

Two Walking Tours of Old Giumri

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There are 3 parts to the Shirak/Giumri Guide:

1. Giumri Walking Tours (This File)
2. Shirak Region (Separate PDF)
3. Giumri (Separate PDF)

Table of Contents

[Tour 1](#) (p. 1): North, Katolikneri Mailah
[Tour 2](#) (p. 9): South, Slobodka, Greek, Turki Mailahs

MAPS: [Tour 1](#) (p. 14) | [Tour 2](#) (p. 15)

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



Background

About city names: The different names for the city are often interchangeably used, though they denote specific times of the city's history, 'Giumri' being just the latest. Originally the city was known as Kumaiyri (ca. 900 BCE – 18th c.), then Alexandropol (Russian Empire era – 1837-1923), then Leninakan (1924-1991), and finally Giumri. If you get confused, just say 'Old Giumri' and you'll be all right.

Until the Soviet Revolution old Giumri was divided into 7 regions, or "Mailahs": the center, or Katolikneri Mailah, Geghtsonts or

Peasants Mailah, Boshi or Traders Mailah, Slabodka or Russian District, Greek or Urumneri Mailah and Turki Mailah. Rich and poor lived side by side, every building as substantial and elegant as funds allowed. The difference between wealth was in quantity, not quality, as buildings on this tour show: Even the humblest abode boasts a style and attention to detail lacking in modern structures. Focus was on the family home and as substantial a public face as possible. Gates and doors can be exceedingly large in some homes, but never overshadow the overall balance.

The extraordinary skill used to build these homes is due to Giumri's status as a city of craftsmen. Crafts were divided by family and areas of the city, each specializing in a unique skill: Blacksmithing, Wrought Iron, metal casting, copper smithy, jewelry, masonry, stone cutting, weaving –even culinary arts and baking—were among the dozens of skills highly prized throughout the Caucasus and beyond. Giumri craftsmen are still prized, especially in Paris, Moscow and Yerevan.

The basic plan was a main entrance and hallway, rooms off each side. Homes were substantial, made of stone, and were built around central courtyards, used as a stable, for communal activities, gardening and rest. Courtyards may be for one family or shared by multiple dwellings, and featured wooden balconies with elaborate balustrades and porch cornices. The houses themselves often used patterns and symbols from Armenian Khachkars or pre-Christian carvings in the



cornices, above windows or at the top of walls.

Certain rules of thumb apply in detecting times and styles: buildings

before 1860 have a neo-classic style in single hue, while those built between 1860-1880 favored the black and red tufa patterns considered "Alexandropol" or "Old Giumri" style: a distinctive pattern from this period were red squares placed as diamonds against

a black tufa façade. From 1880, black tufa became the predominant color, with ever so elegant arches above windows and doors, clean lines and white joints until around 1890, when the white joints began to disappear.

A startling feature of all buildings during the late Russian Empire period was that all buildings—stone or brick—were painted over in bright hues of blue, pink and yellow some on bare stone. This was in keeping with the Imperial styles up north, and the authorities ordered the same done in the Caucasus. Wanting to show the original stonework, the



Kumaiyri City Preservation Project had the paint taken off, but a few samples of this colorful feature remain.

Locals still argue the value of preserving the original black stone or recreating for at least some streets what must have been a warm, colorful and inviting mélange of pastels.

What we call Art Nouveau, Giumretsis call "Modern" and a few samples survive, complementing their older neighbors. Buildings of the early Soviet periods include those erected after the 1926 earthquake, which still show attention to detail and character, though on a subdued level. A few late Soviet structures were built in the old center and they obviously stick out, fighting the character and natural charm of the Belle Époque buildings. It is hoped in time they will be razed and buildings closer to their older cousins will be built. A couple of attempts have been made, one featured on the tour.

Two walking tours of old Giumri follow. The tours are continuous, one following the other. You can pick up any tour at any point, using the accompanying maps. Each tour will take about 2 hours, with suggested stops for eating and drinking along the way.

Streets are named by their contemporary name with their original Alexandropol name and street number in parenthesis. Locals mainly use street numbers, but there are still

those who use the old ones. We include all in this tour so you can ask for directions if you need. So Abovian Street is named: Abovian (Alexandrovskaya – 23rd).



Note: for a copy of these tours, more details and helpful tips for your walking tours, see the folks at City Research Center, 12 Gai p. If you can, ask Ashot or Zhora to guide you for a tour of Old Giumri.

Tour 1 North Old Center [▲](#) [MAP ON PAGE](#) 2 hours.

Start at Freedom Square, the corner of Gai (Pushkinskaya – 20th). Start going west (uphill) on Gai.



1. **Gate**, 20th century. Part of the Bank building facing the square, this gate, by Sasun Grigorian is a wonderful recreation of Old Giumri style in wrought iron.



2. Left next door: **Kamar Bistro**. The downstairs bistro is in a vaulted room, classic Giumri. Cheap eats.



3. Left next door: Large metal doors open to the **Style Art Gallery**, a private gallery and exposition center. Go inside to meet Artoush Mkrtychyan.

4. Left next entrance: **City Research Center**, first landing, door on left. NGO working to preserve and protect Old Giumri while developing a new language of architecture. Ashot Mirzoyan, manager. Go inside for map print outs, more detailed info about buildings on your tour and to arrange a personal guided tour.

5. Right at corner: **ATM machine, Apoteka** and **Internet Club** across street.

Cross over next crossing, Ghorghanian (Karskaya – 21st) and continue up Gai.

6. Left: Lost building: **multiple family dwelling**, now gone.



7. Right: **New building**, 21st century. Designed by Suren Kurazian, the design is an attempt to find a new design solution for Giumri. The white stone (not used in Old Giumri) is complemented with black tufa details.



8. Right next up: **Dwelling**, 1890-1900. The wrought iron work and beautiful old wooden doors mark this building, which had a large courtyard in back (note the wrought iron gate on right side). The building was to have a second wing; the pieces of stone jutting out on the left corner were deliberately done to allow a seamless joint for a new wing never built.

Cross over next crossing, Hakobian (Katolicheskaya – 19th)



9. Left corner: **“Chisliani Shenk”**, 1920s. After the 1926 earthquake, architect Chislian designed this apartment building, the first apartment building in Giumri. It is a four family building.



10. Right: **Commerce College**, 1900s. The huge black tufa building contains Art Nouveau elements on its façade and in the upstairs lecture hall, which can still be seen. The size (the building wraps around the entire next block) suggests the importance of trade to Giumri at the time. The building was later

used for the Shirak Regional Museum, now closed.



10a. Just behind the **modern Khachkar** on the right side, on Hakobian is **Melsida’s Artist Café**, which serves Khash for 1000 AMD.



11. Left at far corner: **“The Dowry”**, 1900. This beautiful black tufa building with elegant windows and doors was a gift by the Drambian family to the groom on the marriage of their daughter Javahir Drambian. The lucky fellow was Gegham Ter-Petrosian, mayor of Giumri, who not only moved in after his wedding but moved his Mayor’s office in too! The last five windows of the building on the Jivani (Slobodskaya – 15th) street side were added during Soviet times, look closely and you can see the differences.

12. Opposite side: **Gorki Park**, 1925-1928. The large tufa gateway leads into the oldest part of the park, originally a military offices park and gymnasium. The building inside the park on the left was first a public club, then a theatre and now houses Shirak TV. The main part of the park was built over the Khazjian family cemetery in 1925. The far end, the Rotunda, has spectacular views of the Akhurian Valley, Mother Armenia and the South Tower (“Sev Ghul”). There is also a newly enclosed arboretum/family restaurant at the Rotunda.

Turn right at the crossing, on Jivani (Slobodskaya – 15th) and continue past the Commerce College.



13. Right corner: **Old Communist Party Headquarters**, 1980. This modern building fits in remarkably well with its older surroundings, made of black tufa with red trim. A note about the red tufa: the architect wanted the building to be only in black, in keeping with Giumri traditions, but the Communist Party insisted on Red. The compromise was the red trim at the cornice and the entrance arches. Note lentils: they are made of single pieces of tufa, extremely difficult to achieve. The building now houses city offices.



14. Left: **Faded Yellow Dwelling**, 1890s. The faded yellow paint on this destroyed house reveals a bit of Old Giumri history. During the Russian Imperial period, all buildings in the city were ordered covered with thick coats of pastel hues of paint. Normally plastered over first, many buildings instead simply had paint applied directly over the stone. This building shows glimpses of the latter style. Buildings have been cleaned of their Slavic colors, but many locals feel this was a mistake, that at least some streets should be preserved in this style to show what Alexandropol really looked like.



15. Right: **Multi-family dwelling**, after 1920. This strange mixture of styles with an overpowering balcony and gear shafts for column capitals is a bit of unknown Leninakan history: who built it and why is not known.



16. Right: **Dwelling**, 19th & 20th centuries. The first floor is 19th century, the second was added in Soviet times.



17. Left to corner: **dwelling**, 1860-1880. This single floor dwelling with courtyard features the classic black and red tufa design in old Kumaiyri: set against a background of black tufa, the red squares are patterned like diamonds along the lower façade. This is but one side of a corner building, which continues on Gorki Street.



18. Cattycorner Right: **Jrahars Fish restaurant** inside 1890 building. Note the beautiful window design in the wall.

Turn left at next crossing, Gorki (Bebutovskaya –16th) street.



19. Left next building: **Dwelling**, 1860-1880. Another wonderful example of black and red tufa from the period. The building had a courtyard and held a shop. The house was the home of Nicolai Ghorghanian, a hero of the Genocide and Armenian independence period.

In the same complex is a small mterk, good cheap goods, and an excellent example of mixed use architecture.



20. Left next building: **dwelling, shop**, 1860-1880. Black and red tufa in classic style. You can see where the main gate has been walled over, the metal one cut through the older wall. The windows have some of the original wooden shutters. This style of closing off windows is a classic feature of Old Giumri architecture. Note the far right corner of the building: the red tufa is shaped like shovels, possibly indicating the type of work own there (blacksmithing, farm implements).

21. Opposite side of street: **Nursing Academy**, 1900s.

Turn around and go back to Jivani, Turn Left.



22. Right above restaurant: **Multiple dwellings**, 1900s. Note the cement at the top of the building, it was poured after the 1926 earthquake to reinforce the building. The old door is original to the building sadly it cannot be saved.



23. Right, next door: **Poloz Mukuch Tavern**, 1900-1920, rebuilt. This wonderful tavern is named after Giumri's most famous humorist. Born Mkrtych Melkonian, Poloz Mukuch ("Beanpole Mukuch", d. 1931), and his sidekick "Tzitro Alek" (Tigran Harutunian, b. 1896) were the creators of/butts of many a joke in Giumri. Born to a Giumri family of famous Silversmiths, Poloz never learned his father's trade and instead became a 'podriatchik' (middle man) and sold fruit from a horse cart. At the same time he and Tzitro Alek served as a kind of court jesters, telling jokes or satirizing the life and times of Alexandropol and then Leninakan. Some of what them beloved is obscure to our ears, but others are still pertinent. Some samples:

Poloz and Tzitro Alek were sitting at home watching the lights go off and on. "Eh," Poloz said to Tzitro Alek, "We're going towards Communism!" "If we're going to communism, how come the lights go off and on?" Tzitro Alek asked. "Because", Poloz replied, "maybe we're going, maybe we're not".

Poloz Mukuch and Tzitro Alek go to Moscow and stop at a Metro Station, watching the people come out of the ground. They stand watching for an hour. Tzitro finally says, "Let's go." "No," said Poloz. "Maybe my parents will come soon."

The first Steam train arrived in Kumaiyri. "How does it move?" Poloz Mukuch asked. "By steam," replied the conductor. "Impossible," said Poloz. "If that were so, our baths would be in Paris by now."

Poloz Mukuch and Tzitro Alek go on a train with one ticket. They have a huge metla Khash pot with them, so Poloz told Tzitro Alek, "Get into that large Khash Pot, and if the conductor kicks it, make a thump-thump sound." So Tzitro Alek goes into the Khash pot and waits. The conductor comes, takes

Poloz' ticket, remembers that there were two men who got on the train and kicks the pot. "Thump-thump" says Tzitro Alek, sounding like an empty pot. The conductor, still suspicious, kicks the pot again. "Son-of-a-bitch!" cried Tzitro Alek, "didn't you hear me the first time?"

Poloz Mukuch died in 1931, and his body was carried by the city to his resting spot. Four hundred people drank to his memory and left their bottles in his grave, a memorial that survived decades. Finally writer Avetik Isahakian bought a grave marker in his memory, inscribed "From one Giumretsi to Another".

The tavern serves hearty pub grub and has a guaranteed supply of beer—the beer factory across the street has run a direct line to the pub!

24. Left opposite catty-corner: **Brewery**, 1898. The first floor is original, the second is a modern reconstruction. The building catty-corner from the tavern is one of two buildings on the street being reconstructed, in fine Giumri style.



25. Right, above **Poloz Mukuch**: **Dwelling** 20th century.

Cross over next crossing, Rustaveli (Tiflisskaya – 14th) and continue.



26. Left corner: **Sheram Home**, 1900-1920. Originally the Sheram family residence, the building later became the Khramian Hairik school and finally the current musical school.



27. Left, up the street: **S. Grigor Lousavoritch** (Gregory the Illuminator) church, 19th century. Unused neighborhood church missing its dome, but still an interesting, austere presence on the street.

Turn around and go back to Rustaveli and Turn Left. Cross the next street, Hakobiani (Katolicheskaya – 19th), then down the block about half way.



28. Left: **Dwelling**, modern. An attempt at imitating the Kumayri style, the red and black tufa almost work. Note the red blocks, instead of being diamond shapes they are squares that form a chess pattern.



29. Right, opposite: **Dwelling**, 1890-1900s. Black tufa with grass growing on the cornice. Note the window lentils with their distinct arch and the overall symmetry. The top of the building has broken fragments, caused by sloppy roof installation.



30. Left, few doors down: **Tiva**, 19th century. Note the ornate gate, old Kumayri.

At the next corner, Turn Right on Ghorghonian (Karskaya – 21st).



31. Right: **Dwelling**, 1860-1880. Black and red tufa with enclosed balcony.

Turn Right at the next opening and follow fence into the yard.



32. Right: **Courtyard**, 1880-1900. At the opening in the buildings, go into the yard and look carefully at the back of the building. Through the old porch frame you can see the finely detailed stonework of this magnificent if tired black tufa building. In the far right of the old courtyard is a niche in the wall, half way up, used to hold a statue or image, but no one remembers. Note the lentils, with their distinct arch angle. These are the same as you saw in number 29, on Rustaveli. It's the same building.

Go back to Ghorghonian Street and Turn Right.



33. Right: **Military Administration Bldg.**, 1930s. The fine wrought iron fence enclosed a front courtyard that sets off the cream building with a red star and Hammer & Sickle at the top. On the left was a canteen and PX during Soviet times, the only place to get decent goods (if you knew someone). On the far right of the building notice the cut of window frame. The architect intended to

continue the building, but the owner of the next property (who knew someone) refused.

Go one door down and walk all the way up the narrow stairs to the top. #230 will be the house number.



34. Right, up the next narrow stairway: **Dwelling**, 1850's. One of the oldest houses in the district, this magnificently detailed building is a hallmark to true craftsmanship. The trim on the cornice and sides of the walls look like 12th century Gordon knots, but they were carved from stone in the 1850s. The 1926 earthquake destroyed the building, and the owners rebuilt using the pieces of elaborate carvings as they fit, creating the current look.

Go back to Ghorghonian and Turn Right.



35. Right, next door: **Large dwelling**, 1880, 1900. The section on the left was constructed in the 1880s by the Ghasabian family, and after twenty years the owners added on the right section.

That on the far left was rebuilt after the 1988 earthquake. The builders were unable to keep the same angle and had to lean the wall back, separating the section as you see now.



36. Left at the corner: **Arax Hotel**, 21st century. Facing Gorki Street, the newly built Arax Hotel is an attempt to copy the previous building's aesthetics.

This is a working hotel. \$100+ a night. (3-58-15, email: araks95@web.am)

Turn Left at next crossing, on Gorki (Bebutovskaya – 16th) street, and look for archway on right side.



37. Right: **archway/courtyard**, 1878. This old courtyard has a magnificent underpinning of finally hewn black tufa arches with a central bridge that connected dwellings. It is run down now, and serves a bevy of residents and a bakery, but in its day it was a peaceful oasis in a busy city. Courtyards served as stables, gardens, washing areas and meeting points for families and friends. Continue back under the left arch, to an inner courtyard with the original wooden porches above. The archway is the bridge.

Go back to Gorki, Turn Left and go back to Ghorghonian, and Turn Left again.

On the left is the same building that faces the courtyard you just visited.



38. Right: **Satik's B&B**, 1880-1900. The red tufa on the building betrays its age. The interiors are preserved to their original state, filled with antiques.

This is a B&B, favored by Peace Corps volunteers. 8000 AMD (Tel: 2-42-32)



39. Right: **dwelling**, 1870. The large black tufa building has a courtyard in back. The huge green gate is original to the house and shows the Old Kumaiyri love for ostentatious display.



40. Left, opposite: **dwelling**, 1870. Currently used as the Dashnak Party headquarters, this magnificent building was originally the Turkish Consulate, boasting a rival huge front gate (Keeping up with the Jonesians?) to 39. It is infamous as the place where the Alexandropol Treaty was signed, that ceded Kars and Ani to Turkey.



41. Right, a little down: **Five large buildings**, 1880-1900. Typical of Old Giumri Style.



42. Left opposite: **Dwelling**, 1876. White joints were fashionable in the 1870s, as were red and black tufa from 1860-1880. This is a fine example of the style. Thereafter both began to disappear.



43. Right, a little down: **Dwelling**, 1880-1900. Built after the 1870s so no white joints.

Go to end of block, turn Left at next crossing, on Gai (*Pushkinskaya – 20th*), go to the next crossing, Abovian (*Alexandrovskaya – 23rd*) Street and Turn Left.



44. At Left corner, **constructivist style building** erected in 1930. The balconies are original and show an early attempt to combine modern and older style.



45. Left: **Aslamazian Sisters Gallery**, 1880-1890. Rebuilt. This pure “Belle Époque” building of black tufa shows itself with clean lines, neat joints and smooth facade. Note the sun symbol on the façade. There is a courtyard in the back with a garden and rebuilt porch. The building houses the Aslamazian Sisters Museum (see Art).



46. Right: **Two story building**, 1880-1890. Upper floors was a dwelling, shops below. Note the beautiful balcony.

47. Right: **City Club**, 1900-1920. Large building with rich details housed the City club, dry goods store and other shops. The club was a meeting place for Alexandropol's more prominent citizens, with political discussions and community decisions a common activity. This building was one of the many that was painted a bright hue, in

accordance with Russian Imperial dictates. Some of the paint can still be detected on the surface.



48. Left: **Dadakhazutsiun or Prosecutor's Building** (partial ruin), 1880-1900. First housing the prosecutor's office, then apartments, the building awaits reconstruction.



49. Right: **City Baths**, 1900-1920. Built by Baron Der Martirosian, these baths were one of many that dotted the city, a few of which still work. From functional to opulent, the City Baths were among the latter with steam rooms and hot baths built using hand-made tiles and mosaics. The building housed a wine cellar/bar in the basement.



50. Left: **Hotel France**, 1880-1890 (partial ruin). Unfortunately this once opulent hotel which housed the city's most distinguished guests has had its image marred by its later use as KGB center. The building was built by Baron Rafaeliants. Note the large gateway to the inner courtyard: a bit Gothic, the entry nonetheless fits within the Kumaiyri style.

51. Left: corner building: **Children's Culture Center**, 1880-1890. Originally one story, the hairdresser was replaced with the Children's center and a second story was added in the 1980's, classic Kumaiyri.

Cross over next crossing, Gorki Street (Bebutovskaya – 16th)



52. Left: **Lost building**, 1860. Now replaced by a new part of the Arax Hotel Complex, this building had classical details and was an important link with previous periods. The new building is a clumsy attempt to emulate its style, as is the large imposing black and red building next door, which is brand new. Some like the imposing structure, but locals pint to the out of proportion windows and hodgepodge of design styles in the columns and cornices. You decide.



53. Right: Opposite. **Apartment building**, office, after 1920. White and butter colors enhance this early Soviet structure that housed the Electric Utility Building. An interesting glimpse at the “proletarian

palaces” Lenin pushed in the 1920's.



54. Left: Black with white trim **dwelling**, 1880-1890. The beautiful wood doors are original to the house. The house was built in stages, an example of the care given to quality, regardless of the cost or time required.



55. Left: Two story, **two-family dwelling**, 1900-1920. The double home was a common type of construction, often by two brothers.

56. Right: two story **dwelling** with semi-basement, 1900-1920. Note the complement arches and extremely tall entrance. Creates the illusion of space in a small dwelling.



57. Right: **Sahakanushian Oriortsata (Girls) School**, 1880-1900. Built by Karapet Yuzbashian, this finishing school for girls combined general education subjects with domestic skills like sewing and housekeeping

and the “gentle arts” of being a lady.



58. Right: **S. N'shan Church**, 1860-1880. Built by the city, this neighborhood church was first named S. Mariam Church, but when another, newer church in the center was named the same, the parishioners were forced to change theirs. They chose S. N'shan (Saint Sign). If doors are open, go inside to see the simple yet elegant design.

59. Left: **Dwelling**, 1900-1920

60. Left: **Small dwelling**, 1900-1920 with large classic windows show attention to quality despite income.



61. Left corner: Two-story **Arabajof School**, 1880-1900. Elementary school run by Baron Arabajof and his children. Balcony is a nice touch of old Giumri.

Cross over crossing, *Rustaveli (Tiflisskaya – 14th) Street and continue*



62. **Art Neveuau**, 1900-1920. Giumri's best example of the “Modern” style imposed on a more classical city is remarkable for both its design and its complement to its neighbors. The interior is preserved in the Art Neveuau style; the swimming pool in back is contemporary.

Go back to Rustaveli, turn left (east) and go to next crossing, Shahumian (Generalskaya – 27th) Street, and turn Right.



63. Right corner: **Mher Mkrtchian Museum**, 1880-1900. Originally a khasharan (“hash joint”) called “Usta Karo”.

64. Right: A **series of dwellings**, 1880-1900, include an unfinished building from the period, basement only, still inhabited. It was not destroyed by an earthquake, no one knows the reason it was never finished.



65. Right: One story **dwelling**, 1900-1920, note fading red paint from Imperial times, and classic Giumri door and 3 windows.



66. Right: next door is a small **dwelling** with arch windows and white grill, same period.

At the next crossing, Gorki (Bebutovskaya – 16th) Street, turn Right, go about 30 meters to an alley and turn Right again.



67. Left at alley corner is a **Workshop** and shop, 1860-1880. Size of windows and doors show its original utilitarian use.

Turn around and cross Gorki (Bebutovskaya – 16th) to opposite alley.

68. Walk down this alley for a look at the **back streets of Old Giumri**. At the end of the alley, by the church, is a fountain where pigeons are sacrificed as supplement to God. A pagan ritual, the priests nonetheless bless the pigeons before they are killed.

Turn around and go back to Gorki, Turn Right at Gorki, go to next crossing, Shahumian (Generalskaya – 27th) Street, Turn Right.



69. Left corner: **“Bari Luis” House**, 1880-1900. Yegor Drambian had this house built, a beautifully proportioned black tufa building which had multiple functions: a home and shop for the family business. The building was built in stages over time, and the name comes from the distinct emblems on the façade: looking like a towel and mirror used when one first arose, Giumretsis' quick wit soon dubbed it the Good Morning House. The courtyard is classic Old Giumri, with wooden balustrades ringing the lower yard. The building was divided into apartments during Soviet times, once housed Giumri Restaurant, which is now closed, and still houses dwellers. It is seismically dangerous and in bad need of repair.

Go to the end of the block.





70. Left corner: **Yot Verk (7 wounds) Church**, 19th c. Giumri's Bishopric Church, and primary place of worship, Yot Verk was named for the seven wounds of Christ. It is a working church, not much of architectural value, but interesting to go inside and watch parishioners pray, marry and be baptized. Sacrificial pigeons are caged on the outside sidewalk.

Note the two bell tower domes outside the building. These fell ("popped") during the 1988 earthquake, and far from being examples of the destruction wreaked on Giumri, they show one of its rare successes. Bell towers were built separated from churches, at much later dates than the original buildings. There is some study showing that rather than being aesthetically built apart, they served a very specific purpose in the event of earthquakes. The towers, no matter how strong, were designed to vibrate during an earthquake and absorb some of the shock. They also served as a counter-balance to the shaking in the church. The domes were meant to literally "pop off" their base, taking the shock waves with them, preventing severe damage. The domes in the main buildings were engineered in much the same way: the dome might be lost, but the remaining structure would survive mostly intact, making reconstruction easier. The domes in front of you did their job and Yot Verk was saved. Opposite the square, the cathedral shows a different story: in the 1970s the domes were stuck to the base of the church in an attempt to reinforce the building, and rather than performing their jobs, they added to the shockwaves, collapsing the building.

Turn left and start up Rizhkov, the diagonal pedestrian walkway immediately past the church.



71. Left corner: **Library**, 1920-1930. Originally the library and community center for Leninakan, this building, designed by local architect Baron Kajaznuni, was taken by the church for its Bishopric offices in the 1990's and closed to the public. Kajaznuni was the first prime minister of the first Republic, and late fell out of favor in killed by the Soviets in the 1930s. The building is a beautiful example of combining contemporary and old designs.



72. **Rizhkov passageway.** Shops and a tiny "vernissage" inhabit this walkway leading to the Peace Circle. Buildings are 19th-20th centuries, and show a variety of styles, including a good example of the Russian Imperial painted façade on the left. The street has some food kiosks and there is a Georgian Restaurant at the top of the street, on the left.



73. **Khaghaghutian Oghak (Peace Circle).** A semi-circle park linking Rizhkov, Haghtanaki and Gorki streets with Sayat Nova street, the park is home to outdoor cafes in the summer (Robinson is a favorite, tables located up in trees), and a peaceful place for rest throughout the year. The buildings located around the Oghak are 20th century creations, one set of apartments in particular still a topic of debate, its pointed arches and plastered façade an exotic touch.

END TOUR 1 [▲](#)

Tour 2: Slobodka ▲

[MAP ON PAGE 15](#)

2 hours.

Tour 2 features **Slobodka, Greek and Turki Mailahs**.

NOTE: STREETS are both paved and unpaved, directions to next street mean the next crossing.

Begin at Yot Verk Church on Freedom Square and continue down its right (W) side, Abovian (Alexandrovskaaya – 23rd) past the Hotel and Sherazi (Melikovskaya – 20th).



74. Kino Hoktember, after 1920. This large building on the north end of the square, showed films, live performances and exhibitions. Resurrected early after the 1988 earthquake, the film theatre features huge posters of film shots from some of Armenia's most famous cinematic sons. Among those on display are (from left) Sophiko Chaurieli in Sergei Parajanov's "The Color of Pomegranate", Galia Novents and Mher Mkrtchian in "The Tango of our Days", "Pepo", "Heghnar Akhpiur" and "Shor and Shorshor".



75. Freedom (May Revolution) Square, 20th century. First named for the May revolution of 1905, which began in Giumri (then Alexandropol) and spread to Russia and St. Petersburg, the square is a Soviet creation, preserving only Yot Verk and the Cathedral from the old period.

Follow along Right side of square as you face the Cathedral.

76. Bank Building, early 20th c. This is the same building with the gate in number 1 in Tour 1.



77. Hotel, after 1920. Architect: Baron Chislilian. One of the few times the architect is known, the hotel building was created in a modernist-Old Giumri style, more monumental than it should be.

One of Giumri's best regarded restaurants, "Kumaiyri" is located behind the building in a courtyard off of Sherazi. For the restaurant, Turn Right on Sherazi and go into courtyard on right.

Continue down Abovian (Alexandrovskaaya – 23rd) past the Hotel and Sherazi (Melikovskaya – 20th) Street.



78. Left corner of Abovian and Sherazi : Cathedral. Constructed between in 1843-1877, the cathedral is based on the 8th c. cathedral of Ani, which was destroyed in the Middle Ages. The structure is one of the few large churches in Armenia, and standing next to it, one can imagine just how amazing the original was, towering as it did over the ancient city to the south. If chronicles can be believed, the original cathedral was the crowning point of 1001 other churches in a city of 100,000. Giumri has always compared itself to Ani, this cathedral one example of it obsession.

During the Soviet period the cathedral was converted into a concert hall. Most of the building was destroyed during the 1988 earthquake. Reconstruction is carefully rebuilding the overall shape and size of the original building, with trying to copy all details in new stone. When entire pieces of carving are destroyed, or only a few pieces remain, those few are combined with simple stone, the better to highlight the beauty of the older design. The whole project is a remarkable commitment to preservation over imitation. Even the current mayor has gotten into the act, reportedly skimming off his own graft to hasten progress.



79. Right: **Armen Tigranians Home**, 19th century. Home of Armenian composer, author of the opera "Anush" which premiered in Kumaiyri in 1912. The home was slated for conversion into a house museum in 1988, but the earthquake stopped work. It is now inhabited by earthquake refugees.



80. Right at corner of Tumanian: **Sewing factory** from late 19th century. Two story black tufa. Under reconstruction.

At crossing, Tumanian (Gruzinskaya – 26th), Turn Right.

There are **two buildings** from the 1890s to 1910s of note on this street, representative of the district:



81. Left: **Kindergarten**, 1890-1900.



82. Right: **"Girl's Gymnasia"**, 1912. Beautiful black tufa building was used as a girl's school. Go to end of building, turn Left to see main entrance, a marvel of Armenian Art Nouveau design.

Turn around and go back to the crossing, Abovian (Alexandrovskaaya – 23rd), Turn Right.

83. Drambian Family Home, 1920. Now a musical school, the Drambian family home was a rich, fashionable dwelling with elegant interiors and comforts. The Drambian family are connected to the "Wedding Gift" building from Tour 1 (#11). Under reconstruction.



84. Right corner at end of block: **City Court, 1880-1900.** Also owned by the Drambian Family, this dwelling was a city court until recently. The dwelling has an old courtyard in the back.

Cross over next crossing, Mayakovski (Sapiornaya – 26th) Street and continue.

By now you are in **Slobodka Mailah**, inhabited by Russians during the days of Old Alexandropol. Houses show their own sense of design here, and some, though simple, have a warmth and charm of their own.

Note on the Left the park peters out into the Shuka, a mélange of kiosks and new shops fighting for survival among the old Khrushhev metal and stone market center.

85. Right: **Three homes** of interest, representative of the Mailah:

- a. **Dwelling** built in 1860-1880.
- b. **Black Tufa** with balcony, 1900-1920.
- c. **Der Ambakum dwelling, (FINCA)**1900-1920.



86. Right: **Lost building:** 19th century one story dwelling with ornamental entrance, now destroyed.

87. Right at end of block: **Dwelling, 1900-1920.** An example of gray tufa.

Turn Right at next crossing, Terian (Artileriskaya – 30th).



88. Right: **Multiple family dwelling** with balcony, 1860-1880. First floor had shops and a workshop. Inside windows are uniquely designed to increase light.



89. Right, halfway up block: Dwelling, 1880-1890. Note balcony.

90. Right about 20 meters before next street: **Two story dwelling, 1880-1890.**

Cross over next crossing, Ghorghonian (Karskaya – 21st) and continue to end of block, which is Japaridze (Tiuremnyi Pereulok – 17th), which looks like an alley, Turn Right and go to end of block, Four buildings represent the Mailah from two different periods:

91. Right: **Dwelling House, 1880-1890**

92. Left Opposite: **Dwelling House, 1880-1890**

93. Left next up: **Dwelling House, 1860-1880**



94. Right at end of block: **Dwelling, 1860-1880.** Go inside courtyard to see a bit of mid 19th c. design.

Cross over next crossing, Mayakovski (Sapiornaya – 28th) and continue towards end of block.

95. Right: **Dwelling, 1860-1880**

At next crossing, Tumanian (Gruzinskaya – 26th), Turn Right.

96. Right two doors down: **Dwelling, 1880-1890.** Half Arc entry, part of building was cut off, in anticipation of being continued when funds allowed.



97. Left second from corner: **Tsarist Military Office, 1880-1890.** Two story black tufa.

Go to corner, Ghorghonian (Karskaya – 21st) which looks like an alley, Turn Left and go to next crossing, Sherazi (Lorisa Melikovskaya – 24th) and turn Left.

98. Left halfway up block: **Workshop and shops, 1900-1920.**

Cross over next crossing, Hakobiani (Katolicheskaya – 19th) street, and continue to next corner.



99. Left at corner: **Balcony** from 19th century.

Turn Right on Jivani (Slobodskaya – 15th) and go to corner.

100. On left corner: **Vahan Sheraz Home, 1900-1920.**

Turn around and go back down Jivani, cross Sherazi (Lorisa Melikovskaya – 24th) and continue.



101. Left after corner: **Mixed style building**, no identifiable time or style.



102. Left next building: **dwelling**, 1860-1880. Has a nice courtyard, go inside to view.

103. Right one door down: **dwelling**, after 1920.



104. Left opposite: **Mkrtych Armen Home**, 1860-1880. Home of author who still resides here.



105. Left at corner: **Red block dwelling**, 1880-1890. Built after the use of red tufa went out of style.

Cross Tumanian (Gruzinskaya – 26th) and continue.



106. Right at corner: **Yuzbashian Home**, 1880-1890. Large building, late converted to apartments.



107. Left Opposite corner: **Stone Dwelling House**, 1880-1890.



108. Left next door: **Stone Dwelling House**, 1860-1880.

109. Right opposite: **Stone Dwelling House**, 1900-1920.



110. Left three doors down: **Stone Dwelling House**, 1860-1880.

111. Right opposite: **Stone Dwelling House**, 1900-1920.



112. Left three doors down: **Dwelling**, 1860-1880.

113. Right Side: **Lost Building: Stone Dwelling House**, different periods. Interesting design with changes.

114. Left opposite: **Stone Dwelling House**, unknown period,

115. Right opposite: **Stone Dwelling House**, 1900-1920.

Cross over next crossing, Mayakovski (Sapiornaya – 26th), and continue.



116. **Street of dwellings**, 1860-1920.

At next crossing, Terian (Artilerskaya – 30th), turn Right. Continue past next crossing, Adjemian (Malaya Slobodsckaya – 13th) and past the next crossing, Hanesoghlian (Komendantskaya – 11) and follow Terian about 100 meters as it winds towards Nalbandian.

116a. **“Pelpelan Zham” Russian Chapel**. The chapel is at the corner of Terian and Nalbandian pts. The Russian Orthodox chapel was built in 1879-80 and used in Alexandropol’s heyday as a funerary chapel.

The church was nicknamed “Pelpelan Zham” (Shimmering Chapel) due to its once gleaming silver roof. The roof is now covered with aluminum paint, putting a damper on the shimmering part, but still, the effect is a little exotic, the base tapering towards the dome creating a fortress effect, appropriate for a military outpost.

There used to be a Russian cemetery next to the building, but it was replaced in the 1950’s by the Russian military by a children’s play area.

Turn around and go back to the next crossing, Hanesoghlian (Komendantskaya – 11) and Turn Left.

117. The next two blocks hold prime samples of **Slobodsckaya dwellings and shops**, 1860-1900.

Go past next crossing, Mayakovski (Gruzinskaya – 26th) to just before the end of the block at the park.

118. Left: Blind Alley, Stone **Multiple dwelling**, 1880-1900. Has a very nice courtyard, feel free to enter.

Continue up next corner, turn right on the pedestrian walkway to the right of the blind alley and garages, follow to next crossing, Adjemian (Malaya Slobodskaya – 13th). Turn Right again and continue to next crossing, Tumanian (Gruzinskaya – 26th) and turn Left.



119. At corner on right: **Yuzbashov Home**, 1900-1920. Made with Red Tufa.



120. Right, next door: Open **Courtyard**, 19th century. The courtyard is in same complex as buildings at start of 106. Very nice multiple dwelling courtyard, partially destroyed by earthquake, feel free to enter and ask for Gugush, who lived in the large gaping room closest to the street, now above a small garage like area on the right. Gugush is one of Giumri's fabled professional Taxi drivers, plying the roads for 40 years and still going strong at 61. An amazing man, he survived the earthquake after being buried under rubble, found and buried his parents afterwards, lost his home, but somehow has

turned that tragedy into a zest for life that humbled me greatly. Full of Giumri's famous wit and good fun, he can shepherd you anywhere in Shirak (and past the fat Gai prodding you for bribes along the way) at below standard prices. Old Volga, the best for Armenia's roads. (093) 41-46-39.

Continue on Tumanian to Abovian (Alexandrovskaaya – 23rd), Turn Left and continue back to Freedom Square.

END TOUR 2 ▲

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](http://www.TWRI.com), 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.

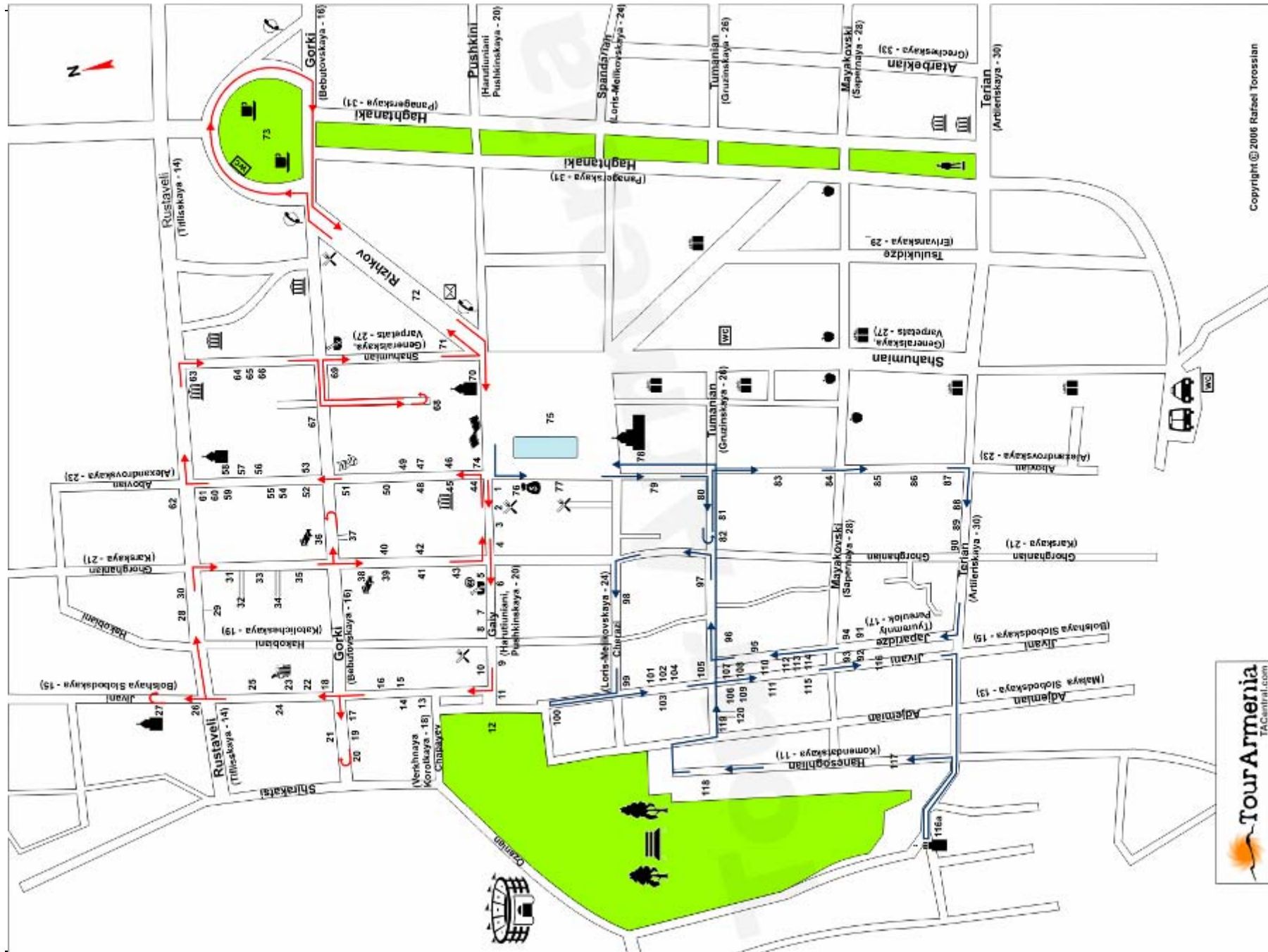
In an even earlier life Rafi was an athlete, competing in Light Athletics (Track) where he set the All Armenia record for the 60 meter dash, a record that still stands. He was a Sports Teacher and an Honored Coach of the Republic of Armenia. He lives in Yerevan, is a proud Yerevantsi, one of the few 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 ArmStateDesign 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!*

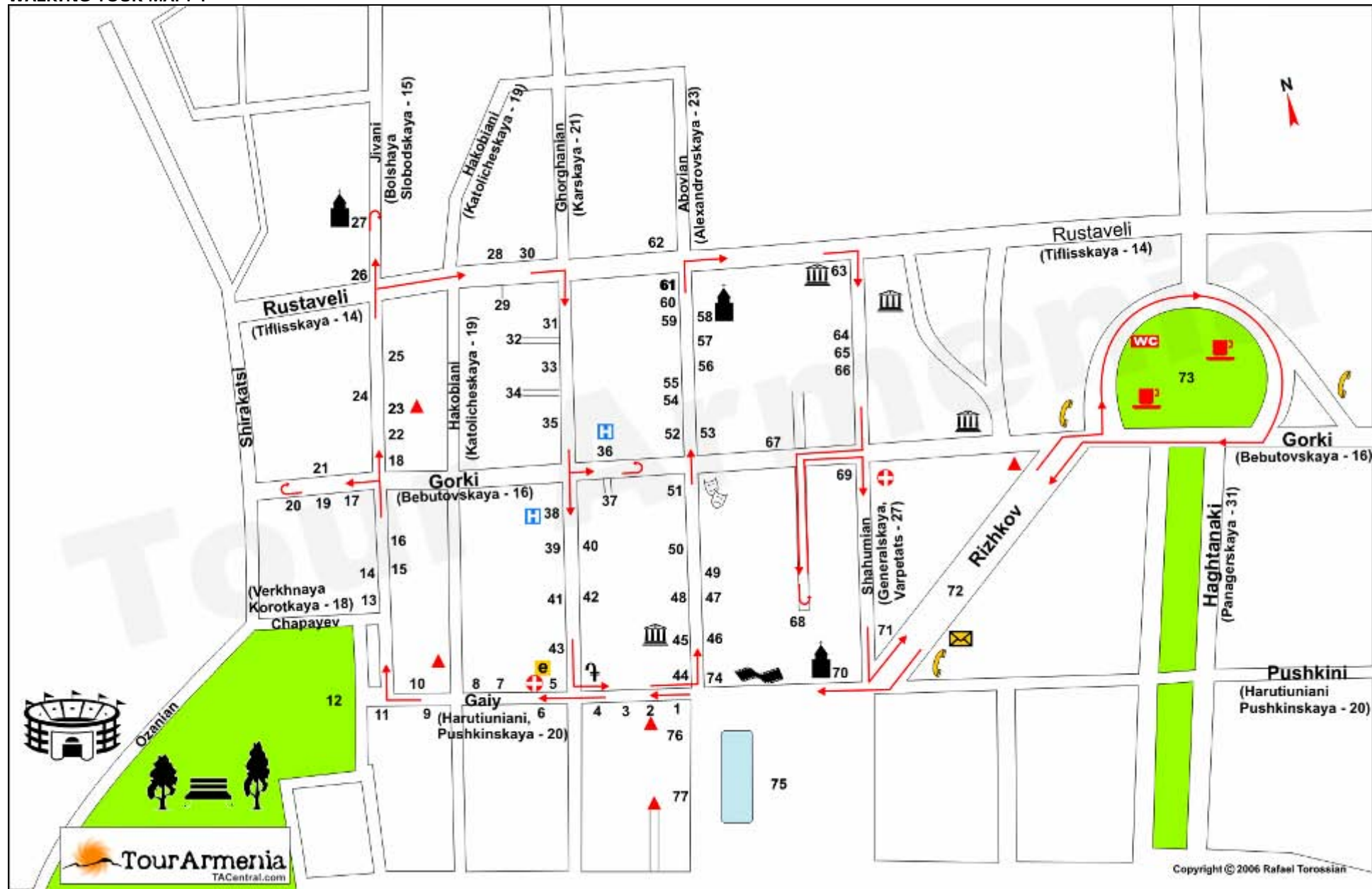
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WALKING TOUR MAP: 1



WALKING TOUR MAP: 2

