



This guidebook is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents of this guidebook are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



Developed by USAID EDMC Project International
Consultant Kip Garland

Contributors: Anna Arakelyan, Mushegh Petrosyan,
Hasmik Grigoryan, Anahit Ghazanchyan.

Maps, Design and Printed by Collage LLC ©
Photos by Ashot Muradyan and Development Principles NGO

ARMAVIR

A Land of Resilience and Renewal



Yerevan 2013



INTRODUCTION:

Do you enjoy exploring undiscovered locations full of fresh insights? Are you willing to trade “ready to go” tourism attractions for a unique adventure full of stories about history, culture, and mankind’s determination? The Armavir “Marz” (region) offers many opportunities for largely unexplored cultural, historical, and artistic experiences for the tourist unafraid to blaze their own trail using the raw materials that the region offers. A tourist who does not speak Armenian should go with a knowledgeable guide since the region is by in large undeveloped for traditional tourism. However the

opportunity to rub elbows with locals, discover largely untouched historical, spiritual, cultural, and artistic assets, and put yourself inside the overall experience makes up for the lack of polish of other more developed tourism experiences. The region offers a fascinating opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of Armenian history and its perpetual struggle to survive and prosper. This region is truly a land of contrasts. It is one of the most important spots in human history, and yet today, outside of a handful of sites, it is still largely untouched by tourists. Come discover its true potential and you will not regret it.



The Sky

Armavir's breathtaking views including the Biblical Mount Ararat, where Noah landed his ark and according to regional legends eventually descended into Armavir to settle, set the scene for a fascination canvas of discovery and adventure.

Armarvir has repeatedly been the Armenians' "last stand" in its struggle to maintain its identity, and at time even against the possible extinction of its entire race. It was stalwart against many attempts, mostly by the Ottoman Turks, to take over this land which has served home to the fascinating Armenian people since ancient times. This region hosts some of the most interesting stories about mankind's potential to prosper through adversity, the preservation of a precious identity, and the rise and fall of the world's most important civilizations and moments in history. Yet the region's purity, simplicity and un-packaged down-to-earthiness welcome the hearty traveler who is willing to overcome the lack of language, logistical or traditional tourism facilities. Its people are hospitable, genuine, and full of interesting stories, foods, crafts, and memories that will stimulate the five senses new and unique ways. If you're willing to prepare in advance and "rough it" a little bit, you will be handsomely rewarded with a one of a kind tourism experience.

We have chosen the infinity sign to represent the overall Armavir Marz. The infinity sign signifies "Resilience" (Resistance, Fertility, and Sustaining) and "Renewal" (Hope, Action and Results). This overall theme can be demonstrated in the three elements most present in the region:

A Culture of Survival

- Defenders
- Battle sites

Religion

- Religious Home and and Spiritual Refuge
- Rituals and Ceremony

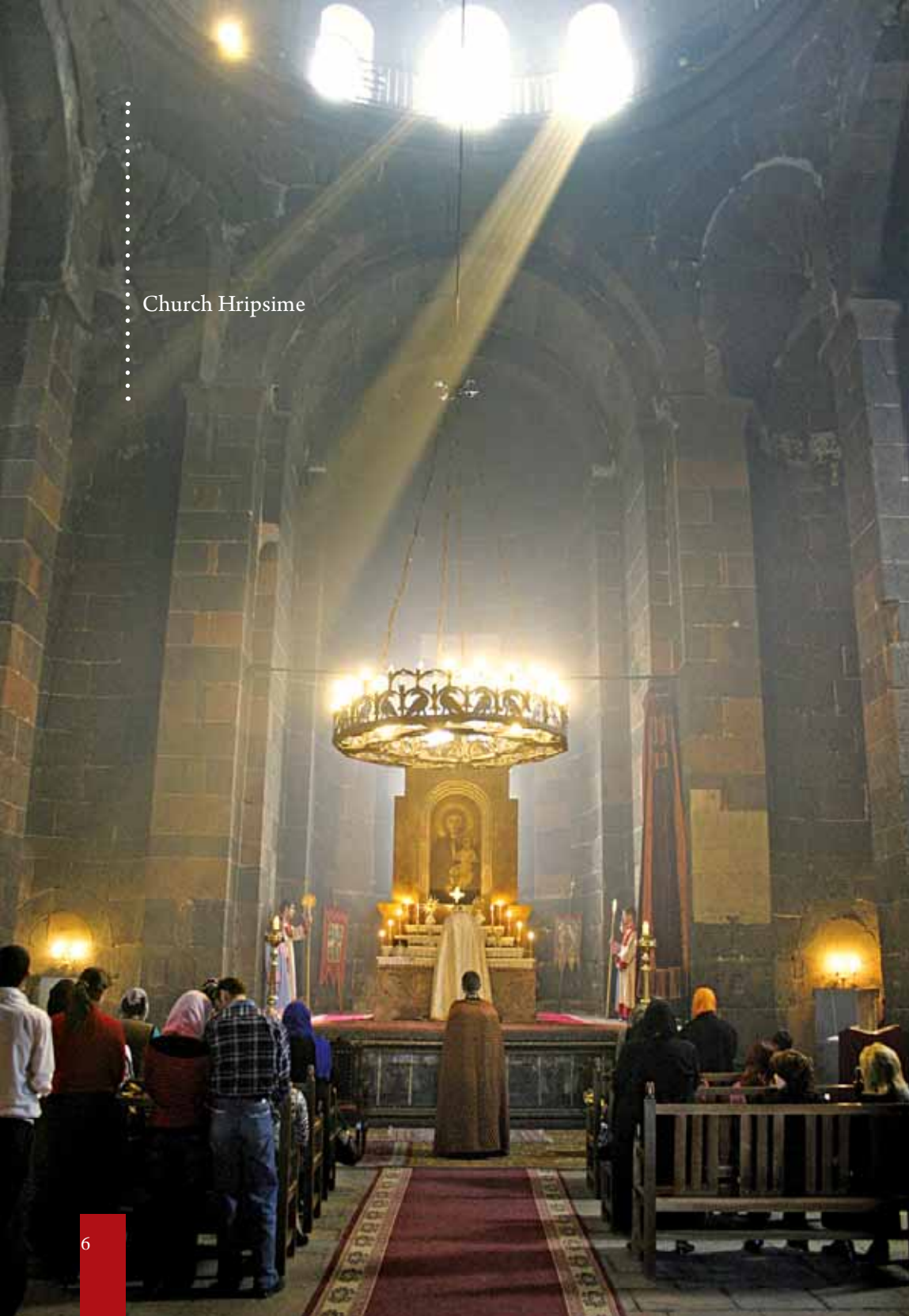
Craftsman

- Woodcrafters, Painters, Carpet Makers, Stone Carvers and Iron Crafters
- Wine Makers Fruit Dryers, Dairy Farmers and Distillers



Zvartnots

Church Hripsime



With these elements as your backdrop, the proactive tourist can construct a multitude of itineraries that will surprise the senses and help gain valuable insights about the struggle of humans to maintain and perpetuate their identity.

Unique Experiences:

There are many unique experiences to be had in the region for the tourist who is willing to uncover the unseen riches that lie beneath the eyes. These experiences are sure to stimulate all five senses and begin to help you better understand the region's significance and people. Some of these unique sensorial experiences include:

Visual experiences

- Colors: The mulberry worm makes a red color that is not present anywhere else in the world
- Views: Breathtaking vistas of Mount Ararat
- Visualize our Stories: Imaging the great stories of battles, defense, identity, the Turkish border and mountains



Lavash



Unique Tastes

- Spirits, dried fruits, fresh homemade juices (apricot, cherry, peach), local honey
- Lavash, Harisa Dish, Dolma, Kufta, Buffalo Matsoon (Armenian yogurt), Gata (Armenian pastry), and Tan (a refreshing summer drink based on Matsoon)

Unique Sensations

- Stones: 'Khachkar' cross stones, ancient stones, and ordinary stones which are transformed into art and meaning
- Sacred birthright objects: stones, bibles, jewels, bones, and excavations
- Crafts: wood wine making, pottery, crafts making, and food preparation

Unique Sounds

- Patarag: Armenian sacred liturgy
- Sharakans: Ancient hymns sung during the Holy Mass
- Church bells, the battle bells of Sardarapat

Unique Smells

- Meron (anointing oil), Khunk (holy incense used by priest in ceremonies)
- Cooking Lavash and barbeques





25 Options to Begin your Exploration of Armavir Marz:

Below find a list of 25 potential sites to visit in Armavir Marz as a way to begin exploration the Resilience and Renewal themes outlined above. As mentioned, it is important that the visitor have a competent regional guide since most of the sites are not developed to receive tourists. In addition most sites require previous notice and some logistical planning since they

do not receive tourists on a regular basis (except Etchmiadzin which has frequent tours arranged by Yerevan-based tour operators). However for the adventurous traveler, an opportunity to uncover fresh and powerful experiences awaits. Those that want to discover new and fresh experiences will have their preparation rewarded with insights and memories. Come and dive in with us



1. City of Etchmiadzin – The “Mother of God” and Saint Hripsime Churches

This is the most developed tourism site in the region. It currently receives many visitors via day tours organized from Yerevan so a trip can be easily organized. The “Mother of God” church is the Vatican of Armenia. It is known as the Holy Mother See, or Mother Church, since the church was foreseen by “Gregory the Illuminator” who in 301 A.D. converted the Armenian King to Christianity, thereby becoming the world’s first Christian State. The destination hosts two large museums. Inside the church itself there are remnants of Noah’s Ark as well as a separate “ethnographic” museum which hosts treasures, art, and religious relics that have important significance for Christians all over the world. Etchmiadzin was also a former Armenian capital. This church is the spiritual homeland for the Armenian people. It has formal control over all Armenian Apostolic Churches throughout the world. In this respect it plays a fundamental role in the preservation of the Armenian identity. The Armenian culture has survived continuously since this time through strife and struggle, making Etchmiadzin an important symbol of Armenian resilience. The church hosts the “Armenian Roundtable” which brings together recognized religious partners: Catholic, the Evangelical union of Protestant churches, Armenian Apostolate, and Russian Orthodox Churches and helps to align doctrine and develop joint projects between the churches. The church is a mecca for spiritual events, from baptisms to



experiencing the daily life of a monk. With prior arrangement it is possible to eat as a monk and go through the important spiritual rituals side by side with them. These grounds represent spiritual renewal and preservation as well as a resilient identification for the Armenian people.



2. Sardarapat Museum and Battle Site, Sardarapat village

This site was the battlefield for one of the most important Armenian battles. There is a well-developed museum that explains and demonstrates the battle. The Sardarapat (meaning “soldiers wall”) battle was a turning point for the Armenia people since it represents an attempt to preserve a physical homeland for the Armenians. Armenia declared itself a republic on May 28, 1918 and in the midst of a Turkish invasion of its homeland. This battle is known as the “last stand” for Armenians. It represents a continual theme in Armenian history – defense and survival. While Armenians do not have a history as invaders, they are fierce defenders. The Sardarapat museum helps give you an overall understanding and context of the geopolitics for the entire region. The museum is quite developed in terms of exhibitions and dioramas, and there is some text in English. However to get the entire understanding of the experience, a local guide or translator should be arranged for.



3. Musa Dagh Resistance Museum and Memorial- Musaler village

This site memorializes the resistance of Armenians under the Ottoman Empire against the World War I-era Armenian Genocide. Musa Dagh, made famous by Franz Werfel’s novel “The 40 Days of Musa Dagh”, symbolizes the struggle to preserve the Armenian race, identity, and culture from extinction. A group of the civilian defenders on the mountain held out against the forced death marches Armenians were being subject to throughout the Empire. They were saved by the French Navy, and Armenians were given refugee status in many European nations. Americans also gave assistance to Armenian orphans of the massacres. Though the actual site of Musa Dagh is located in Turkey, many refugees settled within the current borders of Armenia, including some rescued from Musa Dagh who built this memorial. The site has no infrastructure, but it is nearby to other well developed tourism assets.



4. Metsamor Museum - Archeological Site, Copper Foundry, 3000 B.C., Metsamor

The archaeological site of Metsamor Castle has been populated from the 5th millennium B.C. until the 18th century A.D. It is important to have a specialized guide in order to gain the full benefit and understanding of the site. Metsamor was a prosperous cultural center. A system of smelters with furnaces and boilers was built within rocks. The scientists have discovered that Metsamor was a major settlement which occupied 10.5 hectare,

surrounded by cyclopean wall, as well as a ziggurat observatory. It represents one of the oldest residences of mankind. There are important cultural strata dating from the Bronze Age and Iron Age, relics of the ancient civilization’s economy, practice of agriculture, farming, and industry. There is currently an excavation of the ruins of the ancient Copper Foundry dated 3000 B.C.

5. Zvartnots Church Ruins

A masterpiece of Middle Ages constructed between 641 – 661 A.D., this church was an important example of Armenian architecture. It had a unique design and architecture techniques employed in its construction. This design had a global influence on architecture. The overall design and construction represents architectural innovation at its finest. The church is 45 meters tall and has no central supporting columns.



6. Yervandashat - Ruins of the Second Capital of Armenia

Ancient Yervandashat was founded in the third century B.C. by King Orontes (Eruand) IV. The Armenian king of the Orontid dynasty moved the Armenian capital from Armavir to Yervandashat. The city had strong walls, and many wonderful buildings. Within a short time, Yervandashat became one of the biggest cities of Ancient Armenia. Around 360 A.D., Yervandashat was destroyed by the army of the Persian King Shapuh. The front-line of the battle created the demarcation between the Christian and Islamic worlds. Yervandashat was later a caravansary waypoint along the Silk Road.

7. Armavir Ruins – The first capital of Pan-Armenia (1032 B.C.)

On a hill-side location with a beautiful view of Mount Ararat sits the original city of Armavir, the former capital of the Kingdom of Armenia. The site consists of the ruins of the ancient city with remains of a citadel (a fortress with a castle incorporated inside). It was destroyed in the 6th century BC. This was the first capital of “Greater Armenia” and was built by Aramais, the grandson of Hayk, patriarch of the Armenian Nation. It was a major center of Zoroastrian worship. Here you can gain an understanding of the cradle of Armenian Civilization and see the remains of ancient urban infrastructure which had rich irrigation and a tradition of jewelry and ceramic craftsmanship.



Armavir Ruins

8. Arghishtikhinili - City Fortress (776 B.C.)

This ancient fortress and castle was founded by King Arghishti the First. The ruins sit on a hill, close to ancient capital Armavir with a beautiful panorama of the valley. Throughout the area one can stumble upon pieces of ancient ceramics and the remains of the fortress walls. The fortress had military and political importance for the Urartu and Van kingdoms for which it served as a frontier post. It was a center for ancient commerce including ceramics, craftsmen, pharmacy, blacksmiths, and metal-etching. The fortress had well-developed urban and military infrastructures, including irrigation, three strata castle walls, and a 40 km long water channel originating at the Araks River. The urban plan and architecture are highly influenced by the design of Byzantine and Assyrian cities, proving that there were close ties among these neighboring empires.



Buffaloes

9. Artashar Village and the Matzoon (Armenian Yogurt) farm

Matzoon is a unique type of Armenian yogurt. At Artashar village lies the Genjoyan family farm, which produces one of the finest versions of the product - their own Buffalo Matzoon. Buffaloes are one of the best animal milk producers. The Genjoyan brothers work the farm and produce the Matzoon. They have perfected the craft of producing this high quality yogurt which they supply directly to customers and local restaurants. They are down to earth folks with a taste for the product and have the potential to entertain tourists at the farm itself. Plans are underway to build infrastructure towards

these ends. Their tasty Matzoon is served in lovey Armenian pottery dishes, greatly enhancing the overall experience. Don't forget to enjoy it with fresh vegetables. Tourists will also be able to enjoy the brother's signature dish - a Matzoon omelet with honey. In addition to its unique taste and appearance, the Buffalo Matzoon has the reputation of producing male offspring, thanks to the Genjoyan family itself being composed of 5 sons, each of whom have from 3 to 5 boys of their own. Numerous stories exist around the "boy fertility" legend.



**10. The Yugoslav Relief Team
Aviators Monument-
Artimet Village**

Passing Etchmiadzin on the E bypass, 2 km past the overpass, one can see on the left a conspicuous monument to seven Yugoslav aviators killed in December 1988 when their plane carrying relief supplies to the victims of the Gyumri-Spitak earthquake crashed in a field. Behind the monument, a small mound and water-worn stones mark a site of Bronze Age settlement, though it is marked on the sign as dating from the 5-4th millennium B.C. It is partly covered now by a little shed that has become a local shrine.

11. The Shushanik Church - Bagaran village

As one arrives to the very western part of Armavir there is an astonishing overlook point with incredible views of Eastern Turkey. The border with Turkey has been closed and guarded by Russian troops (a vestige of the security agreement between a newly independent Armenia and Russia) since 1994. Their presence gives the adventurous traveler a flavor of the region's resilience as a "last stand" for the Armenian identity. A remarkable church called St. Shushanik, built in 914 A.D by the Prince Ashot Shapuhyan, is located in the Armenian city of Bagaran, located directly on the Turkish border. According to local legend, after the prince's small daughter was lost here he built this unique church structure on the left bank of the Akhuryan River high upon a rock as a tribute to her. This extreme western arm of Armavir is steeped with mystery, history and intrigue, as well as breathtaking views. There exists a possibility for home-stays if arranged prior to visiting.

12. The Church in Bambakashat village

The Church in Bambakashat village is dated 19th century AD. Around the Church there are old ruins that still serve as a shrine for locals, where they light a candle and pray. The architecture of the church is unique, since it breaks from traditional Armenian Apostolic design, following more of a Catholic church design. On the facade of the church there is a dedication stone from its inauguration. Also clearly visible are traces of bullets in the church wall, a reminder of a regional strife. As with the Aghavnatun Village, this church represents the resurrection of faith of the Bambakashat people.



13. The Ancient Dwellings and Urartian Fortress - Aragats village

Aragats village, on the northwest byway from Etchmiadzin, has several unique attractions. One is the cultivation of the herb tarragon, which almost all villagers engage in collecting, and is exported to Georgia and Russia. Another interesting attraction is a fascinating historical relic of a home perched on a hill. This house was the first building constructed in the village. The home was built of rustic stones attached to each other with clay. The roof was made from long logs, which connect two walls, and on top of it laid more than a half-meter of soil. Though it is almost ruins, one can still see how the villagers lived 100-200 years ago, such as the small bakery (tonir) and cowshed inside the house. There is a huge clay vessel for wine and all kinds of old different tools used in household. Right in front of the house lives an old man Zakar Grigoryan who was born and lived in that house. With great excitement he shows the house, room by room and tells stories about each of them. A fascinating visit to be sure.

Another fascinating visit in Aragats village is the Ruins of Urartian Fortress, resting on the highest hill of the village. According to sources, the Fortress city is dated to the 9th-8th centuries B.C. The Fortress was standing still in the 17th century A.D., and was described in writings of French explorers to the region. When you walk on the ruins of walls you can still see and feel the mightiness of the place in how it dominates the landscape. The excavation of it started in the Soviet period and is still incomplete today.



14. The 13th Century A.D. Mausoleum (burial chamber) - Aghavnatun village

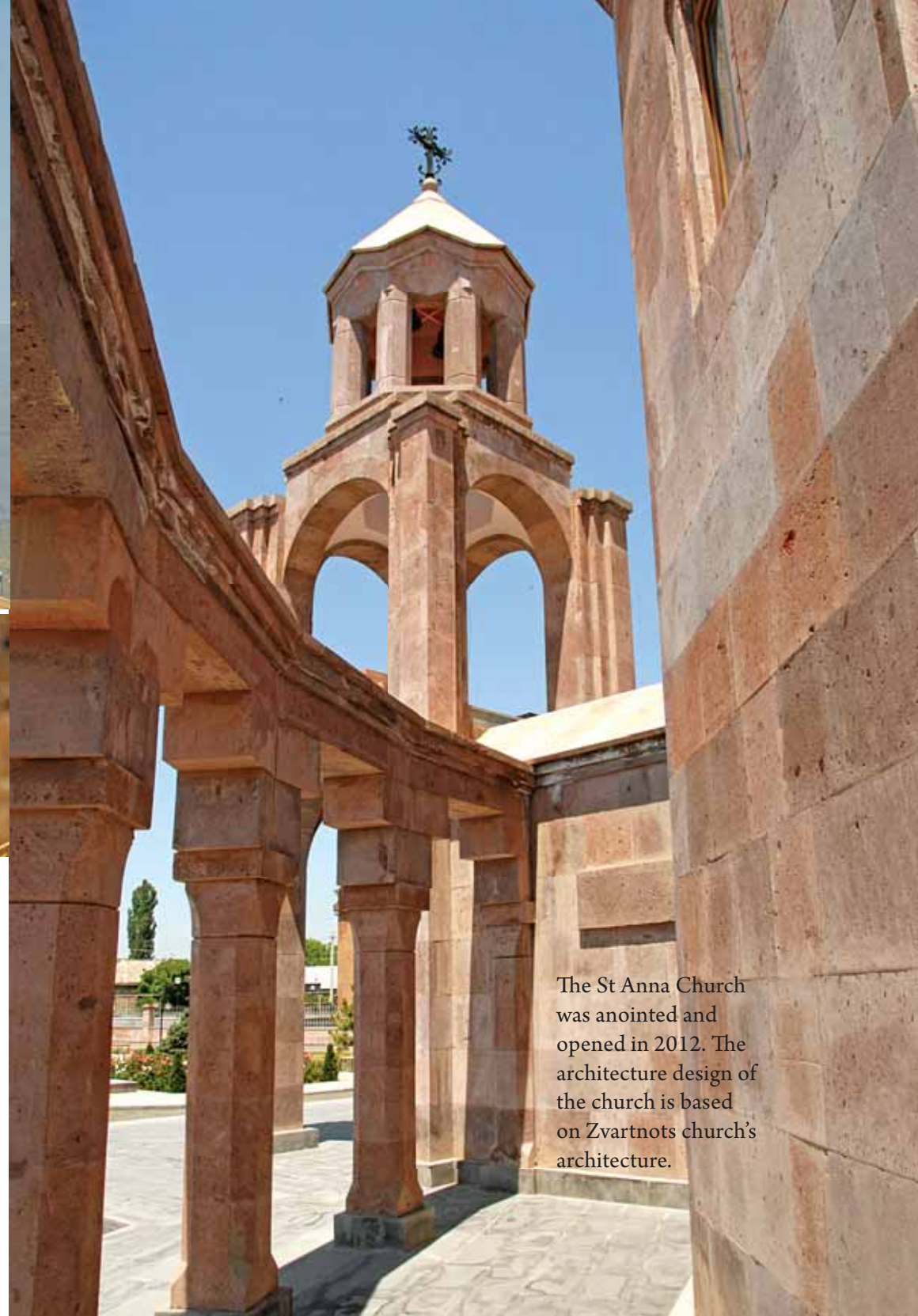
This Mausoleum, hidden in the back yard of villager Babken Nersiyanyan's house, was a pleasant surprise on our site visits. Believed to be an ancient princely mausoleum, it is a well preserved construction which draws the attention of many archeological organizations as well as treasure hunters. This is because according to ancient tradition, a body should be buried with the wealth and treasures the man accumulated during his life. The Mausoleum is large at eight meters in height with a diameter of 4 meters and 12 meters round. On the facade you can see the traces of its history, as different invaders have left evidence of their presence in this area. There are visible "wounds" in the stones left from bullets and swords.





15. The Ancient and Modern Armenian Churches - Aghavnatun village

There are two churches in the village: one is the ruins of Holy Mother of God Church and second is newly built St. Anna Church. Both have an abundance of significance as representations of the unbreakable spirit of Armenian people, which can be repressed, but never destroyed. Though the Holy Mother of God Church is in ruins, it has never stopped serving as an important place for worship. On a small hill near the bypass, if you look northwest you will see the Karmravor Monastery, also in ruins. Every year pilgrims from all over the country come to worship in that monastery on “Kanach Kiraki”, or “Green Sunday”, also known as Pentecost).



The St Anna Church was anointed and opened in 2012. The architecture design of the church is based on Zvartnots church's architecture.

ԱՐՄԱՎԻՐ ARMAVIR

NORAVAN - 4 կմ

TALIN - 44 կմ



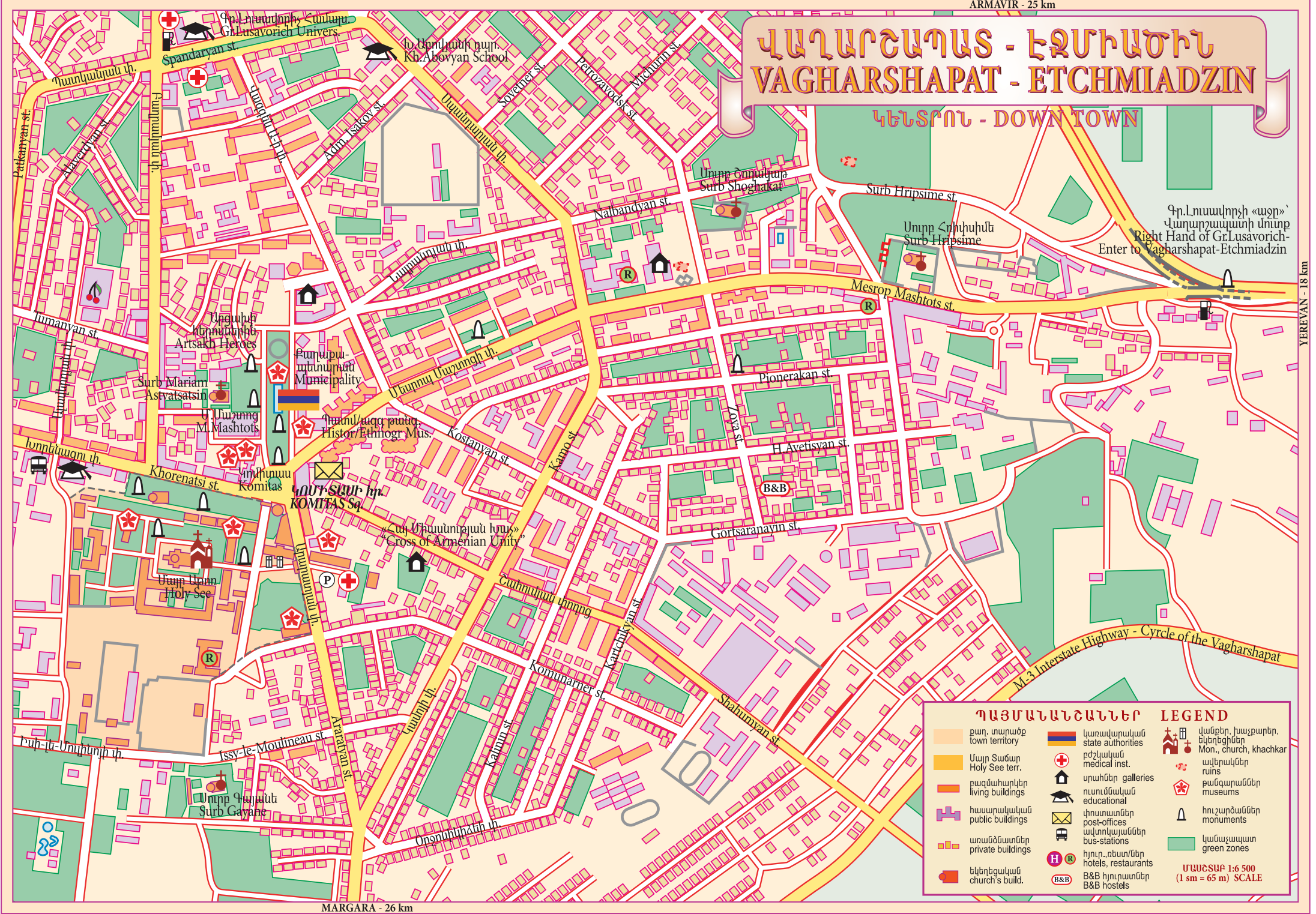
ARMAVIR - 25 km

ՎԱՂԱՐՇԱԴԱՏ - ԷՉՄԻԱԾԻՆ VAGHARSHAPAT - ETCHMIADZIN

ԿԵՆՏՐՈՆ - DOWN TOWN

Գր.Լուսավորչի «աջր»
Վաղարշապատի մուտք
Right Hand of Gr.Lusavorich-
Enter to Vagharshapat-Etchmiadzin

YEREVAN - 18 km



MARGARA - 26 km



16. Galchyan Art Studio and Artisan Workshop - Myasnikyan village

An artistic haven for iron works, painting, ceramics, sculpture, metal etching, carpet-making, weaving and needlework, and a design studio all under one roof. When Grigoryan and Karine lost their son they decided to make a studio in his name to train youth arts and crafts. One can arrange a tour of the facilities and to take classes.



17. Ruben Nalhandyan, Master Cross Stone Artist - Arshaluis village

This fascinating master stone craftsman has developed some of the world's most important cross stones (large stone carved sculptures). He has a working outdoor workshop with craftsmen at work on various carvings. The grounds surrounding the house are quite pleasant for drinking brandy or fresh juices with dried fruits. With advance notice, a truly unique experience can be had at this interesting site.



18. Alvan Brandy Barrel Workshop and Wine Makers - Norapat village

Here an industrious entrepreneur makes hand-crafted barrels for Brandy distillers. He also has a separate wine making facility which could, with prior reservations, be toured and host groups for wine tasting.



19. Proshyan Brandy and Wine Distiller - Haikavan Village

This Proshyan Brandy Factory is one of the largest in Armenia. They have established facilities in Haikavan Village with modern wine and brandy distilling equipment. The resulting brandy is some of the best in Armenia. They are also beginning to receive visitors in their new restaurant and tasting facilities. The pleasant grounds have beautiful gardens to enjoy dried fruits, nuts, and of course brandy and wine. Sit back and enjoy!



20. The Cross of Armenian Unity Ethnographic and Youth Center - Etchmiadzin

This fascinating project combines the arts with food and wine-making to create a powerful overall experience of Armenian Unity. Cross of Armenian Unity (CAU) offers tourists the opportunity to get acquainted with traditional Armenian life. Visitors can learn the Armenian arts of carpet making, pottery, dance and cooking. The winery offers guests the chance to learn the history of Armenian wine making. Lavash (a type of national bread) is made in the Armenian bakery, which has an interesting architectural feature called “Hazarashen”. Archeological tourism is also featured. Every aspect of pre-historic life is displayed, and visitors can try their hand at starting a fire by rubbing sticks together. CAU has a children’s art school on site as well as art galleries of professional artists. CAU also acts as the home of the Noah Bed & Breakfast complex. Advance reservations should be made.

