Note about pronunciation: we transcribe words using local dialect, and substitute “i” for “y” as in Giumri for Gyumri. 

INTRODUCTION
Shirak is a land of contrasts. In northwest Armenia, it is as much semi-desert as it is mountain meadow or high alpine. In the south, the high steppes crash into mountain terrain, verdant green in the spring, hues of reddish brown in the summer. Everywhere is the snow capped Aragats and dots of green in the landscape, spring fed villages and farms giving sustenance to the wayward traveler. In the north lies Armenia’s Alpine Region, a mountain meadow covered with wildflowers from April through July, with rolling hills punctuated by rugged peaks and the Georgian frontier. In the East are the foot hills of Aragats and Mt. Urasar leading to Lori’s forest land.

The region is anchored by the Akhurian river valley, an agricultural oasis that provided sustenance to millennia of civilizations, starting from Paleolithic settlements found in the Giumri region through each epoch of Armenia’s growth. Dairy products are among the most prized of Shirak’s exports, and the season—though short due to Shirak’s high altitude, produce some of Armenia’s best fruits and vegetables (though that legendary Shirak tomato, like the elusive big one that got away, grows more succulent and delicious with each telling, and I have yet to see nary a one.)

The ancient history of Shirak is like that of its cousin the Ararat Valley, steeped in legend to some, but found by archeologists to have been inhabited 250,000 years ago, with settlements popping up along the Akhurian Valley beginning around 9000 BCE. Agriculturally based, the region has few of the metallurgical centers found South, but still had sophisticated settlements during the Bronze and Iron Ages.

The medieval history of the region is intertwined with the fates of two ruling families, the Kamsarakans and the Bagratunis. Up to the 4th century the area was controlled by the Kamsarakans, with their royal palace believed to be found at Beniamin. They were practically wiped out when they led a rebellion against the Arshakuni kings. Later the area had become the property and patronage of the Bagratuni family, the founders of the Second Kingdom (9th-13th centuries), anchored in the fabled city of Ani, just over the Turkish border near Kharkov in southeastern Shirak. Many Churches and monasteries from this period dot the landscape, following the spice trail to Ani and beyond.

The capital of the region is Giumri, which is also Armenia’s second city and location of the largest collection of intact historic buildings in the Caucasus, over 1000 buildings from the 18th and 19th centuries, hallmarks of the “Armenian Belle Époque”.

DO:
Explore Giumri’s Old Center with one of our walking tours. Visit the 9th-13th cc Marmashen Monastery nested in the Akhurian Valley. Explore the monasteries and Bronze Age fortresses around Shirakavan, Sarnaghpur, Markaravank, Lernaksht & Harich. Find a guide to take you to the border and gaze on the fabled city of Ani. Explore Armenia’s Alpine country at Arpi Lich, visiting one of the idyllic villages on the flower-laden slopes around the lake. Eat at one of Giumri’s great restaurants; drink in the Poloz Mukuch tavern in Giumri. Go up to Georgia, cross over into Akhaikalaki and Akhaltsikhe.

WHEN:
Shirak is the coldest region of Armenia. Average altitude at 2100 meters in the Alpine area.
Summers are wonderful; the air is clean, days are warm, the nights are cool. Early autumn will remind one of those in New England, forests in upper Shirak change colors and warm aftersnoons fade into crisp cool nights. Winters are harsh and cold; wonderful for the cross-country skier or the winter hiker, but otherwise a time when the region turns in on itself, cozying up to a warm hearth.

Maps by Bella Karapetian

IN AND OUT
2. Giumri (This File)
3. Giumri Walking Tours (Separate PDF)

HISTORY (p. 2)
Prehistoric Age
Copper and Bronze Ages
Kumayri – Urartian, Roman eras
Early Christian Era – Middle Ages
Empire City
The Armenian Belle Époque
Genocide & First Republic
The Soviet Period
Earthquake and Second Republic
Shirak Now

NATURE (p. 2)

Giumri (separate PDF)

NEAR GIUMRI (p. 7)
Marmashen

EXPLORING THE REGION (p. 10)
TRIP 1: ARTIK (p. 18)
TRIP 2: MARALIK : ANI (p. 17)
TRIP 3: AMASSIA (p. 24)
TRIP 4: ASHOTSK, GEORGIA (p. 27)
TRIP 5: AKHURIAN, KARNUT (p. 31)

RESOURCES (p. 33)
SHIRAK MAP (p. 35)
ANI MAP (p. 39)

Highlights
- Stay in Giumri and savor its Belle Époque center, brisk mountain air and its joie de vivre lifestyle (on page 6)
- Take a walking tour of Old Giumri (Alexandropol), the largest collection of 19th c. historic houses in Armenia (on page 6)
- Visit Marmashen, the monastery of the Pahlavuni princes, with its nearby ancient burial ground and 7th c BCE Urartu King Argishti stone inscription. (on page 6)
- Visit the mountain monasteries at Artik (on page 10) and Pemzashen (on page 12), featuring Lmbatavank, Markaravank and the incredible Harichavank.
- Climb the western face of Aragats to Mantash Lake, with its pristine arctic sustenance to the wayward traveler. In the north lies Armenia’s Alpine Region, a mountain meadow covered with wildflowers from April through July, with rolling hills punctuated by rugged peaks and the Georgian frontier. In the East are the foot hills of Aragats and Mt. Urasar leading to Lori’s forest land.
- Explore the archeological sites of the Arshakuni and Kamsarakans family seats at Beniamin (on page 9), the 3rd m. BCE excavation at Horom (on page 9), the Hellenistic finds at Shirakavan, (on page 14),
- Make your way to the border by Kharkov, and gaze on Ani, the amazing Medieval City (on page 15)
- Visit the 4th c basilica at Yererulik, one of he earliest samples of its kind (on page 19)
- Visit “Armenia’s Siberia” and the high alpine villages around Arpi Lich, one of the migratory trails for Eurasia’s Birds (on page 21)
- Visit Minas Avetisian’s home museum at Jajur, with its unique collection of expressionistic art (on page 23)
- Pay your respects to Sisak, Misak and Apetnak at the 4000 BCE grave site in Tsoghamarg (on page 24)
HOW LONG?  For the casual traveler, Shirak is an easy one or two day trip from Yerevan, letting you visit the Monasteries & Bronze Age monuments at Artik and Maralik on the way up, a walking tour of the old center and perhaps Marmashen and return to Yerevan via the Akhurian reservoir, Jrapa and Anjimpaz the next day. Add more days to fully explore the Old city and savor its culture (1-2 days), Ani (1 day pre-arranged), the Alpine region (1 day), the North to Georgia (1 day) and the area around Giumri (1 day). We explore some day trips from Giumri below, which can be arranged to suit your travel route.

Hitting the Highlights  Giumri, Marmashen, Shirak: Marakalik, Atik, Sarnaghi, Harich, Lake Mantash (1 day)

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT  Shirak lies in stark contrast to the rest of the country, with its southern area lying in predominantly semi-desert to desert mountain steppe terrain, while the northern area rises over alpine meadows called Armenia’s “Siberia”. From Amassia and Ashotsk, it suddenly erupts into mountain forests at the Georgian border. The Region is bordered by Mt. Aragats on the southeast, the Bazruma and Javakh Mountain ranges on the east, and Turkey to the west. The Akhurian River begins in Shirak Region, runs just west of Giumri before forming the border between Turkey and Armenia at Akhurik.

Half of the region lies on the Kars and Shirak Plateaus, a complex mountain steppe region that includes swamp and marshland, large tracts of semi-desert, mountain steppe and mountain/alpine meadows with pockets of forests nestled inside mountain clefts. The Southern area relies mainly on irrigation and springs to cultivate agriculture.

The rock formations and scrub land vegetation that makeup the bulk of southern Shirak are unique Eco-systems, filled with desert wildlife, and the bulk of migrating steppe birds in the Spring and fall.


Mountain meadows to Alpine include Caucasian Grouse, Grey Partridge, Common Quail, Eurasian Skylark, Tree Pipit, Meadow Pipit, Water Pipit, Whinchat, Radde’s Accentor, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Buzzard, Booted Eagle, Tawny Owl, Wood Lark, Skylark, Ring ouzel, Mountain Chiffchaff, Corn Bunting, Ortolan Bunting, Black-headed Bunting, Crimson-winged Finch, White-Winged Snowfinch.

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

Thermal and Mineral Springs  Shirak is blessed with several large natural springs, including several mineral springs. All are cold water springs of natural carbonated sulfur springs lying near Ashotsk, Amakia and Akhurik; carbonated sodium springs near Shirak and Aghn; naturally carbonated springs by Ashotsk and Sodium Chloride springs close to Shirakavan.

For a complete list of thermal and Mineral springs see TourArmenia Springs pages (www.tacentral.com/nature/mineral_springs.asp)

Other Fauna  The largest prairie dog population in Armenia is in Shirak, located west of Maralik. Nutria, moles, jackals and wildcats are frequently seen in the region as well.

HISTORY  The Shirak region has a long history, its evolution roughly parallel to that of the Ararat Valley in the south. Officially “founded” 2,500 years ago, when Assyrians referred to the city by its first known name Akhurian, their history is actually much older; early settlements are over 5000 years old.

PREHISTORIC AGE  Archeologists have found evidence of human activity in the Southern Caucasus as early as 1.7 million BCE with wide-spread settlement area going back to around 5000-250,000 BCE. Geothermal and paleontology evidence show that Highlands have been densely inhabited from the time the Tigris and Euphrates rivers began flowing into the Persian Gulf, during the interglacial eras.

Likewise, inhabitants on the upper plateaus and mountains of modern-day Armenia are traced to the same time, as the volcanic domes of Aragats, Ararat began to cool, contributing to a moist environment. The rich lava soil and warmth from the cooling domes combined to create a lush environment that can be seen at now, with forests of coniferous and deciduous trees covering 70% of the land, supporting a wide variety of fauna, perhaps the most interesting example being a Tragonterian (Mammuthus trogontherii ) elephant found in Giumri during excavations.

Other finds include remnants of a prehistoric bull, rhinoceros, horse, camel, deer and other animals found near Giumri in higher altitudes. They belong to Pleistocene era. The teeming forests supported a huge variety of species. Add to this the rich mineral resources left from the volcanic eruptions of Aragats, Ararat and surrounding mountain ranges, and the conditions were ripe for human growth and development at a very early age, with several strata of occupations uncovered leading the agricultural revolution of the Copper and Bronze Age.

Much of the region’s early development was due to crop production, made possible during the agricultural revolution of the late stone age. Around 15,000 years ago the first strands of domesticated wheat were propagated, along with rice, grapes and fruit trees. Later domesticated animal husbandry further allowed the creation of...
sets of walls and religious development. In Shirak, human settlement was on a wide scale. Giumri was being one of the primary spots for settings. The inhabitants had created a complex level of being, combining obsidian and stone tools with figures and symbols related to an afterlife. The rise of fire worship may have begun at this time, perhaps related to the still smoldering volcanic peaks nearby.

By 5,000 BCE, Shirak, parallel to the Ararat Valley in the south, developed larger settlements, based on agriculture, trade and, by the 3rd millennium, bronze.

**COPPER AND BRONZE AGES**

When you stand in Armenia, you are standing in the birthplace of metal. The ores required to produce copper, bronze and iron were abundant here, fuel to operate kilns and the water to grow the abundant crops and animal resources necessary to support large settlements. The inhabitants were among the first known to forge copper and bronze; and are the first recorded to successfully smelt iron. The first recorded astronomers, they were the earliest to create a calendar that divided the year into 12 segments of time, among the first to devise the compass, and to envision the shape of the world as round.

Early Bronze Age settlements based on the production of metal include Mt. Arteni, plus numerous settlements along the Akhurian river valley, including Giumri, Keti and Karnut. Bronze jewelry and plates, metal earrings and knives, tools and weapons, stone processing centers, pottery, ornamental clay plates and glass from each of the Bronze and Iron Age periods were found in the area of Meat-Packing and Chicken Factories, "Kazachi Post" and Kumayri bed among other sites.

By the 4th millennium BCE, Shirak's inhabitants were noted in Gilgamesh, the Sumerian epic, as part of a people's living in "the mountains of the gods", and by the 3rd millennium ancestral Armenians in Shirak were a part of the Nairi Federation noted by Assyrians in cuneiform and part the second wave of Immigration from Western Asia into Europe and East Asia. The kings of area of present day Shirak were called the kings of Etwishi (Etwin).

Prehistoric excavations in Shirak region include sites in Giumri (Kumayri), the catacomb tombs from the 14th-9th c. BCE near Artik.

Others are at Shirakavan, Yerazgavors, Yereruk, Hoghmik, Mets Sepaspor, Pokr Sepaspor, Karnut, Mets Keti, Pokr Keti, Darband (Karmrakan), Haksik, Benjamin 1, Benjamin 2, Tirashen, Marmashen, Vahramabar, Hakikavan and Harich.

**URARTIAN, GREEK & ROMAN ERA**

Fast forward to the 3rd millennium BCE and the Nairi, a loose federation of tribes in a land noted in early Assyrian chronicles extending through contemporary Shirak, later conquered in the 8th c BCE by Kingdom of Urartu, becoming an outpost of the Urartian Empire. To some it was the first mention of the city of Giumri, then called Kumayri.

Urartu was a remarkably developed culture that had extensive contacts with the major empires of the Ancient world. Stretching between the Mediterranean and India, and rivaled them for trade, military and cultural hegemony. During the Urartian period the region was called Yeriakh, or Yeriain, also Kulaini. Another cuneiform lies near Spandarian.

Urartian settlements in Shirak include Kumayri and Durukan, and Urartu. The fall of Urartu is in part traced to invading Cimmerians (also called Skythians) from the north, which entered through Shirak en route to Anatolia. The name Kumayri may be linked with the same invaders.

The Greek historian and military leader Xenophon (ca. 430-355) mentions the region in his book, "The Anabasis" as did the Greek historian Herodotus writing of Kumaiyri and the area in his 4th c. History. Greek-era ruins include the Hellenistic settlement in Hac lumpur and the conference site of the Seleucid period. Some think Shirak was mentioned in the Anabasis, the epic journey by Xenophon and the "ten thousand" who marched through Armenia en route to the Black Sea in 401 BCE.

Not much is mentioned in historical chronicles of the city during the Roman and Parthian periods, the city acting as a regional administrative center, while sources were poured into the capitals Ararat and Vagharshapat (Echmiadzin) to the south. Another site is in the southeastern section of the city, on a hill in the area known as Vardabag, where excavations have revealed a Roman-era cemetery lying over a Bronze Age settlement. Other Roman/Parthian sites are Yereruk, Benjamin 1, Harich, Shirakavan, Yerazgavors, Hoghmik & Darband.

**EARLY CHRISTIAN ERA – MIDDLE AGES**

Grigor Lusavorich is recorded to have established churches in area on the ruins of pagan temples he had torn down and the area grew along with the country during the early Christian period, its most famous son of the age being the mathematician and astronomer Anania Shirakatsi (515).


900 years before Galileo, Shirakatsi accepted the roundness of the Earth, and expresses the opinion that the Sun illuminates both spheres of the Earth at different times and when it is night on one half, it is day on the other. He considers the Milky Way ‘a mass of densely distributed and faintly luminous stars’. Shirakatsi agrees with those scientists, who believed that ‘the moon has no natural light and reflects the light of the Sun’. He explains the solar eclipse as the result of the Moon’s position between the Sun and the Earth. Shirakatsi gives interesting explanation to the rain, snow, hail, thunder, wind, earthquake and other natural phenomena.

The Arab Invasion ended the 1st era for cultural flowering to the Christina Kingdom, followed by intermittent periods of brilliance shadowed by invasions by Arab, Seljuk, Mongol and Persian armies.

In 851, the Arabs adopted more conciliatory policies towards Armenians, leading to the appointment of Asht Lagratuni (the Carnivorous) in 861, as Prince over Armenia, beginning a long period of eminence for his family (The Bagratuni or Bagratid Dynasty). Early students of the PR machine, the Bagratunis claimed to be the descendants of David and Bathsheba and to be cousins to the Virgin Mary.

They enlarged their lands to include Shirak and Arsharunik, but Kumayri remained a backwater town as focus went into developing other cities; Tbili in the North and above all the new Bagratuni capital, Ani, just to the south. Like Kumayri, Ani was an Urartian stronghold, but, during the Bagratuni dynasty, it became the most sophisticated city in the Near East, growing to a population of almost 100,000, larger than any city in Europe. Religious life flourished and Ani became known as the “city of one thousand and one churches”.

Armenian culture developed to a new level of artistry in church and monastery construction and the veneration of the Madonna increased in church iconography. Throughout the entire country churches and monasteries were built to ever-greater heights and grandeur, Shirak’s
Beginning in the 15th century, Armenia suffered through invasions and occupations, resulting in the division of the kingdom between Ottoman Turks and the Persians in the 16th c. Base survival was the only achievement that could be expected, for the following 200 years, for Shirak and Kumaiyri.

RUSSIAN EMPIRE
The most remarkable period of development was during the 19th c. when Shirak became a part of the Russia Empire, and Kumaiyri its regional center. The area was absorbed into the Empire in 1804, during the first Russo-Persian war. The Russian period initiated a period of tremendous growth and development for the area, propelled by the new regional capital. A heretofore-feudal society was pushed into the industrial revolution, creating an extraordinarily rich and educated class of citizens, a new Golden Age.

The glory was short-lived. Ani was taken over by Byzantium in 1044 to act as a buffer zone, then in 1064, under Sultan Alp Arslan, the Turks swarmed over Ani after a 25-day siege and massacred everyone in sight. The city began a slow decline for which it never recovered. In 1071 the Kingdom of Armenia ended, and, after a short deflowering during the Trebizond Empire, finally succumbed in 1239 when Tatars of Genghis Khan conquered and destroyed the city. Kumaiyri suffered the same fate.

At first refusing to be guarded at all costs. Constant bungling by the Soviet authorities to help survivors and bring in aid led to bitter criticism of the central government. The Soviets finally made an appeal for aid, and for the first time in decades the Soviet borders were opened to caravans of medicine, construction material and aid workers from the West. This act is arguably the first fits and starts, the city of Giumri only replacing the wretched “Khrushev” buildings that were the wretched “Khrushev” buildings that were meant to house victims of the earthquake for a few months) in storage containers that were meant to house victims of the earthquake for a few months) in earthquake and second Republic

On December 7 of that year Armenia was rocked by severe earthquakes (the epicenter was near Spitak) that killed more than 25,000 people in Leninakan alone. Huge textile and heavy industry factories were built, as were the wretched “Khrushev” buildings that populated the region. The boom was followed by decades long period of stagnation and corruption, creating a cynicism that still plagues the country. Corruption allowed substandard construction of the massive housing projects in the region to escape zoning regulations, contributing to the huge death toll in the 1988 earthquake.

EARTHQUAKE AND SECOND REPUBLIC

The republic was short-lived, besieged by continued Turkish aggression and the Red Army. Valiant attempts at survival included those of Giumri native D’rastamat Kanaian (“D’ro”) who repelled Red invasions in the North and counter-attacked entering Georgians as far as the edge of Tbilisi. A truce was declared on New Year’s Eve, 1919, and the Armenian Army withdrew.

The following year the Red Army succeeded in entering Armenia at the same time Armenian Communists forced an end to the republic in 1919. Alexander Miasnikian declared Armenia part of the Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Republic on November 29, 1920 with its capital Yerevan. Alexandrapol was renamed Leninakan following the death of Lenin in 1924.

THE SOVIET PERIOD
The region faced the same sacrifices as all of Armenia during the Second World War. With a population of 2 million, Armenia contributed 650,000 soldiers, 315,000 of which died during the 6-year conflict. Some say 30% of the male population died in the region.

Textile and Industrial complexes were developed in Leninakan, Maralik, Artik, and in several villages, which were forced into collective farms, escaping the mass starvation of the Ukraine and Russia in the 1920’s.

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An industrial boom began after the war, creating jobs for 50,000 people in Leninakan alone. Huge textile and heavy industry factories were built, as were the wretched “Khrushev” buildings that populated the region. The boom was followed by decades long period of stagnation and corruption, creating a cynicism that still plagues the country. Corruption allowed substandard construction of the massive housing projects in the region to escape zoning regulations, contributing to the huge death toll in the 1988 earthquake.

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DIASPORA ARMS

The recovery from the Earthquake has been in fits and starts, the city of Giumri only replacing its vast tracts of domiks (temporary metal storage containers that were meant to house victims of the earthquake for a few months) in 2004, when the Norwegian Refugee Center shamed the Armenian government and Western Armenians into rebuilding the city by taking matters into its own hands to build housing.

The city still has vast tracts of damaged buildings and huiling reminders of the tragedy, but 90% of

This begins the saddest period of Shirak’s history, as refusal to admit the depth of the problem by both Western donors and Soviet Union first blocked, then hampered aid, as poor planning and continued corruption continued with the rebuilding of the city.

At first refusing to admit to the outside world that anything had happened, the Soviet government then refused Western offers of help, saying that the city was a Military secret that had to be guarded at all costs. Constant bungling by the Soviet authorities to help survivors and bring in aid led to bitter criticism of the central government. The Soviets finally made an appeal for aid, and for the first time in decades the Soviet borders were opened to caravans of medicine, construction material and aid workers from the West. This act is arguably the first breach in the Soviet Walls and the beginning of its end.

Diaspora Armenians, who began much of the initial response and seemed the most helpful, became the least reliable providers of assistance over time, continually waiting for the local government and international aid agencies to bear the burden of rebuilding the new city.

SHIRAK NOW

The recovery from the Earthquake has been in fits and starts, the city of Giumri only replacing its vast tracts of domiks (temporary metal storage containers that were meant to house victims of the earthquake for a few months) in 2004, when the Norwegian Refugee Center shamed the Armenian government and Western Armenians into rebuilding the city by taking matters into its own hands to build housing.

The city still has vast tracts of damaged buildings and huiling reminders of the tragedy, but 90% of
the dislocated population has been relocated into family homes. Bottled water is generally not available outside of larger towns.

DESTINATIONS
Shirak has many destinations worth visiting, so many you will find it hard to choose, especially if you are on an affixed timetable.

Picturesque villages and locales include Sarnaghpur, the villages around Arpi Lich, Dzorashen, Karnut, Musaiyelian and Jarar.

Natural areas include Arpi Lich and the surrounding Alpine region, the mountains roads east of Ashotsk, the area around Dzorashen and the western face of Aragats (Mantash Reservoir).

Hiking and Mountain trekking are spectacular throughout the marz, along the Akhurian river as it etches its way through the mountain plateau of the northwest, or up the mountain slopes of the SE and E of the region are particularly pretty and challenging, especially the mountains. Some of the most deserted area is on the lower slopes of Mt. Aragats (Lanjasar, Zohasar) and Mantash. The far NE (Mt. Achkar, Parak, Ashotskar and Sevar) and around Arpi Lich are wild areas, in NE you may never meet a soul save the occasional shepherd and your own heartbeat. Follow the Akhurian river from Giumri NW and you follow trails used over millennium, from the Bronze Age and Urartian fortresses and outpost to Marmashen and monastic paths trod on a thousands of times when this was “super highway” for the region. Around Artik are a number of interesting hikes, visiting monasteries, villages and mountain canyons at every turn.

For most hikes or climbs, an experienced mountain guide is required, for safe travel and to navigate the local populations. They also know which areas are off-limits (some sections are restricted military areas, and not marked) as well as the secret cubby holes and gorges with rare delights.

Caving For avid spelunkers, the most spectacular images in Armenia are underground, and with more than 10,000 caves throughout the country, Armenia aims to please to subterranean explorer. Caves are located in every region of the country, but the more interesting line river gorges.

Caving in Shirak will be found near Marmashen, Kakavasar, Harich, Mets Mantash, Bavra and in caves along the Akhurian, Karnut and Chikan rivers. For more information see [TourArmenia Caving page](http://www.tacentral.com/nature/natural_story.asp?story_no=3)
Flower Watching  Meadow flowers begin their spectacular display in May, blooming up the mountains as the weather gradually warms until they begin to retreat with the first snows of August. June and July have the mildest weather in the region, plus some of the most spectacular flower shows, esp. in upper elevations and around Arpi Lich. Best places to look are on the everywhere in April and May, then Arpi Lich, Jrarat, Mantash, Sarnaghpiur, and roads leading east to Lori and north to Georgia.

Birding  Spring (April-May) and Autumn (September-October) are the best times to observe migrating birds, while summer is ideal for mountain steppes, meadow and slope species that call the region home. Akhurian reservoir has marshland with water loving birds. There are some woodland species in the far north, near Georgia. Best places are the most difficult to reach: mountain crags and high plateaus, recesses of river canyons and feeder streams, as deep in the forest as your jeep (or legs) will carry you. The mountains east of Giumri, the Akhurian reservoir, towards Mantash and SE of Artik and woodlands north of Bavra along the Georgian frontier are good areas to watch.

Nature-Adventure Tour Operators  

Ashot Levonian  (tel. 010 57 03 28, mob. 091 49 58 34), e-mail: levash77@mail.ru is an expert hiking/climbing/camping guide, his team arranges hikes, climbs, birding and geology tours, churches and fortresses. They will arrange hotels in Yerevan, airport pickup, transport, sight-seeing, etc. Group support includes guide, translator, cook, horse doctor and driver. Standard tour is a two-week hiking trip averaging 5-10 km walking a day: Yerevan - Mt. Aragats - Alaverdi - Ijevan - Sevan - Martuni - Yeghegnadzor - Kapan - Meghri - Jermuk - Yerevan.

The Armenian Mountain rescue teams “Spitak”  (tel. 010 35 00 06), 50 Halaban p., Yerevan, email: spitak@yerphi.am, moon yerphi.am/~spitak/aventure.htm, stationed in both Yerevan and Stepanavan, can organize hiking, rock climbing and mountain expeditions. Guides are experienced rescuers-rock climbers, and they can also arrange horse riding along picturesque routes, by a horse cave and “Ancient Armenian horse games.” One of the most experience mountain climbers in Armenia is Andrey Chesnokov, (tel. 010 57 57 57), 10 Vardanants St., Apt. #49, Yerevan, Armenia 375010, email: ruzan@aua.am, who has climbed most of the mountains in Armenia and is a recommend, reliable guide.

Armenia Green Cross Ecological NGO (“AGCE”), 14-10 Batumi, Vanadzor (tel. 0 322 24066, fax. 58449, mob. 093 37 28 38) is a local NGO that provides eco-tours as part of its mission to preserve and enlargete ecologically vital areas of the country. Eco-tours are expert-led hiking, climbing and camping tours, including hiking and climbing equipment, tents, sleeping-bags, emergency and first aid facilities and the services of their professional rescue group (EU. certification).

Avar ayr Adventure Tours, (tel. 010 56 36 81, 52 40 42, Fax: 010 56 36 81), 1 Fastos Biusand p., Yerevan. E-mail: avar ayr@arminco.com, URL: www.avaryr.am/ has been arranging cultural and adventure tours to Armenia for more than 12 years, one of the first to provide fully equipped hiking, climbing and adventure tours. Tours include expert guides, cooks and support staff for all tours. Tours run the gamut from hiking and climbing to cultural visits for the more comfort-minded. Their best seem to be tours that combine both aspects. A good, solid company.

The Eco-Tour Center  (tel. 010 27 87 28 / 27 40 12), 2 H Hakobian St. apt. 22, 375033 Yerevan, Armenia, e-mail: zhanna@netsys.am, www.ecotourismarmenia.com, arranges nature tours, climbs and camping, as well as birding, flower watching and other nature tours. Contact Zhanna.

Hike & Go, (tel. France (+33 6) 88 34 04 11, local cell: 091 20 41 38), email: info@hikeandgo.com an adventure travel group operating out of Armenia and France (English spoken) is an interesting group that features tours of Armenia combining traditional touring with hiking into Armenia’s wilderness and off-the-beaten-path monuments, some of which can only be reached by hiking. See web site (www.hikeandgo.com)

Adventour Travel  (tel. 010 53 96 09, cell.: 091 42 67 45), Email: adventour@netsys.am, URL: www.armeniaexplorer.com, 39 Pushkin p., Yerevan, Armenia, 375002, arranges adventure, birding, botanical and historic tours.

Flower Tours  

Professor Nora Gabriellian 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 tours and combines expert data 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. She doesn’t have a travel agency but contact her through Rafi at (tel: 010 53-24-55) who can check her schedule and make arrangements.

Archeological Tours  

AdvenTour  (tel./fax. 010 27 78 32), 8 Komitas, Yerevan, e-mail: info@masstours.com, URL: www.masstours.com, specialize in archeological tours and participation in archeological digs supervised by working archeologists including the Urartian fortress Erebin (Arin Berd) forerunner of present day Yerevan, the Bronze Age temple-city of Agarak, Bronze -Iron Age tomb field of Aghavnavag, Paleolithc caves in the Kasakh River Canyon near the village of Apnaglugh, guided visits to the petroglyphs in the Gegham mountain range. They also run basic tour packages with expert guides. Excavation packages begin from $750/week for full service land-expeditions.

GIUMRI (Gyumri)  

See Gyumri PDF for details.
Valley, being one of the most favored, nurtured by the Pahlavunis, especially the Ishkhan (prince) Vahan (967-1045), Sparapet (Commander-in-chief) of the Armenian army and source of Bagratuni power. In 1041, he defeated the Byzantine troops at Ani, four years before it fell to them and then shortly thereafter, to the Seljuks. His military talent and heroic deeds were sung in Armenian literature and popular songs. Part of a new rebirth, a “Silver Age” in Armenia, monasteries and churches proliferated throughout the country, one of the more beautiful being Marmashen.

Commerce attained a volume hitherto unknown. Nakhitchevan, Ardzan, Baghesh (Bitti) and many other cities became important centers in which products of Persia, Arabia, India and even of China were exchanged for the merchandise of the West. Profiting by the era of tranquility, Gagik centered his attention on commerce. Armenia became an intermediary between the Orient and Mediterranean countries, and was rewarded with an amazing increase of wealth.

Specifically the buildings you see now at Marmashen were part of a fortress area erected by Vahram Pahlaviuni from 988-1029. Standing in the complex, one can imagine the pastoral beauty and enormous wealth that poured into this monastery, a center of learning, manuscript production, prayer and contemplation.

When the Bagratunis lost their power, the monastery fell to the same fate as others in Shirak. Ani fell to successive invasions and the monastery was pillaged by Seljuks (who ruined the complex) and was restored in 1225 by the grandsons of Vahram Pahlaviuni, Grigor archbishop and his brother Gharib.

Additional invasions by Seljuks, Kurdish warlords, Mongols, Timor the Lame and finally the Ottomans reduced the monastery to a parish church with earthquakes, ever-shifting powers and rivalries. Much in disrepair, but what is left is still awe inspiring, a magnificent reminder the glory of its time preserved for all to see.

The Complex: The monastery has four churches, two rebuilt and two in ruins. One is circular, a miniature of the open cross form (circular) most famous at Zvartnots. The complex was originally part of a fortress, the massive stones used for the fortress walls long since taken away and used for other purposes. The Vank was oriented to the West, where both church entrances are, especially normal for all religious monuments going back to Pagan times, but the altars were shifted to the East, to the rising sun. The complex is also oriented towards the Akhurian River, which lies to the west. Inside the compound you will find a number of fruit trees, beautiful in springtime, dripping with white flowers. An effort to replant the grove of fruit trees, which gives them income.

NOTE: Shirak is relatively easy to navigate, making several points on our Day Trips within easy reach from Giumri. Marmashen is the closest (and is also included in Day Trip 3), but others that can be reached within 30 minutes from Giumri are Beniamin (page 10), Malvian (page 27), Erzament Pagg (page 27) and in just 30 minutes, the incredible Matur for four 1900-1000 BCE sarcophagi in the small chapel at Tsaghkamard (page 28).

NOTE: Also part of Day Trip 3 (on page 24)
The church is a classic example of religious architecture of the time: other than a few early exceptions, the dome or cupola was elevated above the other vaulted ceilings by a cylindrical drum (usually polygonal on the outside). The prevalence of the dome forced architects to think in terms of centrally planned buildings, which this is an example. The domed hall has two pairs of arches beginning from wall piers composed into bunches of columns. In comparison with similar churches of 7th c. the eastern cross-wing is shortened, bringing the altar and its two adjacent chambers (used as depositories for treasure and manuscripts) closer to the central space under the dome. The eastern apse, like that at Ani cathedral, is decorated with wall niches. As a result the dome plays a central position in the exterior composition. This was a major transition for Armenian church construction.

The exterior facade is decorated by two semi-columns with high rising row of arches on them. The central arch, wider than the others, includes a window with a wide outline and decorative framing. The facades are built with triangular niches creating a deep chiaroscuro effect (that’s “the use of light and dark to create the illusion of depth” to all you non-art majors). The 12-sided drum, crowned by a slope roof, is decorated with bunches of semi-columns like the inside wall piers, connected by small frontons (face sculptures).

The roofs were composite in their appearance; they had to cover the vaults and domes of a complex, though symmetric, group of inner spaces. Like the inner and outer walls and the drum, they too were made of tufa thinly cut into uniform shingles. The Katoghike is one of the best examples of the Bagratuni Armenia period.

In 1954–1956 archeologists uncovered remnants of a fourth, nearly circular church. It has a circular exterior with four apses and four small depositories inside (similar to the 11th c. St. Sarkis in Khtskonk). It is also similar to the much larger, magnificent circular church at Zvartnots. The circular design became popular in the 7th century, this structure maybe dating to the same period but more likely to the 11th-13th cc. What remains of the church are the foundation and two rows of walls.

Throughout the area you can also detect foundations of a pagan temple and other buildings, a medieval cemetery to the east and south, and a ruined chapel on the northern hill, the small Karmrashen or Verin (upper) Vank.
Akhurian valley and the north of Armenia. The inscription reads:

"By the Glory of Khaldi, the god Argishti says: I invaded the land of the Yeriakhi tribe, invaded Irdaniuni city up to Ishkikulu land".

1. Hál-di-ni-ni al-su-u-shi-i-ni
2. Ar-gi-ish-ti-she a-li-e
3. ha-u-bl E-ri-a-hi KUR-ni
4. na-u-bl Ir-da-ni-u-ni
5. pa-ri Is-qii-ju-u

It further refers to the people of Kulaiini, the city's first name. During the Urartian period the region was called Yeriakhi, or Yeriaini, also Kulaiini (believed corrupted over time to "Kumaiyr").

Nearby, a little more down the hill towards the river, is a large ancient cemetery, within sight of Marmashen Vank, but still a good 1 or 2 km away. The graves run shock-a-block up the hills, graves date back to pre-Christian period, but most of what you see are 10-11th c. Nearby are the ruins of a Medieval church, stones from ruined capitals have pentagonal or star engravings, another a checkerboard made by a dyslexic artist or a parallelogram pointing to the horizon.

On a nearby hill is a fort from the Bronze to Urartu epochs. The fort was built using huge boulders weighting 1-2 tons each, somehow carried up to this windswept spot, and on top there are number of impressions in the stone base. These are eerily identical to those found at the astronomical observatory at Metsamor near Echmiadzin, perhaps proof that the inhabitants were also early astronomers.

Tirashen: Head back to Marmashen Village and go to the opposite end of the village, to another first road that runs along the river cliffs, towards Giumri. Stick to the edge of the cliff and in about 1 kilometer the dirt road butts up against the cliff and another steep road switchbacks down to the river valley, where a reservoir with a wild marsh and an islet lay.

The lake is idyllic, a perfect spot for a picnic. Just below the cliff you can see the remains of Tirashen medieval village - Ծնկած համայնքային կոմունա built to support the a ruined 11th c church and surrounding buildings. The Village would have been well hidden from one side of the river gorge, it's a hefty hike down to the ruins. To the North of the compound you will find dozens of wonderfully carved 11th c khachkars in the huge boulders that cover the hills. The khachkars run the gamut from tiny little markings on knee-high stones to huge elaborate crosses carved into gigantic boulders. Some have fallen, earthquakes having taken their toll. Wander through the boulders to spot the various types and designs. Most are believed to date from the 10th-12th cc, when the church and village were in their heyday.

Another Urartian / Bronze Age cyclopean city
Just above the medieval Village and about 500 meters S, just by some dumping grounds for earthquake rubble.

-END OF NEAR GIUMRI TRIP-
EXPLORING THE REGION

These trips can be done in a single day by car, depending on how many sites you visit and how long you take at each site. All originate from Giumri, though you can change the order as you wish. UPER CASE destinations are worth a longer visit while (SIDE TRIPS) are worth a stop if you have the time, but may have to be skipped if you want to finish in a single day.

Overnight
Camp possible
Food and drink
Thermal, mineral springs

TRIP 1: ARTIK


The first day trip is a bit of bender, figure a very long day to see it all or break it into two very easy days or pick as you go.

Stay: Overnight in Giumri or Artik/village home (dicey).
Eat: Artik, Marilik cafes.

Take the Yerevan Road south of Giumri. Just south of town, about 6 km, on the right side of the highway is the village of AZATAN (DD 40.602778 x 43.975).

SIDE TRIP: Azatan - Uqunul (till 1945 Gharakhilisa, elev. 1483m, pop. 42296) is reached taking the right fork and has a striking WWII monument shaped like a fortress tower with crosses on top, two 19th century churches, a Catholic (1890) and an Armenian Apostolic (1860). The village is better known as the site of an 1826 battle between Tsarist Russian and Persian armies, a deciding factor in the wresting of Eastern Armenia from Persia and the dawning of the Armenian Enlightenment (the “Armenian Belle Époque”). Hence the name “Azatan” (or Free Land). Just outside of the village, 1 km SW of the highway are a group of megaliths. On the ‘Ghezh’ hill nearby are 6th c. BCE to 1st c. CE ruins of a settlement, Azatan’s progenitors.

Excavators believe Beniamin was also the seat of the once-powerful Kamsarak family, overlords of Shirak and Lori regions and rivals to the Arshakuni Dynasty in the early CE period. The Kamsarakans led an insurrection against Arshak II in the mid-4th c. and, when they lost, were practically wiped out, only to rebound in the 10th-11th cc., Vahram Pahlavuni being their most famous medieval progeny.

As you walk SW from the highway turnoff you will stumble upon a series of low foundations among the grass, part of which form a huge palace building, located by looking for column bases in the main room. This is a 3rd-2nd c BCE palace area, one of the seats of power of the late Persian and early Arshakuni dynasties. The surrounding rooms include the base for a large tower to the S and other service areas. The entire complex was under one roof, making it as large as many palaces in Greece at the same time.

Further NW of this palace, about 100m up the nearest hill are the remains of a smaller palace, dated to the 5th-4th c BCE, in the middle of the Persian Satraps period. The rooms are smaller but no less impressive for their design and detail. Again, column bases form the period show were the main room was located. Another of these columns is outside the offices of the Shirak Regional Museum in Giumri.

BENIAMIN - BENIAMIN (till 1945 Zhlovkhan, elev. 1584m, pop. 2080) The village was renamed in honor of a home-boy in WWII, General-Major Beniamin Galstian, but is not interesting in itself (there rare a few kiosk on the road).

Overnight in home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.
Khachatrian) artifacts from the 3rd-1st millennium (undecorated ceramics, tools made of basalt, tufa, and obsidian).

On the hill slopes and higher you can see the traces of houses consisting of one-two parts built from big and middle size tufa stones, and having rectangular or oval-shaped foundations. A team of Armenian and American archaeologists led by Ruben Badalian and Philip Kohl began excavations recently and have found well-preserved walls and artifacts (sadly not on display), though you will find innumerable potsherds and obsidian.

The "Artik Culture" is a collection of excavations from the 3rd BCE that are considered of exceptional importance for research of the ancient settlements of Aragats highland, and its links with the centres of civilizations in the Old East. Artifacts show links with ancient Egypt, Babylon, China and Sumeria.

In 1908 B. Khalantiants uncovered the 9th-7th c. BCE sepulchres, and found buried inside iron tools, javelin tips, daggers and necklaces and bronze bracelets. Later excavations in 1930 (B. Piotrovski, A. Aljian and L. Giuzalian) uncovered artifacts from the 13th-9th c. BCE, and in 1967 (T. Toros Toramanian) artifacts from the 3rd millennium throughout the area.

Opposite Vardakar is (Nor Gank - Նոր Գանք) (till 1940 Mezhili, elev. 5761, pop. 34615), with ruined 6th-7th c. Gregor Lusavorich church.

Continue south past Nor Gank to Artik (about 7 km, DD 40.617222 x 43.975833)

Artik town is located in a canyon northeast of Aragats mountain, 20km SE of Giumri. There is a rail station on the Giumri-Maralik road. The area is rich in volcanic stone (tufa, pumice, basalt, slag), making it the largest and producer of high quality tufa and pumice stone in the USSR, particularly for its pink tufa stone. The quarry has resumed work, feeding the dreams of industrialists in Yerevan, but the current town is a sad little industrial wasteland on its edges, punctuated by 18th-19th cc homes and old religious relics. Artik is also rich with folk architecture masterpieces such as water mills with water pipes made of huge tufa pieces, and dome-shaped roof houses (unfortunately ruined).

Overlook the industrial squalor and you will find one of Armenia's richer archeological destinations, starting in town with the latest excavations, the 4-7th c. churches and cemeteries.

Proceed into town, to the town square, which has a WW II monument. Go up Tonakian St. till you see two old churches on the left, Marinich or Astvatsat'in (5th c.) and S. Gevorg (7th c.).

The larger, St. Gevorg (St. Lasavorich by Alishan) was built without pillars with semicircular cruciform wings and a collapsed dome. The church has ornaments and architectural patterns like those found at Zvartnots and Mastara, placing the date in the 7th c. though the archeologist Toros Toramanian (who first excavated Zvartnots) dated the church to the 6th century. The church is constructed of native rose-color tuff stone. A blind arcade with floral and geometric motifs carved on the arches decorates the exterior.

The church is a cross winged with a central dome (now gone). The still shows the cornices of the facades and is the absolute largest of its type. Its vestry (about 7 km, DD 40.6172222 x 43.9758333)
banks (Tetsor, Odzun, Mren). The remains of murals are on the northeast of the dome. Using characteristics of 4th–5th c churches, this 5th c church is important as one of the prototypes of single-apse, three-apse and four-apse cruciform central-domed churches that were widely spread in the 6-7th centuries. As it is , it is a superb example of the early “single-ship” hall church, patterned on the pagan temple it replaced.

**PRACTICALS**

Area Code: 244
Long Distance: 0244 + local number
From abroad: +(374) 244 + local number
Mobile Phones: 091 Armentel, 093 Viva Cell
International callers: Armentel + (374) 91 + number, Viva Cell+(374) 93 + local number

**IN AND OUT AND AROUND**

Minivan
Minivans run regularly between Artik and Giumri (1300 AMD) several times a day. They also run twice a day between Artik and Yerevan (1300 AMD).

Taxis
Taxis between Artik and Giumri are 3000 AMD, between Artik and Yerevan 12,000 AMD. They travel anywhere in town for 500 AMD, outside at 100 AMD per km. Call taxis can be reached at 11-11, 40-40, 11-00.

**COMMUNICATION**

Fire – 101
Police – 102
Ambulance service – 103
Gas emergency service – 104
Trunk Line – 107
Telephone directory information – 109
Paging service – 189

**FOOD AND DRINK**

The hotel also has a restaurant frequented by local bosses. Armenian menu, 2000-3000 AMD for multi-course meal.

A Srjaran is near the square, kebab and khorovatz at 500-1500 AMD per shish.

Mterks and Kiosks around the town.

Take the SW road from Artik (ask for directions) to LMBATAVANK.

Just SW of Artik, on a hillside overlooking Artik lies the well-preserved LMBATAVANK – LUPUSIȘIȘUȘ (also known as St. Stepanos of Lmpat - 6th-7th cc) an architectural masterpiece with the S. Stepanos church (6th c.) and important wall paintings.

S. Stepanos is a small cross-shaped building with vaulted roofs, an octahedral drum topped by a dome. The northern and southern wings lie under the dome, a unique feature of this building, as was the hall that surrounded the west wing. The horseshoe shaped apse is placed in the eastern end. No inscriptions from the original construction have been found, but it is figured to be 6th c form its architectural design: cruciform, arched gallery and octahedral dome. An inscription states the dome was reconstructed in the 10th century. Unique to this church was the covering of the north and east wings with domes instead of arches (the transition to the domes are done with two rows of tromps), the absence of an original apse window (the apse window is so important to the orientation of the altar to the east, S. Stepanos is on of the only Armenian churches to not have a window, confirming to the Christian church reversed the pagan altar western orientation. The existing opening was constructed later as in Artik’s S. Mariam), the horse-shoe shaped sacristy and arches. The latter were part of experimentation in the development of a unique Armenian Church architecture that was to become hallmarks of the style to the present.

There are a number of fresco remains, rare to find nowadays. Those in the apse on the right and left sides are thought to be contemporary with the construction of the church. One depicting Christ enthroned was in the center, while heavenly symbols surrounded him in the background of tongues of fire. There are two horsemen pictured on both sides, facing center, each holding a staff (one of which is S. Gevorg). There are numerous khachkars in the area.

**Camping in area**

**HARICH**

Go back to the town square and take the East Road, towards HARICH (DD 40.5980956 x 44.075) 

**HARICH – ՀԱՐԻՉ** (before “Ghepchagh,” elev. 2487m, pop. 5594) Archaeological excavations begun in 1946 indicate that the nearby village of Harich was in existence during the 2nd century BCE and was one of the more well-known fortress towns in Armenia.

One kilometre SE is an 18th c. cave church in a gorge, as well as sepulchres carved in the cliff stone.

There are also ruins of a 5th c. basilica in the graveyard with buildings on both sides of the dining hall. Tombstones from here are now kept in State Museum of History (Yerevan).

Backtrack to center, then take the Harich Road (ask) for about 3 km and turn right on a road that corners the prison. You will see Harich and the vank well before this road, over to the right. Take the prison road about 1 km to reach HARICHAVANK.

**HARICHAVANK** The village has an impressive WWII monument to the right on the outskirts, made from red tufa with wings of khachkar-looking stones flanking the main tower. Continue into the village to see the monastery, which towers over everything else.

Harichavank is one of the grandest monasteries in Armenia, steeped in the history of the area and...
Harich Monastery

1. S. Astvatsatsin
2. Gavit
3. S. Grigor
4. Refectory
5. Katolikos Residence
6. Hostel
7. Seminary
8. Monk Cells
9. Inn
10. Kitchen / Service

The first is S. Grigor Lusavorich, a 7th century building with a crossed dome. The apse wings of the cross are semicircular from the inside and pentahedral from outside (as in Mastara and Artik). The center is covered by original pendentives on 12 columns, which emphasize expressiveness of the inside. Later in the 10th century one-story buildings were added in the eastern corner of the church and in the 13th century a certain Sarkis Dzon initiated the construction of two-story buildings in the south-western part.

The 4 columned bell tower with the belfry in front of its western entrance and circular roof appeared in the 19th century, when the area of the church was expanded. The church was built over a rock-cut tomb and may have originally been a martirion. The ruined basilica of S. Harutiun, located in a nearby cemetery, is dated to the 5th century.

Similar design can be seen in vestries of Saghmosavank and D'segh, built in the middle of the 13th century. The central part of the porch is covered by tent-shaped, garret-window roofing made of jet stone while other parts are covered by mirror block.

The eastern façade is decorated with a series of "belt designs" framing the bas-relief of the church patrons Zakareh and Ivaneh Zakarian, crowned by an elaborate cross. The belt design continues on the north and south facades, wrapping the narrow windows and "Armenian niches," where they again form a cross on top of the window framing. The belt details break up the façade's planes creating a deep chiaroscuro (light and shade) and adds plasticity to the otherwise austere building, especially with the other sculptural ornaments, a graphic style typical for Georgian monuments (roses, sun-clocks, siren-birds with a woman's head, crowns, pigeons and other birds). The entire edifice is crowned by the polyhedral drum for the dome, divided by pilasters and zigzag cornices and decorated with rosettes.

Later Prince Vahan Khechup had a vestry porch built at the western end of the church (before 1224), including the northern part of S. Grigor church in the construction. The porch has 4 columns with a vaulted roof and is decorated in a very elaborate "oriental" style, using a mosaic of small stones; geometrical shapes and leaves.

The monastery fell into disrepair in the late 13th-14th centuries from the invasions of the Mongols, Timur and the Ottoman Seljuks, only to revive again in 1850, when the site became the summer residence of the Katolikos, who renovated and added numerous 19th century buildings to the complex. One of these buildings houses a small museum.

Across the gorge to the south of the village is a BRONZE AGE SETTLEMENT AND FORTRESS.
Nearby is the village of Arevshat (DD 40.6494444 x 44.0508333) which has an old settlement with traces of early churches, and center for propagation of the medieval Tondrakian heresy. Founded by a certain Smbat, the Tondrakian sect took its name from the village of Tondrak, Armenia (c. 9th century). The Tondrakian heretics rejected the authority of the Armenian Church’s form of baptism, the Eucharist and marriage. Particularly, they did not admit such Orthodox practices as fasts, the offering of sacrifice, ordination of priests and celebration of holy days. They were a huge threat to the established religion throughout the Byzantine empire, ‘invading’ Armenia in the 9th c.

Orthodox historians of the eighth to twelfth centuries accuse the Paulicians and their followers of armed collaboration with Moslem enemies and of detestable practices, such as devil-worship, evil nocturnal rites and pagan customs. Grigor Magistros, the Imperial governor, within whose jurisdiction Tondrak lay, called the place Shinavank, ‘Monastery of Dogs,’ “where men dressed in clerical garb lived in company with a multitude of prostitute women.” Not content with such verbal and written castigation, Magistros sent a strong police force to purge this source of scandal and corruption. The ruins at Mets Mantash speak to the backlash against them.

Either Go Back to Artik or Continue opposite to (Nahapetavan, DD 40.6 x 44.0166667) Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

From Harichavank, Go Back to Artik from (Mets Mantash, DD 40.6494444 x 44.0508333) Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Go Back to Artik and then take the road South West about 2 km to the Tusafshen turn off W  and continue another 2.5 km to (Tusafshen, DD 40.6000 x 43.9000) Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

PEMZASHEN (DD 40.5933333 x 43.94) Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

"Of Pumice," (DD 40.1872m, pop. 15923). Go into the village, and on the road to Lernaker (DD 4/SW to just before the electric station take the dirt road that crosses the rail road tracks), behind the old university building you will find a (uniques) decorated 6th c. ruined church. Butting the foundations of a large 5th c. hill church, made from polished tufa and on a multi-level foundation. The horseshoe apse has a pentagonal exterior. The church is divided by three pairs of walls-columns into four, almost equal sections. The entrances are from south and west. In the center a winged cross is carved inside a circle.

Butting up against the 5th c basilica is a small 6th c. single nave church made of polished red tufa with an arched dome and a semicircular apse set into the rectangular walls. The large apse is
unique for single-nave churches, and is an example of the experimentation and development of church architecture already underway in the 5th c. The sole entrance for the church is on the west. The church is set on a multi-step foundation, reminiscent of pre-Christian temples. The frame of the portal is decorated with ornamental motifs similar to those found on the portal of Avan cathedral (also 6th c) and Hripsime (7th c). Unique to this church is its tabula ansata, an interesting element on its southern wall, a kind of clean slate to write on, with swallowtail endings typical for Roman architecture.

On the eastern end of the village is the 11th c. Arakelotz Vank - Uunugq'ing Քղև (dirt road to left) in the same design as S. Sion (the difference being the absence of niches on the west façade). The single nave has a western entrance. The other buildings of the vank are in ruins, except the lower fragment of the bell tower, which, like the church, was built from large polished red tufa stones.

In the gorge below, reached by a steep path is the 17th c. Astvatsatsin church a single-nave arched roof building built on older foundations, and a monk’s cell carved from the cliff.

West of the vank is a large carved tomb memorial, dedicated to Abgharib, the brother of Vahram Pahlavuni is located with a big, ornamental khachkar rising above a 3-step pedestal (built by Sarkis Archimandrite in 1036).

In the SE area of the village is an old cemetery with a 13th-14th c Khachkar. On top of the SE hill of Avan are traces of medieval fort walls. 1940 excavations in Pemzashen uncovered a rich collection of Bronze and Iron Age artifacts (mainly different arrows and jewelry), found together with pieces of black varnish ceramics and other materials. A valuable discovery is a stone lion-figure, much like similar artifacts from the Urartian period.

On the western end of the village, also across the rail track and up a rising hill is MARKARAVANK - Uunugq’ing Քղև, dating to the 10-13th c, with the S. Sion church, constructed for Sahak (unknown) in 1001. The domed hall survives with parts of the western wall and fragments of the rest of the structure. The dome was set upon an octahedral drum and the arched roofing was covered with stone roofing. An old cemetery surrounds the church, with tombstones and some khachkar samples.

**Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.**

**SIDETRIP:** The eastern end of (Maralik - Uunugq’eqh, elev. 1717m, pop. 1213) has some caves inhabited from prehistory to medieval times; 11-12th c. khachkars, and a 1903 church.

**Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.**

**SIDETRIP:** Go Back to Pemzashen and turn Left, going W towards (Maralik). The city lies on the other side of the Giumri-Yerevan Highway. Either take Side Trip to (Maralik, DD 40.572222 x 43.866944) or go on to Sarnaghp’ir.

**Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.**

**SIDETRIP:** Go S on the Giumri-Yerevan Highway about 1 kilometer from Maralik to a side road on the left that angles SE then continue about 2 km to KARMIR VANK. KARMIR VANK - Քարմիր Վանք is located in a dramatic cleft of the mountains, peering over the Sarnaghp’ir River and the opposite side the gorge. The 11th c. church is a cruciform type with a small central hall and four antechambers in its corners. The compact church has niches in walls topped by fan vaulting, and is crowned with a circular drum and tent roof. The woman selling candles on weekends and holidays has been working at the site from when it was renovated, and has some interesting stories to tell, such as the time none of the construction workers would risk climbing the dome when the church was completed, so she (in her 60s mind)
scrambled up the steep roof to complete the building with its cross.

Near the church are the foundations of a series of 4th-6th and 7th c nave churches that were replaced by the vank. The foundations and layout are hallmarks of pagan temples that once dotted the landscape, and served as stopping points for pilgrims making their ways to the sacred springs in the village.

Camping in area; Springs in the area.

Continue another 3 km (and past the Sarnaghpiur Lake) to the village of SARNAGHPUR (DD 40.5188889 x 43.92) or Warning to pass through the village of Hokevank, a 13th c. monastery complex.

Beyond a dam and reservoir lies Sarnaghpiur (“Cold Spring”, till 1940 Sogutlu or Gh‘zelkilisa), which has some great architectural details in a few of its houses, including one remaining fireplace wall of an 1801 building, replete with oriental archway and elaborate geometric designs. The wall is on the left as you take the main road up to the springs.

The name comes from a spring flowing from a cave in the rear of the village, the waters from which are believed to have healing powers. To get there, go through the village and turn left just before S. Tadevos church (1883), then take first paved road to right. The cave is walled over (ask for a key the house on the right—don’t worry they will see you coming), also serves as a shrine to Grigor Lousavoritch. The springs are reputed to have been visited by St. Grigor Lousavoritch himself.

One of the best times to visit are during a holiday. We visited on Vardevar (3rd Sunday in July, when locals pour water on each other—and tourists—in a kind of “baptism” rite held over from pagan days, but now it is all fun) and found a huge celebration in progress. Each home opened its doors to anyone who wished to visit and piled on its tables local foods and delicacies. People from all the surrounding villages came to attend the service and music concert by the church and to collect water from the Lusavoritch springs. And of course all around there was an orgy of water fights and splashing.

To the right (W) of the church are the ruins of S. Hakob (5-6th cc.) and Karapet (1205), once connected by stone corridors you can still see. The churches are single nave structures, thought to have been erected over earlier pagan temples, and are decorated unlike any other church we have found in Armenia, with a rich tapestry of folk and peasant designs on a wooden screen protecting the sacristy. The design is so richly adorned and so free in its appearance, it immediately reminds one of the collage work done by the 20th c artists Sergei Parajanov. This is a must see.

On a hill 6 km east are the ruins of S. Ghazar (5-6th cc.). There are three Iron Age cyclopean forts in the vicinity. The two earlier structures are the bases of a hall church and a tetraconcha, which has trihedral apses on the outside. The surviving cornice fragment is a specimen of a cornice that was widely used in Armenian architecture in the second half of the 7th c.

The region is also famous for its “tonirs,” clay ovens used to bake lavash and the tastiest khorovatz (BBQ). Say yes if they offer!

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Go back to the Yerevan Highway, and Either End Day Trip 1, or Go S on the Highway for (Dzorakap, DD 40.5666667 x 43.8666667) and (Lanjik, DD 40.5094444 x 43.8563889) or

SIDE TRIP: Continue south about 2 km to (Dzorakap - Ձորաքափ, till 1935 Boghazkiasan, elev. 1758, pop. 2213), which is a 1783 S. Astvatsatsin church. The point of this village though is the “turtle Stone” that overlooks the Yerevan highway on a bend. Some people think it’s good luck to go lie on the stone, others just want a photo op. Continue south on the Yerevan Highway to (Lanjik - Լանջիք, till 1947 Muslughlu, elev. 6328, pop. 6347). Just SW of the village is a Bronze Age cyclopean fort & grave field.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

END OF TRIP 1
Day Trip 2 features the churches and sites in the old district Maralik, along the Akhurian Reservoir, skirting the fabled 9th-13th century capital of the Armenian Kingdom Ani and Armenia’s ancient capital Yervandashat. Both are across the border, in present day Turkey.

Notes: the border at Ani is not open to the casual visitor. To See Ani, you will need a guide (from Giumri) who can make the arrangements (and pay necessary “fees” to the border guard). It is entirely possible you will not be able to arrange this on a short visit.

Between Getk and Jrapi it is forbidden to take pictures of the border. This is especially true along the reservoir shores. Tourists have had their cameras taken by border patrols “for security reasons”. Inland form the beach you should be OK, as well as when you pass the reservoir itself.

Take the Southwest Highway towards Armavir. On the way you pass the turn off for Akhurik - Ulupugl. (Turkish frontier, now closed) and the Akhurian Rail Station, a massive facility built it the 1980’s with special equipment to lift rail cars from one rail gauge and onto the other. This allowed rail cars from one side of the border to travel on the gauge rail of the other. It was never used, a relic of the days when perestroika seemed possible. Go about 6 km S to (Getk, DD 40.7333333x 43.7833333)

NOTE ON PHOTOS: You are traveling along the border with Turkey with numerous border posts manned by Russian and Armenian soldiers. It is forbidden to pictures at any point on the border, and tourists have had their film (and cameras) confiscated for violating this law. If you are anywhere in sight of a border tower, do not risk it. There are couple of spots where it seems OK to take pictures and we mark them along the way, but you still do it at your own risk.

The Akhurian Valley is itself located in what was once a large prehistoric lake, formed by lava flows from Mt. Aragats and the Alaja volcanic range, blocking the valley near Kharkov, trapping the Paleolithic waters to form a huge lake more than 50 km long and 40 km wide. The lake lasted as long as lava flows continued to reinforce the natural dam, but as they cooled the rive gradually wore down the lava rock and emptied the great lake to its present natural form. Formed mostly during the Miocene era, there are few remaining pyroclastic materials and lava structures, near Bagrataashen and Bagravan.

The Akhurian River is the largest tributary to the Arax River, which in turns feeds the Kuras and flows into the Caspian Sea. Along the way it forms the border with Turkey and Iran, then as the Arax with Azerbaijan. Springs along the river are more abundant on the Turkish side, but there are a few mineral springs on the Armenian side, especially at Aghin and Jrapi Villages.

At the right time of the year (Spring) you will find a wide variety of flora, including feather grass, couch grass, fescue and a variety of legumes. Further south are absinthe, everlasting and riparian forests and 24 species...
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listed in the Red Book of Endangered species. Endemic Flora includes Karo Hollyhock in the northern end of the reservoir (its only natural habitat in Armenia), Hare’s Ear, Tigran’s elderberry, Akhurian Currant, Rose of Sharon, Caucasian Iris, Elegant Iris, Pucrated Iris, Dwarf Iris, Sage, Gray Germander, Kurdish fritillary, Starflower, Miniature tulip and Oriental poppy.


Camping near the reservoir would be nice but probably not possible, watch for border guards; Springs in area.

SIDE TRIP: Teghenis Fort - Shhglish Rpgn
Between Getk and Yerazgavors, to the right (W) you can see the outline of a large 11th c fortress on a hill. The huge (more than four stories) fortress once protected the outskirts of Ani form the northern approaches. It is now in Turkish hands. The fortress can be seen in detail using binoculars or a zoom camera.

From Getk continue S on the highway about 6 km to Yerazgavors, DD 40.7x 43.7666667 ±

SIDE TRIP: (Yerazgavors - Tsqqwwqiqnq (“Tugzis Hills”) till 1945 Aralik or Shirakavan, elev. 1471m, pop. 2938) has a church (9th c.) and a few medieval remains, including ruins of two castles, one in the village and one W of the river bank.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

From Yerazgavors, continue south about 4 km (past Bayandur) to the 2nd large highway interchange on left (Chalaiai V.), turn Left (E), and follow the potted road 4 km to GUSANAGIUGH (DD 40.6691667 x 43.7883333 ±)

The walls seem to tiptoe on top of a ring of a huge cyclopean rock base, itself made from the remnants of an Iron Age fortress. Note the pockmarked walls, the scars the results of rifle and cannon shot during battles against 400 years of attacks by Turkish and Persian armies, the last of which, in the late 18th century completely ruined the fort. But what remains is truly impressive, the walls rising well over 4 stories above the monolithic foundations. About 1-2 km W of the village on uneven terrain are the remains of a cyclopean fortress (Urartian) near Ghak and Shvaghtapa.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Backtrack to the highway, turn left (S) and continue about 1.9 km to Shirakavan, DD 40.6592667x 43.7386111 ±

SIDE TRIP: (Shirakavan - Chnquniqnquli till 1930 Davanahan, elev. 1498m, pop. 2621) is newly coined, built after the original Medieval village was flooded during filling the Akhurian reservoir. The original (opposite shore, near Bash-Shoragial) was the 9th c. seat of the Bagratuni (Bagratid) family, before they moved their capital to Ani, 25 km S.

South of the village is the excavation of Sevakan (where Sevkan stream joins the Akhurian river- partially under water), excavated in 1977. The excavation showed a large temple area (2nd c BCE - 3rd c.) with links to Rome and Persia (Parthia).

Heracles Myth Statue During excavations, a number of funerary items were uncovered in a shaft-grave dated ca 1300-1100 BCE, including a unique bronze sculpture among a variety of artifacts ritually intended to secure the passage of the soul from this world of living to the realm of the dead and the afterlife. The sculpture depicts a hero- or god-archer dragging a captured monstrous dog of terrifying appearance by some kind of a leash (chain or rope that has not been preserved) attached to a massive collar. The connection of this with the entrance to the netherworld is seen as a parallel to the myth recounting the capture of Kerberos by Heracles.

In the Greek tradition Kerberos was believed to be a brother of the Nemean lion killed by Heracles. Meanwhile the solar hero of the Heracles Myth, arrived in Ararat, particularly in the Daredevils of Sasun, namely Mher, who also kills a lion. This myth of the capture of a beast guarding the entrance to the world of the dead by a deity without weapons probably had a Proto-Indo-European origin. In fact the Armenian god Aralezk in the form of a wolf or dog, is found depicted in bronze figures from the 4th millennium BCE forward, found at sites in Shirak, Aragatsotn and Lori.

The dog in Armenia is a sacred symbol as well as a protector. The Armenian Gampr or shepherd dog has been known to originate from the Armenian mountains, its progeny representing the ancient myths. The figures found here simply confirm its existence. Four principal depictions of dogs are found in Indo-European mythology: Companions of divine hunters (Orion, Wodan etc.); Serving the Lord of the Dead (Yama, Geri and Freki of Odin, Zoroastrianism, Armenian Aralezk, Hermes, etc.) - oftentimes healing and resurrecting the dead; Evil dogs slain or sacrificed by warriors (Kandaros, Kandavas, Cu Chulainn, Hittite, Balkans, Roman, and Celtic traditions); and Monstrous dogs, guardians of the entrance to the netherworld bound and subjugated by an unarmed divine personage (the "Kerberian cluster").

A nearby Stone Age site with mammoth bones is also submerged, but a cyclopean fort remains on a hill above. There is or was a large church nearby.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Go S on the highway about 6 km to Side Trip (Isahakan, DD 40.6166667x 43.7257778 ±)

SIDE TRIP: (Isahakan - Puwulwqululi till 1945 Ghazarabad-Ghazer Aqa, before that Kharan, elev. 1555m, pop. 2262) is named after a hero of the Russo-Persian wars. Aga led the village in a successful defense against the Persians in 1826-28.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

At Isahakan take side road SE another 4 km to (Bardzrashen, DD 40.0582778x 44.5786111 ±

SIDE TRIP: (Bardzrashen - Puwulwqululi till 1947 Baburlu, elev. 1070m, pop. 3314) has a 7th c. S. Astvatsatsin church and close by a Poghos-Petros hermit area.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Backtrack to the highway, turn left (E) and continue another 3.3 km to Sarakap. Urn left (E) and follow the potted road 4 km to (Sarakap, DD 40.5561111x 43.7208333 ±)

SIDE TRIP: (Sarakap - Uwulwqululi till 1935 Bodoghan, elev. 1589m, pop. 1613) has the ruins of the 6-7th c. S. Astvatsatsin church, rebuilt in 1885 and 6 km of hard trudging SE are the ruins of Karm (Red) Vank or Ghrji (Gray) Vank (7th c).
Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Go back to the highway, turn left (S) and pull up to a stop for a glimpse of the WALLS OF ANI.

WALLS OF ANI - Անիի պատերը
The walls and outline of the standing churches of Ani can be seen from the side of the road, to the SW. In clear weather they are amazingly detailed. As you approach Jrai from the Sarakap turnoff, look into the distance on your right (W) for a hill with white chalk inscriptions (Turkey), to the left is an orange roofed building and the rail line with a blue and white tower. From that point look to the left for a large tree, and between them in the far distance you will see the outlines of the city.

From the Sarakap turnoff it is about 1.3 km to the JRAPI Church and Karavanserai, on the left (E) (DD 40.5569444x 43.6827778) 

JRAPI - Ջրապի (till 1947 Chirpli and Keghacab; elev. 1533m, pop. 2921) is a new village, regrouping the two halves of old Jrai, and medieval bridge on the Akhurian is now under water, as were most of the village's historic buildings, but a few remain, now located on hill to the left (W). Among them is a small but evocative black and red tuf 1874 church with wooden beams supporting the metal roof, its stones pulled up from its original location under the reservoir to its current location.

To its S is a reconstructed 11th c. caravanserai,. The caravanserai is often used a stalls for local farmers and the grill of an old soviet car now makes its gate. The cows don't seem to mind, and ironically, if you substitute camels for cows you have a pretty good idea of the way this building was used (and smelled) as does an 1874 church. To the E of the church are the foundations of an 11th c single nave church, also brought up form the old village.

One km S of Jrai is a 1st millennium BCE grave field, hidden among the grass and not marked.

Poor Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Continue S on the highway about 3 km to the Haikadorz turn off, then another 2 km to HAIKADORZ (DD 40.5377778x 43.6688333) 

HAIKADORZ - Հայկաձոր (till 1950 Gh'zelkilisa, "Red Church,," elev. 1489m, pop. 1827), named for Horomos Vank across the reservoir, is the home to the S. Grigor Lasuvorich church (985 CE), restored in 13th c. The church is a fine example of the type of construction favored in the early reign of the Bagratunis, this restoration shows it favored by the Pahlavunis or Kamsarakans, during the last flowering of culture in the region before Seljuk and Mongol invasions. Note The church is right next to the border, and you may not be able to take pictures (be sure to check for border guards and ask first).

Haikadorz is an alternate route to Ani, and if you have someone to take you (who is connected) and/or get permission from a border guard exactly, you may be able to get by here. But they almost always say 'nyet' and look fiercely on those trying to sneak by.

Go back to the Highway then S about 6 km to Bagravan, named for an ancient Armenian religious site on the far side of the river near the capital of the first Armenian kings, Yervandashat. Then continue about 3 km and, just past the Ani Railway station, a little dirt road leads to the border checkpoint, manned by Russian soldiers. If they let you in, proceed to a hill, W or KHARKOV (DD 40.516666x 43.6) overlooking ANI

Note: the border at Ani is not open to the casual visitor. To see Ani, you will need a guide (from Giurir) who can make the arrangements (and pay the necessary "fees" to the border guard). It is entirely possible you will not be able to arrange this on a short visit. Diehards may try.

KHARKOV (ANI) - Խարկով/Անի

Tours to Ani can be made by contacting Valodia Aroushian at AniTour, 28 Isahakian p. in Yerevan, e-mail: anitour@arminfo.com. Referrer: Stepan Ter-Margaryan.

Kharkov (elev. 4698, pop. 5137) is perched on the Akhurian river, across from the 9th-13th c Armenian capital Ani. Much of it gone, still the city has 100,000 ruins of churches, palaces and walls enough to impress. The chance to see an entire city of 100,000 laid to waste by Byzantine, Turkish and Mongol invasions is rare and compelling.

History

A stronghold of the Kamsarakans family from the 4th century, one of the first kings in the Bagratid line, King Ashot (the Meat-eater), bought Ani for Armenia in the first half of the ninth century. 4th century, one of the first kings in the Bagratid line, King Ashot (the Meat-eater), bought Ani for Armenia in the first half of the ninth century. Strategically placed on one of the trade routes running from Persia (India/China) to the Black Sea, the city became vital in the 10th century when wars between the Arabs and the Byzantine Empire were fiercest. Note The church is right next to the border, and you may not be able to take pictures (be sure to check for border guards and ask first).

Bagratunis, the restoration shows that favored by the Pahlavunis or Kamsarakans, during the last flowering of culture in the region before Seljuk and Mongol invasions. Note The church is right next to the border, and you may not be able to take pictures (be sure to check for border guards and ask first).

The Bagratunis enlarged their city to an area of about 4,000 acres, built a series of outer walls and spanned the Arpa-Chai River with bridges to help the caravans plodding between Trebizond and the East. The caravanserai at Jrai is one such building, housing caravans on the outer rims of the city where they could not engage in intrigue or debauch their inhabitants (by Byzantine, Turkish and Mongol invasions is rare and compelling.

The Bagravani church (985 CE), restored in 13th c. Strategically placed on one of the trade routes running from Persia (India/China) to the Black Sea, the city became vital in the 10th century when wars between the Arabs and the Byzantine Empire were fiercest.

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The glory days ended soon enough, with dual invasions by the Caliphate and the Albanians (Azerbaijani) on one side and pressure from Byzantium to succumb to its control. And, in true Armenian fashion, Bagratuni princes fought amongst themselves for possession of the land. First taken by the Byzantines in 1044, Ani was then invaded by Seljuk in 1064. The city lost its power and the capital moved to Dvin. There was a short rebirth in the 13th century, under the Pahlavunis, before a last gasp with the invasion of the Mongols and Timur.

The Site

Standing on the hill by Kharkov, you can see the outline of the great city, built in a triangle on the river and plateau. On two sides cliffs drop off to ravines and on the third the remains of a massive wall, 40 to 50 feet tall in places, cut the city off from the flat tabland.

In Ani you can see the perfection of Armenian Architecture in solving the problem of dome construction, a solution many believe became the original models for Gothic architecture. The dome developed early in Armenia, along with the basilica. Spurred by a desire to distance church buildings from their earlier Pagan forms, as well as to physically create in stone the apparition of St. Grigor for the site of Echmiadzin ("...[A]mazing arches are intertwined on their columns, and above them I could see a cube-shaped dome").
Armenia's domes take their roots from the wooden broach roof of Armenian dwelling houses, as Xenophon described it in his time. The use of a dwelling house borrowed for a sanctuary is not unique, and the Armenian house glhatun, with an hazarashen roof is a true example of a dome-like roof on a cube.

ANI PLAN

LARGE DETAILED MAP AT END OF CHAPTER

Outside the City:
1. Bathhouse ruins
2. Ramparts
3. Burial mound
4. Kirakos Mausoleum
5. Chapel ruins
6. Chapel ruins
7. Stone church
8. "Baron’s palace"
9. Church with a Corinthian capital
10. Stone church
11. Unknown Ruins
12. Palace ruins
13. Oil Press
14. Subterranean room
15. Burial mound
16. Palace of Sarkis
17. Oil Press
18. Oil Press
19. Large church ruins
20. Tunnels
21. Oil Press
22. Baths
23. Bardzrakali church (exc. 1892)
24. Oil Press
25. "Georgian Church"
26. Refuse pit
27. Minukhir Tower
28. Oil Press
29. Oil Press
30. Oil Press
31. Ruins
32a. Ruins
32b. Oil Press
32c. Church ruins
33. Church ruins
34. Church ruins (?)
35. Ruins
36. 4-columned fire temple later converted to a church
37. S. Arakelots (Holy Apostles) church
38. Hostels (exc. 1908)
39. Red church
40. Two large rooms
41. Burial mound
42. Burial mound
43. Burial mound
44. Church ruins
45. Church ruins (wooden décor)
46. Church ruins
47a. Oil press
47b. Baths
48. Burial mounds
49. "Checkerboard Church" (alternating color stone façade)
50. S. Armeakaprlikht (Church of the Holy Redeemer)
51a. Church ruins
51b. Church ruins
52a. Ruins
52b. Burial mound
52c. S. Grigor Abouhamir church
53. Ruins
54. Oil Press
55. Ruins of church with khachkar
56. Foundation ruins
57. Oil Press
58. Burial mounds
59. Horom Tatin (The Lady Horom) church
60. Oil Press
61. Minaret / Abu Maumran mosque
62. Burial mound
63. Ruins
64. Oil Press
65. Burial mounds
66. Church ruins
67. Prelate residence
68. 69a. Colonnade
69. Burial mound
70. Burial mound
71. S. Sarkis church
72. Am Cathedra
73a. "Checkboard House" (exc. 1908)
73b. Cathedral baptistry
73c. Queen Katarineh mausoleum
74. Oil Press
74a. Oil Press
75. Tower & vaulted passage
76. Tower & underground passage
78a. Church
77. Burial mound
78. Burial mound
79. Ruins
80. S. Grigor Honents church
81. Baths (exc. in 1893)
82. Burial mound
83. Vaulted gallery
84. Oil Press
85. Underground entry
86. Chapel
86a. Ruins
87. Guardhouse
88. Ruins
89. Ruins
91a. Ruins
90. Guaranets Vank (Monastery of the Virgins)

Old City (Ashot’s walls):
91. Secular building
92. King Ashot Wall
93. Minukhir Mosque (museum )
94. Bridge
95. House
96. Church ruins
97. Museum
99a. Nikolos Har excavation residence
100. Oil press, ruins
101. Karimadzin church (the red church)
102. Astravatavan Khakhuchents
103. Burial mound
104. Abu Khatsip church
104a. Subterranean city entry
105. Gayl Mauseleum
106. Church
107. 4-Columned structure ruins
108. Ruins
109. The Citadel:
109. Royal palace
109a. Palatine church
109b. Palace Hall
109c. Palace Hall
109d. Palace Hall
109e. Palace Baths
109f. Palace Cistern
110. Midjñaberd Church
111. Vaulted structure
112. Tetraconch church
113. Church
114. Hexagonal church
115. Armenian Cemetery
116. Water conduit
Kirkale Peninsula:
116. Kamsarakon tower bridge
117. S. Grigor Akkaberd Convent

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The archeologist Joseph Strzygowski, in 1918, put forth the view that it was the Armenians who first solved the problem of putting a dome over a square space. There are two ways: first, by the use of the squinch—a triangular-shaped section of a dome which fills up the corner of the square and so transforms it into a circle; second, by the pendentive—a small arch spanning the corner of the square, and so converting it into an octagon, onto which the circular base of the dome could be conveniently fitted.

The pendentive found great favor throughout Europe and Asia. When the possibility of placing a dome over a square had been realized, a variety of alternative elaborations became possible to architects. The square, for instance, could be extended in one or more of four directions, permitting a plan of greater interest and significance than a mere rectangle, and leading at last to the basilica and cruciform plans, and something of a synthesis of the ponderentive and the pendentive, according to Mr. Strzygowski, was developed by the Armenians.

At Ani there is ample evidence that in the Church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator (completed 1215) the Armenians at least used the pendentive. This church is perched on the side of a cliff over the river, its unbroken walls decorated with sculptured arches, double columns and stone tracery of birds and flowers. Inside, 700 year old frescoes cover the nave, apse, the ceilings and all the walls with scenes from the Bible and accompanying legends in Greek.

The apse is to the east end of the nave, a trend started by Armenians and said to be based on Pagan Sun worship. Above the nave, on four columns rests the dome, lit by a circle of windows that throws light onto the small arches spanning the corners of the square. It is a perfect example of the pendentive.

Nearby, in the Great Cathedral, started in the year 989 in the reign of King Smbat II (977-89) and completed in the year 1001 (or 1010) by order of Queen Katranish (Catherine), the wife of King Garapik Bagrationi, Smbat's successor, there is more evidence of a different kind: the presence in the cathedral of the pointed arches and clustered piers considered to be one of the hallmarks of Western Gothic architecture.

The design of the cathedral is on a cruciform plan, with a dome over the central crossing, and a triple-apse eastern end. The dome is supported by four massive piers of coupled pillars with plain capitals and spanned by bold pointed arches. At either end of the building stand four similar piers, a pair at the entrance and one on each side of the apse—all “Gothic” features designed by the Armenian architect, T'rdat (who also designed the present dome of the Santa Sophia in Istanbul) in 989-1001, more than 100 years before the style made its first appearance in Western Europe.

Another is the Church of the Redeemer (Annaprkitch - completed around the year 1035) the walls covered with inscriptions showing much of its history. And it is in the this church's history that the structure of the Bagratuni Armenian society can be understood. For us, much of the fascination (some might say fixation) of the ruling class and Armenian society on churches and religion, can seem obscure and remote. But in fact, it was the cohesive unit that bound the Armenians in their culture, to their kind, and ultimately, to their survival against the Arabs, Persians and Turcomans that were sweeping across their lands.

The church- both its idea as a conduit to God and its physical presence—was the embodiment of an Armenian idea; that no matter how strong the pull of the invaders' religion was to Armenia, no matter how many were pulled to renounce their faith and join the cause of the Greeks (Byzantines), Arabs or Seljuks, the ultimate destination for the people who worshipped here was with their God, a distinctly Armenian one at that.

The church, like the fragment of the True Cross, was the embodiment of the divine on earth. It had 8 apses, the 8th and largest apse symbolizing the day after the resurrection and end of earth, the day of reckoning, the Day of Judgment, which was to be on the 8th day in metaphysical terms. The 7 subservient apses represent the 7 days or times of life leading the people who worshipped here to the completion of a cycle, just as it ends the days of a week. There are three altars, the large central one and two small embedded into the walls on either side. The church is circular, the walls made into a 19 sided polygon. The number 19 represented two sacred concepts of the time, borrowed from classical ideas: 1 for the Base, the beginning, the be all and in all of the 1 God, and 9, the most sacred of numbers a product of the multiplication of the number 3,m which represented the Holy Trinity. For more details, see TourArmenia’s Sacred Geometry section (www.tacentral.com/architecture.asp?story_no=2).

The design of the church, its decoration and symbolism, can be read as biblical lessons for an illiterate class and at the same time a glorification of the ruling power. It can also be seen as an act of defiance, distinctly Armenian, an architectural statement of independence from the opulent (decadent) design in Byzantium, which had abandoned its iconoclastic struggle and once again reveled in the representation of Christ and the saints in icons and frescos that covered their churches, something the more ascetic Armenian religious orders recoiled from.

Armenia built structures to God, their decoration was no doubt more richly endowed than the stripped down versions we see today, but they were far removed from the worship of icons the Armenians preached against. God was the word; the word was made real on earth in the vision of Saint Grigor, in a church, a building. The church of the holy redeemer embodied his spirit. Inscriptions cover the remaining structure, showing its purpose and symbol. The Prince Abgharb Pahlavid (Pahlavuni) had inscribed on the walls:

“In the year 480 (A.D. 1035), I, Abgharb marzpan took an edict on behalf of Smbat Shah’n’Shah to Michael, Emperor of the Greeks, at Constantinople, and with great effort and expense bought a fragment of the Holy Cross, and when I returned, completed this temple...”

The drum of the dome is unusual for it being completely circular and not octagonal as was the custom. It is quite tall and quite wide, capped internally with a cupola. There are faint frescoes from a later age (13th c) attributed to Sarkis Parchkans, and showing a penchant for Byzantine style, betraying the structure’s earlier resistance to Greek Orthodoxy. The faint painwork is still beautiful and was later white washed, which leads some to believe the church may have been used as a mosque in its later Persian/Turkish periods.

On the west side is the Church of Saint Gregory (s. Grigor - 10th c), commissioned by Prince Grigor Pahlavuni as a private chapel for the Pahlavuni family.
The **Arakelots** (Holy Apostles) church exact history is unknown, no founding inscription having been discovered on the building. It is believed to have been built for archbishops from the Pahlavuni princely family, who commissioned its construction. The Pahlavunis, related to both the Bagratunis and the old Kamsarakan nakharar dynasty, were a powerful allies and almost as rich as the Bagratuni kings, patronizing several religious orders and monasteries in Ani and Armenia. The earliest extant inscription is dated 1031, concerning the donation of land by a certain Abghamir Pahlavuni, who also commissioned (No. 53) S. Grigor Abghamir church nearby.

The church has four apses in a cross form, with four chapels in its rectangle shell. A feature of churches from the 7th c., the four-apse (inscribed quatrefoil) design in this case has details unique to the 11th c.; the entry portals (in this case north and south) have doorways with monumental lintels adorned with a sculpted frieze of acanthus leaves and rows of dentils. The dome construction used an innovative method of distributing weight and was lighted by the use of hollow clay "vessels" built into the structure. Like earlier churches its slate roof was decorated with pomegranate motifs. Also unique was the attention to detail in the four corner chapels, each with its own apse and a dome and drum, highly unusual for the time and perhaps a precursor of other structures that followed.

The remarkable **King Gagik's Church of St. Gregory** (S. Grigor Gagik) is based on the great cathedral at Zvartnots, the so-called "Millennium Church of Ani, mentioned in the chronicles of Stepanos of Taron:

"It was in this time, the end of the 1000th year of Our Lord's incarnation, in the time of Emperor Basil, when Gagik, King of Armenia, received the notion of erecting in the city of Ani a church like in size and form to the great church at Vagharshapat, dedicated to St. Gregory, then in ruins."

- Stephanos Asoghik of Taron

It is thought that King Gagik (r. 990 to 1020) chose the architect T'rdat (who designed the Cathedral of Ani) to build his "millennium" church, and it was probably erected between the years 1001 and 1005 (some books say between 990 and 1000). T'rdat's design for the church was a circular gallery around a four-apse central building with rounded walls, which closely resembled the fallen Zvartnots masterpiece. However, like its original, the structure was never very stable, and despite attempts to strengthen the building, it soon collapsed. Later houses were built over the structure, some using the masonry, and it was forgotten until the 1906 excavation uncovered the foundations.

At the southern end of the city the flat top of a promontory was once a separate fortified enclosure. This part of Ani is known as the "Inner Fortress" (Mijnaberd), or simply the "citadel". Though protected on three sides with steep cliffs, the citadel was encircled by a single line of ramparts. This wall had towers on its north side, and a gateway at its NW corner.

According to tradition a pagan temple dedicated to the goddess Anahit stood here, the temple destroyed by Saint Gregory the Illuminator, who then erected a church on the site. Nothing has been found to substantiate this, but it makes a good story. At the very edge of the cliff stands a ruined church, the Kizkaleh, probably built during the first 15 years of the thirteenth century.

The Citadel Church is located at the eastern edge of the palace within the citadel. Its only intact wall is the north wall, a part of a 13th century renovation that added a second story. The church is dated to the 7th c., though the specific decorative elements: capitals with acanthus leaves, fretwork patterned cornice, and other elements typical of early Christian art suggest 6th century. The hall (5.85 by 9.4 m) is divided by two pairs of wall piers and flying arches.

The southernmost tip of the city, nearly surrounded by the Arpa/Akhurian Rivers is perhaps its oldest point, a magnificent defensive perch for millennia of settlers. The fortifications and relatively well preserved buildings suggest this might be amongst the last parts of the city to be abandoned. The site is called "Kizkale" in Turkish or "Gusanats" in Armenian (Maiden's or nun's) point.

The site has never been excavated, though according to tradition a temple to the Armenian goddess Anahit once stood here, destroyed by S. Grigor Lusavorich during the pagan Wars.
Serious excavation may prove this a myth or reality. The point is very difficult to get to now, the once carefully laid stone sacred path strewn with rubble and boulders falling from earthquakes and war. Perched over the river are the ruins of a church, Astvatsatsin, part of a nunnery (S. Grigor) from the 12-13th c. An inscription on the walls of the church (damaged in the 1988 earthquake and attributed to Shah'n'shah Zakarian, related to the Georgian Bagratid dynasty and governor of Ani 1198-1999) reads:

"During the reign of the Queen of queens Tamar, anointed by God and devout, J, Shah'n'shah Zakarian amirsasalar (governor), her faithful servant, son of the great Sarkis M'kargy'tseli, doing God's bidding, created this monument ... in this monastery, near the church built by our Illuminator, Saint Grigor."

The basilica was built on a six-step stylobate (raised floor, typically made with uneven steps to reach the foundation floor) with an east-west orientation. The number of steps confirm its pagan origins; pre-Christian temples were always placed on 6 or 7 step stylobates, borrowed form the Greeks (stylobates were temple foundation platforms), the number divisible by three. Three itself was considered one of the holiest numbers in sacred geometry, the three standing for the trinity deities of all western Pagan faiths, usurped by the Christians in the Holy Trinity. Its long spacious hall is divided into three aisles by three pairs of cross pylons.

The church measures 11.5 x 26.6 m and the central nave is 3 times wider than the side naves, an engineering feat for its time. It rose above the side aisle roofs and seems to have had a wooden ceiling. The Apsidioles (small or secondary apses) protrude far out and are linked by arched galleries at the northern and southern façades. In what became a commonplace in later Armenian church structures, there are four chapels embedded in the corners of the building. This is in keeping with both Greek temple designs which placed antechambers in the corners and with the legend of Grigor Lusavorich's visions, which described the corners of the universe in God's plan. At Yereruik all four are two-story, with the eastern pair behind the side apses looking towards North and the western larger pair looking north and west, and south and west.

The roofing is completely destroyed and there is some debate as to what kind it was. Some say it was a massive wooden beam structure, later covered with stone or ceramic tile, the beams supported by protruding arches on the side walls. Others think that the entire church was stone covered, and point to the western rooms, much larger than the eastern, the roofs for which seem to have been paved with stones. It is probable that the church, like most old structures, was renovated and added to over time, using the latest (or most available) engineering and materials on hand, its harmonious appearance is considered an architectural feat, its complicated design and number of renovations.

The basilica is striking, its three entries (west and south) with pediments adorned with exquisitely ornamented tympanum and column capitals carved with leaf designs. The windows are surrounded by moldings that curl away from each other at their bases. The plaster capitals and bases and entryway architraves are decorated with geometric patterns; six-petal rosettes and Greek crosses in a circle. The detailing and composition of portals became a feature of future churches. There are some fragmentary remains of frescoes, the earliest is dated 1038. The church is built in such a way that to reach the floor of the basilica, you have to descend several steps, the actual floor being lower than the top of the stylobate. Thus (using our sacred geometry) you ascend up to the temple of God, only to then descend (or bow) in his presence, a symbolic form of prostration.

About 200 m SE of the basilica 1958 excavations uncovered a 4th-5th c dam and small reservoir, which captured waters from a stream connected to the Akhurian. The dam, 120 m long and 4 m thick at its widest point, was made of stone, with support arches every 5-6 m and double-thick in the center, clapped with polished stone. Nearby is a cave dwelling complex, as are the ruins of the medieval village and a small chapel. An early Iron Age grave field lies in the valley just E of the basilica.

About 3 km SE of the basilica is Yereruik, an example of this direct use of the Pre-Christian temple, a triple nave basilica built directly on top of the original pagan temple, on a raised stylobate, with numerous frescos, now in fragments.

Excavations (Nicholas Marr, Toros Toromanian) showed extensive renovation of the church, including 5th-6th c addition of the North and South arcades and western antechambers and 10th c renovation of the main altar, which includes an inscription stone in the lower North wall of the main apse that says it was a testimonial stone to S. Karapet.

Its form (basilica) and architectural details (geometric patterns, early fresco fragments) suggest its construction in the 4th-5th c. The basilica was built on a six-step stylobate (raised floor, typically made with uneven steps to reach the foundation floor) with an east-west orientation. The number of steps confirm its pagan origins; pre-Christian temples were always placed on 6 or 7 step stylobates, borrowed from the Greeks (stylobates were temple foundation platforms), the number divisible by three. Three itself was considered one of the holiest numbers in sacred geometry, the three standing for the trinity deities of all western Pagan faiths, usurped by the Christians in the Holy Trinity. Its long spacious hall is divided into three aisles by three pairs of cross pylon.
**TRIP 3: ARPI LICH**


**Stay:** Overnight in Giumri, village home if you don’t mind the rustic amenities.

**Eat:** Amassia, roadside stands on the Georgian Highway, village home.

**NOTE:** There are natural gas stations once you leave Giumri, and petrol stations may be scarce or nonexistent. Past Amassia, there is nothing. Stock up before you leave.

This day trip takes you up to Amassia, Armenia’s Alpine (some say Siberia) district. Visitors are often overwhelmed with the hospitality of these remote villages, whose rough climate imparts a special goodness to the wild honey, home-churned butter, yogurt and fresh food found in every household.

**Take the N Highway towards Georgia and just north of town, and then turn left (NW) on Amassia highway (which skirts past the new housing blocks and quickly peters into a potted road) and continue for about 8 km (and past the village of Marmashen) into the village of Vaghamerberd. Continue for another 500 meters or so the left turnoff to the berd (signposted).**

**HARMASHEN (Vahramaberd) Ուղղածուն** Վաղամաբերդ

For detailed description see NEAR GIUMRI : MARMASHEN (p. 7)

**SIDE TRIP: (Kaps – Վաղամաբերդ, elev. 521m, pop. 145) is a forlorn village whose best feature is its summer jambar (camp) for children, located in the river gorge to the W. When working and not full the map can accommodate visitors and can be a decent place to crash if you are stuck in the area.**

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

**SIDE TRIP:** (Jradzor – Սպինդրին) (elev. 532m, pop. 1811) has a rebuilt 19th c. church, and for a small mountain river that cuts through the opposite mountain in a rocky crest into the river. This is the 3000 – 1000 BCE archeological site at HOGHMIK.

**HOGHMIK EXCAVATION – ՀՈՂՀՅԱԿ ԷՔՍԿԱՎԱՀԱՅՍԻՆ** is on a plateau on the north bank of the Chaiyir river and is found by walking (carefully) past he low piles of stones towards the rim of the gorge. Hidden by grass and wildflowers from a distance, the settlement quickly becomes apparent as you reach it, as one foundation after another unfolds itself before you.

The site consists of a large Hellenistic Settlement from the 3rd-2nd cc BE, which in turn lie over Iron and Bronze Age layers. The settlement had grown by the Hellenistic (early Arshakuni) period into a substantial settlement, as the excavated foundations show: streets, houses and public buildings are outlined in rock, stretching from just below the road to the edge of the gorge.

**Remarkably the settlement’s only source of water for its 500+ citizens was the river itself, which is a 100 m descent into the river gorge. As you walk around the site you can begin to detect the numerous buildings some of their functions: palaces and dining halls still have a few of the column bases, and the streets meander between buildings as it runs to the river gorge. More importantly, the site lies over much earlier levels of settlement, stretching at least to the mid Bronze Age (3000 BCE) when the entire region was lush and humid, warmed by the still active volcanic cones surrounding the area. There are Bronze Age and medieval burial grounds as well, some of which appear as slight humps on the horizon.**

Camping in area; Springs in the area.

**SIDE TRIP:** Backtrack to Jradzor and turn right (N) on the Amassia Highway and continue about 5.5 km to (Amassia, DD 40.9466667x 43.7813889) **(Kaps)**
There is a mterk on the corner of the hotel building, a post office with Armentel office (phone calls) and some commission shops/kiosks off the S end of the Square, where an Apoteka and other small shops can be found. To the N of the square is the hospital, emergencies only.

The Village of “Benzine Ch’ka”

Who woulda thunk? After leaving Amassia with high hopes of running the old border along the Arpa Chai and cruising along the high mountain meadows and rocky crevices to Armenia’s Sibut, Ashot looked over and casually asked, “are there any petrol stops around here?”

A question I might well expect him to have the answer to, he was the driver. We stared blankly at each other, then broke out in laughter. Woo hoo! We were in it now! Driving blind into territory no one knew anything about (at least in our car), except a) it was cold outside, b) it was called Armenia’s Siberia, and c) it was cold outside.

We cruised into Berdashen, off the spine of the Shirak mountains onto an alpine plateau, the dark churning waters of Arpi Lich off it eh distance. Ashot stopped at the first farm house to buy a couple litters of petrol, enough to get us to civilization. Ashot had two Fanta bottles just for that purpose (good ole Fanta).

“Brother, there is no petrol here.” What do you mean? A look like we should have been born under a luckier star or with a brighter set of parents, then, “What I mean is there is no petrol. None. If anyone gets any, they to the S end of the square, where an Apoteka and other small shops can be found. To the N of the square is the hospital, emergencies only.

Flora include Iris lineola, I. Causica, Merendera mirzoeval, Colchicum Szoritsi, Gagea ssp., Puschkinia scilloides, Draba ssp., Lallemantia canesceus, Ranunculus ssp., Myosotis alpestris, Pedicularis ssp., Trifolium ssp., Gladioslus kotschyanus, Silene ssp. Endangered species (Red Book of Armenia) include Iris sibirica, Gladiolus imbricatus, Traunsteinera sphaerica, Seilla rosenii grow in the surroundings. A number of flower species (including yellow water lily (Nuphar luteum), bogbean (Menyanthes trifoliata) and flowering rush (Butomus umbellatus) were lost when Lake Arpi was converted into a reservoir.
Conservation issues  The lake is over-fished and birds are seen as competition to fishermen. Like in other rural areas, farmers and villagers still feel the land is expendable, the lake will live forever. Though not as threatened as Lori or Siunik with their strip mining operations and clear cut operations, Amassia is still a fragile eco-system that needs preserving with the support of local populations. Eco tourism is a way to demonstrate income from preserving and care taking. The bird colony is extremely vulnerable due to annual water-level fluctuations of the reservoir. Birds are sometimes subject to disturbance when fluctuating water-levels allow access to nesting areas.

Camping  around the lake, overnight in village home (5000 AMD), village food (dairy).

From Paghakn, take the side road E about 5 km to the Side Trip (Ardenis, DD 41.0786111x43.7238889)  
SIDE TRIP: (Ardenis - Արդենիս, elev. 2004m, pop. 516) (formerly Gyollu) is E of Paghakn in the foothills of Mt. Yeznasar, once inhabited by Azeris who left before the crisis with Azerbaijan flared up in 1988. As they left, many destroyed their homes, the remains of which still stand as sentinels to their existence. They were replaced with refugees from Karabakh who have built new homes in the same village. Just outside the village, on its E end is a large Azei cemetery with tombstones, some of which have been pushed down or broken, but many of which still stand. Look for the ones with pistols, rifles, knives and swords carved on them. These are memorials to soldiers from the early 20th c and WWI. The stones are inscribed using Russian script, as the Azeris were forbidden to use their own script by the soviets. Though in Russian Cyrillic, the words are still Azeri.

The road is an alternate route to the Georgian highway and the border at Bavra. It is 24 km of bone-crunching dirt road and potted asphalt, about one hour of your life to the other side.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

From Paghakn, take the road N about 4 km to ZORAKERT (DD 41.0927778x43.6597222)  
ZORAKERT - Զուրակերտ (formerly Balikhli, elev. 2004m, pop. 778) has the ruins of a fort a little NE.

On a rutted road N from Zorakert about 5 km from Zorakert, near the border with Georgia, is situated the small hamlet of Darik, with an organic farm producing some of the best dairy products in the country.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Continue on the road W around the reservoir about 4 km to TZAGHKUT (DD 41.0975x43.6163889)  
TZAGHKUT - Զաղխուտ (once Gyullija, elev. 2047m, pop. 745), has a medieval fortress about 2 km E of town.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Continue on the road S around the reservoir about 4 km to Garnarich, then another 4 km to SHAGHIK (DD 41.0477778x43.5855556)  
SHAGHIK - Շաղիկ (till 1991 Karabulagh, elev. 2010m, pop. 835) is at the end of the road. Gorgeous vistas and rolling grass with hints of the riots of colors that come every spring. No monuments, nothing to study or stare at except the endless waves of water, grass and the everlasting sky. Want more?

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

END OF TRIP 3
TRIP 4: ASHOTSK, TO GEORGIA

GIUMRI - MAIYISSIAN - (Keti) - LERNANTSK PASS - (Arpeni) - (Torosgiugh) - (Goghovit) - TSOGHAMARK -

RIGHT ROUTE: (Vardaghpiur) - (Musaiyelian) - (Salut, Bashgiugh) - (Pokr Sariar) - (Kakavasar) - DZORASHEN -

LEFT ROUTE: (Ashotsk) - (Mets Sepasar) - GHAZANCHI - (Sizavet) - (Bavra: Akhalkalaki & Akhaltsikhe)

Stay: Overnight in Giumri, village home if you don't mind the rustic amenities.
Eat: Road side stands, Ashotsk, Bavra.

Day Trip 4 explores Northern Shirak, a land of contrasts with teeming forests, rugged mountains and dry ridges. The day trip follows the highway to Georgia, forking off on the Tashir / Stepanavan highway midway, then returns and continues to the Georgian border, where a pitted road goes on to the impoverished Armenian districts of Akhalkalaki and Akhaltsikhe.

Take the Northern Highway out of Giumri towards Georgia for about 10 km to MAIYISSIAN (DD 40.853056x 43.8294444).

MAIYISSIAN - UZHUBULU (till 1946 Ortakilisa, elev. 1635m, pop. 3849), is named for the May 1920 Bolshevik attempt to seize power in Armenia. In the village is the 7th c. S. Astvatsatsin church made from red and black tuff, with inscriptions.

Camping in the area; Overnight at the hamlet (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Continue N on the Highway about 5 km to (KETI, DD 40.9x 43.8833333).

SIDE TRIP: (Keti) - "Joyous," elev. 2031m, pop. 2760) boasts two Bronze Age settlements on its nearby hills (requires hiking), one NE of town, the other, larger on the hill SE. Relics uncovered during the excavation are kept at the Shirak Regional Museum in Giumri (unfortunately closed because of lack of facilities). The village also has a shrine and a church, neither very interesting. About 2 km NW in a crevice of some hills is another Bronze Age site.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

About 3 km N on the highway, immediately past Pokrashen, is the LERNANTSK PASS.

LERNANTSK PASS - The pass crosses between the foothills of Mts. Chatalsar and Maralsar, with stunning views of the Giumri and Tsoghamark Valleys. Great place for a pit stop and a view.

Camping in area; Springs in the area.

Continue N about 2.6 km to the right (E) turnoff to (Arpeni - DD 40.9166667 x 43.8833333).

SIDE TRIP: (Arpeni - Upnihuq elev. 593m, pop. 700) On the highway at the turn off is a Jasharan (Food joint), with cheap eats and good views.
Camping in the area; Overnight at the hamlet (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Continue N on the highway another 1 km to a bridge and the southern edge of (Torosgiugh DD 40.935 x 43.8775)

SIDE TRIP: (Torosgiugh – Թոռոսգյուղ elev. 604m, pop. 1235) sits above the Chaiyir River in an idyllic spot below plunging alpine mountains. At the bridge is a restaurant (2000-3000 AMD) and jaumbar (summer camp for kids) which, when working will be glad to put up tourists in available rooms (2000-3000 AMD includes three meals).

Camping in the area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Continue N on the Highway about 13 km to a side road and then W about 3 km to (Goghovit)

SIDE TRIP: (Goghovit - Գողիվիտ till 603m Taknalu, pop. 797) off the road above the Chaiyir River, all along which is great for camping and hiking. The village has a ruined 1860 church and some good local produce.

Camping in the area; Overnight at the hamlet (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Backtrack to the highway and turn left (N), continuing about 2.5 km to the left turn off (then 500 m) to TSOGHAMARK (DD 40.95023 x 43.85722)

TSOGHAMARK – Եղջամարք (elev. 2003m, pop. 1875) on first glance looks like any of a number of small villages in Armenia, set against a backdrop of some cliffs (which hold the remains of a cyclopean fortress, mostly ruined during the 1988 earthquake) and a meandering layout of village homes and well-kept gardens. The 18th-19th c church is set up above the village at the end of the right fork from the highway.

The jewels for the village begins inside this simple black and red tufa triple-nave basilica. The roof is tinned over at one time with its western end collapsed an exposed to the elements. The rest of the roof protects an ethnographic dream and one of Armenia’s true historical treasures: an original wooden beam ceiling with earthen roof with massive wooden support columns and carved capitals.

The massive wooden beams the support the cross beams still survive, though about 40% of the top tier beamed roof has collapsed, but enough remains to show how 16th-19th c churches were roofed, and just how closely church design was tied to domestic house construction, and in this case, how closely tied it was to much more ancient buildings that have been excavated from the Iron Age,

Compare this roofing design with that at the Erebusi museum, and the similarities are remarkable. The massive wood beams were shipped in from East Armenia, from the pine forests of Sari Ghamish, a forest that still supplies wood to Eastern Turkey. Some of the beams are more than 20m long and 50 centimeters in diameter. Sari Ghamish also supplied much of the wood used to build the houses in Old Giumri.

The effect is both haunting and enchanting, its primitive design and extraordinarily well preserved origins vying with the elements for dominance, the elements slowly winning. During WWII the church was converted into a warehouse and it has never recovered from that experience, the villagers begging their poverty for not preserving or fixing the church. Just as well, as the extraordinary finds inside require some real expertise in preserving this architectural jewel.

A Bronze-Iron Age fortress lies above the church on the rim of the hills, a 30m hike up rocky terrain. You can detect a few of the red rocks above the rim, and view the destruction of the central portion which cascaded downhill during the earthquake.

The real find is in the tiny matur (chapel), just 100m uphill (NE) from the church, which the villagers have paid special attention to preserving without really knowing what is inside. The tiny pink stucco building, built in 1969 by a certain Andranik Seroyian protects a holy spot the villagers have worshipped at throughout their collective memories, the women of the village placing matagh (sacrifice) offerings at the site even before the chapel was erected over the site.

But its real purpose as the location of early Bronze/Iron Age graves makes it one of Armenia’s real treasures.

Calling the site the graves for three brothers and a sister: Sisak, Misak, Abed & Shoghakat

The thick stone slabs inside the tiny building cover graves of people no one in the village has any memory of, only a collective memory handed down from generation to generation. The four graves are thought to date between the 4th and 1st millennium BCE. If the earlier date is correct, the sarcophagi would predate any of its type in Armenia and be one of the oldest in the world. It shows a sophisticated relationship between people and the after world and their attempt so preserve the memory of the dead using coffin like structures. Interesting to note that the old Armenian names seem to be related from older civilizations in the region, specifically Sumeria and Egypt. Sisak, Misak and Abedpetak appear to be variants of gods in the Sumerian (4th millennium BCE) mythology, appearing later as Babylonian followers of Daniel in the bible (as Shadrach (Shishak), Meshach (Mishak) and Abednego (Abednak/Apetnak).

If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. And if not, we want you to know, O king, that we will...
Shoghakat is the name of a maiden allied with the story of Hripsime and Guyaneh, whose deaths precipitated King T’rdat’s descent into madness and the conversion of the Armenian court to Christianity, but whose real origins are obscure. She may be tied to the Sumerian legend, or simply added to the story of the three brothers to lend Christian credence to the site.

The history of the site is even more obscure, since villagers seem to have been descended from immigrants to the area between 1828 (Russio-Turkish war) and 1874 (The Hamadin pogroms), further removing them from the original inhabitants.

You can’t help but notice their age as you stumble on the huge stone covers for the sarcophagi when you enter the chapel, their layout in exact position common among Bronze Age burials.

The villagers have no idea what they are protecting, for them Sisak, Misak & Apetnak (Shishak, Mishak and Apetnak?) were three brothers who lived in some distant time with their sister Shoghakat and their graves bring great luck to those who bring offerings to them. In one corner of the room an old stone leaning against III, the walls, as well as a small coin. Villagers say if you wish for something and rub it had enough, it will stick to the stone and grant your wish. We tried and alas failed to get the coin to stick, but others succeeded, no doubt in better touch with Sisak and Misak than us.

He village is also renowned (perhaps more so) for being the birthplace for a number of Giunnd’s police chiefs, and one hopes their power will extend to preserving both the 18th c church and to uncovering the mystery of the 4 BCE brothers and a sister.

Camping in the area; Overnight at the hamlet (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RIGHT ROUTE:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Take the NE fork and in another kilometer is (Vardaghpiur, DD 40.95x 43.9166667) or go back to Vardaghpiur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SIDE TRIP: (Vardaghpiur - ճայրագրանք) before Giuilulbah or “Rose spring,” elev. 2024m, pop. 2373) is on a rolling set of hills, on a mountain stream feeding to the Ashotsk and Akhurian Rivers.

Camping in the hills; Springs in the area.

Continue NE on the Highway for about 4 km to Side Trip (Musaiyelian, DD 40.9927778x 43.9388889) or go back to Vardaghpiur

SIDE TRIP: (Musaiyelian - Մասեյելեան, elev. 2081m, pop. 1716) has the 19th c. Stepanos monastery (12-13th cc), remnants of a 10th c. fortress and a church (1863). It is a difficult slog to the monastery, but worth it for the intrepid traveler. Nestled in the folds of the Gogaran Mountains, the hamlet has few amenities (and fewer people, who make the annual treks uphill in the summer to tend their flocks. S. Stepanos is a central damed cruciform type, with elaborate carvings on the remaining stones. The once walled monastery had a gavit (also 13th c) and several shrines, now missing. The fortress was likewise toppled by invading Seljuks, Mongols and Timurid. Scant remains to mark what was once a rather impressive affair, given its remote location.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Continue S on the road about 5 km to (Pokr Sariar, DD 40.9253833x 44.0186111) then another 2 km to (Kakavasar) |

SIDE TRIP: (Pokr Sariar - Փոքր Սարիար, elev. 2014m, pop. 1154) and (Kakavasar - Քաղավասար) lie along a twisting mountain road on the Chichkan river. It has a 19th c. church, but the views as you go up the foothills to Mt. Tsulasar (2555 m) are breathtaking.

(Kakavasar - Քաղավասար - till 1978 Kefli, pop. 153) has the ruined Karmravor church (7th c) just W of the village and the remains of cyclopean fort.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Take the side road E about 4 km (and past the Dzorashen cheese factory) and Turn N on 1946 Boz Giugh (alt. 2272 m) over Mt. Salut (not passable until May) some 35 km to Tashir (then 15 km S to Stepanavan) through deforested mountains.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

DZORASHEN - Դժորաշեն (elev. 2091m, pop. 1526) has the ruined S. Stepanos monastery (12-13th cc), remnants of a 10th c. fortress and a church (1863). It is a difficult slog to the monastery, but worth it for the intrepid traveler. Nestled in the folds of the Gogaran Mountains, the hamlet has few amenities (and fewer people, who make the annual treks uphill in the summer to tend their flocks. S. Stepanos is a central damed cruciform type, with elaborate carvings on the remaining stones. The once walled monastery had a gavit (also 13th c) and several shrines, now missing. The fortress was likewise toppled by invading Seljuks, Mongols and Timurid. Scant remains to mark what was once a rather impressive affair, given its remote location.

Hiking The area has fantastic hiking and climbing possibilities, with trails following stream beds N and E. Pother than climbing the steep hills and cliffs, you can wend your way to Lori Marz by following the Chichkan River to Nalband (13 km) or following the mountain road (4x4 or on foot) to Saralanj and Lori Marz in about 7 km.

Camping in the area; Overnight at the hamlet (3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

(road continues to Saralanj and Lori Marz).

Backtrack to Kakavasar, then backtrack to Vardaghpiur.

LEFT ROUTE: Take the Highway N towards Georgia, about 10 km (via Karmravan) to (Ashotsk DD 41.0375x 43.8508556) or go back to Vardaghpiur.

SIDE TRIP: (Ashotsk - Աշոտսկ, till 1938 Ghezelghoch, elev. 1986m, pop. 1349) was renamed for the medieval name of the area (“Rose Spring”), the old name in honor of a young militant, Ghukas Ghukasian (1899-1920), founder of Armenia’s Communist Youth Movement. In 1919 he represented the Armenian Bolshevik youth at the convention of the Spartacus youth organization in Tilifis. Sent to Kars in February 1920 to prepare for May uprising, he was killed in a battle with the authorities on the 14 May.

Another sad little outlet in Armenia, Ashotsk is the former capital of Ghukasian region, so has a few government buildings (closed), a couple of shops, kiosks and no cafes or jasharans. They do have some rather fat and lazy gai (highway patrolmen) who try and shake anyone down who stops at the town.

Ashotsk is the headquarters for the Ashotsk Cheese Factory (stock up on Dutch, Lori, Chanak, Suluguni etc.), the Redemptoris Mater Hospital, a gift of Pope John Paul II, operated by the Camillian Religious order.

Food Cafes, Food shops, kiosks and BBQ stands on main road, overnight in local homes (ask around)

From Ashotsk follow the hwy N about 1.9 km to the Mets Sepasar turnoff to the Left (W) and
follow that another 2 km into the village of (Mets Sepasar DD 41.0491667 x 43.8233333)

SIDE TRIP: (Mets Sepasar – Ù»Í ê»å³ë³ elev. 67m, pop. 1200) is located just below Mt. Shishtep (Tepe being an Arabic word for mound or citadel) and recent excavations are uncovering a variety of artifacts from various periods including some Aneolithic tools. The excavations work in the summers, if you see a jeep up on the hill, make your way up there to view the work.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Continue N on the highway about 6 km to GHAZANCHI (DD 41.0788889 x 43.8216667)

GHAZANCHI - Ô³½³ÝãÇ (elev. 2030m, pop. 1220) is to the right (E) of the highway and is not much of a village to look at, but N of the village, also to the right is an interesting Catholic Armenian graveyard, replete with a white and blue Greek style chapel inside. The graves cover the 10th c to the modern period and include three animal stones from the time of the Timur and Mongolian invasions.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

Go back to the highway, then N about 4 km to (Bavra DD 41.1275x 43.7758333)

Bavra - ÑüjspU once Titoi Kharaba, elev. 2151m, pop. 960) is best known as the customs and immigration point for the Georgian border. You can purchase a visa entering from Georgia at this point for around $30, and Georgia grants visa to citizens bearing a US passport.

The village ha a cemetery on its W edge with some old Arabic tombstones. Otherwise uninteresting (unless you are thirsty for petrol). Note that Viva Cell works up here and into Georgia.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

The highway continues N into the remote mostly Armenian districts of Akhalkalaki - ÙÆ¼½³ï (45 km) and Akhaltsikhe - Ù»ø²ì³Û (120 km). There are minibuses and taxis at Akhalkalaki. A taxi from Giumri should cost about 30 dollars

END OF TRIP 4
**TRIP 5: AKHURIAN**  
**GIUMRI - (Shirak) - (Hatsik – Topar) - KAMO - JAUR - (Mets Sariar) - (Jajur Pass) - GIUMRI - (Akhurian) - KARNUT RESERVOIR - (Hovit) - MUSAIELIAN - JRARAT**

**Stay:** Overnight in Giumri, village home if you don't mind the rustic amenities.

**Eat:** Road side stands, Shirak, Giumri.

Day Trip 5 explores the Eastern edge of Shirak, the foothills of Mt. Aragats, its villages, ravines and meadows, on the road to Spitak and Vanadzor and above Lake Karnut.

- Take the NE highway towards Spitak (41 km) and Vanadzor (64 km), and go about 6 km to (Shirak, DD 40.9480556x 43.9213889).

**SIDE TRIP:** (Shirak – Çphluş – till 1940 Ghonaghkran or “guest killer,” elev. 1661m, pop. 1616), so name for the time locals killed Persian soldiers quartered in their homes, after hearing the soldiers meant to harm them. In the village are the S. Hakob church and S. Minas shrine.

**Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.**

- At Shirak take the W road about 4 km to (Hatsik, DD 40.1641667x 43.9408333).

**SIDE TRIP:** 4 km west of Shirak on a side road is (Hatsik - Xughref, elev. 889m, pop. 1558), also called Toparli or Topar. The village has the Tsak Kar (literally hole stone), a large huge stone with a hole just big enough for a person to squeeze through, granting happiness to those who can pass through (large people not apply, and apparently, are doomed to live in woe and gnash their teeth). About 2 km away is (Tarband – Xughref), a beautiful old mountain village with stone streets, walls and picture-pretty church.

**Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.**

Go back to Shirak then take the SE road about 3 km to KAMO (DD 40.3598889x 45.1266667).

**KAMO – ÇLIUN** (till 1935 Haji Nazar, elev. 1946m, pop. 1710), named for a revolutionary bank robber, has an Astvatsatsin church (1878). 2 km NW is a medieval settlement ("Chataljur ") and the "Khacher" Hellenistic site.

**Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.**

- At Kamo take the N road past the Jajur Reservoir about 3 km to JAUR (DD 40.8505556x 43.9480556).

**JAUR – ŞUNNUN** (elev. 1750m, pop. 1616) has the house-museum of the painter Minas Avetisian (1928-1975). Born there, Minas was one of Armenia’s most famous painters of the 20th century, a modernist who developed his own style of painting within the so-called “National” style formulated by Sarian. His character was said to be like that of the rural community: strength of character, warm humor, the trustworthiness and reliability which one always feels in people bound to the soil. It was by pure chance that the artist’s parents escaped the 1915 massacre. Not far from Jaour several thousands of people were killed in a ravine. The generation which saw these terrible events with their own eyes is still alive. Often on winter evenings, sitting by the hearth of his village home the artist heard the accounts of eye-witnesses. This may explain the drama he instilled in his paintings.

Avetisian studied art in Leningrad, at the Academy of Fine Arts and haunted the Hermitage to study its art. He credited his skill to his teachers Johonnian, Zaitsev and Khudiakov. He traveled widely around Armenia, eagerly seeking out historical monuments; he studied the Armenian miniature and the works of the greatest Armenian artists, above all, Saryan's. Avetisian's real emergence as an artist was at the “Exhibition of Five” in Yerevan in 1962, where he revealed himself as a mature painter with a bright individuality. Influenced by miniaturists he studied throughout his life, Avetisian's paintings are renowned for their color and depth of detail, as expressionistic as they were.

On the evening of January 1, 1972, while he was visiting Jaour, Avetisian's studio burned down, along with some of his best canvasses. Recovering from the loss of his work, he embarked on a new, late burst of creativity, painting "Meditation" (1972) and "Baking Lavash" (1972) and others.

Paleolithic tools have been found in Jaour.

**Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.**

- At Jaour, go E on the Spitak highway about 3 km to Krashen, then N about 3 km to Side Trip (Mets Sarari, DD 40.8933333x 43.9525).

**SIDE TRIP:** (Mets Sarari – Uбор Xnguru, elev. 1961m, pop. 752) has a 19th c. S. N’shan church, reliquary for several manuscripts now in Yerevan.  

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.
At Akhurian take the E road about 7 km to KARNUT (DD 40.7836111x 43.9541667)

KARNUT - ՔԱՐՆԱԹ (till 1946 Diraklar, elev. 1629m, pop. 1852), is a farming community, specializing in wheat, sugar beets, vegetables, fruit and cattle. The area is also known for its basalt mines, and for some Early Bronze Age ruins on a nearby hill. To the NE is a ruined basilica built on the foundations of a pagan temple in the 4th-5th cc. and rebuilt in the 10th c. This small basilica stands on top of a hill overlooking the village and is of the same type as other early churches of its time, particularly the stretched hall the proportion of 1:2.36 and the horseshoe shaped apse, the same type as that at Tanahat, another early Christian hall.

Karnut has been the focus of excavations and has a dense concentration of Early Bronze Age materials, topographically quite characteristic of contemporary sites in neighboring regions, such as Anushavan, Keti and Tsaghkahovit, in Aragatsotn. Though colder now, in its day, the area was comparatively warm, seldom freezing. Deforestation in Armenia is much of the reason the climate has so radically changed. About 1 km N are the remains of an 8th-7th cc. BCE dam.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

From Karnut take the N road around the Karnut Reservoir about 3 km to (Hovit)

KARNUT RESERVOIR - ՔԱՐՆԱԹԻ ՀԱՅՏԵՍ is a pretty lake that captures the mountain waters flowing to the Jrarat River.

SIDE TRIP: (Hovit – Հուվիթ, pop. 481) has khachkars 2 km east of the village

Camping at the reservoir.

From Hovit continue S 2 km to MUSAIYELIAN (DD 40.9927778x 43.9388889)

MUSAIYELIAN - ՄՈՒՍԱԵՅԼԻԱՆ (till 1935 Mets Kyapanak, elev. 2081m, pop. 1716) was renamed in honor of Sargis G. Musaiyelian, a Bolshevik captain who sent his troops in support of the May 1920 uprising against the government in Alexandropol/Giumri. Sentenced to death when the revolt collapsed, he was nevertheless shot by Dashnaks when two of their leaders were killed in Zangezur. There is a renovated church renovated (1842).

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

From Musaiyelian continue S 5 km to JRARAT (DD 40.7461111x 44.0883333)

JRARAT - ՋՐԱՐԱԹ ("Place of Water" - till 1945 Chirakhlu, elev. 2236m, pop. 1162) has the small S. Minas church (6th c.) and the remains of a cyclopean fort. The road continues (barely) another 9 km to Spandarian, for Jeeps only. Jrarat is near the headwaters of the Jrarat River, with a beautiful view of the reservoir and the Giumri valley.

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.

From Hovit continue S 2 km to MUSAIYELIAN (DD 40.9927778x 43.9388889)

MUSAIYELIAN - ՄՈՒՍԱԵՅԼԻԱՆ (till 1935 Mets Kyapanak, elev. 2081m, pop. 1716) was renamed in honor of Sargis G. Musaiyelian, a Bolshevik captain who sent his troops in support of the May 1920 uprising against the government in Alexandropol/Giumri. Sentenced to death when the revolt collapsed, he was nevertheless shot by Dashnaks when two of their leaders were killed in Zangezur. There is a renovated church renovated (1842).

Camping in area; Overnight in village home is possible (rustic, 3000 AMD for B&B is fair); Springs in the area.
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“The History of Armenian Architecture” (V. Arutunian, Yerevan 1985)

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Sey Gkuh [www.gyumri.am/i/photos/ccr/sevberd](http://www.gyumri.am/i/photos/ccr/sevberd)

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Ani [www.saudiaracmoworld.com/issue/196705/anih](http://www.saudiaracmoworld.com/issue/196705/anih)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rick Ney (author) started his life in Armenia in 1992, working in education, humanitarian aid and development projects that morphed into IT development and writing about Armenia; a relationship of 14 years which has taken him to it seems every nook of his adopted country. Rick is passionate about Armenia’s deep history and amazing ecology, and can be found roaming the countryside in search of new places to introduce to the world. Rick is equally passionate about making the country accessible for independent travelers, whom he believes will be the basis of Armenia’s development and entry into the democratic world. Rick divides his time between Armenia and caring for a parent in Texas, both of which he considers the richest experiences of his life.

Rick wrote the first full guide to Armenia in the post-Soviet era and the first multi-media guide on CD-ROM, TourArmenia. Other writings include articles about Armenia’s prehistoric observatories at Metsamor and Karahundj, Armenia’s Nature and hiking trails and commentary on his experiences in the country. Still others are travel articles for several publications. Rick and his small team at TourArmenia continue to add information about the country to their web site at www.TACentral.com and www.TourArmenia.info.

Rafael Torossian (research, maps, and graphics) has been collaborating with Rick on TourArmenia since 1996, focusing on maps and graphics while providing some much needed reality checks and commentary along the way. In his other real life, Rafael designs flash sequences, ads, graphics and web sites for TWRI, designing for a wide variety of sites and content management projects.

In a previous life Rafi was the Assistant to the Minister for Sports, serving 6 ministers, before meeting Rick when they worked together on several humanitarian aid projects funded by USAID and 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, learning computer skills and creating the first multi-denomination accounting system for USAID projects in the Caucasus.

In an even earlier life Rafi was an athlete, competing in Light Athletics (Track) where he set the All Armenia record for the 60 meter dash, a record that still stands. He was a Sports Teacher and an Honored Coach of the Republic of Armenia. He lives in Yerevan, is a proud Yerevantsi, one of the few who did not leave in 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, where she learned patience and good humor working with American professors (God give us patience and a dose of Pantalgin). She then worked at the World Food Program in Armenia for 11 years as an administrator and Program Officer. At the same time she collaborated with Rick on articles and the first TourArmenia CD-ROM. In her previous life Bella worked with International architects at ArtsStateDesign Institute as an information program assistant and translator, as well as learning the form and function of design in life, a gift she carries with her to this day. History and architecture is her true love 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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ANI PLAN

Outside the City:
1. Bathhouse ruins
2. Ramparts
3. Burial mound
4. Kirakos Mausoleum
5. Chapel ruins
6. Chapel ruins
7. Stone church
   Church ruins

Inside the City:
8. “Baron’s palace”
9. Church with a corinthian capital
10. Stone church
11. Unknown Ruins
12. Palace ruins
13. Oil Press
14a. Subterranean room
14. S. Grigor of King Gagik (Gagikashen)
15. Burial mound
16. Palace of Sarkis
17. Oil Press
18. Oil Press
19. Large church ruins
20. Tunnels
21. Oil Press
22. Baths
23. Bakhtakegi church (exc. 1892)
24. Oil Press
25. “Georgian Church”
26. Refuse pit
27. Minukhir Tower
28. Oil Press
29. Oil Press
30. Oil Press
31. Ruins
32a. Ruins
32b. Oil Press
32. Church ruins
33. Church ruins
34. Church ruins (?)
35. Ruins
36. 4-columned fire temple later converted to a church
37. S. Arakelots (Holy Apostles) church
38. Hostels (exc. 1908)
39. Red church
40. Two large rooms
41. Burial mound
42. Burial mound
43. Burial mound
44. Church ruins
45. Church ruins (wooden décor)
46. Church ruins
47a. Oil press
47. Baths
48. Burial mounds
49. “Checkerboard Church” (alternating color stone façade)
50. S. Amenaprkich (Church of the Holy Redeemer)
51a. Church ruins
51. Church ruins
52a. Ruins
52b. Burial mound
52. S. Grigor Abughamir church
53. Ruins
54. Oil Press
55. Ruins of church with khachkar
56. Foundation ruins
57. Oil Press
58. Burial mounds
59. Horom Tikin (The Lady Horom) church
60. Oil Press
61. Minaret : Abu Muamran mosque
62. Burial mound
63. Ruins
64. Oil Press
65. Ruins of church with khachkar
66. Foundation ruins
67. Oil Press
68. Burial mounds
69. Horom Tikin (The Lady Horom) church
70. Burial mound
71. S. Sarkis church
72. Ani Cathedral
73a. “Checkboard House” (exc. 1908)
72. Cathedral baptistry
73. Queen Katranideh mausoleum
74. Oil Press
75a. Oil Press
75. Tower & vaulted passage
76. Tower & underground passage
78a. Church
77. Burial mound
78. Burial mound
79. Ruins
80. S. Grigor Honents church
81. Baths (exc. in 1893)
82. Burial mound
83. Vaulted gallery
84. Oil Press
85. Underground entry
86. Chapel
88a. Ruins
87. Guardhouse
88. Ruins
89. Ruins
91a. Ruins
90. Guisants Vank (Monastery of the Virgins)
91. Secular building
92. King Ashot Wall
93. Minukhir Mosque (museum )
94. Bridge
95. House
96. Church ruins
97. Museum
99a. Nikol Marr excavation residence
100. Oil press, ruins
101. Karimadin church (the red church)
102. Asvatsatsin Khambuchents
103. Burial mound
104. Abu Khatsip church
104a. Subterranean city entry
105. Gayl Mausoleum
106. Church
107. 4-Colunmed structure ruins
108. Ruins

The Citadel:
109. Royal palace
109a. Palatine church
109b. Palace Hall
109c. Palace Hall
109d. Palace Hall
109e. Palace Baths
109f. Palace Cistern
110. Midjnaberd Church
111. Vaulted structure
112. Tetraconch church
113. Church
114. Hexagonal church
115. Armenian Cemetery
116. Water conduit

Kizkale Peninsula:
116. Kamsarak an tower bridge
117. S. Grigor Aljkaiberdi Convent

Towers:
1-95 – Outer Wall towers
1-7 King Ashots Wall
1-4 Citadel wall
1-4 Kizkale

Main Gates:
I: Igadzor valley gate
II + III: Kars gate, walls
IV + V: Lion gate, walls.
VI + VII: Chequerboard gate, walls
VIII: Gayladzor postern gate
IX: Gayladzor valley gate
X: Aruch gate
XI + XII: postern gates.
XIII: Sarkis Silenkh gate
XIV: Dvin Gate
XV: King Ashot gate
XVI: Tsaghkotsazdor valley gate

Map source: “Ani - a History of the City and its Excavations” by Nikolai Marr, Leningrad and Moscow, 1934.