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, Gauguin 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.



ROW FIVE

**(39) Sahak Lisitsian** (1864-1934), engineer, designer of the Yerevan water system.

**(40) Vasil Davti Ghorghanian** (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 Musheghian** (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 Khanzadian** (1886-1935), linguist and translator.

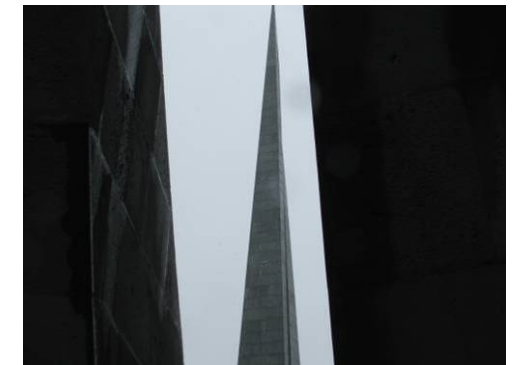
**(44) Yervand Lalaiyan** (1864-1931), ethnographer, archeologist, folklorist, founder and the first director of the History Museum of Armenia (1919-1927), founded The Ethnographic Magazine (1896), the Armenian Ethnographic Society in Tiflis (1906) and its ethnographic-archeological museum (1908).

**(45) Vertanes 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 "Tigranes II and Rome", which avoid patriotic sentiment concentrating in stead on Greek and Roman primary sources.

#### **GENOCIDE MONUMENT**

Tsitsernakaberd park, enter via Kievian pta, just W of the Kievian 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 Tekhianian 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 Soviet Union never officially recognized the genocide, a fact that pained many Armenians. The monument is due to extraordinary circumstances, beginning with the first "thaw" in the USSR under Brezhnev,

**Etiquette** 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 Kievian p.



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. What strikes me most is the silence of the place, the slabs muffling much of the sound of what would be normally a cacophonous place. The **spire** is split in half, representing the division between Eastern (Republic of) and Western (present day Turkish) Armenia, its soaring reach representing the rebirth of the Armenian people, the division what was lost.

The [museum-institute](#) (p. 55), at the west end of the plaza, opened in 1995. The museum documents the genocide with archival photographs, letters and documents from Turkish and foreign officials, and first hand accounts of the events of 1915-1921. It includes a room with display cases showing proclamations by world bodied recognizing the genocide, which Turkey is fighting. See Museums: Tsitsernakaberd p. 55.

#### MONUMENTS BY WALKING TOUR OR PARK:

##### ✦ OLD ABOVIAN STREET (p. 17)

Alexander Miasnikian  
Nelson Stepanian  
Gabriel Sundukian  
Pepo  
Yerevan Water Boy  
Stepan Shahumian  
Karabala  
Avetik Isahakian  
Khachatur Abovian

##### ✦ RING PARK (p. 27)

Karo Halabian  
Hakob Meghapart  
Genocide/Holocaust  
Carrara Spring Monument  
Vahan Terian  
Carrara Spring  
Carrara Hands  
Avetik Isahakian  
Woman as Nude  
Hovhan (Ivan) Aivazovski  
Mikhail Nalbandian  
Khachkar to Artsakh  
Sahak Partev and Mesrop Mashtots  
Movses Khorenatsi  
Tigran Petrossian  
Yeghishe Charents  
Armen Tigranian  
Vartan Mamikonian

Motherhood  
Zoravar Andranik  
Alexander Griboyedov  
Leonid Yengibarian

##### ✦ NORTHERN AVE-OPERA-CASCADE (p. 24)

Arno Babjanian  
Hovhannes Tumanian  
Alexander Spendiarian  
Aram Khachaturian  
Martiros Sarian  
Komitas  
Sayat Nova  
Alexander Tamanian  
Cat  
Cafesjian collection  
50th Anniversary of Soviet Armenia Monument

##### ✦ MASHTOTS AVENUE (p. 33)

Mesrop Mashtots, Matenadaran  
Mother Armenia

##### ✦ NOR NORK / MASIV (p. 87)

Gai  
Tigran Mets  
Tork Angegh

##### ✦ MALATIA-SEBASTIA (p. 89)

Zoravar Andranik  
Hovhannes Shiraz  
Stepan Shahumian  
Old and New Malatia Monument  
40th Anniversary of WWII



**CHURCHES, MOSQUES, TEMPLES ▲**

**CENTRAL YEREVAN CHURCHES ▲**

✚ **S. SARKIS (4TH-15TH CC)**, 21, Israelian, Dzoragiugh. S. Sargis was the principle church in Yerevan before the construction of Grigor Lusavorich and continues as the main bishopric. Wedged between tall apartment buildings overlooking the Hrazdan canyon, the current building is but the latest in a series of structures that have stood on the site. The earliest would have been wooden, a vank established sometime in the 4th-5th cc as an "Anapat" (hermit-monastery, literally "desert-monastery"), built on the foundations of a pagan temple. S. Sargis has substantial remains from a 1450 church built at the spot, which was destroyed in the 1679 earthquake (one the most severe to have struck the country, destroying Yerevan, the temple of Garni and one-third of the crown of Mt. Ararat). It was rebuilt during the reign of the Katolikos Yedesatsi Nahapet (1691-1705), then again during the Imperial Russian era (1835-1842), when it became the principle cathedral for the capital. A new gavit was added in 2000.



✚ **KATOGHIKEH S. ASTVATSATSIN**, Abovian/Sayat Nova, is one of the oldest churches in Yerevan, the tiny edifice (5.4 x 7.5 m) dates to the 13th cc and was encased by a much larger 15th-18th cc church, serving as the sanctuary. The vank, along with the now demolished Poghos Petros (Kino Mosva and Hotel Yerevan) became symbols of Christian resistance in the Soviet era,

S. Astvatsatsin known as "the church Stalin could not break" for its survival during demolitions.

The legend goes that the vank was in the way of Tamanian's master plan for Yerevan, so was set for demolition. The crew managed to demolish the large church that encompassed Astvatsatsin and the nearby buildings, but each time the wrecking ball hit Astvatsatsin, the ball broke. A few workers died in the wake (divine retribution), and the rest refused to continue, prompting the Soviets to admit defeat, lick their wounds and build the Linguistic institute building around the small church, covering it over with tin.



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.

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.

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), and rebuild or add anew version of Katoghike Mets 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 Abovian p.

**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 Yerevan at the time. It had two entry points; south and west, and its only seeming attraction were the old khachkars that were embedded into its walls. Fragments from these have been found at the site, including a few from the medieval period.

Free standing khachkars include those dated to 1679 (the year of the earthquake), 1693 (when the rebuild began), 1694 and 1695 (the year it was reopened). When the church was torn down in 1936, additional stones dating to 1472, 1641 and 1642 were found. The origins of the vank are not well recorded, but it is believed to have begun in the 4th-5th cc, after the conversion of the country, and so built over a pagan temple or shrine. It's founding is equally obscured, the most logical being the 1264 date (though a vank would have existed before then, or the earlier date, though the church lists its founding for some reason as the 17th c.!

Whatever the dates, it is worth visiting to see the oldest intact church in Yerevan, and one of its most enigmatic. Go too to pay respects to the 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...

✚ **GRIGOR LUSAVORICH**, Tigran Mets at the end of Ring Park, is not so lovingly referred to by locals as Yerevan's Bus Station for God, a reference to its odd design and cacophonous interior, as well as the smell of oil on the polished stone floors. The church, built to coincide with the 2001 celebrations of 1700 years of Christianity as a state religion, is the first large church built in Armenia since the 7th c, and its absolute largest, the main hall able to house 1700 people in one sitting.



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. St. 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

spring. The church, at the top of the a hodgepodge pile of housing, is newly minted, its stone façade cleaned and repaired with glowing red tufa stone, a new bell tower and an enlarged yard around the church, adding a modern refectory building.



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 was 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.

✠ **S. POGHOS-PETROS (5th c, destroyed)**, was located at the spot where Hotel Yerevan and Kino Mosva were built. The church, reputedly the oldest in Yerevan (others, such as Zoravar have pre-Christian origins), was a large domed triple nave hall style church with modified cross wings, much as the great churches at Aruch and Talin.

The church was destroyed and rebuilt several times in its life, the latest a 17th c renovation after the devastating 1679 earthquake in Yerevan. The church was finally demolished in 1936 to make way for the Hotel and Cinema House.



✠ **ZORAVAR S. ASTVATSATSIN**

(4th-17th cc), Tumian alley via Parapetsi or courtyard entry at 56/58 Pushkin p, is one of the most popular churches in Yerevan, a favorite of young and old, poor and rich. The small church abutting a tomb shrine is also one of Yerevan's most important churches, part of a once thriving monastery community that single-handedly saved many 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.



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 Saghmosavank 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 copyists 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 at 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 revival, first by communities at Saghmosavank (under bishop Sarkis), Trabezond (under Kirakos) and most importantly, the revived monastery of Mets Arants (Mets Anapat) near Tatev, in 1608 under the patronage of Melik Haikas. 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 Vardapet Movses 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, Vardapet 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.



At that time it sat about half a mile NE of Yerevan, in an area called Khanbag, for the extensive gardens of the khan. Late it became known as Nor Tagh, or "New Block". Siunetsi and his followers restored the chapel and had the church, monk cells and numerous support structures built within a substantial walled compound. The community consisted of around 30 anchorite monks (from the Greek *anachoreo*, "to withdraw"; hermit), led by the newly anointed bishop Siunetsi, who in 1620 established a school of higher learning at the site, similar to that at Mets Anapat in Siunik.



The academy was made possible by a general revival of schools in the area, led by Echmiadzin and Yerevan, where schools at the then existing Katoghike (see above), Poghos Petros, St. Hovhannes (see above) and others, though St. Ananias Monastery focused on higher learning, including the sciences. The academy's fame spread, as did its leader, who, it is said by legend, was so convincing a preacher he converted several Muslims, including the Khan's sister-in-law, who became a nun at the vank. His fame spread to the palace of the Shah himself, who brought Siunetsi to his court (to instruct court craftsmen in the art of blanching candles), gaining his favor which led to his installation as a bishop at the Holy See, where he was elected Katolikos in 1629. His reached Rome, where Cardinal Ubaldinus recounting a popular story that in order to save 500 Armenians captured by the Ottomans, Siunetsi melted gold plate at Echmiadzin to ransom them. Other stories recall his convincing Armenian Meliks to ransom thousands more during the second Turkish-Persian war. When visiting Yerevan, Siunetsi stayed at S. Ananias, and he died there on May 21, 1632. His contemporaries called him the second Lusavorich for his far sighted views and the revival of the church.

**The Manuscriptorium** Between the 16th-18th cc Yerevan became the center for preserving Armenian manuscripts, especially at S. Ananias monastery, where pupils received special instruction in copying manuscripts. Its library was begun in the 1620s with a large number of manuscript copies, as well as new ones being written by monks at the vank. One, The book of Sermons, was copied in 1623 by Movses Siunetsi himself, certified on the last page.

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, Esai, 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" in 1626. Others include Mkrtych (1631 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-Yeresn ("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** and **monastery**, made of timber when reconstructed in 1615, were burned down during the second Turko-Persian war, rebuilt of stone in 1637 (adding an arched meeting hall, cells and refectory) which was in turn ruined by the 1679 earthquake, the aftershocks of which lasted four months. The monastery never fully recovered. The current church was rebuilt with funds donated by a certain Armenian merchant Panos, as described in the inscription over the main door into the church recording the donation given in memory of "Khoja-Panos' descendants and ancestors". This was in 1693, based on inscriptions on khachkars in the Eastern wall. The monastery ceased to exist as such by 1835, when it became a parochial school and neighborhood church for refugees from Persia, becoming known as S. Zoravar (Zoravar means "powerful" in Armenian). The church was closed in 1938 by Soviet authorities, who took possession of the church plate, manuscript talismans, gospels, paintings vestments and relics, transferred to the Museum of Atheism connected to the Committee for national Education of the Armenian SSR. Most were never accounted for when the church reopened in 1949. It was renovated again in the 1970's under the Katolikos Vazgen I and is one of Yerevan's most visited churches.

**Complex**

The **church** of S. Astvatsatsin, later called Zoravar, is unlike other basilicas in Armenia, its

length (normally two times the width) shortened from its original medieval length, causing a radical reinterpretation of the interior (see below). The church measures 9.5 x 11.5 meters without the gallery, 11.2x22.5 meters with.



The **west side** 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 dome. The gallery was enclosed in the 1978-1980 renovation. The other entry is on the south side. The **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, Khoja-Panos and his family.

**Interior** As you enter the narthex, look immediately above the main entry; the model of the church is placed on top of the cornice, a practice common in Armenian churches, the presentation of the model depicted in some church bas relief, showing the completion of the master's plan. After entering, look for the fresco above the church door, rarely found in other churches. The frescoes are attributed to Naghesh Hovnatn, a prominent member of the family of painters who decorated Echmiadzin Cathedral. Naghesh worked at several churches in Yerevan, including Poghos Petros and Katoghike.

The church has a unique configuration, unlike any other in Armenian sacred architecture; instead of the normal two-to-three pairs of columns that delineate the space and support the vaulted roof, Astvatsatsin has only one pair, which still divide

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.



Much of the church's history is known due to ten **inscriptions** carved on its walls and khachkars, including the date of its construction, inscribed above the right khachkar at the church entry and a 1793 inscription over the left khachkar, attributing another renovation to Prince Gabriel Geghamian. Both khachkars are 14th-15th cc specimens. These bits of details are invaluable to historians reconstructing 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 south door with spiral stucco molding, repairing the roof and fencing, and adding new candlesticks. The brickwork and stone facing were done in 1867.

Church **paintings** include copies of 13th-14th cc miniatures (Hovumian, Korkhmazian); a famous "Our Lady with the Infant" by Petros Sarapian, who was hired by the Katolikos Mkrtych I (Khrimian Hairik) and who based his painting on the upper part of Rafael's "The Sistine Madonna"; A canvas of Grigor Lusavorich by Arakel Saghinian (1884); the primitive "Vartan Mamikonian", a copy of the stolen original, and "Coronation of Our Lady" by Hovnatn Hovnatnian, its inscription saying it was

gifted to the church in 1915 by survivors of the 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. 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 pre-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 church was destroyed by the 1679 earthquake, rebuilt in the early 20th c by a wealthy donor, only to be ruined again by Soviet Armenians in the 1930s. Pilgrims continued to visit the church, especially on feast days revolving around the Holy Virgin. The church was again renewed in 2001, when it was completely rebuilt using honey-color tufa stone and adding a columned bell tower.



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. HOVHANNES AVAN** (DD 40.21214 x 44.57774, 1298m), Marshal Khudiyakov 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 Safarian 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 Briusov Block and walk to the site, ask).

The small **single nave church**, sitting next to a neighborhood dump (what else?) is a jewel of Pagan-Christian transitional architecture, its foundation (2-step platform exposed, third below?), layout and ratio identical to that of Pagan temples. The shape and size of the inner hall is almost identical to Garni’s temple and the Temple of Shushi at Erebuni. Another feature attesting to Pagan roots are the stone lintels above the entry. Their huge size is reminiscent of early Christian architecture, which borrowed stones from Pagan temples in constructing new halls, and their carvings, classic pagan symbols that have been altered to display a cross.

There is a sign that says the church is 12th-13th cc, but that is only the latest renovation. Other than its Pagan origins, the first church is believed to have been built in the 5th c, when most of the early churches were erected in Armenia. This followed the end of the Christian wars, when patriotism trumped pagan belief with locals facing the threat of Sassanid assimilation. The medieval renovation lasted until the 1679 earthquake destroyed the church, and it has since sat in ruins.



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 and the constant burning of candles in the top orifice. The open lace work globe is flanked by two winged birds, possibly eagles representing branches of the Zakarian/Vachutian families, attesting to its 13th c renovation date.



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 tree 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, skirting its W side then onto Khudrov skirting 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 32, 59, 61, 86, 121 – get off at the WWII 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 form 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 indicated earlier construction. A 1968 renovation effort restored much of the western wall and parts of the inner building. What survives now are the foundations and substantial portions of the walls, as well as the western portal and parts of the corner annexes.

**The church** Avan is one of the most important churches in Armenian architecture, considered the prototype of S. Hripsimeh (618 CE) in Echmiadzin, and establishing the "Avan type" of the 7th c, with similar churches at S. Yovhannes at Sisavan, S. Gevorg at Garnahovit and Tarkmanchats at Aigeshat.

The complex central **plan** borrowed from several styles in its design, borrowing from earlier periods in its stepped platform and massive basilica exterior (pre-Christian) with an internal cruciform

plan and four annexes at its corners. Each wing of the internal cross form end in semicircular apses that seem carved from the thick walls. The western entry also borrows heavily from earlier periods, with an austere façade punctuated by 5th c motifs in the framing for the large arched doorway and windows.



To this the designer added several features absolutely unique for Armenian churches, the most bold being the three-quarter niches in the central hall (itself octagonal and topped by a massive dome) that lead to the four annexes, themselves circular rooms. Historians conjecture the four circular chambers were originally topped by small domes, which with the central large dome created a five-dome church. At least one historian believes the church was dedicated to the Apostles, in deference to the five-domed Byzantine Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople (ca. 536-550). Both the times and political expediency would make this a plausible theory, and if correct, Avan would be the first example of an Armenian church with five domes.

The western **portal** is a huge arched doorway, which obviously has been filled in later to create an upper window and a small door inside a squared frame. The frame is decorated with beautiful geometric patterns, the arch supported by thick columns with pedestals and capitals, again unusual for the period. The large doorway and windows are not unique to Avan Katoghike, though the huge arch is larger than others I have seen in Armenia. Visiting the church on a cold March day, I was struck by how much of history can be explained by simple expediency; the large windows and doorway must have made the church frigid during Armenia's 5 month winters, and any

grandiose illusion of design during construction would have been tossed aside the minute the church ran out of firewood to heat the huge church. A smaller door and would have seemed rather obvious in reducing heat escape.



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.

✦ **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 Lafique Samvel (Lingerie Samvel), whose father started the family fortune in women's apparel. The shrine was renovated with fund donated by the lingerie magnate.



✠ **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 Almati and Marshal Babajanian pts (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 Mikoian 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.



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.

**KANAKER-ZEITUN CHURCHES** ▲

✠ **KHACHKAR SPRING / MONUMENT** (DD 40.21889x44.53748, 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 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 an 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.



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.

✠ **S. HAKOB** (DD 40.22028 x 44.53487, 1310m), 6th street, 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 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.



The 1695 dating is for the renovation following the 1679 earthquake that ruined the building, funded by a wealthy Tflis (Tbilisi) businessman. Its original construction is uncertain, but its type and size (as well as its location near Astvatsatsin) suggests pre-Christian.

The church was dedicated to the Armenian saint Hakob Mdzbin (James of Nisibis), a 4th c Assyrian-Armenian bishop and one of the founding fathers of the Armenian church. Though his father was an Assyrian, James was related to S. Grigor Lusavorich (Gregory the Enlightener) on his mother’s side (he was the son of Khosrovuhi, an aunt of S. Grigor’s). As a young man he was educated alongside St. Gregory in Caesarea and was ordained Bishop of the See of Nisibis of Mesopotamia by Melidos, Archbishop of Antioch, in 318.

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 his 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

monastery at the foot of Mt. Ararat was built in his name, though it was destroyed in the 1840 earthquake (which also sheered off a third of the crown of the mountain).



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 aperture 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.



**MALATIA-SEBASTIA (BANGLADESH) CHURCHES** ▲

✦ **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 were 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 is a domed cruciform with annexes in the corner, rebuilt in the 19th c on much earlier foundations. There is an open bell tower adjoining the church with khachkars and candle tray in the lower gallery opening. A very pretty church in the closest thing to a park in Malatia.

✦ **HOLY TRINITY** (DD 40.17361 x 44.44250, 943m), Vahan Zatikian Aigi, west of Zoravar Andranik, between Svachian and Raffi pts (B 13, 23, 35, 40 / MV 31, 42, 44, 47, 56, 70, 71, 77, 90, 97, 98, 100, 110, 113, 117, 123), is a newly erected domed cruciform church built in the middle of a boulevard park in the center of a community of concrete apartment blocks and one of the more lively street markets in Yerevan.

Designed using the same idea for its design as Grigor Lusavorich in Nor Nork Gardens. This larger church is still somehow uninspiring, cramming too many styles from too many periods into one large building with a surprisingly small inner space. The wall niches are painted in a manuscript style, adding a bit of color to an otherwise plain surface.

The yard around is disappointingly ill kept for such a large building. The church is still looked on with pride by locals, funded by a wealthy American-Armenian heiress as a spiritual gift to the community. The church serves local parishioners, who through the space on feast days.

**EREBUNI CHURCHES** ▲



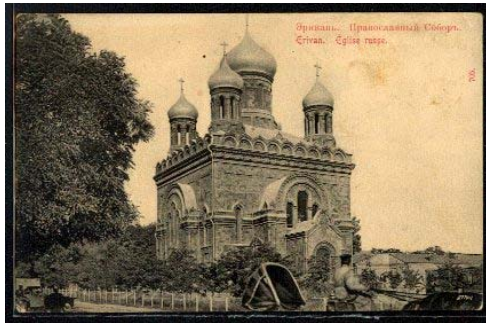
✦ **S. GEVORG** (DD 40.11750 x 44.47314, 912m), 4th back street, Noragavit, deep south Shengavit, enter via Artashat (Masis) Hwy (B 38 / MV 57, 104, 105) is near Erebuni airport, in a working class neighborhood. Getting there requires some quick counting of alleys as streets and a few stops along the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

✦ **ST. POKROV FORTRESS CHURCH** (destroyed), Noy Wine Factory. After the capture of Yerevan fortress by Russian forces in 1827, and the Treaty Turkmanchai 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 Church, now Shahumian Monument

✦ **ST. NIKOLAI RUSSIAN CHURCH** (destroyed), Shahumian Monument, was built to replace the Russian Orthodox church in the old fortress, when it was demolished in 1864. The church was primarily designed by one of Yerevan's two 19th c architectural wiz-boys, Vladimir Mirzoian, who, along with his alter ego, B. Meghrabian, reshaped Old Yerevan into a cosmopolitan center that was later enlarged in Tamaian's master plan. Working alongside Mirzoian was the Russian engineer I. Kitkin. Construction began in the second half of the 19th c and was the church was consecrated in 1901. It

was a handsome red and black tufa Russian-style building with a square plan and five domes, the central dome larger and higher than the corner ones. The main entry had a capstan iron roof. The first bell structure was considered inferior (the bells were muffled by the surrounding church walls) and a year later a new one was built, and later a school. Unique to St. Nikolai was its double altar configuring, one for Russian Orthodox and the other for Armenian Apostolic believers, a reflection of the tolerance of the times as well as the dual religions of the Architect and engineer. The church was demolished in the 1930s (1936-37) to make way for Tamaian's master plan for central Yerevan. The monument to Stepan Shahumian and the traffic circle in front is where the church once stood.



✦ **KANAKER RUSSIAN CHURCH** (working) (DD 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-gilded, the stone glows 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 ruing with newly planted trees which will provide lovely shade on hot days.

To the SE of the church there is a small **monument to Cossack Soldiers** billeted at the barracks across the street fro 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. He 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, one remains from the 8 that once rung the 19th c city, the others pulled down by 19th c tsarist forces or 20th c Soviets.



✦ **BLUE MOSQUE** (18TH C), 12 Mashtots pta, opposite Shuka, the Blue Mosque (Persian: مسجد کبود) was one of Yerevan's 8 mosques, and the 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 madrasah (school for students of the Koran). The large building has 28 rooms, a library, a main prayer hall and the courtyard and takes up 7200 square meters of land, not quite one hectare. When Russian forces took the city, they converted the mosque into an Orthodox church, which continued until Soviet rule abolished religion. Of the four original 24-meter minarets, three were demolished to make way for the surrounding apartment buildings, about the same time the mosque was converted to a History of Yerevan museum. The mosque was renovated beginning in 1995, funded by a private-state Iranian foundation, which completely replaced the old tiles with new, and much of the brick facing. 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 cc immigrations into Persian and Russian Armenia. 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 ahs 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 Jewish 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**, 5a Vardanants, tel. 52-58-82, and the **Jewish Community**, 2/1 Griboyedov p, tel. 23-65-33, 53-49-24.



## OTHER SIGHTS ▲

✳️ **THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (AZGAIYIN 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, 58-81-83, 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 Isahaakov pta, tel. 54-70-47, 54-70-48, [www.noy1877.am](http://www.noy1877.am), is located in the old Yerevan Wine Trust, built on the location of the old Yerevan Fortress. founded in 1887 by a wealthy 1st guild merchant Nerses Tairiants with the help of his cousin Vasili 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

it was acquired by Nikolai Shustov, a well-known Russian vodka and liqueur producer. Shustov's company, Shustov and Sons were appointed as the supplier of His Imperial Majesty's court. During the International Exhibition in Paris in 1900, the brandy received the Grand-Prix and the legal right to be called 'cognac', not 'brandy', following a blind taste test at the exhibition. In 1948, the factory (known as the Shustov Factory) was split into two, the Yerevan, resulting in the Wine Trust at the old site and anew Yerevan Brandy Factory across the bridge. The factory is now owned by Multi-Group, which also includes stone processing, cement and gasoline station businesses. The factory goes head-to-head against its cousin The Yerevan Brandy Factory. The factory gives tours that include visits to different parts of the factory: distillation, cooperage, the museum, and the part you came for it the first place; the wine-cellar and brandy room, with wine and brandy tasting. The one to one-and-a-half hour tours are Mon-Fri 9-4, by appointment.

✳️ **YEREVAN BRANDY FACTORY**, 2 Admiral Isahaakov pta, tel. 54-00-00, fax: 58-77-13, email: [info@yerevan-brandy-company.com](mailto:info@yerevan-brandy-company.com), [www.ybc.am](http://www.ybc.am), was built in 1953 as a separate business from its forebear the Shustov Wine and brandy factory across the bridge (see above). In 1998 it was bought by the French concern Pierre Ricard and specializes in brandy for export. It seems to have given up its rights to call 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 tours. Not nearly as good as those at the old factory across the river.

✳️ **GRAND CANDY PONCHIKANOTS**, Mashtots 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. Ponchikanots 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 ▲

### NATIONAL

*THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF ARMENIA*, 72 Terian p, tel. 58-52-59, fax: 52-97-11, email: [nla@arm.r.am](mailto:nla@arm.r.am), [www.nla.am](http://www.nla.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 Amirian 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*, 62 Terian p, tel. 56-61-62.

*PARLIAMENT LIBRARY*, 19 Baghramian pta, tel. 57-65-24.

### CHILDREN

*khnko aper children's library*, 42/1 Terian p, tel. 52-12-22, email: [karine@childlib.am](mailto:karine@childlib.am), open Mon-Sat 10-5, 100 AMD, has a fairly good collection of books for children, a reading hour and one of he more fanciful doors in Armenia, incorporating Armenian fairy tale figures in the grand design.

### SCIENCE

*FUNDAMENTAL SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF ARMENIA*, 24d Baghramian pta, tel. 56-75-89, 52-47-50, tel. [nune@flib.sci.am](mailto:nune@flib.sci.am), open Mon-Fri 10-4, has scientific journals, research and text books. Fairly up to date.

### MEDICAL

*REPUBLICAN SCIENTIFIC-MEDICAL LIBRARY*, 8 Tumanian p, tel. 52-26-00, fax: 52-26-00, email: [staffr@medlib.am](mailto:staffr@medlib.am), URL : [www.medlib.am](http://www.medlib.am), open Mon-Sat 10-5.

### YSU LIBRARIES

*MAIN LIBRARY, SARKIS AND MARIE IZMIRLIAN LIBRARY*, 1 Alex Manukian p, tel. 55-13-34, fax:

55-11-04, email: [ashalex@ysu.am](mailto: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 Tumanian p, tel. 53-05-52, email: [yslu@brusov.am](mailto:yslu@brusov.am), has over 400,000 books on social sciences, text-books, on science and fiction in Armenian, Russian, English, French, 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 hot 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 larges urban forests in the Caucasus. Cut during the dark 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 indifferently 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.

## NORTH YEREVAN PARKS ▲

✂ **BOTANICAL GARDENS**, 1 Ajarian p, tel. 62-17-81, open 10-6, free, is located at the north end of the city, its entrance opposite Water World at the intersection of Miasnikian/Ajarian (Sevan Hwy) and the road to Garni (2nd Masiv, or Nor Nork). Bus 5, 10, 17, 22, 46 / MV 9, 15, 20, 28, 54, 55, 91. DD 40.19769 x 44.52272, elev. 1143m.



The park still has signs of the grand gardens it once boasted, and in May flowering vines and bushes still put on a spectacular show. Otherwise the garden has been completely ignored by the city, staff members working to preserve what they can with their own resources. The 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 allowed the gutting of the building for its glass windows and even some exotic plants taken for area cafes and restaurants. Self described fanatics, long-time staff and Botanical Institute staff have somehow wrested a miracle from destruction, rebuilding the collection piece by piece, mourning their losses but determined to rebuild the lost glory.

And they have achieved a remarkable turn around, despite the still glaring problems. The circular green house is divided into collections, with 3 taxa in cultivation. Plants are displayed by their habitat, those that most closely imitate the area around Yerevan surviving the best. A central atrium has a massive series of vines spiraling around the circular staircase, with some beautiful desert/semi-desert species below. Special Collections include (Latin names) Syringa, Clematis, Sorbus, Philadelphus, conifers, local tree flora including Fagus sylvatica, Quercus

macrantha, Q. ibirica, Carpinus caucasica, Juniperus polycarpus, J. procumbens, J. sabina, Celtis caucasica, Pyrus salicifolia, Juglans regia, Taxus bac.

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). Of all the public works that should be done, these gardens would probably be the cheapest to renew, giving some idea of how public funds are misplaced. Despite the obvious problems, the park is still a pleasant break from the hectic pace of the city.

✂ **PEACE PARK**, across the highway in 2nd Masiv, is a small garden adjoining Water World with trees, flower beds and a *Monument to the Heroes to the Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh) War*.

#### CENTRAL DISTRICT PARKS ▲



✂ **OPERA SQUARE PARK (FREEDOM SQUARE)**, is bound by Place de France and Sayat Nova pta. (north), Terian p. (east), Tumanian p. (south) and Mashtots pta. (west). All major bus and minivan routes stop at Place de France. If you approach from Mashtots or Tumanian you can't miss the square; it is on the other side of the large fence covered with large hand-painted billboards advertising upcoming events at theatres, concerts halls and other venues in town.

The park has the large gray building housing the Opera & Ballet theatre (south end) and the Symphony hall (north end), a plaza and the

surrounding green space, though public space is pretty much restricted to the large asphalt plaza and around the small pond facing Terian. The pond hosts swans (and splashing children) in the summer, and is transformed into an ice rink in the winter, the southern end frozen for skating enthusiasts. The circular plaza in front of Opera is often busy with children riding bicycles and scooters rented by vendors, couples, passersby and for any of a number of events unique to the square; free concerts and political meetings the two most popular. The name Freedom Square comes from its use as a political meeting point, the first of such meetings being the 1988 Karabakh meetings that led to the declaration of self-rule by Armenians in Karabakh and Armenia's separation from the Soviet Union. At one point, more than a million people crowded the square and surrounding area during the Karabakh movement.

The park includes monuments to Hovhannes Tumanian, Alexander Spendiarov (with gravesite), Arno Babajanian and Aram Khachaturian. For details see [Walking Tours: Northern Avenue-Opera-Cascade](#) p. 25.



✂ **PLACE DE FRANCE PARKS**, is immediately north, encircled by the Opera (south) and three parks, which link Opera Square with Cascade, starting (clockwise as you face Place de France from Philharmonic Hall):

Across Mashtots to the west of Place de France is **SARIAN PARK**, otherwise known as *Artist's Vernissage*, for the weekend art market that takes place there. Anchored by a large sculpture of the "father of modern Armenian art" **Martiros Sarian**, the park's sidewalks are taken over by local painters who display their wares, all on sale. See

[Walking Tours: Northern Avenue-Opera-Cascade](#) p. 26.

Across Sayat Nova to the east is the small **CONSERVATORY OR SAYAT NOVA PARK** facing the Music Conservatory, with a large statue to **Komitas** sitting on a bent tree (sculptor Ara Harutunian), and on the far end, a fountain monument with a bust of the 18th c troubadour **Sayat Nova** (sculptor Ara Harutunian). The park faces the Musical Conservatory on its east end, famed for the vocalists, instrumentalists and composers who graduated there. See [Walking Tours: Northern Avenue-Opera-Cascade](#) p. 26.

Nestled between Sarian and Conservatory parks is the lower end of **TAMANIAN PARK** that has been taken over by Santa Fe Café and links Opera Square with one of Yerevan's most amazing views, the Cascade Park and Monument.



✂ **TAMANIAN PARK/CASCADE**, 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.

The park's preservation is a gift from Gerard L. Cafesjian, a wealthy Armenian-American whose private modern sculpture collection will be housed in the **Cafesjian Museum complex** under construction at the top of Cascade, due to open summer of 2009. The park includes the statue to **Alexander Tamanian** and the large **Cat** by the Latin American sculptor Fernando Botero, part of the vast modern art collection Cafesjian is

donating to the museum. See [Walking Tours: Northern Avenue-Opera-Cascade](#) p. 26.

✂ **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 Khanjian 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.



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. 27.

✂ **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 the first depiction of social injustice in Armenian dramatic literature, showing the life of a young man named

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. 17.



✂ **(ENGLISH) CHILDREN'S PARK**, is across the boulevard from English Park, and about twice its size, with leafy walkways, a children's carousel and a couple of quiet cafes. The park has a monument to Nelson Stepanian, fighter pilot and two times Hero of the Soviet Union. A group of pilots led by Nelson Stepanian sank more than 50 enemy ships and destroyed 13 airplanes in the Great Patriotic War (WWII). Nelson Stepanian flew 240 sorties, defending Leningrad (for which he received his first Hero Star). He died in a dogfight in 1944 during the liberation of the Baltic. Stepanian was awarded two Orders of Lenin and three Orders of the Red Banner. The Children's Park is part of the [Old Abovian Walking Tour](#) p. 17.



✂ **SHAHUMIAN PARK**, between Shahumian & Hanrapetutian (Republic) Squares, is directly behind the Stepan Shahumian Statue, its central feature a two 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 pta (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 Proshian 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 adjoined Abovian street. These have now 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 (nee Pavstos Biuzand, 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.

**VERNISSAGE** begins on the other side of the National Gallery, beginning at H'raparak metro/Nalbandian p (west) and continuing between Arami and Pavstos Biuzand pts. to the Vartan Mamikonian Monument and Ring Park at Khanjian p. (east). Once a shady park with flower beds and cooling fountains, the park's sole function now is to host a large flea market on weekends. Yerevan's main souvenir draw, Vernissage offers something for just about anyone; Armenian carpets, wood carvings, ceramics, jewelry, stone carving, embroidery, leather work, hand made miniatures copies, fine china and antiques, books, maps, Russian icons and lacquer ware, even kitchen gadgets, medals, tools, cats, dogs, pets—the variety and creativity is astounding. A few vendors open every day but the entire two block park fills up each Saturday-Sunday, 8-dusk. There are small cafes on each street corner to cool your heels after strolling through so many stands.

**ARABKIR DISTRICT PARKS ▲**

✂ **HAGHTANAKI AIGI (VICTORY PARK)**, is set above Yerevan's center, a small section on the west side of Azatutian pta, but mostly between Monument (cascade) and Mother Armenia. The main entrance is on Azatutian pta opposite monument (B 2, 14, 24 / MV 10, 14, 19, 33, 38, 41, 43, 45, 72, 93, 98, 111,121), but the more adventurous and sturdy legged can enter via Cascade, climbing the 800+ steps to the top, then climb another set along the construction site for the Cafesjian Modern Art Museum to Monument (officially named the "50th Anniversary of Soviet Armenia Monument") and cross Azatutian pta to the main entrance to the park.

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 manmade lake Areni, 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 Harutiunian, architect Rafael Israelian) 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. 55.

Another statue in the park is that of an 8 meter high **hand 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 downscale budget Arabkir 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 (NORKI AIGINER)**, Armen Armenakian 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](http://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!

✂ **NOR 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 dashing 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) Bzhishkian (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 (АП РФ, оп. 24, дело 413, лист 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).



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.

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 Angher 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 Angher (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.

Tork was no less represented, his battle against foreign marauders bearing remarkable semblance to the episode in Homer; *Odyssey* of Odysseus' encounter with the Cyclops Polyphemus, but in reverse. Homer presents the brute as a primitive, reprobate monster whom the hero must outwit, whilst Tork (a wild creature not unlike the Cyclops) is a heroic defender against foreign marauders. One of the primary gods of Armenian mythology, Tork Angher reflects other, positive features of the Cyclopes that are little read in Greek sources, as well as those from a myth of the Anatolian weather-god from whose name Tork' derives.

Perhaps because of his benign role, the Armenian Tork' is endowed with two eyes- only his power to cast the Evil Eye perhaps recalling an original, solitary orb. As in Greece, there are two types of the Cyclopes, a good and a bad, in Armenia. Tork is good.

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

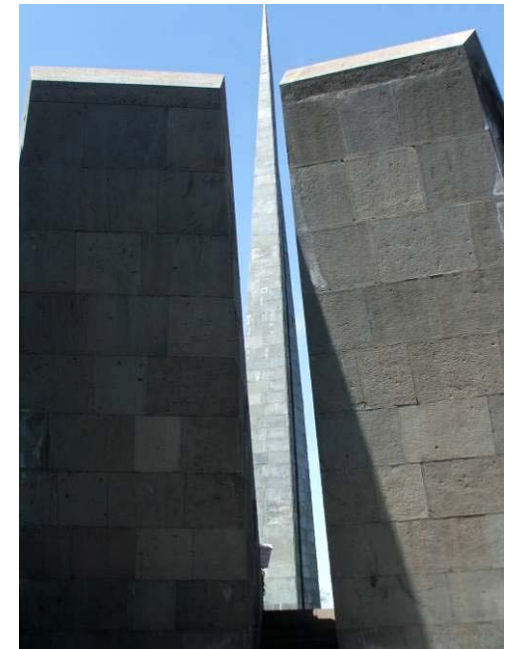
Armenian equivalent for the Vishap or Dragon found throughout early mythology and on prehistoric stones places throughout the country at the sources of water.

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 Angher'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, "Angher" 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 Angher can mean Tork the un-Dragon, or "the dragon's enemy."

#### HRAZDAN RIVER PARKS ▲

✚ **TSITSERNAKABERD**, sits atop a large hill overlooking the Hrazdan gorge. The main entrance is via Kievian pta, just W of the Kievian Bridge (opposite Halabian p, B 3, 35, 40 / MV 21, 34, 50, 56, 63, 71, 83, 101, 107, 114, 117, 125), but you can also enter from the Hrazdan Stadium, taking the 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 park is known almost exclusively as the site of the Genocide Monument and museum-institute, but it also provides one of Yerevan's rare chances to get away from the hustle and bustle (and grime) of the city and spend time alone. In fact there a few sections that are so removed from the main focus you can almost imagine yourself out in the country somewhere, not in the midst of a major metropolis. If you approach from Kievian side, the first thing you face is the huge **Hamalir Sports-Concert Building** (tel. 39-98-03, 39-99-13, 39-00-01, email: [s.c.c.@arminco.com](mailto:s.c.c.@arminco.com)), which hosts major conferences, concerts and sporting events throughout the year.



A sidewalk leads uphill to the L of the complex, with two routes leading through the woods; the upper sidewalk leads to the **Museum-Institute of the Armenian Genocide**, a small underground circular museum opened in 1995 with displays giving basic information about the events in 1915-1921. Documentation of the genocide includes photos taken by German photographers (Turkish allies during World War I) including photos taken by Armin T. Wegner, letters and government documents and publications, all on display. Near the museum is a spot where foreign statesmen plant trees in memory of the genocide. See Museums: Tsitsernakaberd p. 55.

There is also a **Memorial to Artsakh** and the **Line of Graves of the First Fallen** (in Artsakh), a large paved plaza that in turn leads to the **Genocide Monument** itself. The monument, dedicated on April 24, 1967 (April 24, 1915 was the first wave of murders, of Armenian intelligentsia and artists in Constantinople), and each year on April 24 up to a million people climb the steep hill to the monument to lay flowers around the eternal flame in the center of a large circle of twelve inward leaning basalt stones. The



44 meter double spire nearby is split down the middle, to symbolize the division of western and eastern Armenia, while its tall shape is meant to represent the aspirations of Armenian renewal. For more details see [Monuments, Statues: Tsitsernakaberd](#) p. 74.

The **lower sidewalk** leads through a thick grove of trees to the back side of the Monument, with a number of dirt paths running downhill to Hrazdan gorge. Unofficial trails, some dangerously steep, they are popular with youngsters and fleet-of-foot wanting to explore a bit of nature. At the back of the monument there are more sidewalks leading to Brazil Square/Traffic Circle where you can walk or take a taxi or Minivan back to center.

A little known and rarely visited part of the park sits at the highest point in the park, the ruined **Tsitsernakaberd fort and settlement** (officially, "Tsitsernak (a) berd" 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 rung 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 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 p, has the back entry to the Genocide Museum-Institute, **Hrazdan Tennis Club, Picnic Disabled Sport Center, Kilikio Tun café** and the **Abrahamian Archery Center**.

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 talking a nature breather during your hectic tour schedule. Entrance to the park is via several points, all accessible from center.



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 Dzoragiugh (Proshian p.) via a long series of steps under S. Sargis Church; via an entry road across Haghtanak Bridge, and under Kievian Bridge.

From the tunnel, paved riverbank roads straddle the river, leading upriver to Kievian Bridge (2.5 km) and an exit to Kievian p, while a right bank road continues upriver for another 3 km to Davitashen 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 Haghtanak 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 Kievian Bridge on the R bank, and Haghtanak and Kievian 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 very popular early morning running trail, taking advantage of the cool shade and relatively free paved roads on both sides of the river. See [Sports & Fitness: Jogging, Running Routes](#) p. 101.

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 origin dates 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.

See [Walking Tours: Hrazdan Gorge](#) p. 37.

✦ **TUMANIAN PARK**, is a Northern extension of the Hrazdan Gorge Park, beginning N of Kievian Bridge on the L bank (B 11, 20, 25, 27, 30, 33, 34 / MV 3, 5, 12, 13, 18, 27, 28, 52, 58, 46, 50, 62, 64, 74, 78, 84, 88). The small park climbs the bank to a plaza with water basins before hitting a long stretch of steps that climb uphill to street level, at the plaza for the **Metro Station Adjapniak** (under construction) and a popular **Bowling Alley**.

## WEST YEREVAN PARKS ▲

✦ **MALATIA-SEBASTIA (BANGLADESH)**, in far west Yerevan has several green spaces, parks that for the most part have been neglected by locals, hemmed in by kiosks and shops, or simply left as wasted scrubland. A few exceptions exist, lovingly cared for by locals.

The **VAHAN ZATIKIAN GARDEN**, between Raffi and Svachian pts. on either side of Zoravar Andranik Pta (B 13, 23, 35, 40 / MV 31, 42, 44, 47, 56, 70, 71, 77, 90, 97, 98, 100, 110, 113, 117, 123), is a central boulevard of greenery, kiosks and cafes hemmed in by large cement apartment blocks. The park has a small amusement park and a large **statue to Zoravar**

**Andranik** east of Zoravar Andranik pta. Nearby is a **statue of Hovhannes Shiraz** (sculptor Ara Shiraz).



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 Shahumian 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 Millid. Old Malatia lies a few km from the modern city in what is now the villages of Arslantepe (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.

✦ **YERABLUR MILITARY BURIAL PARK** (DD 40.16070 x 44.45356, 960m), Yerablur, Sebastia p just north of the Admiral Isahaakov cloverleaf interchange (B 6, 7, 12, 13 / MV 1, 13, 42, 57, 89, 92, 97, 104, 108, 123), is a military cemetery located on a hilltop in southern Malatia. The hilltop faces Karmir Blur to the S, and was

once an Urartian stronghold. The military cemetery was created in 1988 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 Vazgen Sargsian, a large memorial to the soldiers of Artsakh and a 27, church spire.

Locally famous Armenian heroes buried in the cemetery include Vazgen 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 Gurgen 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 Arshakuniats (Ordzonikidze) pta, Shengavit District, 1.5 km south of Kino Rossiya (take Agatangeghos to Circus, then go S on Arshakuniats), 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 handsome cast-iron fencing and is named after **Komitas** (Soghomon

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.

The north end of the park is better maintained, holding Yerevan's **Pantheon** of graves of famous Armenians. See [Monuments, Statues: Pantheon](#) p. 70.



Adjoining the Pantheon to the W is the new, small **Zoravar Andranik Museum** (entrance from the main sidewalk into the park, open Mon-Sat, 300 AMD), with exhibits on the 2nd and 3rd floors of the converted private house. The museum includes artifacts and personal belongings of the famous general and leader of the Freedom Fighter movement in Ottoman Turkey. Andranik Ozanian was born in 1865 in Shopin Garahisar, trained as a carpenter, following his father's trade until the age of seventeen, when his father was beaten by a Turk and Andranik retaliated by beating the attacker. Running away to escape certain death, he joined the Freedom Fighter (Fedaiyin) guerilla campaign, becoming a leader in the 1880's and leading raids against Ottomans. Turks grew to fear him, saying that, "bullets never touched the Pasha." In reality he was shot during battles, but survived his wounds, strengthening the myth about his immortality. A seminal battle for Andranik was fought in 1901 at Arakelotz Vank in Mush Region, where he led a group of 30 that repelled 3000 Turkish soldiers. Andranik's successes included the First Balkan War, pinning down 10,000 Turkish soldiers at Maritsaget with only 250 men. In 1913, the Bulgarian King Ferdinand conferred the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel on Andranik and made him an honorary citizen. Not trusting the Young Turks, who took control of

Turkey in WWI and spurred by the genocide, Andranik led attacks against the Turkish forces, encouraging Russian involvement and their invasion of Ottoman controlled Armenia. After the revolution he repelled attempts to invade Southern Armenia and waged decisive victories in Zangezur ("Ringing Gates" or entrance to Vayots Dzor and Siunik). Andranik left Armenia following the 1918 Batumi Agreement, which removed the territories of Zangezur and Nagorno Karabakh from Armenia, as well as Armenian lands taken in Turkey. Feeling the politicians had betrayed the Armenian cause he refused to honor the agreements, and exiled himself to Paris, where he died in 1927.

☒ **VARDAVAR PARK**, far SE Yerevan is between Nor Butania (Erebuni District) and the Central Cemetery, at the E end of Sasuntsi David p, opposite the Train Station (B 7, 16, 18 / MV 11, 68, 72, 73, 84, 85, 111, 122) is a large green space with lawns of grass, flowering shrubs and stands of trees around the big manmade Lake Vardavar, with fountains and home of **Yerevan's Windsurfing Club** (weekends busy), the only windsurfing sport venue outside of Lake Sevan.

☒ **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 that 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 ▲**

Yerevan has a plethora of shopping chances; from the simple sidewalk stand hawking Chinese flip flops and Persian lampshades to handmade jewelry, ceramics and art. Except for stores,

haggling is par for the course; each seller has a "last price" that s/he will not budge from, so bargain freely.

**Customs** are strict about exporting antiques or what are considered national treasures, so if you buy a carpet or gallery art, be sure the seller provides the necessary paperwork to export, lest you wind up at the airport having to leave your treasure behind. Chochkies and souvenirs are not affected by this restriction.

**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.



I have had some great talks with folks I have not yet bought from; they seem to enjoy the contact as much as the chance to earn a little money. The art on display covers the gamut from the crudest reproductions and obvious amateurish attempt to some impressive works, the latter by folks needing to ear some quick cash. If you like someone's work, you may want to arrange a visit to their studio; Vernissage artists seldom exhibit their best work at the park, seeing Vernissage as a way to pay bills until their next serious exhibition.

Don't be afraid to haggle; all prices are negotiable, with artists generally naming a figure 20-30% above what they will accept as a "last price". Open Saturdays-Sundays, 9ish-dusk.

**VERNISSAGE**

Vernissage begins on the other side of the National Gallery, beginning at Hanrapetutian H'raparak metro/Nalbandian p (west) and continuing between Arami and Pavstos Biuzand pts. to the Vartan Mamikonian Monument and Ring Park at Khanjian p. (east). Once a shady park with flower beds and cooling fountains, the park's sole function now is to host a large flea market on weekends. Yerevan's main souvenir draw, Vernissage offers something for just about anyone; Armenian carpets, wood carving (khachkars, decorative bowls, vases, chess and nardi sets), ceramics (coffee cup sets, vases, bowls, diner ware and objets d'art), jewelry (gold, silver, precious stones, necklaces, bracelets, ear rings, rings), stone carving (obsidian, marble busts, vases and cups), embroidery (table cloths, handkerchiefs, clothing), leather work (belts, clothing), hand made paper and manuscript copies, even fine china and antiques, books, maps, Russian icons and lacquer ware—the variety and creativity is astounding. Other sellers include a few artists selling water colors, tools, hardware, Soviet medals and mechanical objects, plants, pets and lotto tickets. There are small cafes on each street corner to cool your heels after strolling through so many stands.



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.

**SOUVENIRS**

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.

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 a almost any street in Central Yerevan and you will see at least one shop offering Armenian souvenirs.



**Souvenir Shops** can be found on Abovian p (tourist prices, but look at the Geological museum first floor shop and a couple of shops above Tumanian p, west side of street), Tumanian near

Opera, Mashtots pta, Amirian/Tigran Mets off of Hanrapetutian H'raparak (Republic Square), Berekamutiun, Sayat Nova pta.

A few places specifically commission one-of-a-kind items, some of which is quite lovely.

**SALT SAK** (3/1 Abovian, tel. 56-89-31).

**ARTBRIDGE** (20 Abovian p, tel. 52-12-39, 58-12-84).

**BAREV SOUVENIR STORE** (6/1 Tumanian , tel. 52-52-61, 52-20-69, URL: [www.barev.am](http://www.barev.am)).

**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](http://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 **ARMENIAN 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 \$5-10 for good quality brandy. Armenian Brandy (Mashtots) is the largest store in Yerevan, its cognac displayed in a large shop full of atmosphere and medieval nuance. (Note: Consult airline restrictions before spending your drams on liquid that might not be allowed in carry on and too risky for checked baggage.)

**ESSENTIALS**

The dark days of waiting in line to see if it is toilet paper or chicken are long past; Yerevan has a store for just about anything you might need. Essentials such as **soap, shampoo, toothpaste** and sanitary napkins **are available in mterks (mini-markets)** as well as Apotekas/Deghatuns (pharmacies). **Film** and **batteries** are at Film Developers and other shops around town. Batteries are not very good in Armenia as a rule—bring your own (rechargeable with charger that can use 220 volts is best).

The **shuka** sells fresh produce and meats, while **yarmakas** sell everything else, out of stalls in large market spaces. Shops along Mashtots and major streets sell clothing (designer and otherwise), shoes, CDs, books, maps, toys, etc.

For details see [Practicals: Shopping Lists](#), p. 128.



**ENTERTAINMENT** ▲

**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 ticket offices, or at the corner ticket office at the corner of Mashtots pta and Tumanian (opposite Opera).



**CLASSICAL**

**ARAM KHACHATURIAN CONCERT HALL**, 46 Mashtots pta. (Opera Building), tel. 56-06-45, 500-1000 AMD, is on the Place de France side of the Opera building. The hall hosts the Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra, which season is from October-May, with occasional concerts during the summer season.

The orchestra varies its music choices between Armenian composers (Khachaturian, Tigranian, Spendiarirov) and western repertoire, including a recent premiere of a concert performance of the

opera *Othello*. Once staid and stolid, the orchestra's has begun to experiment a bit with its selections, all to the good. With tickets rarely costing more than 1500 AMD, this is a bargain. The Concert Hall also hosts other performances by classical, popular and folk musicians and groups. The ticket stall is outside the hall in a small building on Sayat Nova p. Upcoming events for each month are posted on a nearby billboard and walls of the stall.



**KOMITAS CHAMBER MUSIC HALL**, 1 Isahakian p, tel. 52-67-18, is located in a small stone building inside Ring Park (between Abovian 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 Abovian 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 Mashtots 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.

**SONG THEATRE OF ARMENIA**, 13a Khanjian p, tel. 56-67-90, 56-70-44, 56-67-92, 54-42-50, email: [griganit@freenet.am](mailto:griganit@freenet.am), mainly performs concerts by pop star wannabes and the occasional performance by established pop singers.

**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.

**NATIONAL ART GALLERY THEATRE**, top floor of the National Art Gallery, Republic Square, tel. 58-08-12, 56-18-12, email: [galleryarmenia@yahoo.com](mailto:galleryarmenia@yahoo.com), URL: [www.gallery.am](http://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.

**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](mailto:suzy@naregatsi.org), URL: [www.naregatsi.org](http://www.naregatsi.org)) and *Akump* (40 Tumanian p. at the corner of Spendiarian and Parapetsi 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 Mashtots 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](mailto:ara@ara.am), URL: [www.ara.am](http://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](mailto:info@stopclub.am), URL: [www.stopclub.am](http://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.

**Watch for** One growing fixture on the local scene are repeated visits to Armenia by the *Armenian Navy Band*, led by Arto Tunchboyachiyan, 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 Babakhanian) 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 Jaghatspanyan* performs classical guitar, but he is renowned for his flamenco and Spanish music concerts.

#### POP, ROCK, ELECTRONIC

**POP (RABIZ)** venues include the massive *Hamalir 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: sayatnova33@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](mailto:ara@ara.am), URL: [www.ara.am](http://www.ara.am)), *STOP CLUB* (37 Moskovian p, tel. 56-07-80, email: [info@stopclub.am](mailto:info@stopclub.am), URL: [www.stopclub.am](http://www.stopclub.am)), *CCCP* (2 Aram p.) and impromptu spots around town.

**Watch for** performances by local bands *AlterEgo Lav Eli*, *Empyray*, *Manic Depression (MDP)* and *Bambir(2)*, *Cj Gog* (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 Arami 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 of the season include *Amber* and *Aramazd*, a folk/industrial metal band.

#### Other Venues

*NAREGATSI ART INSTITUTE*, 16/1 Vardanants p, tel. 58-01-05, email: [suzy@naregatsi.org](mailto:suzy@naregatsi.org), URL: [www.naregatsi.org](http://www.naregatsi.org), is a wonderful gallery/performance hall, with rotating exhibitions, 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 intelligentsia, 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.naregatsi.org/DM/](http://www.naregatsi.org/DM/)

*AKUMP*, 40 Tumanian p (at the corner of Spendiarian and Parapetsi p), tel. 53-13-61, is a restaurant/café/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. Online calendars are at [www.armeniainfo.am/calendar/view.php](http://www.armeniainfo.am/calendar/view.php), [www.armtown.com/events](http://www.armtown.com/events).

#### 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](mailto:info@opera.am), URL: [www.opera.am](http://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 Spendiarov/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](mailto:info@opera.am), URL: [www.opera.am](http://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.

**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),

**Watch for** the *Barekamutiun Dance Ensemble*, *Arax Armenian Dance Ensemble*. *Krunk*, and the *Tatul Altunian Folk Dance Ensemble*,

#### 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](mailto:vahanbadalyan@yahoo.com), performs a variety of productions by student actors, including an acrobatic version of *Jonathon Livingston Seagull*, riveting.



*GHAPLANIAN DRAMA THEATRE*, 28 Isahakian p, tel. 52-47-23, 52-47-33, is considered one of the best theatres in Yerevan, performing classical and modern authors, with ambitious productions including Shakespeare's "Romeo and Juliet", Siva's "The endless Return", Moliere's "Doctor Perforce", and William Saroyan's "My heart is in the highlands".

**HAMAZGAIYIN THEATRE**, 26 Amirian p, tel. 53-94-15, performs for both children and adults in different genres.

**MALIAN THEATRE AT ARMENFILM 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 MKRTCHIAN ARTISTIC THEATRE**, 18 Khorenatsi p, tel. 56-42-27, 56-57-09, performs a repertoire of comedy and drama.

**MUSICAL CHAMBER THEATRE**, 1 Proshian p, blind alley # 1, "Marshal Baghramian" Metro Station, tel. 52-19-68, 52-19-69, 58-88-13, repertoire includes *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Cats*, and the Ajemian opera *Kikos*.



**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. Lusavorich 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'Neill's "Love under the Elms".

**YEREVAN CHAMBER THEATRE**, 58 Mashtots, tel. 56-60-70, 58-78-44, email: [maillto:erkat@xter.net](mailto:maillto:erkat@xter.net), URL: [www.erkat.am](http://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.

**YEREVAN 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 EXPERIMENTAL ART**, 1/3 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 56-82-25, 56-83-25, email: [accea@netsys.am](mailto:accea@netsys.am), URL: [www.accea.org](http://www.accea.org), presents Performance Art and solo performances in its large modern hall.



**Musical, Comedy Theatre**

**PARONIAN MUSICAL COMEDY THEATER**, 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 theater'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 by the mime/actor *Sergei Danielian*, one of he most talented actors working, who combines solo productions with appearances at the Chamber Theatre and one-off productions such as his incredibly inventive *Loretsi Sakon*, based on a poem by Hovhannes Tumanian as performed in reverse order.

**Marionette Theatre**

**AGULIS PUPPET THEATRE-STUDIO**, 29 Abovian p, tel. 51-67-44, presents puppet plays for children. Repertoire includes *Three piglets*, *Red hat*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and *Kikos*.

**STATE MARIONETTE THEATRE**, 43 Mashtots pta, 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-Nova 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**

**HAMAZGAIYIN THEATRE**, 26 Amirian p, tel. 53-94-15, performs for children and adults in different genres.

**STATE YOUTH THEATER**, 3 Moskovian p, tel. 56-84-00, performs October-May, sometimes very challenging, inventive work especially the movement theatre.

**YEREVAN 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**

**YEREVAN 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](mailto:suzy@naregatsi.org), URL: [www.naregatsi.org](http://www.naregatsi.org), open 10-7, is a wonderful gallery/performance hall, with rotating exhibitions, film and video showings, concerts and performances. They have an ambitious calendar of events, which can be found at [www.naregatsi.org/DM/](http://www.naregatsi.org/DM/)

**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 theaters from such countries as Georgia, Russia, Scandinavia, Italy, Britain and France are some of the more inventive around. Well worth looking for.

The **BRITISH COUNCIL**, 24 Baghramian pta, tel. 56-99-24, 56-99-23, fax: 55-99-29, URL: [www.britishcouncil.org/armenia](http://www.britishcouncil.org/armenia), sponsors occasional performance art and theatre productions as part of its annual British Culture Series.



again and you are nearby, stop by for a taste of Indian flair.

**NAREGATSI ART INSTITUTE**, 16/1 Vardanants p, tel. 58-01-05, email: [suzy@naregatsi.org](mailto:suzy@naregatsi.org), URL: [www.naregatsi.org](http://www.naregatsi.org), presents occasional independent and art films in its basement hall. Upcoming films are advertised at the institute. Free admission.

**ESPACES CENTER**, 29 Nalbandian, tel. 54-18-44, email: [espaces@cooperation.net](mailto:espaces@cooperation.net), [www.espaces.am](http://www.espaces.am), open Tue 2-7, Wed-Sat 10-7, is a center supported by the Swiss, with a Community Internet Center, Language lessons (French, English, Italian, German, and Spanish), Conferences, Seminars and Films on subjects of interest for society and culture.

**CINEMA**

**KINO MOSCOW**, 18 Abovian p, tel. 52-12-10, 52-12-40, URL: [www.moscow.am](http://www.moscow.am), shows first (and a half) run films dubbed into Russian in its elegant hall, equipped with Dolby Digital Surround EX. The theatre shows mainly popular fare from Hollywood and Russia. Performances start at 11 am, tickets 500-1500 AMD. Theatre has an indoor and outdoor café and a DVD shop.

**KINO NAIRI**, 50 Mashtots pta, tel. 54-28-29, 56-61-80, shows the same kind of fare as Kino Moscow, also has Dolby Digital Surround EX, in a more intimate setting that serves food. Performances start at 11 am, tickets 500-1500, food about the same. The theatre also has a couple of bars; Fifth Element (karaoke) and Underground (live music, including pop and jazz).

**KINO TUN**, Vernissage at Khanjian, squashed between two high rises, is due to reopen in 2008, Art House, Independent films, film festivals.

**KINO YEREVAN**, 2 blocks south of Republic Square on Tigran Mets (at the corner of Mkrtychian), is Yerevan's porn palace, a derelict hall with soft porn and beer. 500-1000 AMD.

**NATIONAL ART GALLERY THEATRE**, top floor of the National Art Gallery, Republic Square, tel. 58-08-12, 56-18-12, email: [galleriarmenia@yahoo.com](mailto:galleriarmenia@yahoo.com), URL: [www.gallery.am](http://www.gallery.am), presents a series of independent films in its top floor theatre. Upcoming films are advertised outside the theatre. All films are free.

**KINO HAIRENIK**, Garegin Nzhdeh and Arshakuniats, is an on-again/off-again theatre that became famous for showing Indian Bollywood films, popular with local students from India. If on



**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/](http://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 [www.britishcouncil.org/armenia-arts-film.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/armenia-arts-film.htm) for details.

**NIGHT LIFE, WEEKENDERS** ^

**DISCO**

Discos are not the huge floors they have in the west, but they are very popular and energetic; the spaces cram them in on weekends. Women are normally admitted at a discount or for free while men pay to enter, average 1500-3000 AMD to enter the hottest joints. Two of the first discos were

**RELAX**, 105/1 Terian p (basement of Citadel Business Center at corner of Koriun & Terian), tel. 51-43-47 and

**ALEN & ELEN**, 3 Abovian p, tel. 56-39-58, and they still reign as among the most popular in town.

The large **STAR TIME** (opposite Hotel Yerevan on Abovian p.), is rabiz city.

2x2, Khanjian p. by Tekeyan Center, has three floors of entertainment and bump and grind;



**ASTRAL**, tel. 54-53-33, is in the pseudo Egyptian club on Opera Square and a favorite of locals (gay friendly).

**ATLANTIC**, 1 Northern pta, tel. 54-11-15, 54-45-11, is in a new spot; oligarch children love the location.

**BB CLUB**, 52 Abovian p, packs them in on weekends, the later the better.

**CHAMPS ELYSEES**, Nord Business Center (Northern Avenue), 22 Tumanian p, tel.

**CHEERS**, 48 Nalbandian p, tel. 58-04-16, email: [cheerspub@yahoo.com](mailto:cheerspub@yahoo.com), URL: [www.geocities.com/cheerspub](http://www.geocities.com/cheerspub), is a small space run by Diaspora Armenians, heavy on Spiurk Hai with energetic crowds on weekends.

**CYCLONE DISCO, BAR, KARAOKE**, Getar River, Alek Manukian next to YSU.

**GARAGE CLUB**, 54/3 Abovian p, tel. 52-56-96, 091-24-66-44.

**HEAVEN CLUB**, 8 Moskovian p, tel. 58-41-07, 58-40-07.

**OPERA CLUB**, 54 Tumanian p, tel. 54-12-22, 54-12-26, email: [info@operaclub.am](mailto:info@operaclub.am), URL: [www.operaclub.am](http://www.operaclub.am), is in the basement of the Opera building, some say a desecration, others say it is about time.



**BARS, CLUBS**

The more staid bars are frequented by business types and oligarchs, a smarmy mixture of testosterone and money, while café-bars, music clubs and café-clubs tend to be the places where young folks hang out.

**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 mere 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** 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,



**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](mailto:art-zebra@netsys.am), URL: [www.bravo-restaurant.com](http://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 Korian p, tel. 51-99-44, is a small, elegant space on the circle road where it intersects Heratsi/Miasnikian (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](mailto:cheerspub@yahoo.com), URL: [www.geocities.com/cheerspub](http://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, tel. 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@arminco.com](mailto:first@arminco.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 Berekamutiun 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.



**CHALET**, Ring Park (at end of Tumanian p.), tel. 58-02-43, is a large wooden café overlooking one of the prettiest fountains in Yerevan.

**DEAUVILLE**, 2 Baghramian p, tel. 58-59-85, is set too close to Baghramian traffic noise for the outdoor cafe, but indoors is a bit quieter.

**GIANI**, Ring Park, tel. 57-88-99, 57-80-00, indoor-outdoor café-bar with live music.

**GLORIA**. 21/1 Tumanian p, tel. 52-12-57, is an indoor sidewalk café with views of passersby on the street.

**HAVANA PARK**, Tsitsernakaberd Park, next to Hamalir Sport & Concert Complex, tel. 39-95-83, was one of the first extravagant cafes (1998), and continues to top itself each year with more upgrades. Great setting over the Hrazdan gorge.

**JAZZVE** (Moskovian), 8 Moskovian p, tel. 56-15-08, 56-05-41, email: [jazzve@jazzve.am](mailto:jazzve@jazzve.am), URL: [www.jazzve.com](http://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.



**JAZZVE** (Tumanian), 32 Tumanian p, tel. 54-54-24, email: [jazzve@jazzve.am](mailto:jazzve@jazzve.am), URL: [www.jazzve.com](http://www.jazzve.com), is like its sister site on Moskovian, an indoor counterpart to the outdoor counterpart on Opera Square.

**KRUNK**, 20 Khanjian p, tel. 52-00-19, 52-01-19 is on two floors above a beautiful pond with swans.

**L'ORANGE LOUNGE BAR**, 21 Tumanian p, tel. 52-82-93, is like its sister cafe on Abovian, a trendy, upscale eatery/cafe and bar.

**MARCO POLO**, 1/3 Abovian p, tel. 56-19-26, 52-55-50, has a large covered outdoor café with winter windows and a downstairs bar. Very popular.

**MER TAGH**, 21/1 Tumanian p, tel. 58-01-06, is a pleasant little space with a good selection of drinks.

**POPOVOK JAZZ CAFE**, 41 Isahakian p, tel. 52-23-03, 54-71-18, is the indoor part to the legendary outdoor cafe. Busy year round.

**RED L'ORANGE**, 26 Abovian p, tel. 52-57-11, is like its sister café on Tumanian.

**SAYAT-NOVA CAFE (SAYAT-NOVA COMPLEX)**, 33a Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 58-00033, email: [sayatnova33@yahoo.com](mailto:sayatnova33@yahoo.com), is part of the entertainment complex that includes Coliseum hall.

**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 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 CAFE**, Republic Square, tel. 59-90-00, 59-92-50, email: [armenia.marriott@hotelmail.r.am](mailto:armenia.marriott@hotelmail.r.am), URL: [www.marriott.com/EVNNMC](http://www.marriott.com/EVNNMC), is inside the Marriott Hotel. Beautiful setting and great drinks, if pricy.

**ZANGU**, 1 Kievian p, tel. 27-60-21, 27-60-71, 22-50-30, email: [andako@netsys.am](mailto:andako@netsys.am).

**PUBS/TAVERNS**

**SHAMROCK TAVERN**, 1a Sarian p at Tumanian, email: [theshamrocktavern@yahoo.ie](mailto: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. Swagger in and down a few.

**OUTDOOR CAFÉS**

Yerevan's outdoor cafes 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 (cafes 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 cafes 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.

Cafes 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).



**RING PARK**

Ring Park is the daddy of all outdoor cafés, with over a dozen cafes to choose from. Local favorites include (from N to S) first block: **POPLOVOK/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.



**OPERA SQUARE / CASCADE PARK**

Opera Square has a number of cafes in the ring of trees on the Tumanian side. Since trees were cut to make way for the cafes, and many that remain are in poor shape and ill kept as a result of the café trade, I do not frequent them. But they are among the most popular in Yerevan, including **JAZZVE** (which does care for its trees), **MELODY** and the **ASTRAL** restaurant/night club, the garish Egyptian them café looming over Spendiarian's grave.

Across Mashtots pta from Opera, in **Art Vernissage** (Saryan Park), there are a couple of cafes 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 cafes. Service is so-so to bad. Cascade itself has no cafes 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.



**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 cafes 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 cafes; 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 **CAFES** 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 Sayat Nova and Abovian.



There are a few more cafes on the next block, all new, along with *THOMAS TEA* (east side) and *CAFÉ 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 **Haghtanak 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 Anghaght Plaza** (corner of David Anghaght & Rubiniats pts), 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!



Once the king of northern cafes, *DRAKHT* (set inside the lower portion of the Botanical garden on Miasnikian Hwy), no longer rules, but still charms with its natural setting and cool fountains. The colored neon lights are a little over the top.



#### MASHTOTS AVENUE

Mashtots Avenue has very few cafes, aside from those on Art Vernissage and Santa Fe Café in Tumanian Park, there are also *METELITSA* and *MALIBU*, face to face on Mashtots at Boulevard.



#### WATER WORLD, 1ST MASIV

Once the king of northern cafes, *DRAKHT* (set inside the lower portion of the Botanical garden on Miasnikian 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.

*AVANTGARDE FOLK MUSIC CLUB* (34A Pushkin Street, tel. 56-14-97), email: [ara@ara.am](mailto:ara@ara.am), URL: [www.ara.am](http://www.ara.am), offers jazz, blues and folk music performances, along with pop, rock and international strains (reggae, African).

*COLISEUM CLUB (SAYAT-NOVA COMPLEX)*, 33a Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 58-00-33, email: [sayatnova33@yahoo.com](mailto: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 Manukian), 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](mailto:info@stopclub.am), URL: [www.stopclub.am](http://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, Alek Manukian next to YSU.

**DISCO BOMBA**, Abovian Street (near Artbridge cafe), 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.

**MAMA MIA**, 74 Hanrapetutian (Alaverdian) p, tel. 54-27-14, 53-81-18 (delivery), cell 093-18-81-18, URL: [www.mamamia.am](http://www.mamamia.am), combines pizza and Karaoke in a fun atmosphere. Family friendly on weekend days.

**Rivera**, Sayat Nova pta, in the alley next to Levon Travel, has karaoke in its small space.

#### ROLE PLAYING, GAMING

**SICILY CLUB CAFE**, 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\\_\(game\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Werewolf_(game))

**PLAY CITY**, 35 Acharian p, tel. 62-88-80, fax: 28-82-77, email: [info@playcity.am](mailto:info@playcity.am), URL: [www.playcity.info](http://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 musik and without the fruit.

**STAR CITY**, 26 Abovian p, 54-49-69, 54-89-69, URL: [www.starcity.myhauastan.am](http://www.starcity.myhauastan.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.

**DISC PLANET**, 1/3 Abovian p. (next to Marco Polo café), tel. 54-23-34, has one of the best collections of hard-to-find CDs in town, and a friendly staff. Weekend hangout.

**DISC PLANET**, 33 Abovian p, tel. 58-20-98, is a branch of the one by Marco Polo.

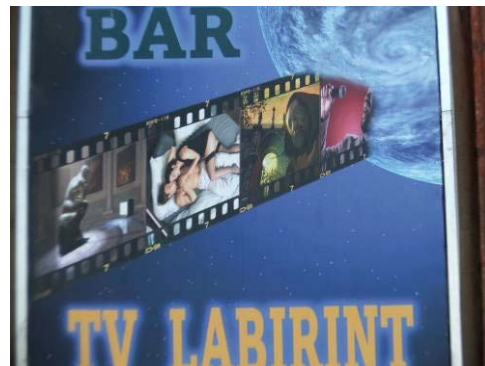
**XXL**, Abovian near Koriun (by the Medical University), is très popular with university students.

**HI FI**, 16 Mashtots pta, has a solid collection of music and software.

**KINO MOSKVA**, 18 Abovian p, tel. 52-12-10, 52-12-40, URL: [www.moscow.am](http://www.moscow.am), has a large selection of movies and browsers.

**NEXUS**, 49 Pushkin, about 80 m down from the Sarian/Pushkin intersection, is considered the best Internet/Game Café/Club by its exgtremely loyal followers, and has a dynamic atmosphere.

**ALSO CHECK:** Around Barekamutiun Circle there are a couple of good shops; by Yerevan State University (Alek Manukian, Isahakian pts), and **TASHIR MALL** (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, Alek Manukian p, East Tumanian and Sayat Nova pts, Barekamutiun Circle/metro and Komitas pta.

**NEXUS**, 49 Pushkin, about 80 m down from the Sarian/Pushkin intersection, is considered the best Internet/Game Café/Club by its exgtremely loyal followers, and has a dynamic atmosphere.

**SKYNET**, 9 Mashtots (by Araya electronic shop).

**TEG**, 7 Koriun p.

**PEGAS**, 8 Komitas pta.

**Peg Master**, 17 Abovian.

**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](mailto:info@maxpower.am).

**VALT 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 Abovian (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.

**BURG**, 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.

**PHARAON**, 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 Armenii hang out here.

**CHARLOTTE CABARET**, 25 Baghramian pta, tel. 27-70-20, email: [info@charlotte.am](mailto:info@charlotte.am), URL: [www.charlotte.am](http://www.charlotte.am), open til 2 am; **CLUB 12**, Ring park (between Abovian and Terian pts), tel. 52-83-22, 091-21-24-39, email: [club12@inbox.ru](mailto:club12@inbox.ru), open til 2 am; **HOLLYWOOD**, 15 Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 54-08-40, open til 3 am; **Libido**, 50 Mashtots pta, tel. 54-37-89, open til 2 am; **OMEGA**, 59 Terian p, tel. 58-25-49, 52-79-93, email: [omega@omega.am](mailto:omega@omega.am), URL: [www.omega.am](http://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](mailto:info@pyramida.am), URL: [www.pyramida.am](http://www.pyramida.am), open til 3 am; **ROYAL**, 1 M. Baghramian pta, tel. 56-70-02, open til 3 am; **S CLUB**, 6 Vazgen 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 Khandjian p, tel. 54-88-28, open til 3 am; **Zevs**, 39 Abovian p, tel. 56-90-94, open til 3 am.

#### DRAG SHOWS

**DREAM GIRLS TRAVESTY SHOW**, URL: [armeniantravesty.narod.ru](http://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](http://StopClub), p. 92).

#### OTHER ▲



#### BOWLING ▲

**ARENA BOWLING CLUB**, 8 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-61-01, 53-01-11, 53-61-41, email: [info@bowling.am](mailto:info@bowling.am), URL: [www.bowling.am](http://www.bowling.am).

**URENI SPORTS COMPLEX**, 69 Koghbatsi p, tel. 53-10-23. 6000+ AMD per hour.

**ACHAPNIAK BOWLING**, Halabian p, below Hamalir Sports Complex, off of Kievian (cross bridge and turn right, bowling is located in old movie house, signs galore). 6000 AMD per hour until 6 pm, 8000 AMD per hour after 6 pm.

**PLAY CITY**, 35 Acharian p, tel. 62-88-80, 28-82-77, 62-01-77, email: [info@playcity.am](mailto:info@playcity.am), URL: [www.playcity.info](http://www.playcity.info).



**BILLIARDS** ▲

**ARENA BOWLING CLUB**, 8 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-61-01, 53-01-11, 53-61-41, email: [info@bowling.am](mailto:info@bowling.am), URL: [www.bowling.am](http://www.bowling.am).

**URENI SPORT COMPLEX**, 69 Koghbatsi p, tel. 53-10-23.

**ARBAT**, 39 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 55-32-20.

**BILLIARDS**, 1/1 Artsakh p, tel. 45-27-00.

**HAIR YEV VORDI YERITSIANNER**, 21 Papazian p, tel. 26-82-22.

**NO PROBLEM**, 1 Glinkai p, tel. 55-49-19.

**OPEN AIR BILLIARDS**, Tumanian p, Opera Square.

**OPEN AIR BILLIARDS**, Ring Park, near Yeridasardakan.

**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** ▲

**ANIMAL LOVERS CLUB**, tel. 27-43-04.

**DOWNTOWN ART CLUB**, tel. 56-00-46.

**CANINE CLUB**, tel. 77-05-63.



**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](mailto:info@playcity.am), URL: [www.playcity.info](http://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. 36-10-10, 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](mailto:waterworld@waterworld.am), URL: [www.waterworld.am](http://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.

**SPORTS & FITNESS** ▲

**STADIUMS, CENTERS**

**HAMALIR**, also known as the Sports and Music Complex, Tsitsernakaberd Park (enter Kievian bridge), tel. 39-98-03, 39-99-13, 39-00-01, email: [s.c.c.@arminco.com](mailto: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**, Athens p (Tsitsernakaberd p), 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 local games. When not busy it is open to impromptu games.

**REPUBLICAN (SARGISIAN) STADIUM**, 65 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 Hrnt Shahinian p. (enter from Vardanants, 1 block south of Alek Manukian) is used by school players, but available when empty.

**SPARTAK STADIUM**, 6 Agatangeghos p, *Nairi Stadium*, 2 Bagratuniats pta, is also used by schools and locals, available when empty.

**Arax Sports Center**, 39 Manandian p. (ask to use, may charge a fee).



**GOLF**

**ARARAT GOLF CLUB**, 50 Gevork Chaush p, tel. 39-35-77, drive ranges and golf. Part of the Ararat Valley Country Club.

**TENNIS**

**ARARAT VALLEY COUNTRY CLUB**, 50 Gevork Chaush p, tel. 39-40-85, 39-70-69, email: [general@hovint.am](mailto: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](http://www.armandgroup.am), has exercise machines and classes. 16,000 AMD per month or 2000 AMD per session.

**FITNESS CENTER**, 10 Vagharsh Vagharshian 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**, Barekamutiun Circle, is on the 3rd/4th floors above Hayastan market, with complete fitness equipment and swimming pool. \$

**NEPTUNE**, tel. 71-12-22, has fitness equipment, swimming pool and sauna.

**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.

**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.



**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.

**Step runners** will be in heaven climbing the steps of **CASCADE**; there are over 1000 to surmount.

**ONE RUN** starts from Hanrapetutian H'raparak S on Abovian (Sargsian/Beurit/Italian) to Miasnikian Square, then across Lusavorich and past Metropol Hotel to Haghtanak 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/Pavstos Biuzand) to Mashtots (Malibu Café), right on Mashtots to the next L (Amirian) back to Hanrapetutian H'raparak. This run combines streets and green spaces, for a total of about 5.8 km.

**Green Spaces** Most 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 aggressive passersby), and is about 2.5 km from the tunnel west to the Kievian Bridge entrance. There are bridges across the river that allow you to circle back to the tunnel. Continue N of the Kievian Bridge and a R bank road traces the river to Davitashen bridge (2.6 km).

**TSITSERNAKABERD PARK** has several trails wrapping the Sports Complex and Genocide monument, most going up or downhill.

**VICTORY PARK** (Haghtanak Aigi), located off of Azatutian pta, between Monument and Mother Armenia, has walking trails that can be used for jogging. Combine this with the steps of Cascade below Monument (magnificent views of Ararat), for a rigorous cardio workout.

**Bicyclists** can follow the same paths in the **Hrazdan Gorge** (save the sidewalks) for relatively light resistance traffic, but most of the streets of the city are crowded with cars (many of which are not at all tolerant of anyone outside their zone of speeding), and the best cycling routes are outside the city (**ASHTARAK HWY**, **GARNI/GEGHARD ROAD**, **SEVAN HWY** with some steep climbs, **ARTASHAT HWY** with many cars 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 J'rvesh, connecting with the Garni road.



There is a bike tour with guide that leads you around the city via the two-wheelers (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](mailto:contact@hyurservice.com), URL [www.hyurservice.com](http://www.hyurservice.com), or **AVARAYR ADVENTURE TOURS** (1 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 56-36-81, 52-40-42, fax: 56-36-81, email: [avarayr@arminco.com](mailto:avarayr@arminco.com), [www.avarayr.am](http://www.avarayr.am)), **ENVOY HOSTEL** (54 Pushkin p, tel. 53-03-69, email: [info@envoyhostel.com](mailto:info@envoyhostel.com), [www.envoyhostel.com](http://www.envoyhostel.com)), or **BEAU MONDE RENTALS**, Armenia Marriott Hotel, 2nd floor, tel. 59-99 65, 59-99-64, 091-50-27-27, fax: 59-99-65, email: [bmsrentacar@hotmail.com](mailto:bmsrentacar@hotmail.com), URL [www.rentcar.am](http://www.rentcar.am).

There is a **velodrome** behind Circus, Grigor Lusavorich at Agatangeghos pts, open Mon-Sat, though in rough shape.

#### SWIMMING POOLS

**GRATSIA INTERNATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER OF ARMENIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY**, 47a Ashtarak hwy, tel. 39-17-69, [www.iptrc.am](http://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**, Barekamutiun 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 pre 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: [info@ararathotel.am](mailto:info@ararathotel.am), [sales@ararathotel.am](mailto:sales@ararathotel.am), URL: [www.ararathotel.am](http://www.ararathotel.am). \$\$

**CONGRESS HOTEL**, 1 Italian p, tel. 58-00-95, fax 52-22-24, email: [congress@arminco.com](mailto:congress@arminco.com), URL: [www.congresshotelyerevan.com](http://www.congresshotelyerevan.com), has a swimming pool facing English park, nicer than Hotel Yerevan's roof top mini-pool.

**GOLDEN TULIP**, 14 Abovian p, tel. (374 10) 58 94 00; Fax: (374 10) 56 46 77, 52 82 91, email: [info@goldentuliphotelyerevan.com](mailto:info@goldentuliphotelyerevan.com), [www.hotelyerevan.com](http://www.hotelyerevan.com), has a tiny rooftop pool for soaking and hobnobbing. \$\$\$



**LATAR COMPLEX**, 58 house, 5th p, Silikian Neighborhood (3rd Village), tel. 31-90-34, 39-47-59, email: [info@latar.am](mailto:info@latar.am), URL: [www.latar.am](http://www.latar.am), has the largest outdoor pool in Armenia with the best view of Ararat, part of the hotel complex. Walk-ins welcome, call ahead.

**NEPTUNE**, Bangladesh, tel. 71-12-22, has a large pool as part of its fitness complex.

**MALATIA SWIMMING POOL**, Sheram p., Bangladesh, has a large outdoor pool and baths for only 200 AMD. Best deal in town.

**WATER WORLD**, 40 Miasnikian pta, tel. 64-97-30, 64-34-30, has pools, water slides and pseudo waves on the banks of the Sevan Highway. \$\$

**ARARAT VALLEY COUNTRY CLUB**, Address: 50a Gevork Chaush p (Ashtarak Highway opposite

"Versailles"), tel. 35-41-41, has a small pool as part of the gold course/driving range. \$\$

#### **HORSEBACK RIDING**

Horseback riding is available at several spots in the area, arranged by contacting the equestrian center directly. These provide lessons (English saddle, dressage, racing) for all ages, plus horseback riding excursions.

**AIYRUDZI RIDING CLUB**, 2 M. Bagratuni p, Ashtarak, tel. (0232) 34-628, cell 091-42-45-70, 093-37-62-68, email: [v\\_hugous@yahoo.com](mailto: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 (HOVIK 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, 22/1 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**

**CERAGEM MASSAGE CENTER**, 15 Deghatan p, 1st Floor, tel. 54-79-75, 091-32-15-16, offers Acupressure, Classic Massage, Indian Ayurvedic Massage - Abhyanga, Massage on Massaging Bed, Massage with Hot Stones, Swedish, and Therapeutic Massage.

**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, Davidashen District, has sauna facilities.

**GRATSIA INTERNATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER OF ARMENIAN Red Cross Society**, 47a Ashtarak hwy, tel. 39-17-69, [www.iptrc.am](http://www.iptrc.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](mailto: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 sophisticate 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.

**LILA**, 40 Pushkin p, tel. 53-94-91, 093-99-33-73, email: [salon@lilaspa.com](mailto:salon@lilaspa.com), URL: [www.lilaspa.com](http://www.lilaspa.com), is a day spa and beauty salon in one. Offers a variety of health and beauty services, including manicures, pedicures, massage, aromatherapy, suntanning beds, tattoos, and non-surgical weight reduction.

**LITTE** 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, manicures and pedicures, massage, etc.

**MEDEST**, 14/2 Vardanants, tel. 52-29-39, email: [info@mewdest.am](mailto:info@mewdest.am), URL: [www.medest.am](http://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 Geghwol® products.

**TIENS MEDICAL AND BEAUTY CENTER**, 50 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-08-02, 56-12-24, URL: [www.tiens.com](http://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: [vital@xter.net](mailto:vital@xter.net), variety of health and beauty services, including manicures, pedicures, massage, aromatherapy, suntanning beds, tattoos, and non-surgical weight reduction. Also performs cosmetic surgery.



#### **BEAUTY SALONS**

*SALON AVO*, 54 Pushkin, tel. 53-90-30, is a women's hair salon, also manicures, facials. Avo is trained and has worked in Syria, Lebanon, and Italy and has a very good reputation.

*ANAHIT DELUXE*, corner of Pushkin & Mashtots, reputation for great facials, manicures & pedicures.

*SERGEY ZVEREV BEAUTY SALON*, 24 Sarian p, tel. 52-70-10.

*SCHWARTZ KOPF*, 40 Pushkin p, 32 Abovian p, Tel. 53-33-58.

*ELINA*, 37 Mashtots pta, 53-13-51, 53-35-42.

*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.

*MILENA*, 22 Kievian p, tel. 27-26-59, 27-27-05.

*VANILLA*, 22 Maisian p. tel. 53-63-52.

*SEPHORIA*, 33 Tumanian p.

*ANNA-RAPHAEL BEAUTY PARLOR*, 36 Moskovian p, tel. 58-72-73, 093-37-36-45.

*DOLCE VITA BEAUTY PARLOR*, 37 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-48-38.

*1+1*, 7 Kassian p, tel. 27-58-68, 27-40-13.

*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 Amirian p, tel. 53-98-27, 54-84-24, 091-45-77-00.

*HAIKAZ*, 50 Baghramian pta, tel. 22-80-31, 091-90-31-31, email: [info@salonhaikaz.com](mailto:info@salonhaikaz.com), URL: [www.salonhaikaz.com](http://www.salonhaikaz.com).

*RENOIR*, 23 Abovian p, tel. 54-05-30, email: [renoir@armfarm.com](mailto: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).

*AVANTA MEDICAL CENTER*, three centers: 5 Zakian p, 14 Mashtots pta, and 15 Hrachia Kochar p, tel. 53-68-91 laser epilation clinic; 26-22-99 laser cosmetology center, Laser Epilation, Anti-Cellulite Packs, Vacuum Massage, Neuromuscular Stimulation, Laser Pigment Removal, Skin Rejuvenation, Tattoo Removal, vessel removal.

*COSMETOLOGY AND PLASTIC SURGERY CENTER*, 56a Pushkin p, tel. 53-36-24.

*DR. AKUNTS' HEALTH AND BEAUTY CENTER*, 26 Amirian p, tel. 53-98-27, email: [akunts@xter.net](mailto:akunts@xter.net), URL: [www.shahnaz-husain.com](http://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](mailto: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.

*HELIOS DERMATOLOGY AND COSMETOLOGY CENTER*, 18 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 51-93-94, 56-03-87, service includes Dermatology, Cosmetology, and Diagnostic laboratory work. Corrective surgery, facial injections, laser epilation, face lifts, laser therapy, peeling, acne treatment, cellulite treatment, laser pigment removal, laser skin rejuvenation, tattoo removal, vessel removal, nonsurgical weight reduction.

For dental work, see [Practicalities: Medical: Dental](#), p. 131).

**PRACTICALITIES** ▲

Area Code: 10



**IN AND OUT** ▲

Most people enter Yerevan by air, but it is also accessible by train from Georgia via Vanadzor and Giumri, 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 cost 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.

**AIRLINES**

**Cheap Flights** You will need to combine cheap flights (Istanbul, Athens, Kiev) with land travel (train, bus) or other flights to reap the rewards of discount airfare to Yerevan, but try at RyanAir ([www.ryanair.com/site/EN](http://www.ryanair.com/site/EN)), easyjet ( ), Air Berlin ([www.airberlin.com/](http://www.airberlin.com/)) and MyAir ([www.myair.com](http://www.myair.com)).

One group I met spring 2007 took 10€ special fare Munich to Istanbul, bought 25€ train tickets to Kars, took a minivan to Batumi (10€) then caught a ride to Giumri. Lucky or smart? No guarantees you will find the same, but it is worth looking into.

**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.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am)).

**Arriving From**

**Europe:** Amsterdam, Athens, Cologne, Donbass, Frankfurt, Kiev, London, Paris, Odessa, Prague, Vienna, and Warsaw.

**Russia/CIS:** Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Krasnodar, Mineralnye Vody, Nizhniy Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Rostov, Samara, Simferopol, Sochi, Stavropol, Voronezh, Minsk

**Middle East:** Aleppo, Beirut, Dubai, Istanbul, Tel-Aviv, Tehran, Aleppo, Sharja



**Airlines with Yerevan representative offices:**

**S7 AIRLINES,** RUSSIA tel. 8-800-200-000-7, YEREVAN: 34 Tumanian, tel. 54-42-20, 54-41-10, URL: [www.S7.ru](http://www.S7.ru), email: [evn.sales@s7.ru](mailto:evn.sales@s7.ru), connecting via Moscow to St. Petersburg, throughout Russia and Siberia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Istanbul, Tel-Aviv, Munich, Innsbruck, Frankfurt, Hanover, Düsseldorf. To Far East: Seoul, Beijing, Tokyo.

**AEROFLOT-RUSSIAN AIRLINES,** RUSSIA tel. 8-800-333-5555, LA tel. (310) 281-5300, NY tel. (888) 340-6400, SEATTLE tel. (888) 348-1005, LONDON tel. 0207 355 22 33, PARIS tel. 331-42254381, TORONTO tel. (1416) 6421653, ROME tel. 3906-420385, BARCELONA tel. 3493-4305880; YEREVAN: 12 Amirian p, tel. 52-24-35, 53-21-31,

223580, URL: [www.aeroflot.am](http://www.aeroflot.am), email: [aflevn@cornet.am](mailto:aflevn@cornet.am), connecting via Moscow to its worldwide network including Japan, Paris, London, New York, Los Angeles, Toronto, South America.

**AIR ARABIA,** SHARJA tel. (06) 5580000, YEREVAN: 14 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-45-33, URL: [www.airarabia.com](http://www.airarabia.com), email: [AST\\_airarabia@yahoo.com](mailto:AST_airarabia@yahoo.com), connecting via Sharja (Emirates) to Colombo, Mumbai, Jaipur, Kabuk, Almaty, Karachi, Khartoum, Jeddah, Riyadh, Kuwait, Amman, Alexandria, Assut, Luxor, Damascus, Beirut, Aleppo, Istanbul.

**AIR FRANCE,** FRANCE tel. 36 54 EUR 0.34 ATI/MN, USA: tel. 1 800 237 2747, CANADA tel. 1 800 667 2747, YEREVAN: 9 Alek Manukian p, tel. 51-22-77, 51-22-88, 51-22-81, URL: [www.airfrance.am](http://www.airfrance.am), email: [info@executive.am](mailto:info@executive.am), connecting via Paris to worldwide network.

**ARMAVIA AIRLINES,** YEREVAN: 3 Amirian p, 37 Sayat-Nova pta, 1 Yekmalian p, tel. 56-48-06, 56-48-17, 56-48-05, 59-38-16, 55-05-92, email: [e.nersisian@u8.am](mailto:e.nersisian@u8.am), [armavia-sales@u8.am](mailto:armavia-sales@u8.am), URL: [www.u8.am](http://www.u8.am), direct flights to (Armenia) Giumri and (International) Aleppo, Amsterdam, Athens, Beirut, Cologne, Dubai, Yekaterinburg, Frankfurt, Kiev, Krasnodar, Mineralnye Vody, Minsk, Moscow, Nizhniy Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Odessa, Paris, Rostov, Samara, Simferopol, Sochi, St. Petersburg, Stavropol, Voronezh.

**ATLANTIS EUROPEAN AIRWAYS,** YEREVAN: 29 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 54-47-42, 58-54-33, 56-88-19, email: [info@atlantis.am](mailto:info@atlantis.am), URL: [www.atlantis.am](http://www.atlantis.am), connecting via Austrian Airlines, British Airways, Czech Airlines, and Aeroflot to a worldwide network of 101 destinations.

**AUSTRIAN AIRLINES,** VIENNA tel. , USA tel. 1-800-843-0002, CANADA tel. 1-800-843-0002, YEREVAN: 9 Alek Manukian p, AUA Business Center, tel. 51-22-01, 51-22-02, 51-22-03, email: [armenia@austrian.com](mailto:armenia@austrian.com), URL: [www.austrian.com](http://www.austrian.com), connecting via Vienna to worldwide network.

**BRITISH AIRWAYS (B-MED),** UK tel. 0870 850 9 850, USA tel. 1-800-AIRWAYS, EGYPT tel. +(20) 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](mailto:simon.avagian@flybmed.com), URL: [www.flybmed.com](http://www.flybmed.com), connecting via British Airways to worldwide network.

**CASPIAN AIRWAYS,** URL: [www.caspianairlines.com](http://www.caspianairlines.com), TEHRAN tel. +98 - 21 - 88751671-5, YEREVAN: 19 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-44-01, 54-33-60, 54-33-61, email:

[info@tatev.com](mailto:info@tatev.com), URL: [www.tatev.com](http://www.tatev.com), connecting via Tehran to Istanbul, Kiev, Minsk, Budapest, Dubai, Damascus, Beirut.

**CZECH AIRLINES,** URL: [www.czechairlines.com](http://www.czechairlines.com), PRAGUE tel. (420) 239 007 007, YEREVAN: 2 Baghramian pta, tel. 56-40-99, 52-21-62, 56-36-24, email: [ticket1@visaconcord.am](mailto:ticket1@visaconcord.am), URL: [www.visaconcord.am](http://www.visaconcord.am), connecting via Prague to worldwide network.

**DONBASSAERO,** [www.donbass.aero/m1/en/index](http://www.donbass.aero/m1/en/index), DON tel. +38 062 388 5 222, YEREVAN: Aviatrans, 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: [klm@arminco.com](mailto:klm@arminco.com), URL: [www.klm.com](http://www.klm.com), connecting via Amsterdam to worldwide network.

**KAVMINVODYAVIA,** YEREVAN: Astkhadzor, tel. 56-76-39, 58-27-58, 59-38-60, URL: [www.kmvavia.aero](http://www.kmvavia.aero), serves Mineralnye Vody in southern Russia, connecting to Munich, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, central Siberia, Khabarok and Pevek.

**KUBAN AIRLINES,** KRASNODAR tel. +7 (861)255-65-08, YEREVAN: 17 G. Lusavorich p, tel. 58-27-58, 56-76-12, email: [ast@arminco.com](mailto:ast@arminco.com), URL: [www.alk.ru](http://www.alk.ru), connecting via Krasnodar to Aleppo, Athens, Kazan, Larnaka, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Istanbul, Tashkent, Tel-Aviv, Ufa, Frankfurt, Sharja.

**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](mailto:lufthansa@dlh.de), URL: [www.lufthansa.com](http://www.lufthansa.com), connecting via Munich to worldwide network.

**PULKOVO AIRLINES (ROSSIYA AIRLINES),** [www.rossiya-airlines.ru](http://www.rossiya-airlines.ru), ST. PETERSBURG tel. 7 (812) 333-22-22, YEREVAN: 4 Sarian St., tel. 56-64-73, email: [plkz@arminco.com](mailto:plkz@arminco.com), URL: [www.pulkovo.ru](http://www.pulkovo.ru), connecting via St. Petersburg to Almaty, Tashkent, Samarkand, Antalia, Beijing, Istanbul, Hamburg, Odessa, Rome, Paris, Varna, Helsinki, Simferopol, Tel-Aviv, Frankfurt.

**SYRIAN AIR,** ALEPPO Tel. 00963212282838, DAMASCUS tel. 2450098, YEREVAN: (GSA Astron Travel), 3 Khorenatsi p, tel. 53-85-28, 53-85-89, 53-85-90, email: [info@astrontravel.am](mailto:info@astrontravel.am), URL:



[www.astrontravel.com](http://www.astrontravel.com), connecting via Syria to Middle East and Europe.

**Other airlines serving Zvartnots:**

Note some may be charter. Tickets purchased at area travel agencies, exclusive where noted.

**AEROFLOT-DON** (Rostov), [www.aeroflot-don.ru](http://www.aeroflot-don.ru), ROS tel. (863) 276-78-11, connecting to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Sochi, Vienna, Rome, Istanbul, Tel-Aviv, Frankfurt. Also flies into Gjumri.

**ATLASJET** (Istanbul), [www.atlasjet.com/en](http://www.atlasjet.com/en), IST tel. ( 0 212 ) 465 53 64, connecting to (Turkey) Adana, Trabzond, Siirt (Ararat), Antalia, Izmir, (International) Germany, Holland, Spain, France, Italy, Czech Republic, Hungary, Denmark, Egypt.

**AZAL** (Baku), [www.azal.az/en/index.php](http://www.azal.az/en/index.php), BKU tel. (994-12) 493 40 04, connecting to Tbilisi, Liev, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Minks, Istanbul, Antalia, Tel-Aviv, Milan, Paris, London.

**BELAVIA** (Minsk), [www.belavia.by/index\\_en.htm](http://www.belavia.by/index_en.htm), MNK tel. (+375 17) 210-4100, connecting to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Istanbul, Tel-Aviv, Kiev, Warsaw, Prague, Berlin, Frankfurt, Vienna, Rome, Hanover, Paris, London, Manchester, Shannon (USA, Canada) Amsterdam (Barcelona, Brussels, Geneva, Madrid, Oslo).

**KONSTANTA** (Zaporozhye, Ukraine), charter.

**POLAND AIR** (Warsaw), connecting via LOT ([www.lot.com](http://www.lot.com)) to worldwide destinations.

**ORENBURG AIRLINES**, [www.oal.ru/eng](http://www.oal.ru/eng), MOS tel. +7 (495) 787-1660, with connecting flights to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Antalia Turkey, and Hanover Germany.

**POLET FLIGHT AIRLINES** (Voronezh), [www.polet.ru/EN/index.shtml](http://www.polet.ru/EN/index.shtml), VOR tel. +7 (495) 786-9698, connecting to Munich, Baden-Baden, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Minsk, Sochi, Istanbul, Antalia.

**SAMARA AIRLINES**, [www.samara-airlines.ru](http://www.samara-airlines.ru), SAM tel. (846) 270-09-95, connecting to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Krasnodar, Novosibirsk, Sochi, central Russia.

**SARATOV AIRLINES**, SAR tel. (8452) 64-9074.

**Scat Airlines** (Kazakhstan), [www.scat.kz](http://www.scat.kz) connecting to Central Asia.

**TATARSTAN AIRLINES** (Nizhny Novgorod, Russia), **KAZAN** tel. (843) 299-51-67, IST tel. (8-10-90-212-589-79-97 (Ender Tours).

**URAL AIRLINES** (Yekaterinburg), [eng.uralairlines.ru](http://eng.uralairlines.ru), EKA tel. +7 (343) 345 36 45, connecting to Antalia, Bangkok, Barcelona, Budapest, Düsseldorf, Istanbul, Larnaca. Moscow, Munich, Prague, Sochi, St. Petersburg, Tel Aviv, Thessalonica, Vienna, Yakutsk.

**UTAIR AIRCOMPANY** (Sochi/Adler, Russia), [www.utair.ru/en](http://www.utair.ru/en), MOS tel. +7 (3452) 49-24-50, connecting to St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Tiumen, Central Russia, Munich.

**VOLGA AVIAEXPRESS AIRLINES** (Volgograd, Russia), [www.vae.ru](http://www.vae.ru), connecting via Moscow-Domodedovo to Aktau, Vakhta.



**ZVARTNOTS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

Zvartnots is the main airport for Armenia, located 8 km from Yerevan center. The other Yerevan airport, Erebuni, or Armenia International, is located at the south end of the city and is reserved for military and a few charter flights.

Zvartnots airport now has two terminals, the newer reserved for international flights.

Getting around the airport has become so easy it is no longer necessary to draw diagrams or point out obscure areas of the terminal. There are only 4 gates to contend with and signs are in Armenian and English, clearly marked with international symbols.

**ARRIVALS**

**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.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.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 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.

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.



**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.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.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 (Barekamutiun) 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 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 pricy 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, though 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.



**IN AND OUT BY TRAIN** 

Using the Yerkatgitzl or Gnatsk (train) is one of the cheapest ways of entering and leaving the country. Trains run daily between Yerevan and the Georgian border, on even days of the month to Tbilisi and Batumi. The cost of a one-way ticket from Yerevan to the border at Sadakhlo is as cheap as 1866 AMD (\$5.50) for a bench seat, or 8111 AMD (\$23.58) for a sleeper compartment. Since it takes 11 hours (or more) to travel the distance between Sadakhlo to Yerevan, you will have ample time to take in the Northern regions, the high plains of Shirak, the Turkish border and the Ararat Valley en route to Yerevan.

And, as the train stops at 12 towns along the way, you also have an excellent opportunity to get off and explore some of the most interesting areas of the country; Lori, Shirak, Aragatsothn and Armavir. On trains you come close to feeling like you are a local, as you all nestle in for the ride and watch bags and hampers open up to full course meals prepared for the long journey. People often carry products to market, returning with town purchases.

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-Gyumri and Gyumri-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).

**Purchase** 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 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: *obshl* (open seating on wooden benches), *plas* (reserved seats, possibly on wooden seats, more often on padded seats) and two types of compartments: *coupe* (compartments with padded seating, sleeping berths for 4), and "CB" ("SV" in English) or "Luxe", a compartment for two with shared bath between two adjoining compartments. All classes are available between Tbilisi and Yerevan, but only coupe 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 coupe class you can pay an extra \$1-\$2 for spitakner (spi-tak-NEHR; sheets and pillow case), it comes with SV class. From Gyumri 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 Gyumri-Vanadzor-Alaverdi, good for exploring the northern district.

**TRAINS TO/FROM YEREVAN**

To Yerevan			From Yerevan	
#	Time	STATION	#	Time
	08:30	Batumi		16:40
	even			odd
	17:30	Yerevan		21:10
-	-	-	-	-
371	16:15	Tbilisi	372	09:45
	odd	Gyumri		even
	07:35	Yerevan		19:00
	ARR			DEP
6521	08:44	Karakert*	6521	17:10
6512	09:10	Yeraskh**	6512	16:30

\* Karakert is local train south, no border connection.  
 \*\* Yeraskh is on closed border with Nakhichevan. Karakert & Yeraskh every day.

**From Tbilisi** The Train Station in Tbilisi is located at 43-Navtolughli. Train #675 leaves for Yerevan at 16:15 on odd days of the month. Ask for the "CB" ("SV" in English) class if you want the 2 person compartment. It's a little more expensive, but is worth it for spreading out. They may only have Obshi and Coupe classes. Obshi gives you

open seating, coupe provides compartment for four.

**To Tbilisi** Train # 675 leaves Yerevan for Tbilisi at 19:00 on even days of the month. They have four classes to Tbilisi (obshi, plas, coupe and SV), one class from Tbilisi to Batumi (coupe). The train stops at the border town of Bagratashen-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 Gnatsk/Elektrichka 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 gnatsk/elektrichka from Yerevan to Giumri, catch a bus, minivan or hired car to Batumi. Buses from Giumri to Batumi are available in front of the yerkatgitzai kaiyeran (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 yerkatgitzai kairan and avtokayan. They cost about \$150-200 per car load.

**TRAIN YEREVAN-TBILISI-BATUMI PRICES**

Note prices change each month.

STATION	obshi	plas	coupé	SV
Yerevan				
Masis	615	921	1589	3249
Echmiadzin	650	959	1650	3382
Armavir	703	1044	1784	3650
Aragats	813	1216	2049	4192
Giumri	1020	1516	2528	5131
Spitak	1221	1819	2988	6070
Vanadzor	1221	1809	2988	6070
Shaghchi	1221	1809	2988	6070
Kobehr	1221	1809	2988	6070
Toumanian	1221	1809	2988	6070
Sanahin	1376	2032	3329	6749
Alaverdi	1376	2032	3329	6749
Airum	1376	2032	3329	6749
Sadakhlo	1866	2516	4023	8111
Tbilisi	2119	2859	4574	9219
Mitkheta			5000*	
Kacpi			5500*	
Gori			6000*	
Khashuri			6500*	
Kharagouli			7000*	
Zastafoni			7500*	
Kioni			8000*	
Samiredla			8500*	
Ochamelizi			9000*	
Batumi			10,000*	

\* 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: 3 ½ hours  
 Yerevan to Vanadzor: 8 ½ hours  
 Yerevan to Airum: 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 (ՏՈՍՍ / 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).

**Left Luggage** Marked by a Russian Kamera Khranenia (КАМЕРА ХРАНЕНИЯ), the left luggage office is located on the train side of the building, left as you exit the main rotunda. They have both lockers and a left luggage room. 100 AMD per day for lockers, 150 AMD per day for larger items.

**Other** On the second floor is a waiting area for parents with small children. There is also an emergency aid office located next to the left luggage.



**IN AND OUT BY BUS, MINIVAN ▲**

Buses and minivans connect Yerevan with Tbilisi, Batumi, Istanbul, Antalya, Moscow and Tehran. Some are charter, others work by schedule. Once a land of two bus stations (Central and Northern), Yerevan has designated a number of street sides and parking lots as "stations", somewhat complicating arrival (you might get dropped off in

the middle of a residential area). Still, with prices as low as these, you can always splurge on a 1000 AMD taxi ride to your final destination.

**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 ЭКСПРЕСС or in Armenian as ԵՔՍՊՐԵՍ), 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 bumps 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, Sadakhlo 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

TO	DAYS	DEP	ARR	Cost	NOTES
Yerevan - Istanbul	-----S	21:00	41 Hrs.	\$50 + \$10 at border	
Istanbul - Yerevan	-----S	16:00	41 Hrs.		
Yerevan - Tbilisi	Daily	08:00, 10:00	15:00, 17:00	3300	
Tbilisi - Yerevan	Daily	08:00, 10:00	15:00, 17:00	\$10	
Yerevan - Tbilisi	Daily	08:00, 09:00, 10:00, 11:00	8 hours	6000	minivan
Batumi - Yerevan	-MT-T-S	07:00	19:00	12,000	minivan
Yerevan - Batumi	-MT-T-S	07:00	19:00	\$35	
Bogdanovka Akhalkalake Akhaltsike	Daily	08:00, 08:00, 08:30	5 hrs, 6 hrs, 8 hrs	3500, 4000, 5000	minivan
Vale (Turkish border, to Ardana)	Daily	08:00	9 hrs	5000	minivan
Stepanakert*	Daily	08:00, 09:00	16:00, 17:00	4000	
Meghri**	----T-S	09:00	21:00	5500	

\* Artsakh (Nagorno Karabakh)  
\*\* Border with Iran

Times and prices subject to sudden changes. Inquire well before departure to be sure.

The **Central Yerevan Avtokayan (Bus Station)** on Admiral Isahaakov 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 Hakhtanaki Karmurj (Victory Bridge) to the cognac factory, then left on Admiral Isahaakov 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 (ՏՈՍՍԱՐԿՂ: Toms)** The Tomsarkegh (ՏՈՍՍԱՐԿՂ: 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 door 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 Khranenia (КАМЕРА ХРАНЕНИЯ), 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, Singru 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 Sputnik Travel Agency building and is an independent agent (tel. 53-75-04). The bus leaves on Sundays. Tickets cost \$150, plus a valid visa to Greece.

The Athens bus also departs from **Vanadzor**. To arrange tickets from there, contact Aerostar Tour Office in Vanadzor (71/2 Tigran Mets (around corner of Garegin Nzhdeh), tel. 22-790 (Lusine), 21-467). Talk to Lusine to arrange tickets, forget her boss, who can be very rude. Fare is \$30-45 plus \$15 for border crossing. Two daily buses connect Yerevan with Vanadzor, one at 14:00 from the Northern Bus Station and the other at 16:00 from Kilikia Central Bus Station.

### ISTANBUL BUS

Istanbul is bus only. Cheap (\$60) and scenic, the bus between Istanbul and Yerevan take about 41 hours, with 6 stops on the way: Sansun, Riseh, Trabson, Batumi, Tbilisi, Sadakhlo (reverse on the return trip). The buses are large, but it is a 41 hour bus ride. Note you may have to pay a \$15 "entry fee" at border (USA citizens do not need a Georgian visa) and a visa at the Armenian border (\$30 for 21 day tourist visa, available at border).

#### From Istanbul

Buy tickets and get information from Emniyet (Auto Garage) Oto Gari No. 5/A Askarai District or from Emniyet Keskibirler Turizm, Kucuk Langa Cad. Emniyet, tel. (0212) 632-7874, (0212) 32 8461, mob: (0535) 716-2384, (0535) 770-8272, email: [rayaistanbul@hotmail.com](mailto:rayaistanbul@hotmail.com). Buses depart from the Emniyet Oto Gari No.5/A Aksarai District.

ETD: Fridays or Saturday. Check on time and date; it can change with little notice. The trip is about 41 hours, with 6 stops, at Istanbul, Samsun, Riseh, Trabson, Batumi, Tbilisi, Sadakhlo, Yerevan (stops give time to eat at local cafe). You can bring food on the bus with you. The bus arrives around 14:00.

The cost is comparable to the Yerevan to Istanbul fare (\$70 + \$15 at border). US citizens do not need a transit visa.

#### From Yerevan

Tickets: Kilikia Central Bus Station, tel. 54-07-56. Other locations: Giumri: (374-41 ) 2-23-11, 4-09-32, Vanadzor: (374-51) 4-52-75, 4-25-32, Trabezond: (0462) 325-55-22

The bus leaves from Kilikia Central Bus Station (Admiral Isahaakov pta. near the Cognac factory) Saturdays at 13:00 (Dep. & Arrival Information at the station: 54-07-56). Check on time and date beforehand, it can change with little notice. The trip is about 41 hours, with 6 stops, at Istanbul, Samsun, Riseh, Trabezond, Batumi, Tbilisi, Sadakhlo, Yerevan (stops give time to eat at local cafe). You can bring food on the bus with you. The bus arrives Istanbul Monday approx. 15.00.

The cost is \$70 (+ perhaps \$15 at border). US citizens do not need a transit visa for Georgia. Visa for Turkey at the border (\$30).

**Other** Purchase your ticket at least 3 days before scheduled departure. The agent will confirm time then. There may be an extra charge for excess or oversize luggage (people bring lots of stuff on board with them). 1 plus carryon is considered normal. Emniyet can arrange hotel in Istanbul with advance notice.

**Alternate Bus to Istanbul, Antalia, 16** Isahaakov, 21/8 Koriun, tel. 56-10-60, 58-10-17, 091-41-40-89, 093-41-40-89. Price gouging at \$140 O/W to Istanbul, \$200 to Antalia. Cagey about when it leaves and what to expect on board.

### TBILISI, BATUMI BUS

Buses and Minivans travel to Tbilisi and Batumi. There are two scheduled buses leaving everyday from the Central 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 ticket and spread out. Arrange tickets at the 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.

#### TEHRAN BUS

Tehran is by bus only. The Tehran/Tabriz bus arrives and leaves from the Kilikia 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 Erebuni (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 Erebuni 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](mailto:info@tatev.com), URL: [www.tatev.com](http://www.tatev.com) also handles the tickets to and from Tehran.

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-Spitak-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 Tsovagiugh (16 km), turning N 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-Bavra route follows the (A306/M1) highway 126 km to Giumri, continuing N for another 73 km to the border crossing at Bavra, passing Akhalkalak and Akhaltsikhe en route to the Tbilisi-Batumi Highway. It is 92 km from the Bavra border to Akhalsikhe (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.

In Tbilisi you can also contact **Levon Travel**, which has offices in Tbilisi, Yerevan and Los Angeles. Tbilisi offices are at 20 Chavchavadze Av, Tbilisi, tel. (995 32) 250010, Fax: (995 32) 232399; and LT Global Services, 1 Khidi St, tel. (995 32) 920023, Fax: (995 32) 922868. Car services are provided.

**Getting Out by Taxi, Car** For road details, see the first part of this section. Call taxis in Yerevan will provide cars and drivers to points in Armenia, the border and some for Tbilisi. The rate is 100 AMD per km or as negotiated. Taxi services are all over town, their reputation can change from season to season (or month to month). This year we had good luck with Taxi Royal (63-00-00), Apollo (51-88-77, 51-88-66), Golf (55-88-07).

Car services are also provided by **Levon Travel** (10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, [www.levontravel.com](http://www.levontravel.com)), **Hyur Services** (50

Nalbandian p, tel. 56-04-95, 52-98-08, 52-24-14, email: [contact@hyurservice.com](mailto:contact@hyurservice.com), URL: [www.hyurservice.com](http://www.hyurservice.com), and **Sidon Travel** (19 Sayat-Nova pta, Ani Plaza Hotel Lobby, tel. 52-29-67, 54-31-27, email: [sidon@arminco.com](mailto:sidon@arminco.com), URL: [www.sidontravel.com](http://www.sidontravel.com)) and **Sabera Tours** (32-38 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 52-55-55, email: [info@saberatours.am](mailto:info@saberatours.am), [incoming@saberatours.am](mailto:incoming@saberatours.am), URL: [www.saberatours.am](http://www.saberatours.am)) among others.

#### 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. 13).



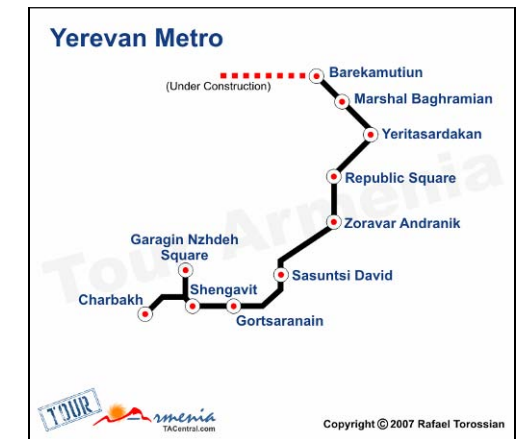
#### GETTING AROUND BY METRO ▲

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 Berekamutiun (Ajapniak District), but nothing yet.

The existing line connects the far south with Shengavit and center, running from Charbakh (a factory area) with busy Berekamutiun Square. The most likely metro stops for visitors are Train Station (David Sasuntsi), Republic Square (Hanrapetutian H'raparak), Ring Park (Zoravar Andranik/Kino Rossiya, Yeridasardakan), Marshal Baghramian (National Assembly, American University of Armenia) and Berekamutiun.

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.



#### Center Metro Stations and nearby sites: South to North:

**David Sasuntsi:** Train Station, Tigran Mets pta, Areg Hotel. Buses to Abovian, Ararat, Arevshat, Artashat, Dvin, Khor-Virap, Norashen, Sovetashen, Vedi, Yeraskh. Minivans to Ararat, Artashat, Khor-Virap, Nor-Hachn/Argel, Sovetashen, Urtsadzor.

**Zoravar Andranik:** Tigran Mets pta, Kino Rossiya, Lusavorich Cathedral, Ring park 6th block, Republic Square, Agatangeghos p, Circus, Grigor Lusavorich pta, Tashir, Sil Plaza Hotel. Buses to . Minivans to Alaverdi, Artashat, Artik, Bagratashen, Dvin, Goris, Giumri, Kakhtsrashen (Ararat), Kapan, Masis, Norashen, Sissian, Spitak, Vanadzor, Vedi.

**Hanrapetutian H'raparak:** Republic Square, State History Museum, National gallery, Near East Museum, Literature & Art Museum, Central Post Office, Marriott Hotel, Senior Hotel, Congress Hotel, English Park, Vernissage, Europe Hotel, Nalbandian p, Armenia Info Tourism Office, Sakharov Square, Abovian p, Aviatrans Hotel, Crown Hotel, Geologic Museum, Hotel Yerevan, Astafian Hotel, Kino Moscow, Russian Stanislavski Theatre.

**Yeridasardakan:** Ring Park 2nd Block, Terian p, Abovian p, Derenik Demirchian Museum, Dramatic Theatre, Opera Square, Chamber Hall. Buses to Sevan (Terian and Isahakian).

**Marshal Baghramian:** Baghramian pta, Lover's park, Musical Theatre, National Assembly, Presidential Office, British Embassy, American University of Armenia, "BBQ Street" (Proshian p.), Hotel Bass, Greek Embassy.

**Barekamutiun:** Barekamutiun Square, Kochar p, Kievian p, Kassian/Komitas pta, Arabkir District, Hayastan Market, Spa and Swimming Pool, Electronic, photo, souvenir and boutique shops.

**Other**

**Garegin Nzhdeh:** Garegin 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.



**BUS**

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](http://www.armeniainfo.am)).

Route #1: TRAIN STATION/BAREKAMUTIUN: Train Station - Republic Square - Opera - Baghramian pta. - Barekamutiun (metro).

Route #2: KANAKER/TRAIN STATION: Kanaker (churches) - Azatutian pta. (Monument, Haghtanak Park) - Abovian p. - Ring Park - Tigran Mets pta. (Kino Rossiya, Tashir, Cathedral, Ring Park) - Train Station.

Route #4: ARINJ/BAREKAMUTIUN: Arinj Village - Sevan Hwy. - Komitas pta. (Arabkir) - Barekamutiun Metro.

Route #5: MASIV/RING PARK: Masiv (Gai pta.) - Miasnikian pta. (Water World, Zoo) - Abovian p. - Yeridasardakan Metro (Ring Park).

Route #8: EREBUNI/ABOVIAN: Erebuni Museum - Train Station - Tigran Mets pta. - Ring park - Abovian Square.

Route #11: TSITSERNAKABERD/PANTHEON: Tsitsernakaberd - Kievian p.- Barekamutiun - Marshal Baghramian pta.- Proshian (BBQ Street) - Paronian (Parajanov, woodworking museums) - Grigor Lusavorich p. (French, Italian, Russian Embassies, English Park) - Circus - Pantheon.

Route #14: MONUMENT/TRAIN STATION: Monument, Haghtanak Park - Abovian p. - Ring Park - Tigran Mets pta. (Tashir, Kino Rossiya, Cathedral) - Train Station.

Route #15: PANTHEON/ABOVIAN: Pantheon - Circus - Ring Park - Nalbandian p. - Abovian Square.

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. - Yeridasardakan Metro (Ring park).

Route #23: BANGLADESH/ABOVIAN: Bangladesh (Yerablur Military Park) - Isahaakov pta. (Bus Station, American Embassy) - Mashtots pta. - Ring park - Abovian Square.

Route #24: MONUMENT/PANTHEON: Monument/Haghtanak 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 p. (Natural History Museum, Tashir, Cathedral, Kino Rossiya, Ring Park) - Republic Square - Amirian p. - Mashtots pta. (Shuka, Blue Mosque, S. Sargis) - Cognac Factory - Tsitsernakaberd (back end).

Route #32: TIGRAN METS/BAREKAMUTIUN: Tigran Mets p. (Tashir, Cathedral, Kino Rossiya, Ring Park) - Circus - Grigor Lusavorich p. (French, Italian, Russian Embassies, English Park) - Woodworking/Parajanov Museums (Paronian p.) - "BBQ Street" (Proshian p.) - Marshal Baghramian pta. - Barekamutiun Metro.

Route #33: TSITSERNAKABERD/TIGRAN METS: Tsitsernakaberd (back end) - Mashtots pta. (Blue Mosque, Shuka) - Amirian p. - Republic Square - Tigran Mets p (Kino Rossiya, Cathedral, Tashir, Ring Park).

Route #34: TSITSERNAKABERD/VERNISSAGE: Tsitsernakaberd (Halabian p.) - Baghramian Metro - Mashtots pta. (Opera) - Matenadaran - Outer Ring - Ring Park - Vartan Mamikonian/Vernissage.

Route #35: TSITSERNAKABERD/ABOVIAN: Tsitsernakaberd - Marshal Baghramian pta. - Opera - Mashtots pta. - Matenadaran - Outer Ring - Abovian Square.

Route #38: PANTHEON/ABOVIAN: Pantheon - Circus - Kino Rossiya - Lower and Upper Ring Park Abovian Square.

Route #40: TSITSERNAKABERD/ABOVIAN: Tsitsernakaberd - Marshal Baghramian pta. - Opera - Mashtots pta. - Matenadaran - Outer Ring - Abovian Square.

Route #41: AVAN TO VERNISSAGE: Avan/Arinj - Water World/Zoo - Outer Ring (Koriun/Sayat Nova pts.) Ring Park - Vartan Mamikonian/Vernissage.

Route #43: J'RVESH/RING PARK : J'rvesh Village - Masiv (Gai pta.) - Komitas pta. (Arabkir) - Marshal Baghramian pta. - Opera - Hotel Ani (Sayat Nova pta.) - Ring Park.

Route #45: BAREKAMUTIUN/VERNISSAGE: Barekamutiun Metro - Marshal Baghramian Ave. - Opera - Mashtots pta.- Matenadaran - Outer Ring - Ring park - Vartan Mamikonian/Vernissage.

Route #46: MASIV/J'RVESH: Yeridasardakan Metro - Abovian p.- Zoo, Water World (Miasnikian p.) - Masiv (Gai pta.) - J'rvesh Village.

Route #48: NORK: Ring Park (Nalbandian/Isahakian corner) - Abovian p.- Outer Ring (Koriun p.) - Nork (Armenakian p.).

Route # 50: AIRPORT: Opera - Mashtots pta. (Blue Mosque, Shuka) - Cognac Factory - Echmiadzin hwy. - Zvartnots Airport.



**YEREVAN REGION BUSES**

Buses to Yerevan Regions depart from different stations, all but two of which are on the side of a street or in a parking lot. The two main stations are Kilikia Central Bus Station (Isahaakov/Echmiadzin Hwy) and Northern Bus Station at the beginning of the Sevan Highway. A partial list (full list at [www.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am)):

**KILIKIA STATION REGIONAL BUS LINES**

Destination	Days	Hours	Price
Alaverdi	Daily	10:00 am	1000 AMD
Artik	Daily	4:00 pm	600 AMD
Giumri	Daily	12:30 pm, 4:30 pm	700 AMD
Maralik	Daily	2:00 pm, 3:30 pm	600 AMD
Noyemberian	Daily	11:30 am	1500 AMD
Vanadzor	Daily	4:00 pm	500 AMD
Vardenis	Daily	3:00 pm	1000 AMD
Abovian	Daily	10:15 -5:15 (Every 20 min)	150 AMD
Abovian	Daily	9-10 (Every 15 minutes)	150 AMD

Alaverdi	Daily	10:00 am	800 AMD
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**NORTHERN STATION REGIONAL BUS LINES**

Destination	Days	Hours	Price
Aghberk (Shorzha)	Daily	12:00 pm	800 AMD
Dzoravank	Daily	11:00 am	1000 AMD
Gavar	Daily	2:15 pm, 3:45 pm	800 AMD
Martakert	Daily	8:30 am	800 AMD
Chambarak	Daily	2:00 pm	850 AMD
Vanadzor	Daily	2:00 pm	700 AMD

**TRAIN STATION REGIONAL BUS LINES**

Destination	Days	Hours	Price
Abovian	Daily	9-10 (Every 15 min)	150 AMD
Ararat	Daily	7:50-7:30 (Every 50 min)	350 AMD
Arevshat	Daily	9:00 am, 3:00 pm	300 AMD
Artashat	Daily	7:50-7:30 (Every 30 min)	200 AMD
Khor-Virap	Daily	9:00 am, 14:30 pm, 5:10 pm	350 AMD
Norashen	Daily	6:30-6 (Every 3 hrs)	300 AMD
Sovetashen	Daily	8:30-11 (Every 10 min)	100 AMD
Vedi	Daily	8:20-6 (Every 1 hr)	350 AMD

**Other Regional Bus Lines**

*Echmiadzin* bus is caught on the side of Sarian street at the Mashtots pta intersection. Buses operate 7:20-10, every 20 minutes, 220 AMD.

*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 *Dilijan* buses are caught in front of the Dramatic theatre on Isahakian p (Ring Park 1st block). Dilijan bus is at 1 p.m., 800 AMD; Sevan at 10:30 a.m. & 2 p.m., 400 AMD.

**Kotaiik 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 pta between Nersissian & Aharonian pts. 9-6, 300 AMD.

**Aragatsotn Region:**

*Biurakan* bus is caught at Shahumian Square; 10:30, 1:00, 3:50, 7:50, 350 AMD.

*Ashtarak, Dzorap (Tegher), Erzntka, Kakavadzor, Karin, Sasunuk, Karpi, Kosh (Kakavadzor), Ohanavan (Hovhanavank), Parpi, and Sasunik* buses are caught on the side of Paronian Street, west of Mashtots pta. below the Shuka. Various times and prices. See [www.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am).

**Arnavir Region:**

*Arnavir (Hoktemberian), Markara (Turkish border) & Norakert* buses are caught at the same place. *Arnavir* buses are at 8:30, 1:10, 5:00, 350 AMD. *Markara* buses leave 8:10, 1:00, 4:45, 350 AMD. *Norakert* buses operate 9-5, 100 AMD.


**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.


**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 #2: ARABKIR/VERNISSAGE:** Komitas pta. (Arabkir) – Barekamutiun Metro - Baghramian pta. – Place de France/Opera - Matenadaran – Outer Ring – Ring Park – Vartan Mamikonian/Vernissage.

**Route #6: EREBUNI/ENGLISH PARK:** Erebuni – Tashir/Kino Rossiya (Ring Park) - Republic Square – Sakharov Square - Tumanian St. - Opera – Mashtots Ave. – English Park.

**Route #7: TRAIN STATION/ABOVIAN:** Train Station – Tigran Mets pta 9 Kino Rossiya – Ring Park – Tumanian/Opera – Mashtots pta. – Ring Park – Abovian.

**Route #8: KANAKER/SHENGAVIT:** Kanaker – Arabkir – Barekamutiun metro – Baghramian pta – “BBQ Street” (Proshian) – Parajanov/Woodworking Museums (Paronian) – Grigor Lusavorich (Russian, French, Italian Embassies, Sundukian Theatre) – Circus – Pantheon – Garegin Nzhdeh/Shengavit.

**Route #10: SHENGAVIT/MONUMENT:** Garegin Nzhdeh p. – Pantheon - Circus - Grigor Lusavorich p. - Mashtots pta (Blue Mosque, Shuka, Charents Museum, Opera, Artist Vernissage) - Abovian p. – Monument.

**Route #11: EREBUNI/COGNAC FACTORY:** Erebuni Museum – Train Station – Kino Rossiya - Republic Square - Mashtots pta. - Haghtanak Bridge.

**Route #14, 95: TIGRAN METS/MONUMENT:** Natural History Museum – Kino Rossiya/Ring park/Cathedral – Ring Park - Abovian St. – Monument/Haghtanak Park.

**Route #15: J'RVESH/CENTRAL BUS STATION:** J'rvesh – Masiv (Gai pta.) – Water World/Zoo - Abovian Square - Republic Square – English Park - Admiral Isahaakov pta. -Central Bus Station.

**Route #17: ZEITUN/SHENGAVIT:** Zeitun – Komitas (Arabkir) – Barekamutiun – Baghramian pta. – Opera – Ring Park – Kino Rossiya – Garegin Nzhdeh/Shengavit.

**Route #18, 84: TRAIN STATION / TSITSERNAKABERD:** Train Station – Kino Rossiya - Republic Square –Sakharov Square – Outer Ring – Matenadaran - Mashtots pta. - Baghramian pta. – Barekamutiun Metro - Kievian St. - Tsitsernakaberd.

**Route #19: VARDAVAR/MONUMENT :** Vardavar Park – Train Station – Kino Rossiya – Ring Park - Abovian p. – Monument.

**Route #20: AVAN/EREBUNI AIRPORT:** Avan (Churches) – Water World/Zoo – Abovian Square – Ring Park – Kino Rossiya – Circus – Garegin Nzhdeh – Erebuni Airport.

**Route #21: TSITSERNAKABERD/ABOVIAN SQUARE:** Tsitsernakaberd – Barekamutiun – Baghramian pta. – Place de France – Opera – Ring Park – Abovian Square.

**Route #23: TRAIN STATION/BUS STATION:** Train Station – Kino Rossiya – Circus – English Park – Mashtots pta. – Cognac Factory – Bus Station.

**Route #24: KANAKER/RING PARK:** Kanaker – Komitas pta (Arabkir) – Barekamutiun Metro – Baghramian pta. – Place de France/Opera – Sayat Nova pta. – Ring Park.

**Route #27: TSITSERNAKABERD/VERNISSAGE:** Tsitsernakaberd – Orbeli – Baghramian pta – Place de France/Opera – Mashtots pta – Matenadaran – Outer Ring – Ring Park – Vartan Mamikonian/Vernissage.

**Route #30: BAREKAMUTIUN/TASHIR:** Barekamutiun – Baghramian pta. – Place de France/Opera – Matenadaran – Nalbandian p. – Ring Park – Tashir Mall.

**Route #33: MONUMENT/YERIDASARDAKAN:** Monument – Abovian p. – Ring Park – Yeridasardakan Metro.

**Route #36, 76: BAREKAMUTIUN/EREBUNI:** Barekamutiun – Baghramian pta. – Mashtots pta. – Republic Square – Kino Rossiya – Train Station - Erebuni p.

**Route #38:** MONUMENT/REPUBLIC SQUARE: Monument - Terian p. - Sayat Nova pta. - Mashtots pta. - Republic Square.

**Route #39:** PANTHEON/KOMITAS: Pantheon – Circus – Grigor Lusavorich (Italian, French, Russian Embassies, English Park, Sundukian Theatre) – Parajanov & Woodworking Museums (Paronian) – “BBQ Street” (Proshian) – Baghramian – Berekamutiun – Komitas pta. (Arabkir).

**Route #43, 72, 109:** MONUMENT/EREBUNI AIRPORT: Monument – Abovian p. – Ring Park – Kino Rossiya – Natural History Museum – Train Station – Erebuni Airport.

**Route #44:** TRAIN STATION/ABOVIAN SQUARE: Train Station – Kino Rossiya - Republic Square - Mashtots pta. – Ring Park - Abovian Circle.

**Route #46:** TSITSERNAKABERD/LUSAVORICH/VERNISSAGE: Tsitsernakaberd – Berekamutiun – Baghramian pta – Mashtots pta. – Grigor Lusavorich – Circus – Ring Park – Vartan Mamikonian/Vernissage.

**Route #50, 74:** TSITSERNAKABERD/NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM: Tsitsernakaberd (back side) – Cognac Factory - Haghtanak Bridge - Mashtots pta. (Blue Mosque, Shuka, Charents Museum) - Opera (Tumanian side) – Ring Park – Kino Rossiya – Natural History Museum.

**Route #54, 81:** AVAN/PANTHEON: Avan/Arinj - Botanical Garden – Water World/Zoo – Abovian p. – Ring Park – Place de France/Opera – Sarian p. – Republic Square – Kino Rossiya – Circus – Pantheon.

**Route #55:** MASIV/RING PARK: Masiv (Gai pta.) – Water World/Zoo – Abovian p. – Ring Park/Yeridasardakan.

**Route #59, 91:** AVAN/CIRCUS: Avan – Water World/Zoo - Abovian p. – Place de France/Opera - Mashtots pta. – English park (Khorenatsi) - Grigor Lusavorich pta. - Circus.

**Route #61:** MASIV/BAREKAMUTIUN: Masiv (Gai pts.) – Water World/Zoo – Outer Ring – Matenadaran – Mashtots pta. – Baghramian pta. – Berekamutiun Metro.

**Route #64:** TSITSERNAKABERD/YEREVAN STATE UNIVERSITY: Tsitsernakaberd – Berekamutiun Metro – Baghramian pta. – “BBQ Street” (Proshian) – Parajanov/Woodworking Museums (Paronian) – Grigor Lusavorich (Russian, Italian, French Embassies, English park, Sundukian

Theatre) – Circus – Kino Rossiya – Ring Park – Outer Ring – Yerevan State University.

**Route #65:** PANTHEON/ABOVIAN SQUARE: Pantheon – Circus – Kino Rossiya – Ring Park – Outer Ring – Abovian Square.

**Route #67, 70:** BANGLADESH/TRAIN STATION: Sebastia p. – Echmiadzin Hwy/Isahaakov p. (American Embassy, Bus Station) – Cognac Factory - Haghtanak Bridge – Mashtots pta. (Blue Mosque, Shuka) – Republic Square – Kino Rossiya Tashir – Train Station.

**Route #68:** EREBUNI MUSEUM/BUS STATION: Erebuni p. – Train Station – Kino Rossiya - Republic Square - Mashtots pta. – Haghtanak Bridge – Cognac Factory - Isahaakov pta. - Central Bus Station.

**Route #69:** MASIV/YERIDASARDAKAN: Masiv (Gai pta.) – Water World/Zoo – Abovian p. – Yeridasardakan Metro/Ring Park.

**Route #73:** EREBUNI MUSEUM/MASIV: Erebuni p. – Train Station – Kino Rossiya - Republic Square - Sakharov Square – Ring Park - Abovian p. - Water World/Zoo – Masiv (Gai pta.).

**Route #75:** PANTHEON/BANGLADESH: Pantheon – Train Station – Kino Rossiya - Republic Square - Mashtots pta. – Cognac Factory - Isahaakov pta. Bus Station – American Embassy – Sebastia p.

**Route #77:** BANGLADESH/MASHTOTS/ABOVIAN: Sebastia p. - Isahaakov pta. – American Embassy – Central Bus Station - Mashtots pta. - Matenadaran – Outer Ring - Abovian Square.

**Route #86:** EREBUNI MUSEUM/AVAN: Erebuni p. – Train Station – Kino Rossiya - Republic Square - Mashtots pta. – Place de France/Opera - Baghramian pta. – Berekamutiun Metro - Komitas pta. (Arabkir).

**Route #88, 117:** TSITSERNAKABERD/TASHIR: Tsitsernakaberd – Berekamutiun Metro – Baghramian pta. – Place de France/Opera – Ring Park – Tashir Mall.

**Route #93:** ABOVIAN/RING PARK/ABOVIAN: Abovian Square - Abovian p. – Ring Park – Kino Rossiya - Republic Square – Mashtots pta. – Place de France/Opera – Baghramian pta. – Berekamutiun Metro – Komitas pta. – Monument/Haghtanak Park – Abovian Square.

**Route #94:** HAGHTANAK BRIDGE/KOMITAS: Haghtanak Bridge - Mashtots pta. (Blue Mosque, Shuka, Charents Museum) – Place de France/Opera - Baghramian pta. – Berekamutiun Metro - Komitas pta (Arabkir).

**Route #96:** BAREKAMUTIUN/RING PARK: - Berekamutiun - Baghramian pta. – Place de France/Opera – Mashtots pta. – Khorenatsi – English Park – Republic Square – Kino Rossiya – Ring Park.

**Route #98:** PANTHEON/MONUMENT: Pantheon – Circus – Kino Rossiya – Ring park – Vernissage – Ring Park – Outer Ring – Abovian p. – Monument/Haghtanak Park.

**Route #99:** MAYOR'S OFFICE/MONUMENT: Khorhrdaran p. - Grigor Lusavorich p. (French, Italian Embassy, Sundukian Theatre) – Circus – Kino Rossiya – Ring Park – Abovian p. – Monument.

**Route #100:** ARINJ/YERABLUR: Arinj Village – Sevan Hwy. - Kanakertsi p. – Komitas pta. – Berekamutiun Metro - Baghramian pta. – Place de France/Opera - Mashtots pta. (Charents Museum, Shuka, Blue Mosque) – Haghtanak Bridge – Isahaakov/Echmiadzin Hwy – Central Bus Station - American Embassy - Sebastia p. – Yerablur.

**Route #102:** ARINJ/MASHTOTS/HRAZDAN STADIUM: Arinj Sevan Hwy. – Water World/Zoo – Koriun p. – Matenadaran – Mashtots pta. – Place de France/Opera – Mashtots pta. – Haghtanak Bridge – Hrazdan Stadium/Gorge.

**Route #106:** PTGHNI/TRAIN STATION: Ptghni Village - Northern Bus Station – Monument - Abovian p. – Outer Ring – Ring Park – Tashir Mall – Train Station.

**Route #107:** BAREKAMUTIUN/ZVARTNOTS AIRPORT: Berekamutiun Metro - Kievian p. - Leningradian p. – Bangladesh (Sebastia p.) - Isahaakov pta. -Echmiadzin Hwy - Zvartnots Airport.

**Route #108:** ABOVIAN SQUARE/TRAIN STATION/ZVARTNOTS AIRPORT: Abovian Square – Ring Park – Kino Rossiya – Train Station - Garegin Nzhdeh - Echmiadzin Hwy. - Zvartnots Airport.

**Route #113:** BANGLADESH/MONUMENT: Sebastia p. – Isahaakov pta. (American Embassy, Bus Station) – Haghtanak Bridge – Mashtots pta (Blue Mosque, Shuka, Charents Museum) – Place de France/Opera – Ring Park – Abovian p. – Monument.

**Route #118:** MASIV/MASHTOTS/CIRCUS: Masiv (Gai pta.) – Monument – Terian p. – Place de France/Opera – Mashtots pta. – Khorenatsi (English Park) – Circus.

**Route #124:** MONUMENT/TRAIN STATION: Monument - Abovian p. – Outer Ring – Ring Park – Kino Rossiya - Train Station.

**Route #125:** TSITSERNAKABERD/RING PARK/PETAK: 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.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am)):

#### CENTRAL BUS STATION REGIONAL MINIVANS

Destination	Days	Hours	Price
Jermuk	Daily	10:00 am, 3:00 pm	1800 AMD
Agarak	Daily	8:00 am	600 AMD
Armavir	Daily	7:30 -9:30 (every 15 min)	400 AMD
Artik	Daily	3:00 pm, 4:00 pm	1000 AMD
Bagratashen (Vanadzor, Noyemberian)	Daily	11:30 am	2000 AMD
Biureghavan	Daily	From 9:00-7:30 (every 20 min)	200 AMD
Goris	Daily	8:50 am, 3:00 pm, 5:00 pm	2500 AMD
Kapan	Daily	8:30 am	3500 AMD



Noyemberian	Daily	9:30 am, 2:30 pm, 3:30 pm, 4:00 pm	2000 AMD
Sissian	Daily	8:30 am - 2:30 pm	2000 AMD

**NORTHERN BUS STATION REGIONAL MINIVANS**

Destination	Days	Hours	Price
Berd	Daily	9:00 am	3000 AMD
Dilijan/Ijevan	Daily	From 9-6	1500 AMD
Gavar	Daily	9:30am, 10:30 am, 12:00 pm, 1:30 pm, 3:30 pm, 4:30 pm	800 AMD
Martuni	Daily	10:00 am, 11:00 am, 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm, 1:45 pm, 2:30 pm, 3:15 pm, 4:00 pm	1200 AMD
Sarukhan	Daily	10:00 am, 12:30 pm	
Chambarak	Daily	9:30 am, 10:30 am, 4:00 pm	1500 AMD
Vardenik	Daily	9:30 am	1500 AMD
Vardenis	Daily	8:45 am, 10:30 am, 11:30a m, 12:30 pm	1500 AMD

**KINO ROSSIYA STATION REGIONAL MINIVANS**

Destination	Days	Hours	Price
Alaverdi	Daily	9:00 am, 2:00 pm, 3:00 pm, 4:00 pm	1500 AMD
Artik	Daily	11-6	1000 AMD
Bagratashen	Daily	8:00 am, 4:00 pm	2500 AMD
Goris	Daily	7:30-3	2500 AMD
Gjumri	Daily	7:30-8:30 (every 20 min)	1200 AMD
Kapan	Daily	7:30-12	2800 AMD
Kapan	Daily	7:30-12	2800 AMD
Sissian	Daily	9:00 am	2000 AMD
Vanadzor	Daily	7:30-8 (every 20 min)	1200 AMD

**Other Regional Minivan Lines**

*Echmiadzin* minivan is caught on the side of Sarian street at the Mashtots pta intersection. Buses operate 7:30-10, every 10 minutes, 250 AMD.

*Garni* minivan is caught in Masiv, on the side of Gai Street, near the Mercedes Dealership. 10-9:30, every 50 minutes, 250 AMD. Taxis to Geghard are at the bus stop in Garni.

*Dilijan/Ijevan* minivans are caught at the Northern Bus Station. Minivans run from 9-6, once an hour, 1500 AMD; Sevan at 10:30 a.m. & 2 p.m., 400 AMD.

*Sevan* minivans are caught in front of the Dramatic Theatre on Isahakian pts (Ring Park), Minivans run from 9:10-7, every 40 minutes, 500 AMD.

**Kotaiik Region:**

*Charentsavan* minivan is caught at Abovian Square. Minivans operate between 9:45-7, various times, 350 AMD.

*Hrazdan* minivan is caught at the Raikom Station, Azatutian pta between Nersissian & Aharonian pts. 9-6, 400 AMD.

**Aragatsotn Region:**

*Agarak (Ashtarak)*, *Ashtarak*, *Dzorap (Tegher)*, *Karin*, *Ohanavan (Hovhanavank)*, *Parpi*, *Ujan/Kosh*, *Voskehat* and *Voskevaz (Ashtarak)* buses are caught on the side of Paronian Street, west of Mashtots pta. below the Shuka. Various times and prices. See [www.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am).

**Ararat Region:**

*Artashat*, *Dvin*, *Masis*, *Norashen*, *Kakhtsrashen (Ararat)* & *Vedi* minivans are caught behind Kino Rossiya (Tigran Mets, Khorenatsi), from 9-8:30 or later, prices between 150-400 AMD. See [www.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am).

*Ararat*, *Nor Hachn/Argel*, *Sovetashen* & *Urtsadzor* minivans are caught at the Train Station. *Ararat* minivans run 8:50-6:30, every 50 min, 400 AMD, *Nor-Hachn/Argel* minivans run 7:15-10, every 10 min, 250 AMD, *Sovetashen* minivans run 8:30-11, every 10 min, 100 AMD, *Urtsadzor* minivans operate 10:30 & 3:40, 400 AMD.

*Artashat* & *Khor Virap* minivans are caught behind Sasuntsi David Square (Train Station). *Artashat* minivans run between 8:50-7:30, every 30 min, 200 AMD. *Khor Virap* at 9:00, 2:00 and 5:00, 350 AMD.

**Lori Region:**

*Spitak* minivans are caught at Kino Rossiya, 9:30-7:30, 1000 AMD.

**Vayots Dzor Region:**

*Vaik* and *Yeghegnadzor* minivans are caught at Ashkhatank Square (intersection of Arshakuniats and Bagratuniats). *Vaik* minivans operate between 8-7, *Yeghegnadzor* minivans between 8:30-7, both 1000 AMD.


**GETTING AROUND BY TAXI, CAR <sup>▲</sup>**
**Taxis**

Street Taxis proliferate throughout the city, more in the center than outside districts, but there are plenty to go around except during rush hour (4-6) and of course when you need them most. Taxis are marked as such by a lit sign placed on the car roof. Those belonging to a taxi firm will have markings on their sides. Hailing a taxi is the same as in other cities; signal approaching cars and any available will come to your side. Tell the driver where you are going before getting in the car; some will not drive to far areas. Except for the center, do not expect drivers to know where everything is in the city. This is a low paying job that recruits newcomers to the city and there is no pre-screening that includes knowing each location in the area. Taxis use meters that start at 600 AMD (a few at 500 AMD) which covers most trips inside the center. A tip, not required, is customary and many now round up to 1000 AMD for trips in the center. 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 dozen to choose from with more opening each year. Everyone has a favorite company they use, which changes depending on how their last one panned out. If you stay in a hotel, they will contact one for you. Otherwise ask around for the flavor of the

month for a service, or try one on your own. Call Taxis advertise on the sides of their cars (with phone numbers) and on walls throughout the city. The rate is now 100 AMD per km, with most charging a minimum of 500 or 600 AMD per trip. When you place the order, tell the call operator where you are located and where you are going. They will ask for a number to call back when the taxi arrives, and will give an approximation of how long before the taxi arrives.

**Taxi services**

*TAXI ROYAL*, tel. 63-00-00

*APOLLO*, tel. 51-88-77, 51-88-66

*GOLF*, tel. 55-88-07

*VOYAGE*, tel. 54-54-05

*ANAHit*, , tel. 8185, 58-50-28

*AMERICAN*, tel. 8606, 54-40-04

*MARQUIZA*, tel. 44-10-44

*VIP*, tel. 49-99-99

*TOUR*, tel. 49-99-94

*CITY CAB*, tel. 8294, 28-79-99

*DREAM TAXI*, tel. 55-00-00

*ELEGANT TAXI*, tel. 54-52-51

*KARUZO*, tel. 58-00-14

*TAXI-TAXI*, tel. 54-54-53

*JUST LIMOUSINE*, tel. 58-81-11

*PEG*, tel. 8555, 8150, 56-56-10

*VALENTINE*, tel. 77-37-77

*VOYAGE*, tel. 8195, 55-58-40

**Hiring a Car**

All travel agents will arrange a car and driver. Finding one that has insurance and seat belts is another question (it can be done, see below). The simplest car and driver arrangements are a Soviet made car (Lada or Niva) with a driver with which 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. One driver Bella found **ABP (Armenian Bureau of Traveling)**, 64/4 Charents p, tel. 093-88-56-42, Hovik) which has a Ford minivan with both insurance and seat belts. Hovik speaks English and is a great traveling companion.



#### Rent a Car

Rent a car is distinct from hiring a car and driver, which I still recommend to all but the most diehard travelers determined to learn directions by getting lost. If you choose this option, note that insurance is a required accessory and you will probably need it. An international driver's license is also required (contact AAA in your home country to obtain one before leaving). Armenian drivers are notoriously ruthless, looking at a red light as the last chance to squeeze by everyone else.

#### With Driver

**ARAM-ANAHIT**, 49 Koriun p, apt. 24, tel. 58-11-12, 58-05-42

**ARCADA TOUR**, 12 Azatutian p, apt. 35, tel. 25-67-93, (091) 40-73-66

**ARARAT TOUR**, 8 Moskovian p, tel. 58 60 30, 51 60 30, Fax: 58-60-30, email: [info@ararat-tour.com](mailto:info@ararat-tour.com), [ararat-tour@mail.ru](mailto:ararat-tour@mail.ru), [president@ararat-tour.com](mailto:president@ararat-tour.com), URL: [www.ararat-tour.com](http://www.ararat-tour.com)

**AZAT GASPARIAN AND FRIENDS**, 2/2 Shrjanaiyin p, Malatia-Sebastia district, tel. 77-71-50, (091) 41-90-21, 36-52-90

**BEAU MONDE SERVICE**, Marriott Hotel, Republic Square, tel. 59-99-64, 59-99-65, (091) 50-27-27, (091) 55-22-58, email: [rentacar@netsys.am](mailto:rentacar@netsys.am), [info@rentcar.am](mailto:info@rentcar.am), URL: [www.rentcar.am](http://www.rentcar.am)

**BUS.AM**, tel. 56-78-78, email: [info@bus.am](mailto:info@bus.am), URL: [www.bus.am](http://www.bus.am), **EET**, 15 Tumanian p, apt. 16, tel. 54-42-06, 54-42-07, 54-42-08, email: [eet@netsys.am](mailto:eet@netsys.am), URL: [www.eet.am](http://www.eet.am)

**FRANS PARK**, 20 Tbilisi hwy, tel. 28-77-33, 28-35-53

**GARNI TOUR**, 14/3 H. KOCHAR p, tel. 26-34-21, 47-67-55, 093-47-67-55, [info@garnitour.com](mailto:info@garnitour.com), URL: [www.garnitour.com](http://www.garnitour.com)

**LEVON TRAVEL**, 10 Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, 52-52-84, 58-31-93

**MENUA TOURS**, 19 Sayat Nova pta, Ani Plaza Hotel, tel. 52-73-72, 58-39-01

**SIDON TRAVEL**, 19 Sayat-Nova pta, Ani Plaza Hotel Lobby, tel. 52-29-67, 54-31-27, email: [sidon@arminco.com](mailto:sidon@arminco.com), URL: [www.sidontravel.com](http://www.sidontravel.com)

#### Without Driver

**ADVENTOUR**, 39 Pushkin p, tel. 53-96-09, Fax: 53-80-17, Cell: 091-42-67-45, email: [adventour@netsys.am](mailto:adventour@netsys.am), URL: [www.armeniaexplorer.com](http://www.armeniaexplorer.com)

**BEAU MONDE SERVICE**, tel. 59-99-64, 59-99-65, (091) 50-27-27, (091) 55-22-58, email: [rentacar@netsys.am](mailto:rentacar@netsys.am), URL: [www.rentcar.am](http://www.rentcar.am)

**BUS.AM**, tel. 56-78-78, email: [info@bus.am](mailto:info@bus.am), URL: [www.bus.am](http://www.bus.am), **EET**, 15 Tumanian p, apt. 16, tel. 54-42-06, 54-42-07, 54-42-08, email: [eet@netsys.am](mailto:eet@netsys.am), URL: [www.eet.am](http://www.eet.am)

**EUROPCAR**, 8 Kievian p, Hotel Golden Tulip, tel. 22-94-95, 26-94-95, 56-44-02, email: [info@europcar.am](mailto:info@europcar.am), URL: [www.europcar.am](http://www.europcar.am); **Hertz**, 7 Abovian p, tel. 54-33-11, 58-48-18, 52-24-34, URL: [www.hertz.am](http://www.hertz.am)

**LEMON RENT A CAR**, 4 Abovian p, tel. 54-55-47, 54-55-48;

**TOURORENT LLC**, 3 Arami p, Sil Plaza 2nd floor, tel. 54-10-25, 091-46-22-12, email: [rent@netsys.am](mailto:rent@netsys.am)



*JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT OF ARMENIA (JAA)*, 4/6 Saryan p, tel. 54-47-94, email: [Anahit.manukyan@ja.org](mailto:Anahit.manukyan@ja.org), URL: [www.jaa.org](http://www.jaa.org).

MEDECINS SAN FRONTIERES FRANCE, Aigedzor p, tel. 27-64-45, email: [msff@arminco.com](mailto:msff@arminco.com).

OSCE, 89 Terian p, tel. 54-58-45, email: [osce@osce.am](mailto:osce@osce.am), URL: [www.osce.org/yerevan](http://www.osce.org/yerevan).

OPEN SOCIETY, 7/1 Tumanian p, 2nd cul-de-sac, tel. 53-38-62, 53-67-58, email: [info@osi.am](mailto:info@osi.am), URL: [www.osi.am](http://www.osi.am).

PEACE CORPS ARMENIA, 33 Charents p, tel. 52-44-50; 55-13-65; 56-25-65, email: [pcarmenia@am.peacecorps.gov](mailto:pcarmenia@am.peacecorps.gov), URL: [www.usa.am/peacecorps.php](http://www.usa.am/peacecorps.php).

UK DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID), British Embassy, 34 Baghramian pta, tel. 26-43-01.

UNITED METHODISTS COMMITTEE ON RELIEF UMCOR, 14, Karapet Ulnetsu p, tel. 24-81-41, email: [ermarkar@umcor.am](mailto:ermarkar@umcor.am), URL: [www.umcor.am](http://www.umcor.am).

UNESCO, Government Building 2, Republic Square, 5th floor, #505, tel. 54-40-41, URL: [portal.unesco.org](http://portal.unesco.org)

USAID/ARMENIA, 1 American Avenue, tel. 46-47-00, email: [armeniacontact@usaid.gov](mailto:armeniacontact@usaid.gov), URL: [www.usaid.am](http://www.usaid.am).

USDA ARMENIA, URL: [www.usa.am](http://www.usa.am).

WORLD BANK, Republic Square, 9 Vazgen Sargsian Street, tel. 52-48-84, Fax: 52-17-87, email: [vsargsyan@worldbank.org](mailto:vsargsyan@worldbank.org), URL: [www.worldbank.org.am/](http://www.worldbank.org.am/)

WORLD VISION Armenia, 1 Romanos Melikian p, Malatia-Sebastia, tel. 74-91-46, email: [wvarmenia@wvi.org](mailto:wvarmenia@wvi.org), URL: [www.wvarmenia.am](http://www.wvarmenia.am).

## Outside Armenia

### USA

ARMENIAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE OF AMERICA, 1711 N Street NW • Washington, DC 20036 • Ph: (202) 775-1918 • Fax: (202) 775-5648, email: [anca@anca.org](mailto:anca@anca.org), URL: [www.anca.org](http://www.anca.org).

ARMENIAN ASSEMBLY OF AMERICA, 1140 19th St. NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC, USA 20036, tel. (202) 393-3434, fax (202) 638-4904, email: [info@aaainc.org](mailto:info@aaainc.org), URL: [www.aaainc.org](http://www.aaainc.org).

ARMENIAN GENERAL BENEVOLENT UNION (AGBU), 31 W. 52nd St. 10th Floor, New York, NY 10019, tel. (212) 765-8260, 765-8208, email: [agbuwb@agbu.org](mailto:agbuwb@agbu.org), URL: [www.agbu.org](http://www.agbu.org)

FUND FOR ARMENIAN RELIEF, 630 Second Avenue, New York, NY, tel. (212) 889-5150, fax (212) 889-4849, email: [far@farusa.org](mailto:far@farusa.org), URL: [www.farusa.org](http://www.farusa.org).

### France

AZNAVOUR POUR L'ARMENIE, 75-78 ave. des Champs Elysées 75008 Paris, tel. (33-1) 49-53-03-27, Fax (33-1) 49-53-03-28.

Complete list of French Armenian associations at [www.netarmenie.com/diaspora/associations/liste.php](http://www.netarmenie.com/diaspora/associations/liste.php).

## TOUR AGENCIES, GUIDES ▲

There are over 140 tour agencies listed in the Armenia Information web site ([www.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am)) 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.armeniainfo.am](http://www.armeniainfo.am). 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).



## TOUR AGENCIES

### INTERNATIONAL OFFICES ▲

These have offices abroad with experience bringing tourists into Armenia. \* denotes agency with its own office in Yerevan & its home country.

### North America

\*CARAVAN TOURS, 42/1 Terian p, tel. 56-52-39, email: [caravan@netsys.am](mailto:caravan@netsys.am), URL: [www.caravanarmenia.com](http://www.caravanarmenia.com), has an office in Springfield, Massachusetts (see web site for details). Group and individual tour packages.

GEOGRAPHIC EXPEDITIONS, 2 627 Lombard Street, San Francisco, CA 94123 - (800) 777-8183; (415) 922-0448; Fax: (415) 346-5535, has been bringing in tourists to Armenia for several years now. In the same league as Distant Horizons and MIR for quality, service and good prices.

Hyr Service, 50 Nalbandian p, tel. 56 04 95, 52 98 08, 52 24 14, email: [contact@hyurservice.com](mailto:contact@hyurservice.com), URL: [www.hyurservice.com](http://www.hyurservice.com), has corresponding contacts in Paris (33 6) 19 58 53 40 and Los Angeles (1 626) 466 1073. Good day trips and walk in tours at their office in Yerevan.

\*LEVON TRAVEL, 10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, 52-52-84, 58-31-93, email: [kim@arminco.com](mailto:kim@arminco.com), [sales@levontravel.am](mailto:sales@levontravel.am), URL: [www.levontravel.com](http://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.

\*MENUA TRAVEL, 9 Alek Manukian p, AUA Business Center, room #102, tel. 51-20-51, 51-20-52, 51-20-53, Email: [info@menuatours.com](mailto:info@menuatours.com), URL: [www.menuatours.com](http://www.menuatours.com), has an office in Los Angeles/Glendale (see web site for details). Air ticketing, classic tours.

\*MER LERNER, Nalbandian p, tel. 54-33-70, cell: 091-38-46-77, email: [contact@merlerner.com](mailto:contact@merlerner.com), URL: [www.merlerner.com](http://www.merlerner.com), has numerous worldwide contacts and professional guides for their adventure and nature tours.

\*SIDON TRAVEL, 19 Sayat-Nova pta, Ani Plaza Hotel Lobby, tel. 52-29-67, 54-31-27, email: [sidon@arminco.com](mailto:sidon@arminco.com), URL: [www.sidontravel.com](http://www.sidontravel.com), has an office in Los Angeles/Glendale (see web site for details). They also specialize in tours to the Middle East. The office staff is very helpful and

friendly. I have good luck with them in finding discount deals.

\*TATIAN'S TRAVEL, 14 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-53-67, 53-48-10, email: [info@tatianstravel.am](mailto:info@tatianstravel.am), [info@discoverarmenia.com](mailto:info@discoverarmenia.com), URL: [www.discoverarmenia.com](http://www.discoverarmenia.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.

### South America

AVIATUR, Oficina Principal Avenida 19 No. 4 – 62, Columbia Conmutadores: 2827111 - 2865555 - 2347333 Fax: 2830141 Número unico nacional: 900 3312222 - E-Mail: [aviatur@aviatur.com.co](mailto:aviatur@aviatur.com.co).

A. B. TRAVEL, Florida 537 - GAL. JARDIN LOC. 332 1st SS-1005 BS. AS. Argentina. - (+54-1) 322-7372, 393-1951 - Fax (+54-1) 322-7584.

IANTUR S.R.L., at Corrientes 922, 5 to. off. 29, 1043 Buenos Aires, Argentina - (+54-1) 326-1280 - Fax: (+54-1) 326- 2855.

MER LERNER, Nalbandian p, tel. 54-33-70, cell: 091-38-46-77, email: [contact@merlerner.com](mailto:contact@merlerner.com), URL: [www.merlerner.com](http://www.merlerner.com), has numerous worldwide contacts and professional guides for their adventure and nature tours. Contact Salpie Evazian, Tel. +598 26283680, email: [salpiev@yahoo.com](mailto:salpiev@yahoo.com) in Argentina/Uruguay.



### Europe

#### Austria

CLUB MARCO POLO ( 88-26-51-0 fax 88-26-51-2) at Samergasse 27, 5020 Salzburg, Austria, has ski-trips to Georgia., From there you are just a jump away to Tsaghkadzor.





**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.



**ETHNOGRAPHIC TOURS** ▲

**AVARAYR TOUR COMPANY**, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 52-40-42, 56-36-81, email: [avarayr@arminco.com](mailto:avarayr@arminco.com), URL: [www.avarayr.am](http://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.

**FOLKTOUR**, 3 Agatangeghos p, tel. 52-92-24, email: [info@folktour.am](mailto:info@folktour.am), URL: [www.folktour.am](http://www.folktour.am).

**GEOGRAPHIC TRAVEL CLUB**, 26 Parapetsi p, tel. 51-88-33, email: [info@geotravel.am](mailto:info@geotravel.am), URL: [www.geotravel.am](http://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), Medicinal Plants and Folk Medicine and Stars over Armenia Hiking/Camping tours.

**MASSTOURS**, 8 Komitas pta, tel. 27-78-32, email: [info@masstours.com](mailto:info@masstours.com), URL: [www.masstours.com](http://www.masstours.com), are ethnographic, historic, archeological and regional tourist specialists. Among the best in Armenia.

\***SIDON TRAVEL**, 19 Sayat-Nova pta, Ani Plaza Hotel Lobby, tel. 52-29-67, 54-31-27, email: [sidon@arminco.com](mailto:sidon@arminco.com), URL: [www.sidontravel.com](http://www.sidontravel.com), has an office in Los Angeles/Glendale (see web site

for details). They also specialize in tours to the Middle East.

\***SABERATOURS** in Paris ( (33-1) 42-61-51-13 fax (3-1) 42-61-94-53), 19, rue St. Roche, 75001 Paris; and **SEVAN VOYAGES** ( (33-4) 78-60-13-66 fax (33-4) 78-60-92-26.

**SIMA TOURS**, 50 Terian p, tel. 58-99-54, 091-21-24-65, email: [marketing@simatours.com](mailto:marketing@simatours.com), [simatours@yahoo.com](mailto:simatours@yahoo.com), URL: [www.simatours.com](http://www.simatours.com), has historical, pilgrimage and tours to Western Armenia in Turkey.

**TREASURES OF TRAVEL**, 924 Olympic Avenue, P.O. Box 714, Edmonds, Washington 98020, USA, Tel. 1-800-572-0526, 1-425-775-2250, Fax: 1-425-771-6723, email: [info@treasuresoftravel.com](mailto:info@treasuresoftravel.com), URL: [www.treasuresoftravel.com](http://www.treasuresoftravel.com), has a new Arts and Crafts Tour of Georgia and Armenia.

**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.



**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](mailto:adventour@netsys.am), [info@www.armeniaexplorer.com](mailto:info@www.armeniaexplorer.com), URL: [www.armeniaexplorer.com](http://www.armeniaexplorer.com), arranges Adventure, Nature and Archeological tours catered to individual requirements.

**APAGA TOUR**, 8 Tumanian p, room 216, tel. 091-79-74-02, email: [info@apaga.info](mailto:info@apaga.info), URL: [www.apaga.info](http://www.apaga.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 ALPIN FEDERATION**, 127 Terian p, tel. 58-42-88, email: [alpfdt@yahoo.com](mailto:alpfdt@yahoo.com), started it all with their Soviet trips into the mountains and valleys of the country. Professionals all around, include Emergency Rescue Teams in case of need.

**ARMENIAN ECOTOURISM**, 2 H Hakobian St. apt. 22, tel./fax: 27-87-28, tel. 27-40-12, email: [zhanna@netsys.am](mailto:zhanna@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@adg.am](mailto:arminius@adg.am), URL: [www.arminiusreisen.com](http://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](mailto:avarayr@arminco.com), URL: [www.avarayr.am](http://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](mailto:incoming@da-tours.com), [armenia@da-tours.com](mailto:armenia@da-tours.com), URL: [www.da-tours.com](http://www.da-tours.com), has a number of carefully crafted adventure and nature tours, and solid bios for their staff.

**FRUCTUS ARMENICUS**, 12a Vagharshian p, 3rd floor, tel. 26-41-99, 26-41-20, 091-32-37-15, email: [info@fructusarmeniacus.com](mailto:info@fructusarmeniacus.com), URL: [www.fructusarmeniacus.com](http://www.fructusarmeniacus.com), what a name! what a promise.

**GEOGRAPHIC TRAVEL CLUB**, 26 Parapetsi p, tel. 51-88-33, email: [info@geotravel.am](mailto:info@geotravel.am), URL: [www.geotravel.am](http://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), 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](mailto:info@haytour.am), URL: [www.haytour.am](http://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](mailto:info@hikeandgo.com), URL: [www.hikeandgo.com](http://www.hikeandgo.com).

**INKAR**, 115 Andranik p, apt #44, tel. 74-42-26, 093-74-42-26, email: [info@amtour.am](mailto:info@amtour.am), URL: [www.amtour.am](http://www.amtour.am), specializes in caving combined with its culture and nature tours.



**MASSTOURS**, 8 Komitas pta, tel. 27-78-32, email: [info@masstours.com](mailto:info@masstours.com), URL: [www.masstours.com](http://www.masstours.com), are ethnographic, historic, archeological and regional tourist specialists. Among the best in Armenia.

**MER LERNER**, Nalbandian p, tel. 54-33-70, cell: 091-38-46-77, email: [contact@merlerner.com](mailto:contact@merlerner.com), URL: [www.merlerner.com](http://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@satostour.com](mailto:info@satostour.com), URL: [www.satostour.com](http://www.satostour.com).

**SPITAK RESCUE TEAM**, 50 Halabian p, tel. 35-00-46, 35-01-86, E-mail: [spitak@moon.verphi.am](mailto:spitak@moon.verphi.am), are the nature tour and adventure tour experts in Lori, Araratsoth, Tavush and Siunik.

**TOURHM**, Davitashen 4th dist, bldg. 23, apt. 10, tel. 36-37-55, 091-40-17-34, email: [tourhm@netsys.am](mailto:tourhm@netsys.am), URL: [www.tourhm.am](http://www.tourhm.am), tours to all destinations (except Karabakh) including small group treks and hikes to little known areas of the country.

**TRAVELON**, 21/3 Pushkin p, apt 6, tel. 52-62-26, 52-61-21, email: [info@travelon.org](mailto:info@travelon.org), URL: [www.travelon.org](http://www.travelon.org), offers classical tours and 7, 9 and 13 day hiking tours among its main offerings.



#### ADVENTURE TOURS ▲

These include camping, hiking, climbing, biking, 4x4 off Road, skiing, sailing, caving, sports adventure (repelling, gliding, paragliding, jumping, ski jetting, etc.). Most are geared toward more physically fit tourists, but can be adjusted for different levels of ability.

**ACTITOUR**, tel. 091-40-92-19 (Arthur), email: [info@actitour.com](mailto:info@actitour.com), URL: [www.actitour.com](http://www.actitour.com).

**ADVENTOUR**, 39 Pushkin p, tel. 53-96-09, Fax: 53-80-17, Cell: 091-42-67-45, email: [adventour@netsys.am](mailto:adventour@netsys.am), [info@www.armeniaexplorer.com](mailto:info@www.armeniaexplorer.com), URL: [www.armeniaexplorer.com](http://www.armeniaexplorer.com), arranges Adventure, Nature and Archeological tours catered to individual requirements.

**APAGA TOUR**, 8 Tumanian p, room 216, tel. 091-79-74-02, email: [info@apaga.info](mailto:info@apaga.info), URL: [www.apaga.info](http://www.apaga.info), focuses on their tour camp at Yenokavan, Ijevan, which is lovely, with tours in the area.

**ARMENIAN ALPIN FEDERATION**, 127 Terian p, tel. 58-42-88, email: [alpfedt@yahoo.com](mailto:alpfedt@yahoo.com), started it all with their Soviet trips into the mountains and valleys of the country. Professionals all around, include Emergency Rescue Teams in case of need.

**ARMENIAN ECOTOURISM**, 2 H Hakobian St. apt. 22, tel./fax: 27-87-28, tel. 27-40-12, email: [zhanna@netsys.am](mailto:zhanna@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.

**AVARAYR TOUR COMPANY**, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 52-40-42, 56-36-81, email: [avarayr@arminco.com](mailto:avarayr@arminco.com), URL: [www.avarayr.am](http://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](mailto:incoming@da-tours.com), [armenia@da-tours.com](mailto:armenia@da-tours.com), URL: [www.da-tours.com](http://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](mailto:info@explore.co.uk), URL: [www.explore.co.uk](http://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 Parapetsi p, tel. 51-88-33, email: [info@geotravel.am](mailto:info@geotravel.am), URL: [www.geotravel.am](http://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), 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](mailto:info@haytour.am), URL: [www.haytour.am](http://www.haytour.am), has devised Nature and Adventure/Extreme Tours for amateurs and professionals.

**INFINITY TRAVEL**, 8 Kievian p, tel. 22-94-95, 26-94-95, email: [incoming@travelarmenia.am](mailto:incoming@travelarmenia.am), [anka@arminco.com](mailto:anka@arminco.com), URL: [www.travelarmenia.am](http://www.travelarmenia.am), provides package, pilgrimage, Wellness & Spa, wedding, adventure, biking, horseback riding and hunting tours.

**INKAR**, 115 Andranik p, apt #44, tel. 74-42-26, 093-74-42-26, email: [info@amtour.am](mailto:info@amtour.am), URL: [www.amtour.am](http://www.amtour.am), specializes in caving combined with its culture and nature tours.

**MER LERNER**, Nalbandian p, tel. 54-33-70, cell: 091-38-46-77, email: [contact@merlerner.com](mailto:contact@merlerner.com), URL: [www.merlerner.com](http://www.merlerner.com).

**WISHUP ADVENTURES**, 27 Sayat-Nova pta, apt. 23, tel. 58-04-46, email: [info@wishup.net](mailto:info@wishup.net), [extreme@wishup.net](mailto:extreme@wishup.net), URL: [www.wishup.net](http://www.wishup.net), site is in Russian, but the tours can be done in English

as well. Extreme tourism at its most refined. Moscow contact: Москва: +7 (495) 789-43-19.



#### HISTORICAL FOCUS TOURS ▲

**AVARAYR TOUR COMPANY**, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 52-40-42, 56-36-81, email: [avarayr@arminco.com](mailto:avarayr@arminco.com), URL: [www.avarayr.am](http://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.

**\*CARAVAN TOURS**, 42/1 Terian p, tel. 56-52-39, email: [caravan@netsys.am](mailto:caravan@netsys.am), URL: [www.caravanarmenia.com](http://www.caravanarmenia.com), has an office in Springfield, Massachusetts (see web site for details). Group and individual tour packages.

**GEOGRAPHIC TRAVEL CLUB**, 26 Parapetsi p, tel. 51-88-33, email: [info@geotravel.am](mailto:info@geotravel.am), URL: [www.geotravel.am](http://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), Medicinal Plants and Folk Medicine and Stars over Armenia Hiking/Camping tours.

**MASSTOURS**, 8 Komitas pta, tel. 27-78-32, email: [info@masstours.com](mailto:info@masstours.com), URL: [www.masstours.com](http://www.masstours.com), are ethnographic, historic, archeological and regional tourist specialists. Among the best in Armenia.

**SIMA TOURS**, 50 Terian p, tel. 58-99-54, 091-21-24-65, email: [marketing@simatours.com](mailto:marketing@simatours.com), [simatours@yahoo.com](mailto:simatours@yahoo.com), URL: [www.simatours.com](http://www.simatours.com),

has historical, pilgrimage and tours to Western Armenia in Turkey.

**TRAVELON**, 21/3 Pushkin p, apt 6, tel. 52-62-26, 52-61-21, email: [info@travelon.org](mailto:info@travelon.org), URL: [www.travelon.org](http://www.travelon.org), has a number of classical, historical, pilgrimage tours, as well as tours to Georgia.

#### ARCHEOLOGICAL TOURS ▲

**ADVENTOUR**, 39 Pushkin p, tel. 53-96-09, Fax: 53-80-17, Cell: 091-42-67-45, email: [adventour@netsys.am](mailto:adventour@netsys.am), [info@www.armeniaexplorer.com](mailto:info@www.armeniaexplorer.com), URL: [www.armeniaexplorer.com](http://www.armeniaexplorer.com), arranges Adventure, Nature and Archeological tours catered to individual requirements.

**ARMEN TOUR TRAVEL**, 24 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-21-90, 53-49-15, email: [armetur@arminco.com](mailto:armetur@arminco.com), URL: [www.armeniatour.com](http://www.armeniatour.com), offers archeological tours with professional guides and local archeologists. This group was involved in the excavation of the early bronze Age Agarak temple site.

**AVARAYR TOUR COMPANY**, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 52-40-42, 56-36-81, email: [avarayr@arminco.com](mailto:avarayr@arminco.com), URL: [www.avarayr.am](http://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.

**MASSTOURS**, 8 Komitas pta, tel. 27-78-32, email: [info@masstours.com](mailto:info@masstours.com), URL: [www.masstours.com](http://www.masstours.com), are ethnographic, historic, archeological and regional tourist specialists. Among the best in Armenia.

**SPITAK RESCUE TEAM**, 50 Halabian p, tel. 35-00-46, 35-01-86, E-mail: [spitak@moon.verphi.am](mailto:spitak@moon.verphi.am), are the nature tour and adventure tour experts in Lori, Aragatsotn, Tavush and Siunik.

**TRAVELON**, 21/3 Pushkin p, apt 6, tel. 52-62-26, 52-61-21, email: [info@travelon.org](mailto:info@travelon.org), URL: [www.travelon.org](http://www.travelon.org), offers classical tours and 7, 9 and 13 day hiking tours among its main offerings.

**WISHUP ADVENTURES**, 27 Sayat-Nova pta, apt. 23, tel. 58-04-46, email: [info@wishup.net](mailto:info@wishup.net), [extreme@wishup.net](mailto:extreme@wishup.net), URL: [www.wishup.net](http://www.wishup.net), site is in Russian, but the tours can be done in English as well. Extreme tourism at its most refined, includes archeological tours. Moscow contact: Москва: +7 (495) 789-43-19.



**SPIRITUAL TOURS** ▲

**INFINITY TRAVEL**, 8 Kievian p, tel. 22-94-95, 26-94-95, email: [incoming@travelarmenia.am](mailto:incoming@travelarmenia.am), [anka@arminco.com](mailto:anka@arminco.com), URL: [www.travelarmenia.am](http://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](mailto:info@newage.am), URL: [www.newage.am](http://www.newage.am), works with Psalm Tours on Spiritual tours.

**SIMA TOURS**, 50 Terian p, tel. 58-99-54, 091-21-24-65, email: [marketing@simatours.com](mailto:marketing@simatours.com), [simatours@yahoo.com](mailto:simatours@yahoo.com), URL: [www.simatours.com](http://www.simatours.com), has historical, pilgrimage and tours to Western Armenia in Turkey.

**TRAVELON**, 21/3 Pushkin p, apt 6, tel. 52-62-26, 52-61-21, email: [info@travelon.org](mailto:info@travelon.org), URL: [www.travelon.org](http://www.travelon.org), has a number of classical, historical, pilgrimage tours, as well as tours to Georgia.



**NAGORNO KARABAKH (ARTSAKH)** ▲

Tours to Artsakh can be arranged at local travel agents, among the largest being Hyur Service, Levon travel, Menua Tours, SaberaTours & Sidon 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@adg.am](mailto:arminius@adg.am), URL: [www.arminiusreisen.com](http://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.

**ASBAR TOURS OF ARTSAKH**, 16a, Yerevanian p, Stepanakert, Mountainous Karabakh Republic, tel. (37410) 28-65-10, 28-64-15, 28-07-01 ext. 1228, email: [travel@asbar.nk.am](mailto:travel@asbar.nk.am), URL: [www.asbar.nk.am](http://www.asbar.nk.am), arranges tours in Nagorno Karabakh (Artsakh).

**\*LEVON TRAVEL**, 10 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-52-10, 52-52-84, 58-31-93, email: [k1m@arminco.com](mailto:k1m@arminco.com), [sales@levontravel.am](mailto:sales@levontravel.am), URL: [www.levontravel.com](http://www.levontravel.com), office in Karabakh is at 16a, Yerevanian p, Stepanakert, Karabakh, tel. 52-52-10, Fax: 56-14-83/

**SHUSHI TOUR**, 24d/710 Baghramian pta, tel. 56-80-42, email: [info@shoushitour.com](mailto:info@shoushitour.com), URL: [www.shoushitour.com](http://www.shoushitour.com), has classical, adventure, extreme and hiking tours to Karabakh.



**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!

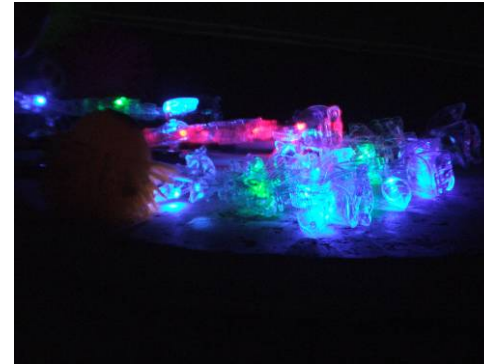
For Cosmetic and Beauty Centers, see [Health & Beauty](#), p. 102.

**INFINITY TRAVEL**, 8 Kievian p, tel. 22-94-95, 26-94-95, email: [incoming@travelarmenia.am](mailto:incoming@travelarmenia.am), [anka@arminco.com](mailto:anka@arminco.com), URL: [www.travelarmenia.am](http://www.travelarmenia.am), provides package, pilgrimage, Wellness & Spa, wedding, adventure, biking, horseback riding and hunting tours.

**MUR AZ TOURS**, 10 Aigestan p, apt. 51, tel. 55-13-21, 091-47-03-44, email: [info@muraztours.com](mailto:info@muraztours.com), [muraz@web.am](mailto:muraz@web.am), URL: [www.muraztours.com](http://www.muraztours.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](mailto:portfolio@xter.net), URL: [www.portfolio.am](http://www.portfolio.am).

**SATOS TOUR**, 34 Garegin Nzhdeh p, tel. 44-51-53, email: [outgoing@satostour.com](mailto:outgoing@satostour.com), [info@satostour.com](mailto:info@satostour.com), URL: [www.satostour.com](http://www.satostour.com).



**WEDDING TOURS** ▲

**INFINITY TRAVEL**, 8 Kievian p, tel. 22-94-95, 26-94-95, email: [incoming@travelarmenia.am](mailto:incoming@travelarmenia.am), [anka@arminco.com](mailto:anka@arminco.com), URL: [www.travelarmenia.am](http://www.travelarmenia.am), provides package, pilgrimage, Wellness & Spa, wedding, adventure, biking, horseback riding and hunting tours.

**TUFENKIAN HERITAGE TOURS**, 21 / 1 Tumanian Street, tel. 52-09-11, 52-09-12, Fax: 52-09-13, hosts wedding receptions in its luxury hotels.

**INDIVIDUAL TOUR GUIDES** ▲

**GENERAL TOURS**

**SIRANUSH HOVHANNISSIAN** tel. 53-53-49 (h), 54-60-60 (w) gives exquisitely attentive tours using her vast reservoir of knowledge and wonderful charm. She can tailor tours to individual needs and backgrounds, and is fluent in English. A real gift to Armenia.

**ARAM OHANIAN** tel. 52-77-27) 39/12 Mashtots Ave., Apt. 17, Yerevan, Armenia, is one of the most erudite and interesting people we know. His dry sense of humor is coupled with an almost encyclopedic knowledge of Armenia to provide an

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.



**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 handcrafts while visiting the cultural heritage sites.

The **WRITER'S UNION** (tel. 56-45-70), 4, Marshal Baghramian St., is an excellent place to go and ask for a specialized tour about Armenian Literature. Apkhar 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. 56-45-53) 16 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 Isahakian St. Probably need a translator.



#### 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.



Photograph courtesy Tigran Nazarian ©

#### NATURE-ADVENTURE

**HAIK MELKONIAN**, tel. 091-71-73-82, email: [ajdahag@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto: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 - Dilijan - 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@aqa.am](mailto:ruzan@aqa.am), who has climbed most of the mountains in Armenia and is a recommend, reliable guide.



### MAPS, BOOKS, NEWSPAPERS, ETC. ▲

One thing the Soviets did very well was to map the country. Highly detailed maps from the 1970s and 1980s are still the most reliable to be had, though they are still considered top secret by some old-timers. Unfortunately, unless you know someone who knows someone who knows someone you will be hard pressed to get your hands on one. You can try online by googling "Soviet Maps of Armenia".

### MAPS

#### Online

Google Map ([www.maps.google.com](http://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](http://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 here is around \$15, though 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 Georgia, 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).

Marco 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 Georgian Republic. Detailed travel map with tourist information. English and multilingual legends. Much too much for a casual tourist.

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 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)"**: 69032f (National Geographic, Folded Map, Scale 1:7 100 000) In 1999, National Geographic Magazine published a supplement map of the Caspian Region. This is the result. Good overall view, but not for finding that out of the way village.

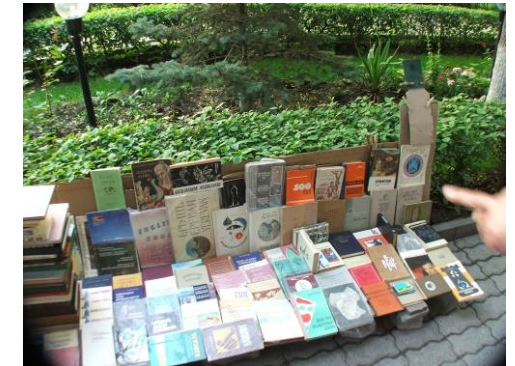
A much better map for exploring hills and dales then the above, though not complete, is the American University of Armenia edition **"Birds of Armenia, Road and Tourist Map"**. Scale 1:500,000. Size 23"x29". Includes bird lists and birding tips that equally apply to other nature touring.

#### Historical Maps

**"Historic Maps of Armenia: The Cartographic Heritage"**, by Rouben Galichian, is a coffee table book that reproduces the most important representations of Armenia, from the oldest known version--a Babylonian clay tablet of the 6th Century BC--to the renderings of Greek and Alexandrian cartographers, the early Christian

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, Tsarist, 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.



### MAP VENDORS

#### FREE MAPS

Hotels have basic maps of the center, most rung by adverts for restaurants and bars. The **Yerevan Guide & Tourist Info 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).

### MAPS AND BOOKS IN YEREVAN

**NOYAN TAPAN BOOK STORE**, Republic Square (Abovian side), tel. 56-80-84.

**KNIGI WORLD BOOKSTORE**, 20 Mashtots (1 block N of Amirian), tel. 53-74-13.

**AVASA (KNIGI)**, 25 Abovian p. (just above Cafe de Paris), tel. 56-52-01.

**ARTBRIDGE CAFE**, 20 Abovian p. (just N of Tumanian on Abovian), tel. 52-12 39.

**THE CLUB (AKUMP)**, 40 Tumanian p. (W of Mashtots) 53-13-61.

Look also in **SOUVENIR SHOPS** and sidewalk vendors on Abovian and the square.

**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.

**VERNISSAGE** 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.



**OUTSIDE SELLERS**

**Online**

**AMAZON.COM** ([www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)) has the largest selection of maps to Armenia, including Yerevan.

**MAPS2ANYWHERE** ([www.maps2anywhere.com/Maps/Armenia\\_road\\_map.htm](http://www.maps2anywhere.com/Maps/Armenia_road_map.htm)) sells a large selection of maps of Armenia that include Yerevan.

**THEMAPCENTRE.COM** ([www.themapcentre.com](http://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](mailto:Enquiries@themapcentre.com), sells maps online for worldwide distribution.

**MAPSWORLDWIDE** ([www.mapsworldwide.com](http://www.mapsworldwide.com)) has a small selection of Armenian maps and travel guides.

**ABRIL BOOKS** ([www.abrilbooks.com](http://www.abrilbooks.com)), has an extensive list of

**AGBU BOOKSTORE** ([www.agbu.org/bookstore](http://www.agbu.org/bookstore)) has an extensive line of books and maps for online sale.

**STANFORDS** ([www.stanfords.co.uk](http://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](mailto:info@abrilbooks.com), URL: [www.abrilbooks.com](http://www.abrilbooks.com), distributes a large selection of books, music and maps from its store in Glendale.

**AGBU BOOKSTORE** ([www.agbu.org/bookstore](http://www.agbu.org/bookstore)) has an extensive line of books and maps for online sale.

**BORDERS** ([www.bordersstores.com](http://www.bordersstores.com)), **BARNES & NOBLE** ([www.barnesandnobles.com](http://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 in the Travel section.

**England**

**STANFORDS COVENT GARDEN & NATURAL CAFE**, 2-14 Long Acre, Covent Garden, London WC2E 9LP (less than five minutes walk from Covent Garden and Leicester Square tube stations), tel. 020 7836 1321, Fax: 020 7632 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](http://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](mailto: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

from and about the CIS/Russia. Armenia is usually stuck in another larger treatise or map.

Also try **TRAVELER'S BOOKSHOP** at 25 Cecil Court, London, the Travel Bookshop at 13 Blenheim Crescent, London and Edward Stanford at 12-14 Long Acre, London.

**Paris**

**BRENTANOS** (37 Avenue de L'Opera 75002 Paris, France, tel. + 33.1.42 61.52.50, email: [brentanos@brentanos.fr](mailto:brentanos@brentanos.fr), URL : [www.brentanos.fr](http://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**, 37 rue de la Bucherie (M: Saint Michele), tel. +33-43-25-40-93, URL: <http://www.shakespeareco.org>, has a remarkable collection of books and maps 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](http://www.armenianow.com)) and **HETQ** ([www.hetq.am](http://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 online ([www.noyan-tapan.am](http://www.noyan-tapan.am)).

Other newspapers include **ARAVOT** (multi-language online at [www.aravot.am](http://www.aravot.am)), **ASBAREZ**, **AZG ARMENIAN DAILY** (multi-language online at [www.azg.am](http://www.azg.am)), **GOLOS ARMENII** (Russian online at [www.golos.am](http://www.golos.am)), **ORATERT** ([www.oratert.com](http://www.oratert.com)), **PANARMENIANNET** news aggregator (English online at [www.panarmenian.net](http://www.panarmenian.net)), **PANORAMA** (multi-language online at [www.panorama.am](http://www.panorama.am)), **YERKIR** (multi-language online at [www.yerkir.am](http://www.yerkir.am)) & **ZHAMANAK** (Armenian only online at [www.zhamanak.com](http://www.zhamanak.com)).

**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 newspapers and magazines dropped off by visitors available for browsing.

**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.



**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 singers together each week in a "contest" with predictable results. Hugely popular, the show is going into overtime with spin-offs using the same performers. A hint at how predictable things are; the duo winning the most points includes the girl friend of the president's son. Hmmm. There are about 14 rivals to the two state channels, including *Dar21*, Armenia's version of MTV.

**Foreign Language TV**

Satellite TV channels include CNN, BBC, MTV, French Canal 5, German, Italian and Spanish language channels, as well as broadcasting from the Middle East. Some hotel lobbies, the US

Embassy and certain bars or restaurants have satellite connections. Invariably the channel will be turned to Sports or CNN ad nauseum.

#### 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](http://www.armradio.am))

101.6 - Radio VEM - Yerevan (Classic, Christian, [www.vem.am](http://www.vem.am))

102.0 - Armenia National Radio, Second Program - Yerevan (public, [www.armradio.am](http://www.armradio.am))

102.4 - RFI-Radio France Internationale - Yerevan.. news/info, 24h French, Russian

103.0 - Radio Van - Yerevan (Russian, Armenian, European Pop, [www.radiovan.am](http://www.radiovan.am))

103.5 - Radio Ardzagank - Yerevan (Russian, Armenian, Pop, [www.alfael.am](http://www.alfael.am), [www.rusradio.am](http://www.rusradio.am))

103.8 - Radio Jazz - Yerevan (Jazz of all types)

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](http://www.radiohay.am))

106.0 - City FM - Yerevan (Russian, music, talk radio, jazz in evenings, [www.cityfm.am](http://www.cityfm.am))

106.5 - Impuls-Mayak - Yerevan ([www.impuls.am](http://www.impuls.am))

107.0 - FM 107 - Yerevan (Russian, Armenian Pop, [www.fm107.am](http://www.fm107.am))

107.6 - Armenia National Radio, First Program - Yerevan AM (public, [www.armradio.am](http://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/](http://www.armenianow.com/)

HETO, [www.hetq.am](http://www.hetq.am)

GROONG NEWS AGGREGATOR, [groong.usc.edu/](http://groong.usc.edu/), still the best news aggregator around.

ARMENIA LIBERTY, [www.armenialiberty.org/](http://www.armenialiberty.org/)

ARMTOWN, [www.armtown.com/](http://www.armtown.com/)

INTERNEWS ARMENIA, [www.internews.am/](http://www.internews.am/)

ARAVOT, [www.aravot.am/](http://www.aravot.am/)

ASBAREZ, [www.asbarez.com/](http://www.asbarez.com/)

ARMENPRESS, [www.armenpress.am](http://www.armenpress.am)

NOYAN TAPAN, [noyan-tapan.am/](http://noyan-tapan.am/)

ARMINFO, [www.snark.am/](http://www.snark.am/)

GOOGLE NEWS ARMENIA, [news.google.com/news?hl=en&q=Armenia](http://news.google.com/news?hl=en&q=Armenia)

#### BLOGS

NOTES FROM HAIRENIK, [www.noteshairenik.blogspot.com/](http://www.noteshairenik.blogspot.com/)

LIFE IN ARMENIA, [www.cilicia.com/armo\\_life-log.html](http://www.cilicia.com/armo_life-log.html)

ONEWORLD MULTIMEDIA, [oneworld.blogsome.com](http://oneworld.blogsome.com)

ARMENIA BLOG, [armoblog.blogspot.com/](http://armoblog.blogspot.com/)

EAST MEETS WEST, [eastwestarmos.blogspot.com/](http://eastwestarmos.blogspot.com/)

ONE ARMENIAN WORLD BLOG, [onearmenianworld.blogspot.com/](http://onearmenianworld.blogspot.com/)

ARMENIA VOLUNTEER BLOG, [armenianvolunteer.blogspot.com/](http://armenianvolunteer.blogspot.com/)

ARMENIA BRIBE TIPS [armeniabribes.blogspot.com/](http://armeniabribes.blogspot.com/)

ARMENIA PROJECT 2006, [sonyavaroujian.blogspot.com/](http://sonyavaroujian.blogspot.com/)

ANOUSH ARMENIA, [anousharmenia.blogspot.com/](http://anousharmenia.blogspot.com/)

ARMYOUTH, [armyouth.blogspot.com/](http://armyouth.blogspot.com/)

UNZIPPED: GAY ARMENIA, [gayarmenia.blogspot.com/](http://gayarmenia.blogspot.com/)

THE ARMENIAN OBSERVER BLOG, [ditord.wordpress.com/](http://ditord.wordpress.com/)

OXFAM ARMENIA, [www.oxfam.org.uk/applications/blogs/armenia/](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/applications/blogs/armenia/)

L'AME ARMEINNE (French), [minouchig.canalblog.com/](http://minouchig.canalblog.com/)

LA VIE REELLE (French), [dartag.over-blog.com/](http://dartag.over-blog.com/)

ARMENIAN FOOD BLOG, [armenianfood.blogspot.com/](http://armenianfood.blogspot.com/)



#### COMMUNICATION ▲

##### PHONE

The local phone service is owned by Armentel ([www.armentel.am](http://www.armentel.am)), which also provides cell phone service. Viva Cell ([www.vivacell.am](http://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 smolder 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.

#### Basic Information

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.

#### 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

Yerevan City Information – 565232, 525770

#### 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, 960-9600 AMD, local calls 1 min=20 AMD, calls to US 520 AMD/min). The phone is easy to use. Multi-language voice prompts lead you through the process of making a call and warn you when your minutes are about to expire.

If calling from a **local phone** (someone's home), note they pay 8 AMD a minute for that call (soon to double in cost). 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.

**Armentel Public Phones** allow international calls using their telecards. Rates are around \$1 a minute.

Armentel offers the **Kamurj** prepaid card for making international calls via VOIP telephony. Cards 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
- MCI (Russian) 0 800 222
- 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 TALK are all used here) 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 Sarian 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 calls). Prepaid cards are 1500-4500 AMD. Charges vary, around 36-60 AMD to make calls, free to receive calls.

**Armentel** ([www.armentel.am](http://www.armentel.am)) has service centers at 6 Vazgen Sarkisian (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 Kievanian pta.

**Cell Phone Rentals** *Hyr Service*, 50 Nalbandian p, tel. 56 04 95, 52 98 08, 52 24 14, email: [contact@hyrservice.com](mailto:contact@hyrservice.com), URL: [www.hyrservice.com](http://www.hyrservice.com), provides cell phones at 500 AMD a day rental.

**POST, TELEGRAMS**

The *Central Post Office* is on Republic Square, another is on Sarian 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 cafes** 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, Alek Manukian p, East Tumanian and Sayat Nova pts, Berekamutiun Circle/metro and Komitas pta.

**INTERNET CLUB**, 18 Abovian p (Kino Moskva), tel. 52-12-70

**MAX POWER**, 3 Arami p, tel. 54-16-34, [info@maxpower.am](mailto:info@maxpower.am).

**NEXUS**, 49 Pushkin, about 80 m down from the Sarian/Pushkin intersection, is considered the best Internet/Game Café/Club by its extremely loyal followers, and has a dynamic atmosphere.

**PEGAS**, 8 Komitas pta.

**PEG MASTER**, 17 Abovian,

**SKYNET**, 9 Mashtots (by Araya electronic shop).

**TEG**, 7 Korium p.

**THE ZEON CLUB**, 31 Tumanian Street, is open 24 hours.

**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), has prepaid dial up for local phone lines plus prepaid WI-FI in the center.

**NETSYS**, 38 Abovian, tel. 54-00-91, email: [info@netsys.am](mailto:info@netsys.am), URL: [www.netsys.am](http://www.netsys.am), has prepaid cards ("netcards").

**WEB**, 22 Isahakian (opposite Yeridasardakan Metro), tel. 28-60-99, email: [janna@r.am](mailto:janna@r.am), URL: [www.web.am](http://www.web.am), has prepaid cards ("web.card") for dial up service.



**MONEY**

The Armenian national currency is the dram ("AMD"). Paper notes are issued in denominations of 500, 1,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000 and 50,000 AMD. Coins are 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 and 500 AMD.

**BANKS**

**ARDSHINVESTBANK**, 3 Deghatan p, tel. 58-20-91, [www.ashib.com](http://www.ashib.com).

**AREXIMBANK**, # Deghatan p, tel. 58-05-06, URL: [www.areximbank.am](http://www.areximbank.am).

**ARMECONOMBANK**, 3 Arami p, tel. 52-08-16 58-72-57, URL: [www.aeb.am/eng](http://www.aeb.am/eng).

**ARMSAVINGSBANK**, 10 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-94-54, URL: [www.asb.am](http://www.asb.am).

**CONVERSE BANK**, 26/1 V. Sargsian p, tel. 51-12-00, 51-12-11, email: [post@conversebank.com](mailto:post@conversebank.com), [www.conversebank.am](http://www.conversebank.am).

**HSBC**, 6 Terian p, tel. 51-50-00, email: [hsbc.armenia@hsbc.com](mailto:hsbc.armenia@hsbc.com), URL: [www.hsbc.am](http://www.hsbc.am).

**ITB**, 18/3, Amirian p, tel. 53-03-62, email: [info@itb.am](mailto:info@itb.am), URL: [www.itb.am](http://www.itb.am).

**MELLAT BANK**, 6 Amirian p, tel. 58-17-91, email: [ellat@mellatbank.am](mailto:ellat@mellatbank.am), URL: [www.mellatbank.am](http://www.mellatbank.am).

**UNIBANK**, 26 Abovian p, tel. 54-24-30, URL: [www.unibank-armenia.com](http://www.unibank-armenia.com).

**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. And they are spot on! Good job, World Bank! Bank exchange rates (not same as street rate) can be found at [www.cba.am](http://www.cba.am).

At time of writing the exchange Rate is US\$ 1 = 330 AMD / 100 AMD = 0.29 US\$

**Price Test**

- Coffee Test: One cup of coffee = 150-200 AMD
- Bread Test: One loaf of bread = 150 AMD
- Chicken Test: One kg of chicken = 2000 AMD
- Fruit Test: One kg of apples = 400 AMD
- Vegetable Test: One kg of tomatoes = 200 AMD
- Petrol Test: One liter of petrol = 450 AMD



**Exchange** Foreign bank notes can be exchanged at local banks and at exchange counters throughout the city. There is no limitation on the amount of money exchanged. At exchange counters, offices and banks are safe places to exchange money, but be cautious with people on the street offering to change money for a higher rate. Though many are just trying to get the desired currency in question, some are counterfeiters, and without knowing what to look for you could be taken. Stick with exchange offices and you should be fine.

Exchange offices and banks post current exchange rate outside their doors. All legit exchange centers are required to give you a receipt for the transaction. You may or may not keep it.

The Airport and Banks in general give the worst exchange rate, as do the exchange centers on Tumanian (behind Opera) and lower Abovian p.

The best rates have been on Mashtots (below Tumanian) and off Ring Park on Alek Manukian. Shop around, there is a difference.

**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, 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 can be bent, scribbled on and sweaty with the dirt of someone else's palm, and still accepted. Bring only crisp clean Hard Currency bills with you.

**ATM's**

A complete list of ATMS in Armenia can be found at the ARCA web site ([www.arca.am/atmsearch.php-en](http://www.arca.am/atmsearch.php-en))

7 Abovian P.	Anelik Bank	  
39 Abovian P.	Armeconombank	  
1 Amirian P., Marriott Armenia	Conversebank	 
2 Amirian P.	Unibank	 
1/3 Arami P.	Armeconombank	  
1/1 Baghramian	Unibank	 
Barekamutiun Square	ACBA-Credit Agricole Bank Hayastan	 
43 Khorenatsi P.	Armeconombank Airarat	  
2 Koriun P.	Ardshinvestbank	 
1 Alek Manukian P.	Armimpexbank	 
9 Al. Manukian P.	Cascade Bank CJSC AUA	  
11 Al. Manukian P.	Armeconombank	  
15 Mashtots	Anelik Bank	 
23 Mashtots	Armenian Development Bank	 
Mashtots & Sayat-Nova Corner	ACBA-Credit Agricole Bank	 
28 Nalbandian P.	Unibank	 
41 Pushkin P.	Anelik Bank	  

2 V. Sargsian P.	Armimpexbank	 
4 V. Sargsian P.	Ardshinvestbank	 
Sayat-Nova & Abovian Corner	ACBA-Credit Agricole Bank	 
12/3 Sayat-Nova Ave.	Artsakhbank	 
15 Sayat-Nova Ave.	Anelik Bank	  
3/6 Tigran Mets Ave.	Artsakhbank	 
37 Tumanian P.	Cascade Bank CJSC Super System	  
42 Tumanian P.	Anelik Bank	  
2nd Block Ring Park, Nirvana	Inecobank	 

**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; use 10% of total bill 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 Barekamutiun 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 Amirian (across from the large drugstore).

There are developers on Upper Abovian, Sayat Nova and all around the city. Generally OK for snapshots and non-essential developing.

**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.

**PORTABLE SOLAR SYSTEMS**

**CT SOLAR**, tel. +1-772-621-4499, Fax: +1-772-382-0770, email: [sales@ctsolar.com](mailto:sales@ctsolar.com), URL: [www.ctsolar.com](http://www.ctsolar.com), has a nifty series of backpack size solar systems designed to power your laptop or other small electronic devices. The economy model provides unlimited supply in direct sunlight, while a more expensive standard model includes 3-6 hours of power after dark. Not cheap, but if you plan to do any work or writing, and will be stuck in the wilderness, this is one option to consider.

**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 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).

**SUPPLIES**

**Bring or Buy** If you travel in the summer, pack mosquito repellant, 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 Ani Plaza Hotel), **AG** (Mashtots) and **ARAY** (Mashtots at Amirian).

**SHOPPING LISTINGS** ▲

**SHUKA, YARMAKA**

The main "Pak" (enclosed) **Shuka** is on lower Mashtots, one block south of Khorenatsi/Marx p

(for details see [Shuka](#), p. 34). 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 Gnatsk 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.).



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, knick 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.

**SUPER MARKETS, MALLS**

- ANUSH**, 32 Tumanian p.
- HAYASTAN**, 2a Hrachiaia Kochar (Barekamutiun Metro), tel. 22-75-76
- KLAIK**, 43 Sjirak p, 42-02-20
- MANTASHOF**, 37 Mashtots pta.
- PETUSHOK**, 41 Pushkin.
- GROCER**, 10 Pushkin at Parpetsi.
- SAS SUPERMARKET**, 13 Amirian (at Mashtots), tel. 539399
- SAS SUPERMARKET**, 31 Tumanian p, 538888
- STAR SUPERMARKET**, 3 Amirian p, tel. 535577
- STAR SUPERMARKET**, 37 Tigran Mets pta, tel. 519519
- YERITSIAN SUPERMARKET**, 21 Vahram Papazian p (Arabkir), tel. 220868
- TASHIR MALL**, 33 Khorenatsi (facing Tigran Mets), tel. 545435
- KINO ROSSIYA MALL**, Kino Rossiya, Tigran Mets.



**MTERKS, FOOD STALLS**

**Mterks** are small food and produce shops that are not as large as supermarkets but tend to stock the same items, many times at lower prices. They proliferate throughout the city, in every district. In the center they are on all major streets with the most being on Mashtots, Tumanian, Abovian,



Hanrapetutian, Nalbandian and Tigran Mets around Kino Rossiya.

**Food stalls** also proliferate throughout the city, and are the font of cheap eats in Yerevan. Restaurants may now be charging upwards of \$30 per person for a few grams of khorovats, but you can still stuff yourself on Shaurma, Lahmadjo, sandwiches and fried meat pies for \$1.

#### ELECTRONICS

AG ELECTRONICS, 18 Mashtots pta.

ARAY, 17 Amirian at Mashtots.

ZIGZAG, 24 Abovian at Sayat Nova.

ZIGZAG, 22 Sayat Nova pta.

ZIGZAG, 28 Mashtots pta.

#### GIFTS & SOUVENIRS, VERNISSAGE

1+1, 34 Mashtots pta, 53-21-73.

ART SALON, 11 Abovian p, tel. 520953.

ART SOUVENIRS, 51 Mashtots pta, tel. 59-63-21.

BAREV SOUVENIRS, 1 Abovian, Sil Plaza, tel. 52-20-69.

BAREV SOUVENIRS, 6 Tamanian p, tel. 56-17-80.

EGOISTE BOUTIQUE, 16 Sarian p, 54-14-00.

GIFT SHOP, 1 Baghramian pta, 58-20-05.

HAYASTANI KANTZER, 1/1 Abovian p, 2nd Floor, tel. 56-17-80.

INKERON, 31 Moskovian p, tel. 53-87-73.

INKERON, 38 Tumanian p, tel. 52-81-53.

IRINEX ART, 7 Abovian p, tel. 56-88-56.

MADE IN ARMENIA DIRECT, Marriott Hotel, tel. 59-92-33.

LUX, 7 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 51-99-19.

SALT SAK (AGHAK-SAK), 3/1 Abovian p, tel. 56-89-31.

SOUVENIRS, 6/1 Tumanian p, tel. 52-52-61.

SOUVENIRS, 3 Arami p, tel. 54-11-74.

SURPRISE GAGS, 40 Mashtots pta, 53-83-47.

THE CLUB (AKUMP), 40 Tumanian p, tel. 53-13-61.

TUFENKIAN SHOWROOM, 21/1 Tumanian p, tel. 52-09-11.

VOCH ART, 2 Arshakuniats pta, tel. 58-16-76.

**Vernissage** is Armenia's largest outdoor handicraft and tools market, with crafts, jewelry, carpet, embroidery, knick knack and souvenirs.

There are a few vendors open everyday but the market really takes off every weekends. This is no longer tourist traffic only; locals crowd stalls for discount jewelry, tools, furnishing and house wares. There is even a pet area. Located in the eastern arm of Boulevard Park, between Republic Square Metro (Nalbandian) and the Vartan Mamikonian Statue in Ring Park (Khanjian p.). For more see [Shopping: Vernissage](#), p. 91.



#### CARPETS, RUGS

ARMEN CARPET, 9 Kimiagortsneri p, tel. 44-86-61.

CARPETS, tel. 58-25-65.

EDEM, 41 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-32-50.

GABEH CARPETS, 28 Tumanian, tel. 52-07-87.

HEMAG'S CARPETS, 25a Nalbandian p, tel. 52-13-55.

MAGIC CARPETS, 12a Malkhasiants p, tel. 24-99-60.

MEK, Charbakh, tel. 46-35-64.

NIKO, 16 Nikogayos Tigranian p, tel. 28-44-88.

PARISIAN CARPETS, 3 Vasgen Sarkisian p, tel. 52-36-44.

SALT SACK, 3/1 Abovian p, tel. 56-89-31.

TUFENKIAN, 21/1 Tumanian p, tel. 52-09-11.



#### 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.

TREASURES OF ARMENIA, 1 Abovian p, upstairs, tel. 52-77-69, UL: [www.ninacouture.com](http://www.ninacouture.com).

TUFENKIAN SHOWROOM, 21/1 Tumanian p, tel. 52-09-11.

#### 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.

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 than 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.

**Disclaimer** I take no responsibility for the firms or persons listed herein, nor do I recommend or advise 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 APAHOVAGRAKAN, 1 Charents p, tel. 57-51-18, URL: [www.arajin.am/eng/index1.htm](http://www.arajin.am/eng/index1.htm). is a local travelers and medical insurance provider.

"DIAGNOSTIKA" JSC, 6/1 Markarian St., Achapniak, Yerevan-73, Armenia, tel. 34-32-47, 28-74-11, fax: 28-74-11, email: [haik@diagnost.arminco.com](mailto: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.



### MEDICAL EVACUATIONS

**MEDEVAC**, 18 Baghramian pta, tel. 52-46-61, +(374-1) 52-16-11

**SOS INTERNATIONAL**, 15 rue Lombard, 1205 Geneva, Switzerland, tel. +( 22-36-333 or 22-47-6161), US Toll free +1 (800) 523-8930, telex: 427 172-SOS SACH), is the largest and best known medical evacuation insurance company for the CIS. Contact them for advance insurance before you come. Others include

**JETFLIGHT FINNISH AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE**, tel. (358-0) 822-766, 684-07978, telex: 122-520 JETFL SF; fax: (358-0) 829-2203);

**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 77-34-58. is the US Embassy local Physician, based in the Internal and Intensive Care Unit of the Malatia 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 Mashtots, which sells quality medications at almost wholesale prices.

**911 PHARMACY CHAIN**, 36 Tigran Mets pta (tel. 58-14-54), 82 Hanrapetutian p (tel. 58-51-41), 11 Azatutian 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](http://www.natalipharm.am).

**PHARM ARS+ (24-HOUR DRUGSTORE #25)**, 10 Kievian p, tel. 27-12-62, 27-13-90, URL: [www.pharmars.am](http://www.pharmars.am).

**PHARM TRUST**, 13 Moskovian p, tel. 54-34-14, 54-77-26, 54-40-79.

**TRIOFARM DRUGSTORE**, 46-1 Abovian p, tel. 54-59-48.

### EMERGENCY

**YEREVAN CITY EMERGENCY AMBULANCE SERVICE**, 40 Dzorap p. For patient transportation & mass casualties (dial 103 emergency service). Contact: Levon Grigorian - chief doctor (tel. 53-66-12, 53-92-53), Nuneh Zhamkochian (tel. 53-92-21).

**EMERGENCY / TRAUMA PHYSICIAN: EREBUNI MEDICAL CENTER**, 14 Titogradian p, tel. 47-35-72, 47-24-00. Contact: Armen Charchian Armen, 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. 63-89-04, 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, 22-65-86 (office.)

**EUROPEAN MEDICAL CENTER**, 3/1 Vazgen Sargsian p, Tel. 54-00-03, 54-05-40, 54-09-40, email: [emc\\_ap2002@yahoo.com](mailto:emc_ap2002@yahoo.com), URL: [www.emcmos.ru](http://www.emcmos.ru).

**HOSPITAL # 8, 7 Nersisian p**, tel. 28-38-37, 28-58-09.

**INTERNAL MEDICINE & INTENSIVE CARE: MALATIA MEDICAL CENTER**, 28A Daniel Varujan p. Contact: Dr. Armen Piruzian (US Embassy local Physician, tel. 77-30-79 or 77-34-58), Dr. Andranik Mshetsian, Intensive Care (tel. 77-34-58). Both speak English.

**MIKAEIAN INSTITUTE OF SURGERY**, 9 Hasratian p, tel. 28-17-90, email: [surgery@netsys.am](mailto:surgery@netsys.am), URL: <http://www.medlib.am/mikaelian/index.html>.

**NORK-MARASH MEDICAL CENTER** (13 Armen Armenakian p, tel. 65-58-20, 65-09-71, 65-59-30, email: [heart@nmmc.am](mailto:heart@nmmc.am), [cca@arminco.com](mailto:cca@arminco.com), URL: [www.nmmc.am](http://www.nmmc.am), is located in Nork region, with departments the in treatment of intestinal and infectious diseases.

**NAIRI MEDICAL CENTER**, 21 Paronian p, tel. 53-75-21, URL: [www.nairimed.am](http://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.



### CLINICS



## 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 offing.

### HOTELS/MOTELS

#### CENTER ▲

##### Moderate

**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 and tourists alike. 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](mailto: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 Kievian 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

**PAREV DOON BED & BREAKFAST**, 11 Aigestan p, house # 71 tel. 55-99-85, 55-55-43, email: [parev@arminco.com](mailto:parev@arminco.com), URL: [www.parev.am](http://www.parev.am) is located near the Medical Institute, entrance from Mkhitar Heratzi Street, in a warren of streets and alleys. The B&B has room for 8 people, bath, air conditioning. Rooms are basic with SGL/DBL/TRP/QUAD at 22,000/26,000/30,000/34,000 AMD.

**UNIVERSITY GUEST HOUSE**, 52 Mashtots pta, tel. 56-00-03, 56-24-15, 54-42-80, 54-42-81, fax 56-24-16, email: [ysugh@xter.net](mailto:ysugh@xter.net), is located near the Matenadaran at the northern end of Mashtots, 5-7 minutes from Opera Square/Cascade. The dorm is meant for groups only from approved organizations (academic, scientific), but sometimes

allows walk-ins if they are not busy. SGL/DBL/LUX at 15,000/23,500/29,500 AMD includes tax and breakfast.

##### Moderate-Expensive

**AUA SUITES at HYEBUSINESS**, 8 Hanrapetutian, URL: [www.hybusiness.com](http://www.hybusiness.com), tel. 56-75-67, 58-04-22, fax: 54-31-31, is a hotel and guest house for AUA. Rooms are suites, newly renovated with all amenities. All suites are DBL at 25,000./40,000/45,000/55,000/65,000 AMD.

**HOV HOTEL**, 29 Paronian 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.

**SENIOR HOTEL**, 26 Vazgen Sargisian p, tel. 54-15-55, 58-18-04 (Director), fax: 52-56-84, is smack dab in the middle of town, which is about the best you can say for it, given its basement setting and frayed look. The rooms are used by both overnight and hourly trade, basically clean and staff is friendly and helpful. Overlook what's going on in the next room for cheap digs in the exact center of the city with DBL/TRP/LUX at 20,000/25,000/35,000 AMD including breakfast.



**SHIRAK HOTEL**, 13a Khorenatsi p, tel. 52-99-15, fax 58-35-93, email: [shirak\\_hotel@cornet.am](mailto:shirak_hotel@cornet.am), URL: [www.shirakhotel.com](http://www.shirakhotel.com), is located in a quiet neighborhood 3 minutes from Republic Square facing English Park/Children's Park. Rooms are basic and priced according to the hotel location, not their value. Complicated pricing which

includes unrenovated room DBLs at €40/56/70 and renovated DBLs at 80/88/120 includes breakfast. Renovated rooms are not worth the excessive charge. CC

##### Expensive

**ANI PLAZA HOTEL**, 19 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 58-95-00, fax 56-53-43, email: [info@anihotel.com](mailto:info@anihotel.com), URL: [www.anihotel.com](http://www.anihotel.com), is in a convenient spot, just off of Abovian p, an easy 5-10 minute walk to most central spots. It is also a favorite of tour groups, which is a plus or minus depending on your preferences. Rooms on the Sayat Nova side face the center (upper floors get a view of Mt. Ararat), and amenities include balconies, air-conditioning, laundry/dry cleaning, fitness center, on-site currency exchange, taxi, concierge, travel agency, gift shop. There are also conference and banqueting facilities. Non-smoking rooms are available. SGL/DBL/Bus SGL/Bus DBL/STE at 38,000/46,000/62,000/76,000/99,000 AMD, includes breakfast and lunch.

**ARARAT HOTEL**, 7 Grigor Lusavorich p, tel. 51-00-00, fax 51-00-01, email: [info@ararathotel.am](mailto:info@ararathotel.am), [sales@ararathotel.am](mailto:sales@ararathotel.am), URL: [www.ararathotel.am](http://www.ararathotel.am), is located on a busy street near the French, Italian & Russian Embassies, Circus and English Park. It is an easy 10 minute stroll to H'raparak, 15-10 minutes to Opera Square. All rooms are deluxe with Satellite TV, mini-bar, Telephone, free internet, lap-top rentals, fully equipped bathrooms with heated flooring, climate control, king size beds. No-smoking rooms available (not always enforced), business center, conference halls with AV equipment. SGL/DBL/FAMILY/STE/LUX STE at 49,500/103,500/69,750/139,500/229,500 AMD



**ARMENIA MARRIOTT HOTEL**, Republic Square, tel. 59-90-00, 59-90-02, fax 59-90-01, email:

[Armenia.Marriott@hotelmail.r.am](mailto:Armenia.Marriott@hotelmail.r.am), URL: [www.marriott.com/EVNMNC](http://www.marriott.com/EVNMNC), is located on Republic Square, in the thick of the busiest traffic circle in Yerevan and what some consider the heart of the city. Billed as a five star hotel, I couldn't help but notice little flaws and service lapses that would detract from the same rating in the west. Still luxurious by local standards. Rooms include business hookups (voice mail, data ports), cable/satellite TV, in-room movies, minibar, climate control, iron, hairdryer, in-room safe. Services include laundry valet, room service, Hotel Wi-Fi and high speed internet in all rooms. SGL/DBL/STE/EXE/Jr. STE/VP STE/Pres STE at 60,000/ 66,000/ 76,000/ 83,000/ 175000/ 265,000/ 485,000 AMD. Breakfast and 20% tax not included. CC

**HOTEL ASTAFIAN**, 5/1 Abovian p, tel. 52-11-11, 54-11-11, 56-45-72, fax: 56-45-72, email: [astafian@netsys.am](mailto:astafian@netsys.am), URL: [www.astafian.com](http://www.astafian.com), has rooms in the large building that also houses Alen-Elen Disco. Rooms are basically clean though a little tatty, smoky and overpriced with SGL/DBL/LUX at \$80-100/120/130.

**AVIATRANS HOTEL**, 4 Abovian p, tel. 56-72-28, 56-72-26, 56-72-30, 58-41-74, 58-41-39, 58-41-50, fax 58-44-42, email: [hotel@aviatrans.am](mailto:hotel@aviatrans.am), URL: [www.aviatrans.am](http://www.aviatrans.am), is just 3 minutes from Republic Square off of historic Abovian street. 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@jans.am](mailto:hotelbass@jans.am), URL: [www.bass.am](http://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 Barekamutiun). Rooms have balconies looking onto Mt. Ararat, satellite TV, International phone, minibar, complimentary fruit baskets. SGL/DBL/Jr. STE/Sr. STE/LUX at 32,000/ 36,000/44,500/48,500/56,000 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](mailto:info@bella.am), URL: [www.bella.am](http://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/DEL at \$60/70/200, includes breakfast.



**CONGRESS HOTEL**, 1 Italia p, tel. 58-00-95, fax 52-22-24, email: [congress@arminco.com](mailto:congress@arminco.com), URL: [www.congresshotelyerevan.com](http://www.congresshotelyerevan.com), has 126 rooms in a large building overlooking English park and Shahumian Park/Square. it is a 3 minute walk to Republic Square, 15 to Opera. Rooms are clean and air-conditioned, with TV and minibar. Services include laundry, fitness center and outdoor swimming pool. SGL/DBL/LUX at 29,700/39,000/48,000 AMD. Breakfast (3500 AMD) not included. CC

**EREBUNI HOTEL**, 26/1 Nalbandian, tel. 58-05-05, 56-49-93, fax: 58-03-30, [info@erebunihotel.am](mailto:info@erebunihotel.am), [www.erebunihotel.am](http://www.erebunihotel.am), behind H'raparak (Republic) Square, is in the process of total renovation, with about 32 rooms open for the 2007 season. Rooms are furnished gaudily with "Romanian furniture", with TV, Internet connection, mini bar, a/c, bath and direct phone. The whole thing still feels a little cheap, which is where the hotel started and what it gave the city—cheap digs. Not sure it can compete at these prices with SGL/DBL/BUS/DEL/FAMILY-STE at 26,000/32,000/40,000/50,000/65,000 AMD includes buffet breakfast.

**EUROPE HOTEL**, 32/38 Hanrapetutium p, tel. 54-60-60, fax 54-60-50, email: [sales@europohotel.am](mailto:sales@europohotel.am), URL: [www.europohotel.am](http://www.europohotel.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 bobby and a bar. SGL/DBL/TWIN/Jr. STE/Exe STE at 31,000/37,000/37,000/54,000/66,000 includes tax and breakfast. CC



**GEGHAMA MOTEL**, Hrazdan Gorge near Kievian 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).

**HOTEL YEREVAN (GOLDEN TULIP)**, 14 Abovian p, tel. 58-94-00, fax 52-82-91, email: [info@goldentuliphotelyerevan.com](mailto:info@goldentuliphotelyerevan.com), URL: [www.goldentuliphotelyerevan.com](http://www.goldentuliphotelyerevan.com) is located on historic Abovian p. opposite Kino Moscow and opposite the Russian Stanislavski 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/DBL LUX/Jr. STE/Sr. STE/VP

STE/Pres STE at 54,000/64,000/72,000/83,000/99,000/235,000/32 9,000 AMD and stingy with breakfast included for only the last two suites. Tax not included.



**HRAZDAN HOTEL**, 72 Dzorapi 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](mailto:info@hotelhrazdan.am), [hrazdan@aviatrans.am](mailto:hrazdan@aviatrans.am), URL: [www.hotelhrazdan.am](http://www.hotelhrazdan.am), is located off of Proshian (BBQ) street overlooking the Hrazdan gorge and next to Nairi Clinic. Not conveniently located, the hotel is a 15-20 minute walk to Republic Square or Opera. The hotel was the only working hotel with amenities during the dark days of the 90s, a feat it hasn't kept up with in its latest incarnation, with surprisingly cheap interiors and furnishings in its standard rooms. Has great views of the Hrazdan Gorge and Ararat on two sides. Amenities include international telephone & fax service, laundry service, satellite TV, Internet, parking. SGL/DBL/LUX/STE at 25,000/40,000/45,000/50,000 AMD tax and breakfast included.

**METROPOL HOTEL**, 2/2 Mashtots pta, tel. 51-07-31, 51-07-00, fax 51-07-68, 51-07-02, email: [metropol@metropol.am](mailto:metropol@metropol.am), URL: [www.metropol.am](http://www.metropol.am) is awkwardly situated at the point where Mashtots pta and Khorh'rderan p. meet, and is a 15 minute walk from Republic Square, 25 minutes to Opera. Rooms have all the amenities, with focus on luxury (slippers and bathrobe are included), with questionable taste. Rooms have great views of the Hrazdan gorge and on one side Mt. Ararat. Hotel has swimming pool, sauna and gym. SGL/Jr STE/Sr STE/APT/Pres STE at 36,000/56,000/60,000/72,000/110,000 AMD. Tax and breakfast included. CC

**PRAHA HOTEL**, 22 Tumanian p, tel. 58-89-89, email: [info@praha.am](mailto:info@praha.am), URL: [www.praha.am](http://www.praha.am), has 6 clean rooms with a/c, TV, Internet connection, security and room service. The small hotel is part of a complex that includes a small bar/restaurant and billiards. Rooms normally rent by the hour starting at 15,000 per 4 hours, but they have 24 hour rates with SGL starting at 30,000 AMD, and DBL from 35,000 to 45,000.

**HOTELS NORK** ▲

Nork is reached by taxi (15 minutes from Opera Square) or mass transit (B 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**

**NAIRI HOTEL**, 250 A. Armenakian 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.

**Moderate**

**VILLA DES ROSES**, 123 Armenakian p, tel. 65-31-38, 65-31-25, is a wonderful boutique hotel newly renovated with a lovely front and back garden. The hotel's twenty rooms are spacious, clean and comfortable, with TV, Phone, 24 hour hot and cold water and minibar. Staff friendly and helpful, food quite good in the café. This is how hotels should be. DBL starting at 27,000 AMD, with LUX at 45,000 AMD.



**Expensive**

**ARMA HOTEL**, 275 Norki Aiginer p, tel. 54-60-00, 52-27-79, 58-18-43, fax 54-41-66, email: [hotel@arma.am](mailto:hotel@arma.am), URL: [www.arma.am](http://www.arma.am), has great views of downtown Yerevan and Mt. Ararat on clear days. The hotel is located in Nork, about 15 minutes from Opera Square by taxi. Rooms are clean, with balconies, satellite TV, some bathrooms with Jacuzzi, mini bar, laundry service, direct international line, laptop computer line, climate control. Also has business center. SGL/DBL/Jr STE/Sr STE at 35,000/40,000/47,000/55,000 AMD.

**TUFENKIAN AVAN VILLA YEREVAN HOTEL**, 13 Nork Marash p, bldg. 16, tel. 54-78-88, 54-27-07, fax 54-78-77, email: [hotels@tufenkian.am](mailto:hotels@tufenkian.am), URL: [www.tufenkianheritage.com/hotels.html](http://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 \$20 per second person and \$20 full board. Taxes and breakfast not included. CC



**Moderate**

**REGINEH HOTEL**, 235/1 Norki Aiginer, tel. 65-40-20, 65-59-29, 65-16-19, fax 65-59-39, email: [reservation@hotelregineh.am](mailto:reservation@hotelregineh.am), URL: [www.hotelregineh.am](http://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

**HOTELS NORTH OF CENTER** ▲

**ARABKIR** ▲

**Expensive**

**GOLDEN PALACE HOTEL**, 2/2 Azatutian pta, tel. 21-99-99, fax 21-99-21, email: [info@goldenpalacehotel.am](mailto:info@goldenpalacehotel.am), URL: [www.goldenpalacehotel.am](http://www.goldenpalacehotel.am), was built inside HaghTanaki (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



**Inexpensive- Moderate**

**AREVIK MOTEL & RESTAURANT**, Babaiyan p, tel. 25-18-71, 25-07-26, 093-75-97-22, off of Azatutian (just around the corner from Golden Tulip, DD 40.19817 x 44.52138, elev. 1140m), is a pleasant surprise. The motel is set inside HaghTanak park, but unlike the Golden Tulip, the manager has preserved the trees and greenery, enhancing its charm. The slightly worn but clean rooms are in cottages set inside a dense garden of trees, ferns and greenery, all of it designed to give the impression you are in a forest or jungle. While

this is not for everyone (they also thrive on 6 hour rentals), for anyone seeking value for the money, solitude and greenery outside your room instead of asphalt, this is the place to try. Right on the park's lake, near the amusement park and Mama Armenia, the motel is handy to public transport and is a 10 minute drive from center. Rooms have a private porch, TV, and bath. Staff friendly and helpful. All rooms DBL, with DBL/DBL LUX at 14,000/18,000 AMD.

**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.

**Inexpensive**

**ARABKIR HOTEL**, 54 Komitas pass, tel. 23-37-70, has a few rooms to let in a hotel otherwise occupied by refugees from Azerbaijan. Lobby is depressing, smell rank, Soviet style rooms with barely rustic amenities are still overpriced with DBL/LUX at 10,000/15,000. Not recommended for women.

**Zoo – Water World** ▲

**Expensive**

**VALENSIA HOTEL & RESORT (WATER WORLD)**, 40 Miasnikian p, tel. 52-40-00, 54-35-73, fax 54-35-71, email: [valensiahotel@valensiahotel.com](mailto:valensiahotel@valensiahotel.com), URL: [www.valensiahotel.com/index-eng.html](http://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 is a series of cottage looking rooms with climate control, international phone service, satellite TV, hair dryer and minibar. The place is already looking worn, and caters primarily to the local trade looking for a water weekend in the capital. SGL/DBL/Sr STE/Pres STE at 36,000/45,000/65,000/99,000 AMD includes tax and breakfast. CC

**PARK HOTEL**, 59, Miasnikian pta, tel. 24-11-30, 24-11-40, is a great disappointment; situated in an ideal location (opposite Water World), and set into a tree grove by the Botanical Garden, the small hotel is poorly kept and keeps busy with by-the-hour trade. They have 4 run down rooms for tourists, though this would be one of my last choices to stay. Not recommended for women travelers. DBL/Jr. STE/DEL/Jr. STE/ Sr. STE at 20,000/22,500/30,000/37,500 AMD.

**GREEN PALACE HOTEL**, 57 Miasnikian pta, tel. 24-00-26, email: [hotel@GREEN.am](mailto:hotel@GREEN.am), URL: [www.green.am](http://www.green.am), is next door to Park, and a

succeeds where Park Hotel fails. It has 15 rooms in a small compound off of the Botanical gardens, opposite Water World, about 10 minutes by taxi to Opera Square (B 5, 10, 17, 22, 46, Minivan 9, 15, 20, 28, 54, 55, 91). Compound is in a pretty stand of trees. Hotel has its share of tête-à-tête visitors but welcomes tourists. Rooms have extraordinary retro-kitsch decor, with a/c, cable TV, international phone. Services include airport transfer, massage, tours, laundry. DBL/Sr STE/DEL/STE/LUX/Pres STE at 25,000/30,000/35,000/40,000/45,000/240,000 AMD.

**GRAND PALACE 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 be comparable to Green Palace and Valensia Hotels.

**Arinj** ▲

**DGHIK HOTEL COMPLEX**, 38 Ajarian, tel. 61-69-41, 62-69-61, 093-70-78-18, email: [dghjak@mail.ru](mailto:dghjak@mail.ru), is located at the north end of Yerevan off of the Sevan Hwy, just south of Arinj village gate. Though far from center (taxi is 10-15 minutes to Opera Square, Arinj/Abovian minivans), the complex has great views of Ararat and is a good spot if you want to escape the stifling heat of the center, or stop en route to explore Kotaik and Sevan. An upscale tête-à-tête hotel with small but clean rooms with DBL/DEL/LUX at 25,000/35,000/45,000 AMD.

**HOTELS NORTHWEST OF CENTER** ▲

**3rd Giugh** ▲

**Expensive**

**LATAR COMPLEX**, 58 5th p, Silikian Neighborhood (3rd Village), tel. 31-90-34, 39-47-59, email: [info@latar.am](mailto:info@latar.am), URL: [www.latar.am](http://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.



**TERJAN HOTEL**, 39/1 5th p, Silikian Neighborhood (3rd Village), tel. 39-03-88, 39-96-99, fax 39-86-99, email: [terjhot@arminco.com](mailto:terjhot@arminco.com), URL: [www.terjanhotel.am](http://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, ginetun 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 DBL/DBL/DBL/LUX at 28,000/36,000/41,000/50,000 AMD. CC



**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.

**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/DBL starting at 10,000 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: [anazo@web.am](mailto:anazo@web.am), URL: [www.areg.am](http://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. SGL/DBL at 14,500 / 21,700 breakfast included.

**Expensive**

**SIL HOTEL**, 20 Tigran Mets pta, tel. 54-07-08, 54-07-09, fax 54-50-00, email: [silhtl@arminco.com](mailto:silhtl@arminco.com), URL: [www.sil.am/?section=hotel](http://www.sil.am/?section=hotel), is located between the railroad station and Republic Square, in front of Tashir Shopping Mall and Shuka. 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/STE/LUX at 33,000/40,000/47,000/55,000 AMD. Tax and breakfast included. CC

**Erebuni** ▲

**Inexpensive-Moderate**

**WHITE HOUSE HOTEL**, 29 Aivazovski p, Nor Aresh (Erebuni), tel./fax 45-80-88, 49-90-99, email: [info@hotelwh.com](mailto:info@hotelwh.com), URL: [www.hotelwh.com](http://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. 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



**Shengavit** ▲

**Moderate**

**BOLERO HOTEL/MASSAGE**, 17 Bagratuniats 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'rvesh ▲

There are a number of **Restaurants/Hotels** between Yerevan Masiv and J'rvesh. Many cater to wedding parties on the weekends and the dinner crowd the rest of the time. They provide clean, comfortable rooms for eating, tête-à-têtes 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, tête-à-têtes 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 minivan or bus going to Garni (110). DBLs go for 5000 AMD for 5 hours, double your time for overnight at 10,000 AMD.

*MONTE CARLO*, across the road, has several rooms of same quality. Central Yerevan reached by any minivan or bus going to Garni (110). DBLs go for 5000 AMD for 5 hours, double it for overnight at 10,000 AMD.

*VANATUR*, Garni Highway at the End Yerevan sign, has several rooms to let, all are clean and air-conditioned, if a bit noisy downstairs. DBLs go for 5000 AMD for 5 hours, double it for overnight at 10,000 AMD.

*YEREK KHNDZOR*, Garni Hwy, J'rvesh, has rooms to let, talk to manager for overnight. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

*ZHPIT*, Garni Hwy, J'rvesh, has a few rooms for overnights, air-conditioning. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

*HOTEL ELINA*, Garni Hwy, 1 Garni Road, J'rvesh, tel. 091-43-90-96, is trying for the wedding crowd, with private rooms for overnights. DBL at 12,000 AMD is worth the extra fee for the relatively quiet area walled compound.

*RESTAURANT POTOVIK*, Garni Hwy, J'rvesh, does not normally cater to overnights but management can be persuaded if you order twice the standard rate of DBL at 5000 AMD for 5 hours (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

*MASIS RESTAURANT/HOTEL*, Garni Hwy, J'rvesh, on left side of highway has several rooms to let. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

*KHNDZORANOTS RESTAURANT/HOTEL*, Garni Hwy, J'rvesh, has several rooms to let, clean with air-conditioning. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

*ANUSHIK RESTAURANT/HOTEL*, Garni Hwy, J'rvesh, has several clean rooms with air-conditioning. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

*MUSH RESTAURANT/HOTEL*, Garni Hwy, J'rvesh, has several rooms for tourists in its restaurant complex. Can get noisy on weekends. DBL at 10,000-12,000 AMD (breakfast not included), meals average 2000-3000 AMD.

*JOVINEYISA 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.

*VASPURAKAN RESTAURANT/HOTEL*, Garni Hwy, 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, was a great deal when it 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 room is a good deal at 18,000 AMD. Breakfast included.

### B&Bs ▲

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](http://www.bedandbreakfast.am/Lists/Yerevan_List.htm)

*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),

[SEE APARTMENTS FOR OTHER B&B SERVICES \(p. 137\)](#)

### B&B's CENTER

*VILLA DELENDA*, 22 Yeznik Koghbatsi (100 m up Koghbatsi off of Amirian), tel. 545-697, 561-156, tel/fax: 584-574, email: [info@villadelenda.com](mailto:info@villadelenda.com), [family@arminco.com](mailto:family@arminco.com), URL: [www.villadelenda.com](http://www.villadelenda.com), [www.familycarearmenia.org](http://www.familycarearmenia.org), is a delightful find. Located in a side street smack in the heart of the city (less than 10 minutes walk from Republic Square or Opera), this 1906 refurbished building has 6 guest rooms all decorated traditionally. Amenities include en suite bathrooms, a/c and heating, telephone and Wi-Fi. Airport pick up, sightseeing tours and special dinners available separately. The lower level has a breakfast area and handmade crafts shop. Money from the bed & breakfast go to support the Spitak Art School and also the new Ceramic Art School in Giumri. SGL/DBL/TRP at 20,000/30,000/35,000 AMD, extra guests 8000 AMD each.

*ANAHIT STEPANIAN'S B&B*, 5 Sayat Nova, apt 25, 5th floor, tel. 52-75-89, 091-50-20-71, email:

[stepanahit@yahoo.com](mailto: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/Terian near Moskovian), tel. 52-52-15, has 5 rooms. Speaks Italian.

*GUYANEH SIMONYAN'S B&B*, 5 Sayat-Nova Ave, apt. #22 tel. 52-75-88, has 3 guest rooms, bath, hot water, TV, telephone.

*GOHAR'S B&B*, 8 Marx (Khorenatsi) p, apt. 23, tel. 58-56-65, has apartments on 4th and 5th floors.

*HASMIK'S B&B*, 9 Aghaiyan p. (between Abovian/Terian near Moskovian), apt. 10, tel. 62-04-72, 56-31-41, 58-78-31, has three rooms, speaks English.

*IRENE'S B&B*, 24 Sarian p, apt. #6, tel. 58-07-34, 091-35-73-44, email: [chaboyan@yahoo.com](mailto:chaboyan@yahoo.com), has two bedrooms, hot water, shower, washing machine, TV, DVD player. Speaks French, English. SGL/DBL at 8000/13,000 AMD

*KARINEH'S B&B*, 20 Amirian p, apt. 19, tel. 53-61-61, has 3 rooms and hot water. Speaks English.

*KARINEH'S B&B*, 35 Pushkin p, apt. 17, tel. 53-08-49, has 2 bedrooms, kitchen, dining, bath with hot water, TV.

*MAMIKON'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.

*NELLI'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.

*NSHAN'S B&B*, 31 Pushkin p, apt. 12, tel. 53-37-76 has a 3 room apartment with hot water.

*NUNEH'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, two baths.

*RUZANNA'S B&B*, 16 Tumanian p, apt. 2, tel. 58-38-36 has three rooms, hot water, computer, internet and garden.

*SOFIA'S B&B*, 25 Moskovian p, tel. 56-00-72, has 2 bedrooms, hot water, kitchen, dining room, TV.



**SONA'S B&B**, 10/1 Zarubian (old Plekhanov, across from Khachaturian museum, enter from Baghramian) p, apt. 10, tel. 52-79-49, has 1 room, 24 hours hot water, TV, speaks English.

**SUZAN'S B&B**, Nalbandian /Tumanian pts, tel. 26-26-39, 093-23-67-04, has 1 bedroom, living room, kitchen and bath at \$15-20 a day.

#### B&Bs OUTSIDE CENTER

**BABKEN'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.

**KARA'S B&B**, 7a Verfel p. (Nor Kilikia), tel. 52-40-56, has 7 rooms in a 2-story house, three bathrooms. 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](mailto:sunsetarm@yahoo.com), URL: [www.bedandbreakfast.am](http://www.bedandbreakfast.am), is in Kanaker-Zeitun District far from center (take any bus/minivan going up Azatutian and get off at Komitas/David Anghagt overpass) and has 2 bedrooms with telephone, computer, email and internet access, TV/VCR, minibar and optional transportation service. A little steep with SGL/DBL/APT at 14,000/19,000/22,000 AMD.

**SUZAN'S B&B**, 8 Raffi p (Bangladesh district), tel. 26-26-39, 093-23-67-04, is very far from center (30 minutes by bus), and has 5 bedrooms in a 3-story house, living area, kitchen, 2 baths and garage. High at \$15-20 a day.

#### APARTMENTS ▲

Most are self-catering, some offer catering at extra charge. Some have minimum stay requirements, but worth asking for shorter stays anyway; if space is available, they can accommodate. At some of these rates, even paying for a full week is cheaper than a few days in a hotel. All can arrange long-term leasing.

**SARYAN SUITES** [www.dp.am/apartments/](http://www.dp.am/apartments/)

#### YEREVAN APARTMENTS

[www.yerevanapartments.com/listingscontactus.html](http://www.yerevanapartments.com/listingscontactus.html)

#### HYUR SERVICE

[www.hyurservice.com/gallery/all\\_apartments.php](http://www.hyurservice.com/gallery/all_apartments.php)

**YEREVAN RENTALS** [www.yerevanrentals.com/](http://www.yerevanrentals.com/)

#### MENUA TOURS

[www.menuatours.com/Menua%20apartments/main.htm](http://www.menuatours.com/Menua%20apartments/main.htm)

#### PORTFOLIO APARTMENTS

[www.portfolio.am/eng/index.php?p=apartments](http://www.portfolio.am/eng/index.php?p=apartments)

#### VISIT ARMENIA

[www.visitarm.com/apartmentrent.html](http://www.visitarm.com/apartmentrent.html)

**SEVEN DAYS** [www.welcomearmenia.com](http://www.welcomearmenia.com)

**TATIAN'S TRAVEL**, 14 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-53-67, email: [tatiantr@netsys.am](mailto:tatiantr@netsys.am), URL: [www.tatiantravel.am](http://www.tatiantravel.am)

#### FOOD & DRINK ▲

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#### 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 lowliest bistros and sidewalk cafés offering full course meals and sidewalk joints duking 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.



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 they have made a deal with, and they might not be the best on the block. 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**, 19/4 Dzorap p, tel. 53-77-54, off 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. \$-\$\$

##### ARMENIAN

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.

**\*AMROTS**, 122 Antariayin p (near top of Cascade), tel. 52-52-20. Good view and food, very expensive. \$\$\$

**ARAGAST**, 41 Isahakian p, email: [smeloian@yahoo.com](mailto:smeloian@yahoo.com), tel. 54-55-00, 54-22-54. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**ARARAT**, Republic Square, Government bldg. # 2, tel. 52-79-33, 52-73-82, 56-76-34. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**ARBAT**, 39 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 55-32-20. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**ARMENIAN BRASSERIE**, *Marriott Hotel*, Republic Square, tel. 59-90-00, 59-92-48, email: [armenia.marriott@hotelmail.r.am](mailto:armenia.marriott@hotelmail.r.am), URL: [www.marriott.com/EVNMCMC](http://www.marriott.com/EVNMCMC). Fair food but expensive at \$26 per person. \$\$\$

**ARMENIAN CUISINE**, 42 Mashtots pta, tel. 58-02-68. \$\$

**\*\*ARTASHI MOT**, Yervand Kochar p (across from Cathedral), tel. 55-32-22, 57-32-22, has terrific grilled dishes and reputedly the best veal in town. Variety of grilled kebabs and vegetables (mushrooms). Try a portion of their steaming hot stew called "Piti.". \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**BASS**, 3/1 Aigedzor p, Bass Hotel, tel. 22-26-38, 22-13-53, email: [hotelbass@lans.am](mailto:hotelbass@lans.am), URL: [www.bass.am](http://www.bass.am). Armenian food served in traditional ginetun. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**\*\*DOLMAMA**, 10 Pushkin p, tel. 56-89-31, 56-13-54, E-mail: [dolmam@arminco.com](mailto:dolmam@arminco.com), still one of the best. Armenian nouveau menus in the city. Lovely atmosphere. Reservations suggested on weekends. Expensive but save to splurge here; meals average 15,000 AMD per person. \$\$\$

**EASTERN CUISINE**, 16 Komitas pta, tel. 27-16-20, 22-07-84, has been a favorite for years, serving Middle Eastern dishes and desserts. \$\$\$

**GETAR**, 28 Khorenatsi p, tel. 52-67-99. \$\$\$

**GUSAN**, 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 Mashtots), with a large menu featuring primarily Armenian but also Russian and Continental dishes.



**OLD ERIVAN ("HIN ERIVAN")**, 2 Northern pta at Tumanian, tel. 58-88-55. This place vies with Our Village for most Disneyesque of the theme eateries. The multi-story restaurant is stuffed with carpets and folk stuff with wait staff dressed in traditional costumes. The food is only so-so and portions stingy, but every Diaspora Armenian and tour bus seems to stop here at least once; a right of passage. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**OLYMPIA**, 56 Barbuis p, tel. 27-74-24, 27-18-50, 27-18-26, email: [info@olympia.am](mailto:info@olympia.am), URL: [www.olympia.am](http://www.olympia.am). Armenian and International specialties in hotel restaurant. \$\$\$

**OUR VILLAGE ("MER GIUGH")**, 5 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 54-87-00, located on the other side of Opera from Old Erivan, Our Village was the first Armenian theme restaurant in Yerevan, and its age is showing. The space can be claustrophobic as people crowd the room and the acoustics are deafening. Food & atmosphere was good at one time. Last we went it was disappointing; no live music or dancing, the waiter tried to short-change us and the food a big let-down. Too much success. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**SHIRVAN**, 32 Tumanian, tel. 58-25-65, 091-35-22-75 (Mihran), serves Armenian and International food in a small uniquely designed space with carpets. There are only four tables, seating a maximum of 20 people. Excellent nouveau-Armenian cuisine. \$\$

#### WESTERN ARMENIAN

**\*\*AYAS-CILICIA**, 78 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 54-88-08, good food, moderate prices. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**\*\*CHEZ GAROS**, 48 Pushkin at Mashtots (take steps to lower floor, no sign). Western Armenian food, almost Mediterranean. \$\$\$



#### GEORGIAN, CAUCASIAN

**\*\*CAUCASUS TAVERN**, 82 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 56-11-77, 56-26-14, email: [caucasus@arminco.com](mailto:caucasus@arminco.com), good food in a folk-like setting. Can be pricey if you let the server snuggest. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**GENATSVALE**, 7 Kievian p, tel. 27-79-99, has Georgian fare in its small space. Good food, to go or stay in. \$\$\$

**\*\*KHINKALI**, 21/1 Tumanian, tel. 58-23-52, is another great find in Yerevan. This spiffy little restaurant serves Georgian khinkali (a kind of ravioli without the sauce) and side salads at reasonable prices. The restaurant wisely restricts its menu to a few items and focuses on quality. Choose from spiced meat or cheese khinkali (150 AMD each; most cannot eat more than 4) that is boiled (my favorite) or fried. ₼-

**KHINKALI**, Arshakuniats pta next to Petak, has tasty khinkali at 100 AMD each, whole in the wall joint, but oh so good! ₼-

**LAHMADJO-A-NOTS**, 85 Hanrapetutian p, across from Pizza Tun, is in a downstairs space and serves tasty lahmadjo, a Caucasian dish consisting of spicy ground meat spread over a slice of paper-thin dough and baked in an oven. Lahmadjo is cheap (100-300 AMD) and filling, drunk down with large servings of *tan* ("tahn", yogurt mixed with water). Very good. ₼

**MIMINO**, 7 Manukian p, 57-33-44, 57-88-85, has good Georgian fare in a traditional setting. Very

tasty satsivi, khachapuri and other traditional dishes. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**\*\*THE COLOR OF POMEGRANATE (N'RAN GUIIN)**, 15 Tumanian Street, tel. +374 10 585 204, [www.nran-guyn.narod.ru](http://www.nran-guyn.narod.ru)). Armenian and Georgian cuisine. Wonderful food in intimate setting. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

#### AMERICAN, MEXICAN

**AVENUE STEAKHOUSE**, 33 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 54-14-74. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

**CACTUS**, 42 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-99-39, 53-63-99, pseudo-Mexican food in faux-Mexican surroundings. There is nothing Mexican about this food, except the coincidence of some of the same ingredients. I'm die hard Tex-Mex, this is not. \$\$\$

**CITY DINER**, 1/3 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 54-24-40, URL: [www.citydineryerevan.com](http://www.citydineryerevan.com), has real burgers, fries and shakes in a diner! A bit of down home USA eating in the heart of the Near East. \$\$\$

**SQUARE ONE**, 1/3 Abovian p, tel. 54-04-14, email: [eat@squareone.am](mailto:eat@squareone.am), URL: [www.squareone.am](http://www.squareone.am), serves Continental/American food in its indoor-outdoor café. The Onion Rings are worth the trip alone. \$\$\$



#### ASIAN

**BREEZE THAI FOOD**, 23 Nalbandian p, tel. 58-39-82, has pretty good Thai food in its small space behind the stork fountain. \$\$

**BEIJING**, 9 Tumanian p, tel. 52-78-22, is yet another attempt to introduce Chinese cuisine to the local palate. It may have finally worked; they are two years old and still working (though they

always seem empty). Good food, if chintzy on portions and a little too high for what you get. \$\$-\$\$\$

**\*\*BUKHARA**, 9 Tumanian (next to Beijing Chinese), tel. 52-13-31, has good Uzbek food in a traditionally decorated restaurant. Try the lamb pilaf and their form of khinkali, lamb, beef and chicken Manti. I guess it is possible to go whole hog and spend a lot, but we had liberal portions of dumplings, salad, pilaf and beer and spent 6000 AMD for three people. \$-\$\$

**CHINA TOWN**, 40 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-99-45, 53-99-46, 53-99-48, is in a great location, serving basic Chinese food. \$\$-\$\$\$

**GREAT WALL**, 4 proshian p, tel. 26-10-07.

**HONG KONG**, 3 Grigor Lusavorich p, tel. 56-57-99, serves its Chinese in a red-rimmed room. \$\$

**LOTUS**, 33 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 52-24-63 / 091-20-82-44. \$\$-\$\$\$

**NEW DEHLI**, 29 Tumanian p, tel. 58-12-25, has authentic Indian dishes in their small lower level restaurant. The Puri bread is to die for. \$\$-\$\$\$

**SAMURAI SUSHI**, 2 Baghranian pta, at Place de France, tel. 58-56-70, serves traditional Sushi in its small space made to order. Japanese chefs. \$\$-\$\$\$

**SHANGHAI**, 28 Khorenatsi, tel. 58-99-35, fair Chinese at moderate prices. \$-\$\$

**SHARM EL**, 21 Nalbandian p, tel. 52-86-47, serves Oriental, Thai and European dishes in its small and elegantly designed space with faux stained glass and Michelangelo painting walls. Exclusive wines and Brandies. \$\$\$

**TANDOORI**, 65 Terian p, tel. 58-92-15, email: tandoori@yeayea.com, serves Indian food in its underground space. \$-\$\$

#### CHEAP EATS

Cheap eats are all around town, at street side stands, small cafes and bistros and in the undergrounds for metro stops. As with all cheap eateries, the food may be high on starch and low on nutrition, and you need to check out the hygiene before diving into a pile of fried food.

**\*\*HATSATUN**, 33 Pushkin off of Mashtots (Chinese looking sign), tel. 53-88-20, 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. €-\$



**\*\*KHINKALI**, 21/1 Tumanian, tel. 58-23-52, is another great find in Yerevan. This spiffy little restaurant serves Georgian khinkali (a kind of ravioli without the sauce) and side salads at reasonable prices. The restaurant wisely restricts its menu to a few items and focuses on quality. Choose from spiced meat or cheese khinkali (150 AMD each; most cannot eat more than 4) that is boiled (my favorite) or fried. €-\$

**KHINKALI**, Arshakuniats pta next to Petak, has tasty khinkali at 100 AMD each, whole in the wall joint, but oh so good! €-\$



**LAHMADJO and SHARMA stands** and cafes proliferate throughout the center, on lower Mashtots pta, Tigran Mets pta, Tumanian p. at Terian, Koriun p. near Abovian, upper Abovian p, and near the university. Lahmadjo 100-300 AMD, Sharma 400-600 AMD. €-\$

**CITY MTERKS and BAKERIES and SIDEWALK VENDORS** will have a variety of cheap eats, including **PEROSHKIS** (meat, potato or mushroom stuffed dough fried in oil), **KHACHAPURI** (Georgian pastries stuffed with cheese) and sweet **PONCHIKS** (fried dough filled with sweet cream and dusted with powdered sugar).

**MEAT AND VEGETABLE PASTIES** can be bought at a stand on Mashtots one block south of Pushkin (great mushroom and meat pasties, 150 AMD). **QUEEN BURGER**, Tigran Mets and Khanjian (Ring Park), tel. 56-01-22, email: [info@sil.am](mailto:info@sil.am), started the fast food race with its burgers and fries in imitation of western fast food joints. €-\$

**MR. TOASTER**, 25 Koriun 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. €-\$

**S.F.C. SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN**, 12 Tigran Mets pta, tel. 52-42-32, 52-34-53, has lip-smacking southern fried chicken to grease your stomachs. Better than in the states and cheaper too. €-\$

**S.F.C. SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN**, 14 Isahakian p, tel. 56-22-25, same as its cousin, facing Ring Park, Chamber Hall. €-\$

**SMAK**, 17 Abovian Street, tel.: 56-67-82, has sandwiches and fries from 350 AMD. €-\$

**SMAK SALAD**, 41 Mashtots pta, includes a salad bar with the sandwiches. €-\$

**\*\*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. €-\$

**TASTY TOWN**, 37 Abovian p, tel. 58-57-70, has sandwiches, hot dishes and a potato bar with all the trimmings. Cheap eating at its best. \$

**TACO BELL**, 20 Mashtots pta, is a small two story café with Sharma on the first floor (400-600 AMD) and their own version of Burritos and Tacos upstairs. Get the Burrito—as good as Tex Mex. (400 AMD).

#### CONTINENTAL

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 Sayat Nova pta, , tel. 59-45-31, 58-95-00, email: [info@anihotel.com](mailto:info@anihotel.com), URL: [www.anihotel.com](http://www.anihotel.com). \$\$-\$\$\$

**ASTORIA**, 8 Zakian p, tel. 56-89-21. \$\$

**BARCELONA**, 37 Tumanian, near Ai Leoni & Malkhaz. Spanish, Armenian, American dishes. Interior is très fancy, not sure it is Barcelona, but very nice, with gilded wrought iron designs in ceiling and on walls. A lot of wood. Marble floors. "Barcelona Tea House" sign outside advertises reasonable prices (spas 400 AMD, burger 350 AMD, cheeseburger 400 AMD), which is true but the menu also has expensive courses. Can be \$, can be \$\$\$

**BELLINI**, 3 Amirian p, tel. 54-59-00, 54-54-00, email: [info@bellini.am](mailto:info@bellini.am), URL: [www.bellini.am](http://www.bellini.am). Expensive oligarch restaurant. \$\$\$

**ELEN**, 9 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-42-21, 53-82-87. \$\$-\$\$\$



**GLORIA**, 21/1 Tumanian p, tel. 52-12-57, serves international cuisine to the strains of classical, instrumental and jazz music. \$\$

**L'ORANGE**, 26 Abovian p, 21 Tumanian p, tel. 52-82-93, email: [info@lorange.am](mailto:info@lorange.am), URL: [www.lorange.am](http://www.lorange.am), has some good food in a terrifically modern atmosphere. Continental menu, large assortment of teas and desserts. \$\$-\$\$\$

**MATADOR**, 40 Miasnikian pta, tel. 524000, email: [valensiareservation@xgroup.am](mailto:valensiareservation@xgroup.am), URL: [www.valensiahotel.com](http://www.valensiahotel.com), wide menu of European,

Russian and Armenian dishes, live music. Works 24 hours. \$\$-\$\$\$

**NOY (NOAH)**, 7 Grigor Lusavorich p, Ararat Hotel, tel. 51-00-00, 54-11-00, email: [info@ararathotel.am](mailto:info@ararathotel.am), URL: [www.ararathotel.am](http://www.ararathotel.am),

has a wide menu in the hotel restaurant. \$\$-\$\$\$

**RE-PE-TE**, 15 Tumanian p, tel. 54-48-99, serves international cuisine (read : Armenan and others). \$\$-\$\$\$

**WARSTEINER**, 2/2 Tumanian p, tel. 54-20-10, serves German and European dishes along with its ice-cold German beers. Setting much like a German bier-haus. \$\$-\$\$\$

#### FAMILY – KIDS ORIENTED

**ARLEKIN KIDS CAFÉ-THEATRE**, 31 Moskovian p, tel. 53-95-94. \$\$

**HEKIAT**, 6 Tamanian p, 54-38-00, combines continental food, pay-hall and fairy tale characters. \$\$

**PINOCCHIO**, 19 Terian p, tel. 53-65-99, caters to kids and parents in its space with a play-hall. \$-\$\$

**TUTTI FRUTTI**, 13 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 54-13-13, has international food, play hall and costumed characters. \$-\$\$

**WONDERLAND CAFÉ**, 2 Arshakuniats p, tel. 52-48-36. \$\$

**ZIZIKI BIZIKI**, 62 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 54-59-12, caters to children with continental food and a play-hall. \$-\$\$

#### FAST FOOD

**QUEEN BURGER**, Tigran Mets and Khanjian (Ring Park), tel. 56-01-22, email: [info@sil.am](mailto:info@sil.am), started the fast food race with its burgers and fries in imitation of western fast food joints. €-\$

**S.F.C. SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN**, 12 Tigran Mets pta, tel. 52-42-32, 52-34-53, has lip-smacking southern fried chicken to grease your stomachs. Better than in the states and cheaper too. €-\$

**S.F.C. SOUTHERN FRIED CHICKEN**, 14 Isahakian p, tel. 56-22-25, same as its cousin, facing Ring Park, Chamber Hall. €-\$

**MR. TOASTER**, 25 Koriun 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. €-\$

#### 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. \$\$-\$\$\$

#### ITALIAN

**AI LEONI**, 40 Tumanian Street, tel. 53-08-92, [www.aileoni.am](http://www.aileoni.am), has good pasta and meta dishes in a Venetian setting. Very attentive waiters. Expensive. \$\$\$

**\*\*ANKIUN**, 4 Vardanants p, tel. 51-99-98, has exquisitely cooked dishes in their tiny corner (hence "Ankiun") space. Traditional Italian home cuisine without the fuss. \$\$-\$\$\$

**CUCINA**, Marriott Hotel, tel. 59-92-48, has great Italian food in a hotel restaurant setting. Expensive but 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. \$-\$\$

**RAFFAELLO**, Congress Hotel, 1 Italia p, tel. 58-00-95, serves Italian pastas, fish and meat dishes in the hotel restaurant. Good. \$\$-\$\$\$

#### MEDITERRANEAN, MIDDLE EASTERN

**AGU HAGOP**, 31 Khanjian p, tel. 54-28-42.

**AMAZON (SAYAT-NOVA COMPLEX)**, 33a Sayat-Nova pta, tel. 58-00 33, email: [sayatnova33@yahoo.com](mailto: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](http://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](http://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, très 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. \$-\$\$



#### PIZZAS

**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 Koriun 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. €-\$

**PEPPINO PIZZA**, 23 Mashtots 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. €-\$\$

**PIZZA TUN**, 78 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 54-00-99, 52-90-69, has pizzas, sandwiches, full meals and a salad bar. \$-\$\$

**SANTA RITA PIZZA**, 2 Northern Avenue, tel. 58-88-55, serves so-so pizza by slice or pie. \$-\$\$

**\*\*SQUARE ONE**, 1/3 Abovian p, tel. 54-04-14, serves Continental/American food in its indoor-outdoor café. The Onion Rings are worth the trip alone. \$\$

**TIFOSI CAFE-PIZZERIA**, 52 Terian p, tel. 58-38-85, serves pizzas and sandwiches. \$-\$\$

#### RUSSIAN

**CCCP (USSR)**, 2 Aram p, across from Republic Square Metro, tel. 56-08-66, Soviet kitsch décor and a menu featuring recipes from ex-Soviet republics. Something to write home about. \$\$-\$\$\$

**SLAVONIC RESTAURANT**, 13 Amirian p, tel. 53-89-99, serves excellent Russian fare in a Tsarist Russian atmosphere, with live entertainment. Expensive but worth the splurge (figure \$25 per person). \$\$\$

#### SALAD BARS

Salad bars combine appetizers and cold plate dishes with the lettuce and condiments. These are full meals in themselves if you pile them on.

**PEPPINO PIZZA**, 23 Mashtots 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. €-\$

**PIZZA TUN**, 78 Hanrapetutian p, tel. 54-00-99, 52-90-69, has pizzas, sandwiches, full meals and a salad bar. \$-\$\$

### SUPPER CLUBS

Supper clubs can combine Armenian and other cuisines into an eclectic menu, sometimes combining tastes into a Nouveau Armenian recipe. Their focus is on atmospheres, casual dining, music or dancing, perhaps a gallery of art.

\*\* **AKUMP (THE CLUB)**, 40 Tumanian, tel. 53-13-61; 53-73-04, URL: [www.theclub.am](http://www.theclub.am). Very chic basement with floor pillows in one room and tables and chairs in another. The style reminds me of London's St. martin in the Fields, where chic lighting and stripped walls are de rigueur. Trendy spot, lots of atmosphere and jazz performances. Food is fair, nothing to write home about, venue rests on its trendiness. Not worth the price if you are on a budget. \$\$-\$\$\$

**ARAGAST**, 41 Isahakian (Ring park block 1), tel. 52-23-03, has a wide ranging menu (Armenian, Russian, Continental) in its large indoor/outdoor space in Ring Park. Decent food. \$\$-\$\$\$



\*\***BACCHUS**, 29 Tumanian p, tel. 56-46-00, 56-46-20, food in an art gallery with a vivacious host. European and Caucasus 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: [ayatnova33@yahoo.com](mailto:ayatnova33@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. \$\$-\$\$\$

### 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. \$-\$\$

\*\***HATSATUN**, 33 Pushkin off of Mashtots (Chinese looking sign), tel. 53-88-20, 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, Meals at 1000 AMD. 20% discount before 6 p.m. Can't be beat for the prices. \$

**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. €-\$

**VERNISSAGE**, 1 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 56-40-54. \$-\$\$

**YEREVANIAN**, 85a Hanrapetutian p, tel. 51-62-61. \$-\$\$

**ZANGU**, 1 Kievian p, tel. 27-60-21, 27-60-71, 22-50-30, email: [andako@netsys.am](mailto:andako@netsys.am). \$-\$\$



### CAFES, 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.

**ABSENT**, 38 Isahakian p, tel. 56-80-51. \$-\$\$

**ARCADA CAFÉ**, 24 Terian p, tel. 56-89-99. \$-\$\$

**ARTBRIDGE CAFÉ**, 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. \$-\$\$

**BAR DOLCE VITA**, Hotel Yerevan, 14 Abovian p, tel. 58-94-00, Italian, Continental, and Armenian. \$\$\$

**BEERLOGA**, 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 Koriun 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](mailto:avart@rambler.ru), has a wide variety of dishes on their menu, mostly continental and dessert oriented. Their salad bar is a big disappointment. \$-\$\$

\*\***CAFE MATE**, 1 Tumanian 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 CAFÉ**, 83 Terian p, tel. 56-42-40. \$-\$\$

**JAZZVE (Moskovian)**, 8 Moskovian p, tel. 56-15-08, 56-05-41, email: [jazzve@jazzve.am](mailto:jazzve@jazzve.am), URL: [www.jazzve.com](http://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](mailto:jazzve@jazzve.am), URL: [www.jazzve.com](http://www.jazzve.com), is ditto the above entry. Ditto the money.

**KRUNK**, 20 Khanjian p, tel. 520019, 520119, has a large menu favoring Continental-Armenian-Russian. \$\$-\$\$\$

\*\***LE CAFE DE PARIS**, 23 Abovian p, tel. 52-26-48, 54-45-34, email: [pcoffe@arminco.com](mailto:pcoffe@arminco.com), URL: [www.lecafede-paris.am](http://www.lecafede-paris.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: [juli7@yandex.ru](mailto:juli7@yandex.ru). \$

**MANTASHOFF PUB**, 37 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-16-51, email: [info@mantashoff.am](mailto:info@mantashoff.am), serves international and continental food in its slower hall. \$\$

**MARAKESH**, 3 Sayat Nova pta, tel. 56-76-96, serves desserts, teas and coffees. \$-\$\$

**MANTASHOFF BEER HOUSE**, 37 Mashtots pta, tel. 53-16-51. \$\$

**MARCO POLO**, 1/3 Abovian p, tel. 54-53-52, has sandwiches and snacks in its indoor-outdoor café space. \$-\$\$

**MARRIOTT LOBBY**, Marriott Hotel, tel. 59-90-00, coffee and snacks. \$-\$\$

**\*\*MOKKA CAFÉ-PÂTISSERIE**, 3 Tamanian p, tel. 54-79-10, an intimate and friendly café-pâtisserie 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 HOVNIANIAN TEA CAFÉ**, 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**, 18 Abovian p (Kino Moskva plaza), tel. 52-13-02, URL: [www.palmyra.am](http://www.palmyra.am), features Middle Eastern pastries to go along with its strong coffees and teas. great atmosphere and food. \$



**PCHAK TAVERN**, 1/3 Pavstos Biuzand p, tel. 54-24-40, email: [pchak@mail.ru](mailto: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. \$-\$\$

**RONNEFELDT**, 12 Abovian p, tel. 58-06-58, serves coffee, teas and drinks in its small space. \$-\$\$

**\*\*SHERLOCK HOLMES**, 25 Baghramian pta, tel. 260100, serves pub grub and traditional English food in an English pub setting. \$-\$\$

**\*\*PONCHIKANOTS**, 54 Mashtots pta at Koriun, is the bastion of Yerevan sugar fixes, a brand spanking new café serving hundreds of deep fried sweet-cream filled doughnuts popular throughout the USSR at 50 AMD a serving. The most popular sweet for generations of children, the place is packed from opening to closing, for good reason; pretty surroundings, cheerful staff, and cheap donuts. ¢

**\*\*STUDIO CAFÉ**, 38 Isahakian p (Cascade), tel. 54-05-68, is a small establishment near the cascade monument. Sunday brunch a favorite of expats. \$\$-\$\$\$

**VIENNA CAFÉ**, Marriott Hotel, tel. 59-92-50, caters to the outside café in front of Marriott as well as its indoor digs. Elegant space with Louis IV furnishings and coffee to boot. \$-\$\$

**WHITE CROW**, 21 Abovian p, tel. 54-07-59, has sandwiches, hot food and drinks in a space with card gables and TV. \$\$

**YUM-YUM DONUTS**, 39/12 Mashtots pta, tel. 56-19-84, serves American style donuts and coffee in a Formica decorated storefront. ¢-\$



#### TEA HOUSE

**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. ¢-\$

**\*\*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 nicer interior, one room designed with Japanese screens and paper lanterns. ¢-\$

**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. \$\$

#### DZORAGIUGH/HRAZDAN GORGE

##### KHOROVS

**CAESAR PALACE**, 40 Dzorap p, tel. 53-92-41, 53-92-43. Khorovats joint dressed as restaurant. Choose the pork yourself for delicious results. \$\$-\$\$\$

##### ARMENIAN

**HRAZDAN**, 72 Dzorap p, tel. 53-15-11, 53-53-32, email: [info@hotelhrazdan.am](mailto:info@hotelhrazdan.am), URL: [www.hotelhrazdan.am](http://www.hotelhrazdan.am). \$\$-\$\$\$

**ISRAEL ORI**, 42 Proshian p, tel. 26-19-76. \$-\$\$

##### THEME RESTAURANT

**\*\*H'RASHALIK**, Hrazdan Canyon, tel. serves Armenian (tonir khorovats) and International dishes in its outlandish setting. The moderate to expensive menu is in a complex that looks like something out of the movies "Barbarella", the "Flintstones" and "Pirates of the Caribbean", with dinosaur and Rhino tusk flourishes throughout the area. The wedding towers are to be seen to be understood. Tonir grilled food good but expensive, service lacking, but this architectural fantasy is to be seen. Seats 3000. \$-\$\$\$



**MONTE CHRISTO**, Hrazdan Canyon, tel. 54-33-98, 54-33-99, is a bit of a fantasy, with Tudor castle walls, a couple of towers and dining tables on both sides of the Hrazdan gorge, reached by a central bridge. Expensive with table for 4 at \$100. \$\$\$

**PARVANA**, 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. \$\$\$

**PRINCESS MARIANNA**, Hrazdan Gorge, tel. 26-88-55, started the theme restaurant idea when it berthed this ship on the river (actually it was built in place). Cafe/restaurant/bar serves a variety of dishes on and below deck. \$-\$\$

#### NORK-MARASH

##### ARMENIAN

**\*AVAN VILLA**, 13 Nork Marash p, bldg. 16, tel. 54-78-88, 54-31-22, 54-27-07, email: [hotels@tufenkian.am](mailto:hotels@tufenkian.am), URL: [www.tufenkianheritage.com](http://www.tufenkianheritage.com), 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. \$\$\$

##### ARMENIAN, CONTINENTAL

**ARMA**, Arma Hotel, 275 Nork Aiginer p, tel. 54-60-00, 58-18-43, 52-27-79, email: [hotel@arma.am](mailto:hotel@arma.am), URL: [www.arma.am](http://www.arma.am). \$\$

##### MONUMENT

## ARMENIAN, CAUCASIAN

*HAVLABAR*, 12 Azatutian pta, tel. 25-77-85, has good Khinkali, Khachapuri and Kupati. \$-\$\$

## ITALIAN, CONTINENTAL

*ROSSINI*, *Golden Tulip Hotel*, 2/2 Azatutian pta, 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 whets the palate but disappoints in trying to be all things to all people. Expensive. \$\$\$

*AL DENTE*, 2 Azatutian pta, tel. 21-99-99.

## BAREKAMUTIUN/ ARABKIR

### ARMENIAN, CONTINENTAL

*AKOR*, 29 Komitas, tel. 27-33-26, serves a variety of dishes in its large modern space. \$\$

*BRAVO*, 13 Hrachia Kochar p, tel. 27-06-10, email: [art-zebra@netsys.am](mailto:art-zebra@netsys.am), URL: [www.bravo-restaurant.com](http://www.bravo-restaurant.com). \$\$-\$\$\$

*GOLD STAR*, 16 Komitas pta, tel. 27-44-41, serves Armenian and European food in its basic space. The food is very good. Works 24 hours. \$\$

## GEORGIAN, CAUCASUS

\*\**OLD TBILISI*, 35/2, Komitas pta, tel. 29-77-97, 29-75-57, serves Georgian and Caucasus food in its Arabkir location. Good food. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

## GIUMRI KITCHEN

\*\**POLOZ MUKUCH*, 24 Papazian p, 26-21-75, serves great food with a Giumri twist. Ap jan! \$\$

## CAFÉ, PUB

*777*, 16/1 Komitas pta, tel. 21-17-17, serves continental food along with drinks. \$\$

*X PLANET*, 56/4 Komitas pta, tel. 29-86-00, serves continental food along with drinks. \$\$

## ZOO-WATER WORLD

### ARMENIAN

*ARKAIYADZOR*, 32 Miasnikian pta, tel. 58-00-62, 58-09-22. \$\$

*ASHTARAKI DZOR*, Ashtarak Gorge, Ashtarak, tel. 36-778. \$\$\$

*BELLAGIO*, 2 Miasnikian pta, tel. 563838. \$\$\$

\*\**DRAKHT COMPLEX*, 3 Adjarian p, tel. 62-22-02. Park setting neat the Botanical Gardens. Food so-so but the greenery is lovely. \$-\$\$

## SUPPER CLUB

*BELLAGIO*, 2 Miasnikian pta, tel. 56-38-38, is hugely popular with the richest sections of the populace. The menu is wide ranging, from Armenian to Russian to Europe and back again. Very expensive; per person around \$30. \$\$\$

## SOUTH

### ASIAN

*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

*MSHO TUN* (Latar Complex), 4-th p, Third Giugh, House 58, tel. 31-90-34, 39-47-59, email: [info@latar.am](mailto:info@latar.am), URL: [www.latar.am](http://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](mailto:info@latar.am), URL: [www.latar.am](http://www.latar.am), serves Italian, Mexican and Indian cuisine. \$\$-\$\$\$

*TATOENTS' 164*, 1 Sazhumian p, Ashtarak City, tel. 31-954, 31-414, email: [tatoents164@yahoo.com](mailto:tatoents164@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. \$-\$\$

*TERJAN*, 39/1 5th p, Sillikian Neighborhood (3rd Village), tel. 39-03-88, 39-96-99, fax 39-86-99, email: [terjhot@arminco.com](mailto:terjhot@arminco.com), URL: [www.terjanhotel.am](http://www.terjanhotel.am), serves traditional Armenian food in its ginnetun. \$\$

*VANATUR*, Kochinian p, J'rvesh, tel. 63-49-00, serves Armenian, Russian and European food in its Casino setting. \$\$\$-\$\$\$

## 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 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 the 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 raised to be gallant and romantically driven. Avoid situations where you are uncomfortably alone with strangers, travel in groups and you should mostly be fine.

**Smoking.** This is the bane of the country, and next to trash, the single greatest complaint about traveling in the region. Perhaps 40% of the population smokes, the rest suffering while smokers light up. It is more tolerable in the summer, when outdoor cafes are open, but in the winter it can be unbearable in closed spaces. Most hosts will respect your request not to smoke, if it is done politely, but not forever.

**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 emptied 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.



**Right of Way.** Pedestrians do NOT have the right of way, cars do. 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.



**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.

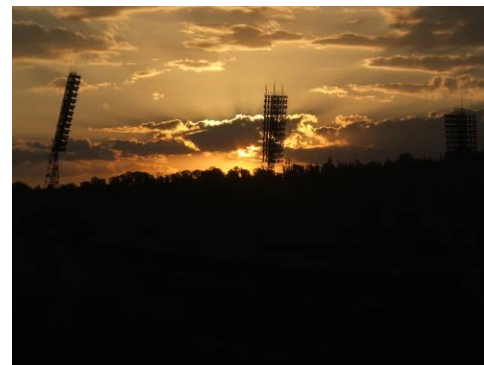
Many avoid street vendors and hole-in-the-wall eateries for fear of getting "Arshak's revenge". But that does not mean that others will not be able to eat the same food and have no problems at all. The main cause of diarrhea and dysentery are poorly cleaned dishware, and careful observance will do much 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 repellent and first aid kit, plenty of water, sunscreen, sunglasses and hat with you on your visit. Mostly, bring your sense of humor and open eyes.





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[www.ArmeniaNow.com](http://www.ArmeniaNow.com)  
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[www.cac-biodiversity.org/arm/index.htm](http://www.cac-biodiversity.org/arm/index.htm)

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Birthright Armenia,  
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### Blogs

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[minouchiq.canalblog.com/](http://minouchiq.canalblog.com/)  
[dartag.over-blog.com/](http://dartag.over-blog.com/)

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS ▲

**Rick Ney** (*author*) first came to Armenia in 1992 as an administrative director for the American University of Armenia. In 1993 he began his work in humanitarian aid and development for USAID-funded projects at the Armenian Assembly of America and Fund for Democracy and Development, the latter as Caucasus Region Director. This morphed into writing about Armenia for various publications, which became the first English language complete guide to Armenia in 1996 (online) and 1998 (CD-ROM). It has since become an online resource, visited by more than 24 million unique visitors ([www.TACentral.com](http://www.TACentral.com) and [www.TourArmenia.info](http://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 [TVRI](#), 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.

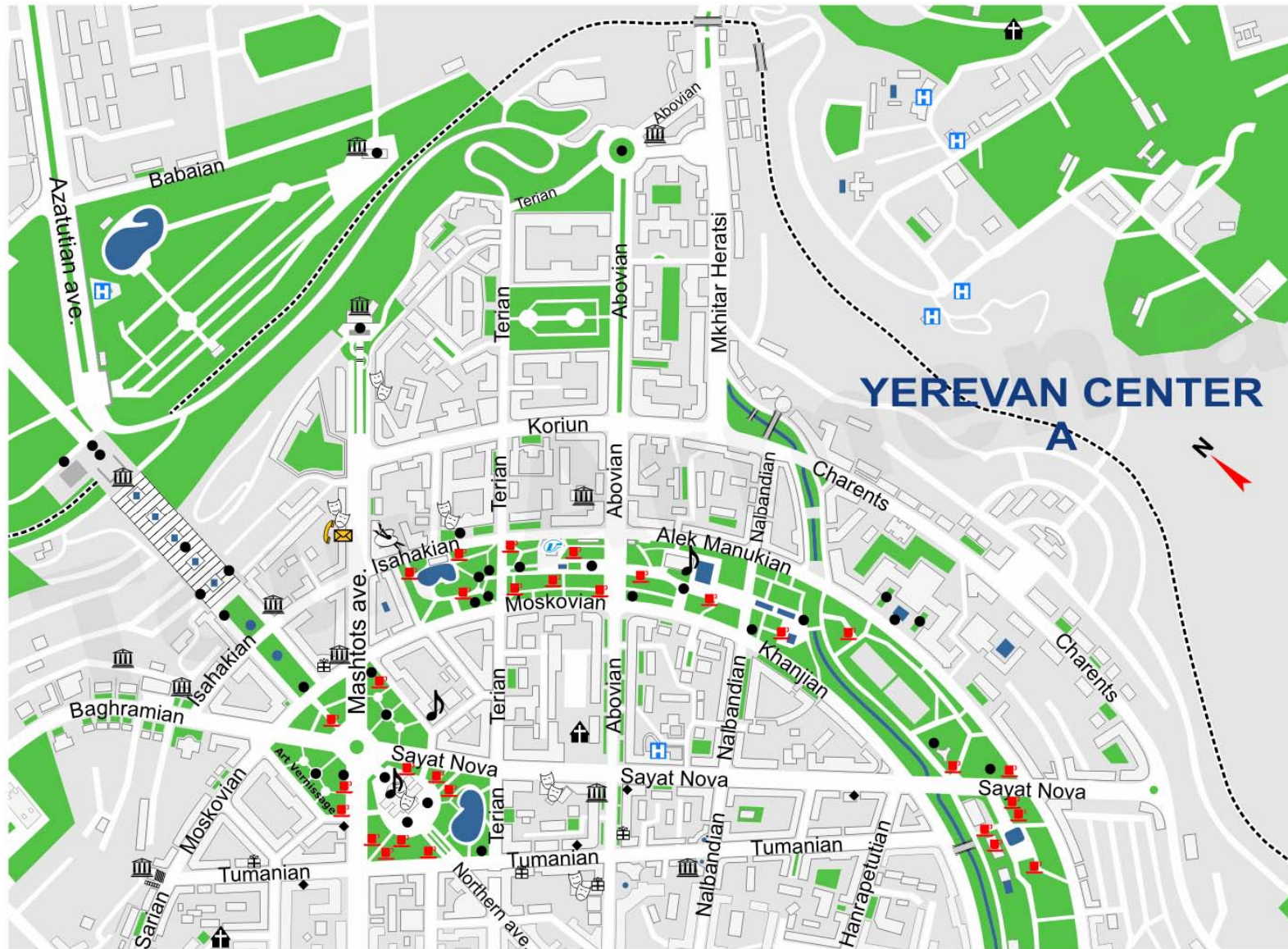
**Bella Karapetian** (*Editing, Translations, Russian Edition*) first met Rick in 1993 when she came to the American University and worked in his office as Faculty services Manager and Special Events Coordinator. There she had the chance to use her remarkable patience and good humor with wide-eyed professors 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!*

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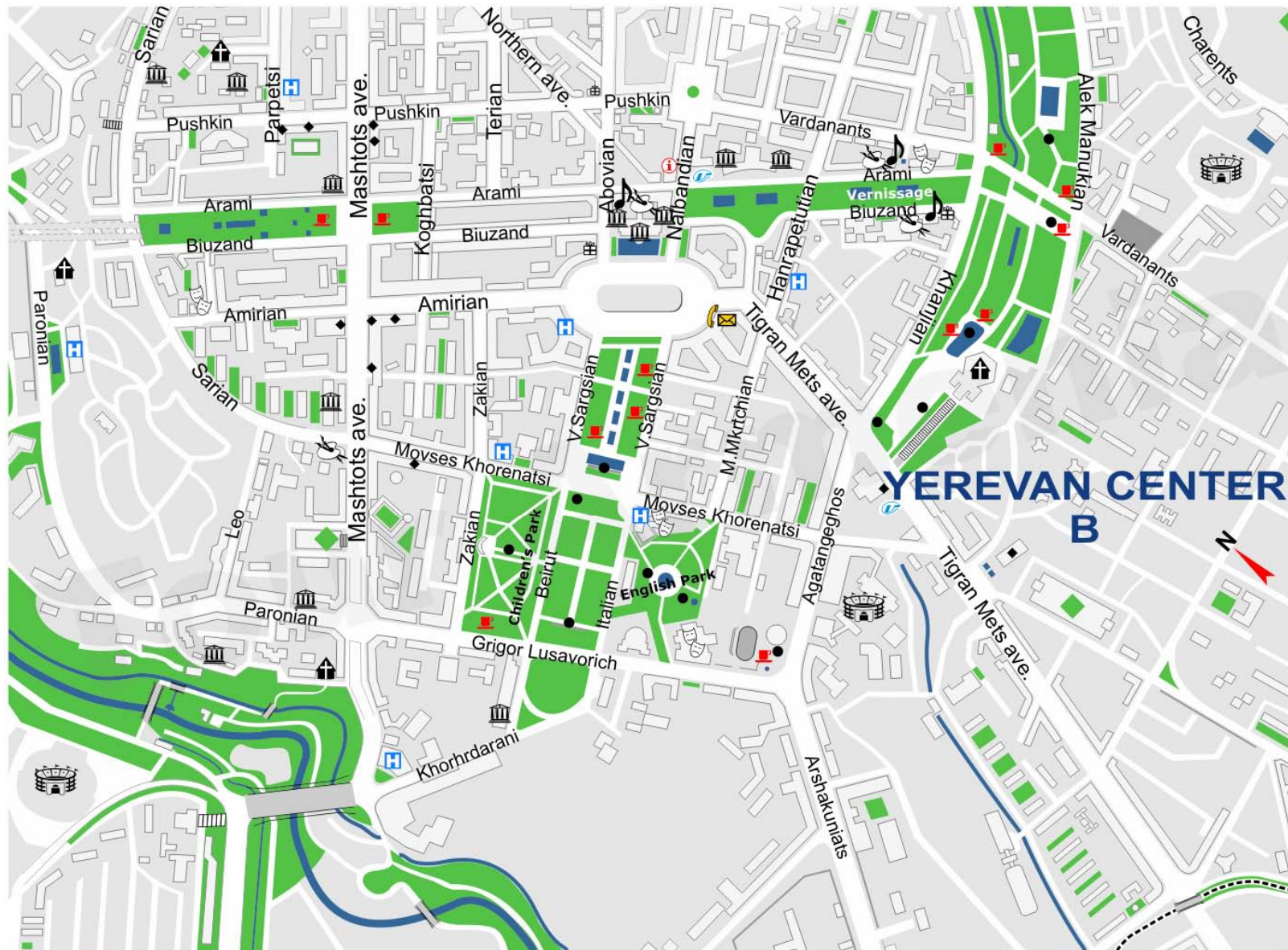
from the Ministry for Historical Preservation, who has been showing me the intricacies of Armenia's cultural monuments and their influences since 1992, leading me to some of the most amazing places and events I have been, as well as to the large vat of killer Voskevaz wine in his garden; to Stepan Ter-Margaryan & 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 Arminco, Grisha Saghian and Vahan Yerkanian for their support, the creation of the first edition on CD, link ups and links to culture and so much more. To ArmeniaNow.com for giving me the chance to share this material to their world. And to R and L. TMB.

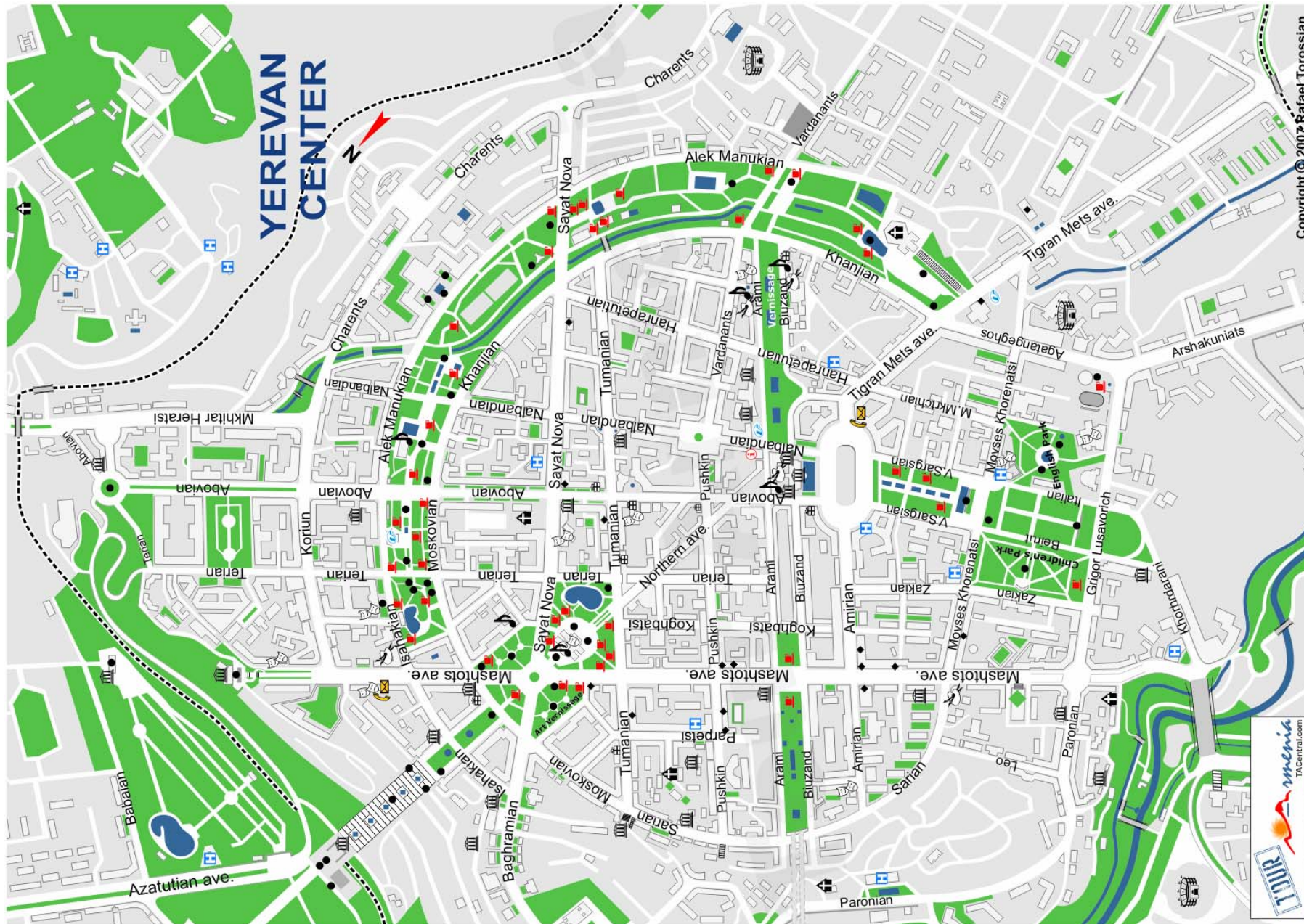
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