

# ARMENIA

THE HIDDEN GEM BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA



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Armenia is a cultural, historical, and religious intersection located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia. The boundless beauty of its landscapes, from desert to alpine zones, fertile valleys, picturesque land formations, basalt columns, rock sculptures, and waterfalls, will leave you speechless. Armenians have cherished their artistic traditions from ancient times, which reflect a unique culture where aspects of everyday life are expressed in the most artistic fashion, in needlework, embellishments, carvings and design. Armenia is often referred to as an open-air museum, with over 4,000 historical monuments throughout the country from prehistoric to Hellenistic times, and from the early to medieval Christian era. Churches bear artistic illustrations in frescoes and reliefs. Sculpting is everywhere - in nearly every city, town, and village in Armenia.



# DISCOVER

- Visit the city of Yerevan and its highlights:
  - Republic square, surrounded by the most beautiful buildings in the city, where the Stalinist style meets Armenian architecture, and where every evening in summer the spectacle of dancing fountains takes place.
  - Cascade complex, a gigantic staircase built in the 70's on an art nouveau project of the early 1900s by Alexander Tamanyan, the architect who planned the urbanization of the city
  - Blue Mosque, built during the reign of the Khans of Armenia, when ancient Erivan was its capital. Shiite rite mosque, has been renovated with funds from Iran and today, of the eight historic mosques of Yerevan, is the only one left standing after the Soviet domination of Armenia
- In the rupestrian monastery of Geghard (UNESCO World Heritage), exclusively meet the local abbot for an informal discussion of the monastery secrets and traditions. Partially excavated in the rock of the Azat river and whose name in Armenian means 'spear', because here the spear point that pierced the side of Christ was preserved for many years.
- Visit to the complex of Khor Virap, dominated by the snow-covered profile of the magnificent Mount Ararat, in a picturesque position near the border with Turkey. The fortified complex houses inside the well-prison) in which in the 3rd century San Gregorio the Illuminator was locked up for 13 years.
- Get access to Echmiadzin, the "Armenian Vatican", seat of the "Catholicos" of the Armenian Apostolic Church. With an art historian visit the Cathedral, the oldest Christian cathedral in the world and today a UNESCO World Heritage site.



# ART & ARCHITECTURE

- With an archaeologist privately visit the State Museum of Armenian History which gives a thorough idea of culture and history of Armenia by exposing more than 400,000 objects covering a period from the 3rd / 2nd millennium BC to nowadays.
- Discover Gerard Cafesjian's modern art collection in a privately guided visit with an art historian.
- Private visit of the temple of Garni, a Hellenistic Roman temple from the 1st century AD and the only one to survive after the Christianization of Armenia in the 4th century AD.
- Visit Noravank, by architect Momik, a monastery surrounded by rugged gray and red rocky mountains, get access to its unique two-story church, richly decorated with bas-reliefs.
- Private visit of the Matenadaran, the library museum, unique in the world, in which over 17,000 ancient illuminated manuscripts are preserved. Exclusive access to the restoration laboratory where a passionate team will disclose their methods and patient preservation work.
- Visit the ruins of the cathedral of Zvartnots (UNESCO World Heritage), known as of the Vigilant Forces, built in the 7th century and destroyed in the 10th century due to an earthquake, famous for the very fine bas-reliefs that connected Christian to pre-Christian symbols and built on a previous site from the Urartean period.
- With an art historian visit the Church of Santa Hripsime, a UNESCO heritage site, the most admirable example of a 'quadriconca cupolata' church in all of Armenia, built on the tomb of the Holy martyr.
- Visit the fortified church of Akhtala, built on a rocky outcrop surrounded by high and deep canyons, famous for being one of the few churches in Armenia with interior walls covered with paintings, executed between 1205 and 1216, listed among the best examples of Byzantine art outside the Byzantine Empire.



# EPICUREAN

- Exclusively enter an Ararat distillery to taste the famous brandy preferred by Winston Churchill. Discover the production methods: from grape harvesting, to distillation, to aging in oak barrels
- See the preparation of Lavash, the traditional Armenian bread named by UNESCO as an intangible heritage of humanity.
- Private and exclusive outdoor dinner in the courtyard of the Temple of Garni, enjoying the delicacies of the Armenian cuisine along with the beauty of the surrounding landscape.
- Reach Areni, in the region of Vayots Dzor, the place where the most ancient wine tradition worldwide is still alive today. Enjoy an exclusive lunch at a local wine cellar with wine pairing
- At the Haghartsin Monastery enjoy a private dinner in the large assembly hall built in 1248, a unique venue for the discovery of ancient culinary recipes.

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# ARTS AND CRAFTS

- Access to the Megerian showroom, a name known for the production of refined Armenian carpets, all handmade, where you will learn how the production of the famous Armenian carpets takes place, you will discover how to understand the decoration, how the wool is colored by natural colors, weaving on loom and finishing
- In one of the halls of the Monastery of Geghard, famous for its spectacular acoustics, exclusively attend to the performance of a traditional choir singing popular and religious Armenian songs.
- Inside the suggestive cell of the temple of Garni, exclusively assist to a concert by Duduk, the ancient double-reed flute in apricot wood typical of Armenia and named Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO.
- Inside the Haghpat Monastery (built in the 10th century and now protected by UNESCO), which was the most important spiritual center of Medieval Armenia in the 12th century experience the unrepeatable performance of traditional Armenian instruments.

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# NATURE

- With your private 4x4 vehicles drive to the Kotayk region for an exciting off-road climb on the mountains of the Geghama Range that will take you to the top of Mount Azhdahak, at an altitude of 3,597 m above sea level.
- By the Vishap Lich lake admire some Vishapakar, characteristic menhirs dating back to the early Bronze Age carved in forms similar to cigars with fish heads or snakes, that archaeologists believe were related to the cult of water.
- Reach the Lake of Sevan, the “Emerald of Armenia”, one of the highest alpine freshwater lakes in the world, located at 1900 meters above sea level and visit of the Sevan peninsula with its Sevanavank monastery, from which you will admire splendid views on the lake and surrounding mountains.

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# TRADITIONS

- Visit of the rupestrian monastery of Geghard (UNESCO World Heritage), partially excavated in the rock of the Azat river and whose name in Armenian means 'spear', because here the spear point that pierced the side of Christ was preserved for many years.
- In one of the halls of the Monastery of Geghard, famous for its spectacular acoustics, exclusively attend to the performance of a traditional choir singing popular and religious Armenian songs.
- Exclusively get access to the Haghartsin Monastery, nestled among the green woods of the Dilijan National Park, meet the bishop of the Tavush Region and immerse yourself in a conversation about the Armenian apostolic religion.

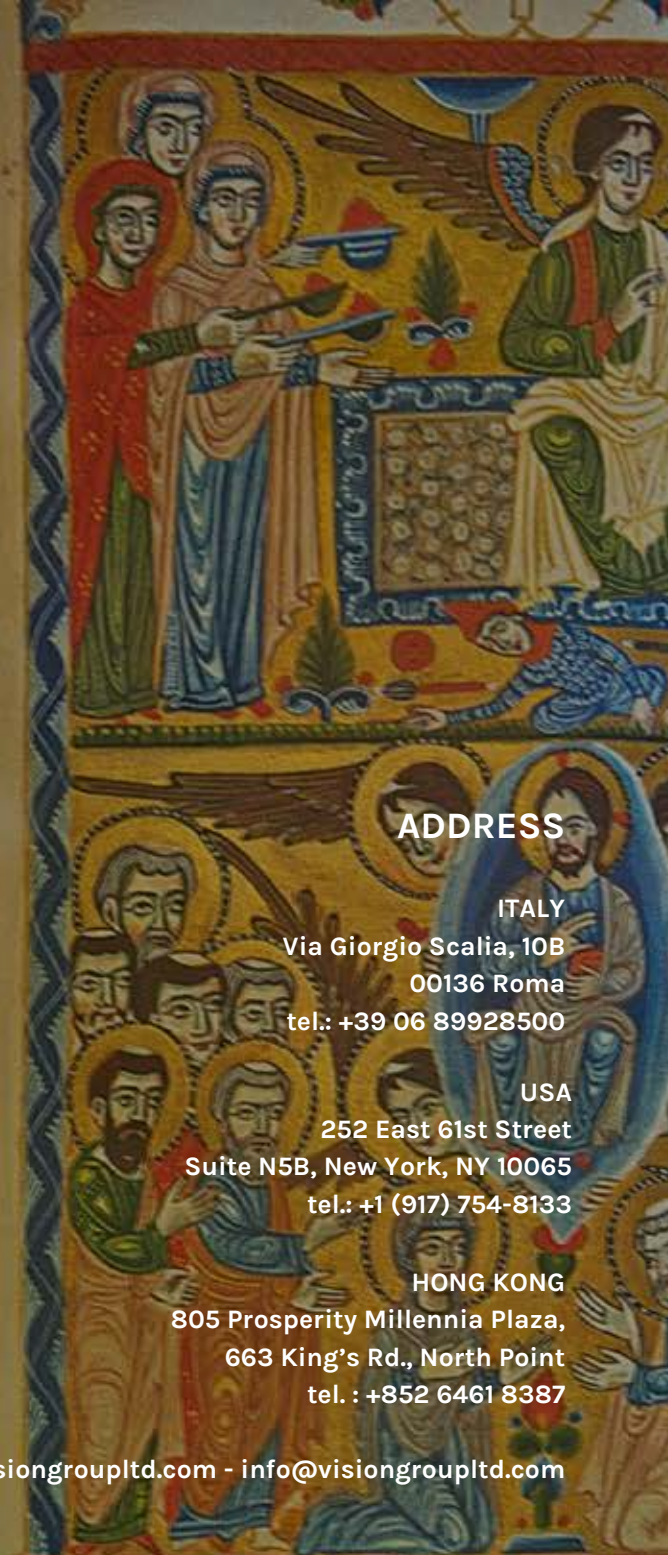
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