**Grand Tour of Armenia**

**8 days/7 nights**

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| 1st day ARRIVAL IN ARMENIA |
| Arrival in Yerevan.  Meet-and-greet at the airport  Transfer to hotel, check-in and overnight at the hotel |
| 2nd day CITY TOUR + GARNI + GEGHARD + SYMPHONY OF STONES |
| Breakfast at the hotel  09:00 – 12:00 **City tour of Yerevan** with Victory Park, in which stands the large statue to Mother Armenia and from which there is the best view of the city. We continue to Cascade Complex and stroll through the city center from the Armenian Opera House Square to Republic Square. Then departure to the Kotayk region. Not far from Yerevan you can visit an extremely picturesque sight - the **Charents Arch**, giving an incredible view of Mount Ararat.  13:00 You have a **lunch** at a family-owned restaurant in Garni village and are welcome to have your first contact with delicious Armenian cuisine by participating in a culinary **master class** for preparation of Lavash, Armenia's traditional bread.  14:30 Visit to the **Temple of Garni**, the only standing Greco-Roman colonnaded building in Armenia. The temple dedicated to the sun god Mihr is the best-known symbol of pre-Christian Armenia.  15:30 We continue to the **Geghard Rocky Monastery** (UNESCO World Heritage Site) being partially carved out of the adjacent mountain. The monastery was originally named Ayrivank ("the Monastery of the Cave"). The name Geghard, or more fully Geghardavank, meaning "the Monastery of the Spear", originates from the spear which had wounded Jesus at the Crucifixion, allegedly brought to Armenia and stored at the monastery for a long time. This masterpiece of Armenian medieval architecture is set into a landscape of great natural beauty, surrounded by towering cliffs at the entrance to the Azat Valley.  Short descent and you see a deep canyon with walls covered in basalt rock formations shaped like organ pipes. This place has earned the name "**Symphony of Stones**."  18:00 Return back to the hotel.  19:00 **Dinner** at a city restaurant with folklore |
| 3nd day YEREVAN CATHEDRAL + ZVATNOTS + ECHMIADZIN + MELEK TAWUS |
| Breakfast at the hotel  09:00 Though Armenia is a small country, it is characterized by great cultural and religious diversity. During our tour you see the **Blue Mosque**, an 18th-century Persian Shia mosque. We continue to the Saint Gregory the Illuminator Cathedral, also known as the **Yerevan Cathedral**, the largest cathedral of the Armenian Apostolic Church.  10:00 – 11:00 Visit to Zvartnots, a magnificent and majestic temple built in the 7th century, which is one of the masterpieces of Armenian architecture, registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Zvartnots means "Celestial Angels". Departure to **Echmiadzin**, the city nicknamed the "Armenian Vatican" because it is the seat of the "Catholicos," the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church.  11:30 Visit to the **Museum "Treasures of Echmiadzin"** housing unique holy relics and religious art. Among the many treasures there are: the Holy Lance (Geghard), which pierced the side of Christ; the relics of Noah's Ark and other valuable pieces of art.  13:00 Lunch in the Echmiadzin monastery  14:30 Visit to the **St. Gayane Church** and the **St. Hripsime Church**, ancient 7th-century Armenian churches.  15:30 Depart for Aknalich, the site of the world's largest **Yazidi temple** outside the area of origin of this Kurdish minority originally from Iraqi Sinjar. The temple is dedicated to **Melek Tawus**, the peacock angel worshipped by the Yazidis.  18:00 Return back to the hotel.  Free time in the city. |
| 4th day KHOR VIRAP + ARENI CAVE + ARENI VILLAGE WITH MASTER CLASS AND WINE TASTING + NORAVANK + GORIS |
| Breakfast at the hotel. Check-out of the hotel.  Meeting with guide.  09:00 Depart for the Ararat valley to visit the Khor Virap Monastery where St. Gregory the Illuminator lived in captivity for thirteen years in an underground cell.  10:00 – 11:00 Visit to the **Khor Virap Monastery**, which is located in a high position on the left bank of the Araks River on the Turkish border with a splendid view of Mount Ararat.  Continue to the Vajots Dzor region along the beautiful Gnishik River Gorge.  12:30 You will visit **Areni Cave 1** (Bird Cave). The oldest shoe in the world and an ancient wine cellar were found right there during archaeological excavations.  The **village of Areni** is located in the Vayots Dzor region. This sunny village is famous for its best wine assortments. Due to its specific flavor and delicate taste, "Areni" wine has its respected place among the best Armenian wines.  13:00 – 14:30 Lunch in a village house with a master class on cooking barbecue in a tandoor and **wine tasting**.  15:00 – 16:00 We arrive at the wonderful monastic complex of **Noravank**, particularly famous for its architecture, refined architectural solutions and luxurious embellishments. Noravank is one of the most brilliant examples of 13th-century Armenian architecture. The monastic complex includes the churches of St. Karapet, St. Gregory the Illuminator and St. Astvatsatsin (Holy Mother of God).  18:30 At the end of the visits, we will arrive in **Goris** for hotel accommodation.  19:00 Dinner and free time  Overnight stay in Goris |
| 5th day KHNDZORESK + WINGS OF TATEV + TATEV MONASTERY + KARAHUNJ OBSERVATORY + JERMUK |
| Breakfast at the hotel. Check-out of the hotel.  09:00 Meeting with guide. Departure from the hotel  09:30 – 10:30 We arrive at **Khndzoresk**, a unique “cave city”, one of the ancient villages around Goris with man-made caves dating back to the 1st century. Some people continued to live in the rocks until the 1980s, and even today some of the caves are still used as warehouses, cellars or cattle yards. In these places we will be able to observe rural and ancient Armenia. The bravest group participants can cross the 300 meter long **“Swinging Bridge”** that spans a 60 meter deep gorge. The views from the bridge are breathtaking in beauty and excitement, and you can take great photos in almost any weather.  11:30 - 13:00 Later we will reach **Tatev Monastery**, one of the most important religious and educational centers of the medieval period. Tatev Monastery was one of the most avant-garde universities of the Middle Ages and hosted many intellectuals who delved into the scientific, religious, and philosophical arts. We will arrive at the monastery using the cable car "TaTever" (“**Wings of Tatev**”) that connects the village of Halidzor to the monastery. This is the shortest, most scenic and impressive way to Tatev Monastery via the longest reversible cable car in the world (5752 meters), included into the Guinness Book of Records. We will experience 12 minutes of unforgettable flight over the gorge of the turbulent Vorotan River at an altitude of 320 meters.  13:30 – 15:00 Lunch at a city restaurant in Goris  16:00 – 17:00 Visit to the prehistoric site of the **Karahunj Observatory** (also known as Zorats Karer - "vertical stones"), probably one of the oldest astronomical observatories reminiscent of Stonehenge.  18:30 At the end of the day, we will arrive at the city of **Jermuk**, known for its hot springs and mineral waters  19:00 Dinner and free time  Overnight stay in Jermuk |
| 6th day SELIM PASS + CARAVANSERAI + NORATUS CEMETERY + SEVANAVANK + HAGHARTSIN + LAKE PARZ + DILIJAN |
| Breakfast at the hotel. Check-out of the hotel.  09:00 Meeting with guide. Departure from the hotel  We will set off to explore the **Vardenyats Pass (Selim Pass),** a part of the ancient Silk Road, located at 2410 meters above sea level.  10:00 Along the way we will make a stop at the **Caravanserai** (a roadside inn) built in 1332 by prince Chesar Orbelian to accommodate weary travelers and their animals as they crossed from, or into, the mountainous Vayots Dzor region.  11:00 – 12:00 The next stop of our journey is the medieval **Noratus cemetery**. The cemetery has the largest cluster of khachkars (memorial stelas) in Armenia. The oldest khachkars in the cemetery date back to the late 10th century.  We will leave for Lake Sevan, one of the most beautiful places in all of Armenia, where we will drive along a scenic road that will allow us to enjoy spectacular views.  13:00 Lunch at a restaurant near Lake Sevan  14:30 Visiting the **Sevanavank Monastery** and the Sevan Peninsula from where there are spectacular views of the **Lake Sevan** called "Emerald of Armenia," the alpine lake located at 1900 meters above sea level.  15:00 Leaving Sevan we head to surroundings of the city of Dilijan, an area that is often called “the Armenian Switzerland”.  16:00 – 17:00 Visit to the **Haghartsin Monastery** (in Armenian: “monastery of the soaring eagle”) built between the 10th and 13th centuries. This monastery located in the forests of the Tavush region is an indescribable example of the fusion of nature and architecture.  Moving to **Lake Parz** located in the Dilijan National Park.  17:30 The name "Parz" literally means "clear lake." Because the forests are very close to the shoreline, the massive trees, sloping toward the lake, are reflected in the water.  18:30 At the end of the day, we will arrive at the city of **Dilijan**, one of the most important resorts in Armenia.  19:00 Dinner and free time.  Overnight stay in Dilijan |
| 7th day DILIJAN + MOLOKANI VILLAGE + HAGHPAT MONASTERY + SANAHIN MONASTERY + AKHTALA MONASTERY |
| Breakfast at the hotel. Check-out of the hotel.  09:00 Meeting with guide. Departure from the hotel  Tour of Dilijan. We see the Sharamberyan Street, the historic part of Dilijan, with typical stone houses with wooden balconies.  09:30 – 10:30 Along the way we stop to visit Fioletovo, a village of the **Molokani minority**. These people, of Russian origin, practice a unique form of Orthodox Christian religion, which was declared heresy in the late 19th century and for this reason the Molokans were sent into exile to the borders of the empire. Many of them settled in Armenia and still live their lives in the same way more than a century ago. We stop by one of the families to connect with this small community and taste homemade sweets and jams.  13:00 Lunch at a local restaurant in the town of Haghpat.  14:00 – 16:00 Visit to the fortified monastic complex of **Haghpat** and the nearby located monastery **Sanahin** built between the 10th and 13th century. Described as a "masterpiece of religious architecture and a major center of learning in the Middle Ages", Haghpat monastery, together with Sanahin Monastery, was placed on UNESCO's World Heritage List.  16:30 Continue to the Debed Valley where you will visit the fortified church of **Akhtala**, famous for being one of the few churches in Armenia with its interior walls covered in mural paintings.  17:30 Departure back to Yerevan  19:00 – 20:30 Stop at the city of Vandzor for a dinner at a local restaurant  22:30 Arrival in Yerevan. Check-in at the hotel.  Overnight stay |
| 8th day RETURN HOME |
| Breakfast at the hotel. Check-out of the hotel.  Transfer to the airport |

***Program sequence is subject to change due to organizational reasons!***

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| **The price includes** | **The price doesn’t include** |
| - Transfers airport – hotel and hotel - airport;  - Accommodation in a 4\* hotel in Yerevan;  - Accommodation in a 3\*/4\* hotel in Goris, Jermuk and Dilijan;  - 1 pax free in a SGL room;  - Guide for the entire period (available languages: English, German, French, Italian. Chinese – per request);  - Accommodation for 4 nights in Yerevan;  - Accommodation for 1 night in Goris;  - Accommodation for 1 night in Jermuk;  - Accommodation for 1 night in Dilijan;  - 7 breakfasts + 6 lunches;  - 1 dinner with folklore;  - 1 wine tasting;  - 1 master class on Armenian baking;  - Radio equipment;  - 1 bottle of water per day per person during the tour;  - Transportation services;  - All entrance fees to historical and cultural sites mentioned in the program | o Airline tickets;  o Optional excursions:  o Drinks and gratuities;  o Dinners (except 2nd day);  o Any services not mentioned in the section “The price includes” |

***Price depends on dates and number of people***

***Send inquiries via e-mail booking@art-travel.am or WhatsApp***