

ARMENIA

GUIDEBOOK

KOTAYK





**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**EDMC**  
Enterprise Development &  
Market Competitiveness Project

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## KOTAYK MARZ GUIDEBOOK

2014





## 1. General

Kotayk, which lies just to the north of Yerevan, is a top notch excursion destination easily accessible from the capital, with key attractions including Garni, Geghard and the Khosrov Reserve. The accessibility of Kotayk has been a great advantage in terms of tourism development. There are numerous overnight accommodations available in Garni and the Tzaghkadzor ski resort area. There are also a number of eco-tourism and wellness resort developments which have been recently established in the province.

## 2. Present Situation

Kotayk Marz is located in the center of Armenia with its capital in the town of Hrazdan, the province is unique in that it is the only Marz that does not share a border with a foreign country. Tourism is well represented in Kotayk with highly popular attractions at Tzaghkadzor. The province covers an area of 276 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 280,700 people. The Tsakhkunyats and Geghama mountain ranges dominate Kotayk, with Mount Ara (2577 m) and Mount Hatis (2528 m) being the principle peaks. Two major river systems flow through the region carving dramatic gorges in the landscape, the Hrazdan which is over 140 kilometres long and the shorter Azat river.

Kotayk Marz is uniquely positioned in order to grow its tourism sector, which at present is largely under-developed. The province is traversed by the main Yerevan to Lake Sevan highway, which also provides the major access route to Lori Province and Georgia in the north. As such Kotayk is already transited by considerable numbers of tourists as well as freight traffic destined for Georgia and the Black Sea to the north. In addition the province develops from the southern outskirts of Yerevan and, given the relatively high quality road linkages and capacities is readily accessible to residents of the city as well as tourists using Yerevan as a base. Much of this highway, E117, has already been upgraded to dual-carriageway standards and offers a high speed, high capacity link through the province. It should be anticipated that with the continuing evolution of the tourism sector that route traffic volumes, and in particular tourist traffic between Georgia and Armenia will increase dramatically. In addition the route greatly facilitates short excursions from Yerevan to Kotayk and neighbouring provinces to meet the potential growth of the domestic tourism market.



### 3. Key Resources, Flagship Attractions

#### 3.1 Garni Temple

Garni Fort and Pagan Temple are dramatically situated on a rocky promontory which juts over the Azat River Gorge. This eminently defensible site was developed as a fortress as early as the 3rd century BC, around 70 AD and Greek-style temple was constructed on this site. One of the most iconic images of Armenia Garni temple was destroyed by an earthquake in the late seventeenth century but was extensively restored in the 1970s.

The temple is surrounded by a palace complex which comprises a number of buildings over a large area around the main square of the fortress. Palace buildings include the remains of a small temple, throne room, formal hall, residence and a bath house. The site is enclosed by the remains of a fortress wall and gateway, which still serves as the main access to the attraction. A number of buildings have been identified within the walled area, including the remains of a two level Royal Summer Palace, a bath complex, a church built in AD 897, a cemetery and the site's most famous and best preserved monument the Greco-Roman temple built in the classical Ionic order. Archeological excavations on the site have revealed no less than six successive layer of human occupation. The earliest traces of habitation date back to the Neolithic period, followed by Bronze Age and Classical layers as well as three distinct medieval layers. The fortification circuit is built of massive basalt blocks weighing up to 6 tonnes and extends over 300 metres in length punctuated by guard towers and the main entry gate.

Garni Temple is justifiably one of the most iconic attractions in Armenia tourism and currently receives a million visitors a year. The site, which has been extensively restored, is attractively laid out with a landscaped avenue providing access to the Temple which is the principle, although not sole attraction.

#### 3.2 Garni canyon

Garni Canyon is located around 30 km east of capital Yerevan and contains some of the most dramatic scenery in Armenia. The canyon is believed to be formed millions of years ago by volcanic eruptions followed by rapid cooling which led to the formation of unique rock formations which are similar the Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland.. The Gorge can be reached from a path alongside Garni Temple or on a cobbled road through the village itself.

In this spectacular scenery, which should not be missed, there are many options for leisure including a walk in the canyon, picnics and swimming in the ice cold Azat River. Make sure you take all of your needs with you, including plenty of water.







### 3.3 Geghard Monastery

Geghard Monastery was inscribed into the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2000 and is one of only four such sites in the country. The monastery contains a number of churches and tombs, unique for the fact that many are cut directly into the mountain rock face. Gerhard is held to represent the peak of medieval Armenian architectural achievement and comprises a walled complex set in stunning mountain scenery in the upper Azat Valley in Kotayk Province. UNESCO describes the site as being an exceptionally complete and well-preserved example of a medieval Armenian monastic foundation. Geghard was founded in the 4th century, according to tradition by St Gregory the Illuminator. The first monastery was destroyed by invading Arabs in the 9th century, but re-established and reconstructed by the 13th century. The monastery was famous because of the relics that it houses; the most celebrated the lance that wounded Christ on the cross.

The site is that of a small spring emanating from a cave which is thought to have been sacred in pre-Christian times, and which continues to flow through one of the rock hewn chapel of the complex. One of Armenia's principle tourist attractions, as well as an important pilgrimage site, Geghard reportedly receives up to one million visitors a year. The monastery complex is accessed by a long paved road which terminates in a parking area below the ramparts of the complex. A line of residential accommodations are coincident with the walls and form the southern boundary of the complex and at the rear line the monastery courtyard. Within the walls are a complex of churches, chapels and gravels developed into the cliff face these include a magnificent entry hall, or gavit, and the Church of St. Gregory.

Like Garni Temple the Geghard monastery is one of the leading tourist attractions in the country, reinforced by its status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Well served by tour operators who offer numerous day trips from Yerevan the site is exceptionally well preserved and presented while the main access road has several restaurants with panoramic views of Geghard which are well frequented by tour parties.



### 3.4 Khosrov Reserve

Garni Gorge and the Khosrov Reserve can be accessed directly from Garni village by a cobbled road that descends into the gorge and runs along the river to a medieval bridge which provides access to the Khosrov Reserve. The banks of the Azat River are often used for picnic parties and as informal camp sites. A second footpath access to the gorge can be found to the side of Garni Temple and winds its way down the precipitous slope to the river below. Within the Khosrov Reserve, and within easy striking distance of Garni, are important historic sites; Havuts Tar Monastery and Aghjots Vank, including St. Stepanos Church. Some eight kilometers inside the park it is possible to visit Kakavaberd a ninth century fortress of the Bagratuni dynasty

Khosrov Forest State Reserve, which covers 300 square kilometers, is one of the oldest protected areas in the world and is the largest nature reserve in the country. While the Reserve is essentially located in Ararat Marz to the south its most frequented entry is from Garni, a route which also offers the most convenient access to the Reserve's historic buildings. The reserve was first established by King Khosrov III, a Christian monarch, around the year 330 in order to improve climatic conditions in the nearby city of Artashat. Trees were planted on the high slopes and populated with wildlife for royal hunting parties. It is believed that this reservation was the only one of its type in the Roman Empire.

The Khosrov Reserve extends along the Geghama Ridge at an altitude varying between 1600 and 2300 metres and is noted for its diversity on unique European and Asian flora and fauna. With approximately 30 percent of the reserve forested Khosrov is reputed for its spectacular scenery, pristine environment and rich historical legacy, including associations with the Silk Road. The Reserve has been granted official status by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and is now managed and operated as a non-profit organisation.

Remarkably the Reserve has four diverse ecosystems; semi-desert, mountain steppes, woodlands and alpine meadows all boasting a rich variety of flora and fauna all of which are explained in the new Visitors Centre for the Reserve which has been constructed in Garni. Around 15 percent of the Reserve is composed of forest and 20 percent open grassland meadow. Khosrov holds an impressive variety of flora comprising over 1800 species including endemic, rare and endangered plants. The semi-arid areas are dominated by Wormwoods, Buckthorn, Almond, Capar and Thyme. Arid grasslands have small stands of Junipers, Almond and Maple as well as extensive areas of Oak.

Khosrov is home to 33 species of reptiles which populate a range of habitats from semi-desert to the subalpine meadowlands. The main varieties of lizards found in the Reserve are the: Caucasian Agama, Azerbaijani Lizard, Snake-eyed lizard and the Caucasus Emerald Lizard. The main snakes found in Khosrov are the Wood Snake, Mountain Grassland Viper and the Armenian Viper. Several varieties of rare snake species are also present including the Golden Grass Mabuya, Black-headed Ground Snake and the Transcaucasian Rat Snake.

Incredibly 56 percent of all the bird species present in Armenia can be found within the Khosrov Reserve; this amounts to a total of 193 species of which 83 are migratory. The Reserve



is particularly rich in raptors with the Bearded Vulture, Egyptian Vulture, Eurasian Griffon, Peregrine and Lanner Falcons. Species included a number of endangered genera including the Black Vulture, European Roller, Mongolian Finch and the exceptionally rare Red-tailed Wheatear. A wide variety of avian habitats exist in the Reserve although perhaps none is so impressively striking as the 'Bird Fortress', a towering and heavily eroded cliff face that has been colonised by white-chested crows. Located in the centre of the Reserve this site can only be accessed by horseback through areas of wild forest, a journey of immense interest for nature enthusiasts.

There are at least 41 mammal species within Khosrov including the wild Boar, Grey Wolf, Eurasian Lynx, Red Fox and badgers. Species include the Ussurian Spotted Deer, which was introduced in 1594 and now thrives in the area. A number of rare and endangered animal species roam wild within the park and are best observed either early in the morning or evening, these include; the Persian leopard, the Bezoar Ibex, an impressively large horned wild goat, the Marbled Polecat, the European Wildcat, and the Brown Bear.

While the main entry to the Reserve is from Vedi in Kotayk Province the northern areas of Khosrov can be directly accessed from Garni on a road from the village through the Garni Gorge. In many ways the northern portion of the Reserve offers more interesting tourism opportunities containing the best historic monuments as well as much of its unique wildlife. The monuments along the Azat River include Havuts Tar and Aghjots monasteries as well as a number of ancient abandoned villages.

To facilitate and encourage access a Khosrov Visitors centre was opened in Garni in 2008, the centre provides interpretative information to visitors and is the starting point for ranger-guided tours of the Reserve, which must be booked in advance. Access to the reserve is strictly controlled and a visitors pass must be obtained from the Reserve Director, who is based in a headquarters building on the outskirts of Vedi, the cost of which will vary depending on the itinerary that you wish to follow within the park. Tours of the park are guided by a Ranger and official vehicles.





### 3.5 Tzaghkadzor Ski Resort

The Tzaghkadzor Ski Resort is Armenia's leading winter sports destination. Tzaghkadzor is located around 50 kilometers to the north of Yerevan and 3 kilometers east of the provincial centre Hrazdan. This small town is surrounded by alpine meadows and enjoys a cool summer climate. Located on the southeastern slope of the Teghenis Mountains, at a height of 1841 metres Tzaghkadzor boasts the finest ski slopes in Armenia and was earlier developed as a winter sports base for the then Soviet Olympic Team. Access to the mountain areas is provided by a ski lift which takes visitors to an area with an impressive 30 kilometres of quality piste over a level change of 800 metres on the slopes of Mount Teghenis.

As a small town, Tzaghkadzor, is attractively developed on the mountain foothills. Well frequented through the summer and winter seasons, the resort has a wide variety of quality resort hotels as well as a large stock of bed and breakfasts and private home rentals. This small town has a total of around 40 hotels and 2,000 bedspaces available to accommodate visitors. In addition it has been estimated that around 50% of local homeowners have developed detached cottage units in their gardens for rental to tourists, details of all accommodation options can be obtained in the town's tourist information office in the main square.

Tsakhkadzor, or the Gorge of Flowers, has always been a great resort for exclusive ski holidays in Armenia and is a truly majestic getaway, where the beauty of Mother Nature appears in all its variety. Carved out of the forest situated on the foot of Teghenis Mountain, Tsakhkadzor is considered to be Armenia's premier ski resort town. It is famed for its winter sport activities and is a real paradise for skiers and mountaineers from Armenia and all over the world. In Tsakhkadzor it is possible to practice 35 sports and facilities include a football stadium, swimming and diving pools, a ski piste, a range of indoor sport halls and facilities and so on. The ski area has 16 slopes and 5 ski lifts. One thing to do in Tsakhkadzor irrespective of the season is to take a ride on the ropeway. It will cost around \$4 for one





stop. The ropeway consists of four levels, all equipped with Austrian seat elevators. The ascent to the top of Mt. Teghenis will last some 40 minutes.

The winter delights of the ski slopes on the Mountain are accompanied by an open air ice rink in the town square and Tsaghkadzor also has a wealth of other attractions for the visitor. The chair lift, which operates from the town, provides year round access to the mountain area, which during the summer offers numerous hiking trails through the highlands. Within the town one of the key attractions is the Orbeli Brothers Museum which is dedicated to three local brothers who rose to become major international archeological authorities. Tsaghkadzor also has a number of fine buildings including the eleventh century Kecharis Monastery and the Chapel of the Holy Resurrection.

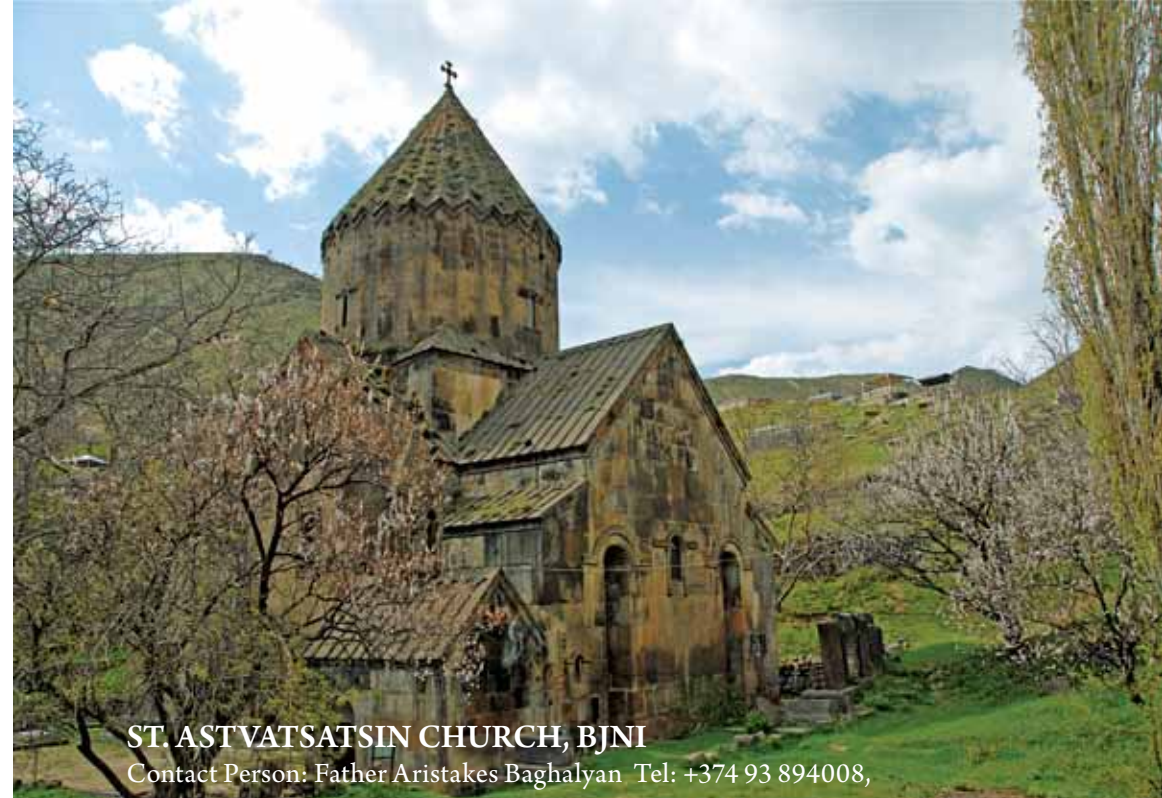
Mountaineers can conquer the highest slopes of Teghenis Mountain and climb throughout the natural forests of this wonderful city. The Tsakhkadzor ropeway is one of the longest in Armenia. Other than that, a wide range of activities are offered for spring and summer-time rest lovers, these include:

- Outdoor sports-volleyball, football, basketball.
- Olympic size swimming pool (available in winter too).
- Mountaineering.
- Hiking.
- Horse Riding.
- Bike Riding

### 3. 6 Aghveran

Aghveran is located 50 kilometers north of Yerevan in the Kotayk Province and sits on the left bank of River Dalar at an altitude of 1550 meters. Aghveran is a wonderful place of rich nature and cool mountain air. It is a family vacation spot, which is frequented by many Armenians as it offers a chance to choose between leisure time activities such as sleeping and reading in the hotel room and activities such as climbing the rolling and serpentine hills and mountains, dangling your feet in river Dalar and staying overnight in tents under the stars.

Aghveran is a beautiful village surrounded by impressive nature. It is a health resort and is close to several museums and galleries. So if you are planning to escape from the noisy city and enjoy the beauty of the Mother Nature, it is a fantastic destination. Travelers who are interested in climbing Tsaghkunyats Mountain in Aghveran, rest assured that somewhere on the highest slopes of the mountain there is a hidden old chapel. Since Aghveran is very small and the things-to-see sights are limited to the surrounding view and the mentioned mountain, visitors may wish to explore around the resort. Some of the places to pay a visit to are the warm springs of Arzaqan, which are located in Arzaqan village and have a water temperature of water is 54 degrees.



**ST. ASTVATSATSIN CHURCH, BJNI**

Contact Person: Father Aristakes Baghalyan Tel: +374 93 894008,

The Church of Saint Astvatsatsin was built by Gregory Magistros, the son of Vasak Pahlavuni, in 1031. One of the unique elements of the church are the walls, which include various inscriptions is the cantilevered stone drawers stretching along the walls at the height of 5 meters. It is assumed that the drawers sheltered the various manuscripts written in the church. To the south of the church there is a vaulted chapel dating back to the 13th century. There is a huge khachkar in the niche of the chapel's western wall. Various popular masters of stone-carving used to work in Bjni. This made clear by the number of precious khachkars found at the eastern wall of the church. The church was reconstructed in 1947.

In the time of the Bagratunis Bjni fell under the domain of the Pahlavuni, who built a fortress and church there in the 11th century. The church, dedicated to Surb Astvadza-dzin, the Virgin Mary, was erected in 1031 by order of Prince Grigor Magistros. The small sanctuary, planned as a domed hall, presents a simple exterior architecture, crowned with a round drum and an umbrella-like dome. To the east of the church are some admirable khachkars. In addition there are two more churches; St Gevorg Basilica, built in 13th century and St Sarkis Church, built in 7th century, on the top of the rock in front of the Fortress. This church is recognized as the smallest church in Armenia.

Another site worth seeing in the area is the rock named Tsakqar (Holy Stone). Tsakqar is a huge natural arch, which is visible upon entering Bjni. There is an interesting legend regarding the naming of Tsakqar, which is that there is a cool spring of water that does not freeze in the winter and operates seven mills year round. The spring is believed to have carved a hole in the rock.

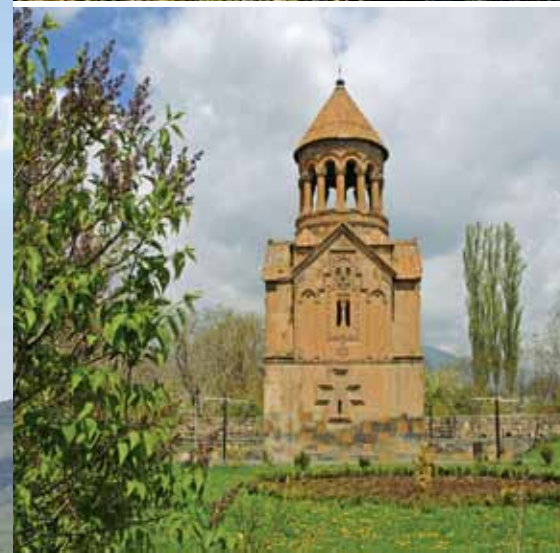


## PAHLAVUNI FORTRESS, BJNI

Contact Person: Yasha Sahakyan

Bjni Fortress is a castle located in the village of Bjni in the Kotayk Province of Armenia. It sits upon the top and along the sides of a rocky plateau that nearly divides the village in half. The larger portion of the fortress is located west of this mesa and curves south, while a smaller portion is east. The walls of the fortress may only be seen from the western side of the village, and are easiest reached via a narrow dirt road that forks (take the left fork) and goes up the side of the hill past some residences. Portions of the exterior fortification walls at Bjni have survived and follow the sides of the mesa. At the plateau, there are sections of battlements that remain in relatively poor condition. Traces of several structures that fell long ago are indicated by depressions in the ground at various areas. There is also the stone foundation of a church of the 5th century, a medieval structure that is still partially standing (currently being rebuilt as of 2009), two cisterns one with the remains of intact vaulting, and a covered passage that led to the river in the event of a siege.

The fortress of Bjni, which can only be reached from the village of Bjni, was built in the 9th to 10th centuries by the royal Pahlavuni family of the Bagratuni Dynasty. For years the fortress was the primary fortification of the province of Nig, and as such it protected and guarded Bjni. The fortress is protected by rocks to the south, east and partially, to the west. As for the north and west, the fortress was surrounded by now ruined walls. The ruins and traces of various building-structures can be seen in the fortress. The commander of Bjni, Lord Vasak Holum Pahlavuni (the Pahlavid), reconstructed the fortress. The 12th century Armenian historian Matteos Urhayetsi wrote in part 1 of the "Chronicle" covering the late 10th to early 11th centuries, of the invasions of mercenary Turkish soldiers of the Daylamis at Bjni in 1021 who went to raid and plunder villages and towns. It was then that Vasak learned that the entire district of Nig was enslaved. This realization was followed by the battle near the River of Qasagh. After which an exhausted Vasak decided to rest at a mountain and while asleep the commander was slain and thrown off of a rock.





## TEGHENYANTS Monastery

Bear leftish toward Aparan and continue 5.5 km to an unsignposted asphalt road to the right, which leads across the valley to the village of Buzhakan, once also known as Babakishi, and the splendid ruined Teghenyats monastery comes into view in a forested fold of the Tsaghkunyats mountain range. Set between two streams, with a distant view of Mt. Ararat, the site has sheep and horse-shaped tombstones, an impressive half-intact gavit beside the ruined 12th century sanctuary, parts of a monumental 13th century dining room, and lots of atmosphere. From the entrance to Buzhakan, take the left fork through the centre of the village. At the far end of the village (1.8 km), where the asphalt turns left, keep straight along a dirt road. Continue 1 km to a large, half-built inn and then go straight another 0.6 km to a fork, at which turn left. Bump along the rutted track, cross the stream, up to the top of the rise and near right and the monastery buildings will be visible on the left. The road, dubiously passable, allegedly goes on to Tsaghkadzor. There are walking and mountain bike trails and numerous picnic spots. The final bit of road is not recommended for anything other than off road vehicles. On the east side of the village of Buzhakan is a 6th-7th century ruined church.

## ST. ASTVATSATSIN Church

The church of Yeghvard, also known as St. Astvatsatsin was completed in 1301 and is located in the centre of the town of Yeghvard in the Kotayk province of Armenia. Nearby to the northwest are the ruins of the Katoghike Church, a large triple-nave basilica built in the 5th to 6th centuries.

St. Astvatsatsin has a small cruciform central-plan interior with a rectangular, but almost square plan exterior and a second floor. Centreed above is a single cylindrical drum and a conical umbrella type dome. The drum is made up of twelve columns with arches that support the weight of the dome. The second floor has a semi-cruciform layout with single small windows to the left and rear façades, while on the right is a larger window with a single column that stands in the middle. A small inset portal sits in the middle of the front façade, with the remnants of exterior stone steps that once led to the second floor. The first floor has a single large portal at the front façade with a semi-circular lintel and decorative columns, while the left, right, and rear façades each have a small window. The left and right are surrounded by a large intricately carved cross in high-relief.

Exceptionally rich decorations cover a large portion of the church. There are beautiful motifs on each side of the second floor and geometric patterns around the cornices, eaves, and other parts of the walls. Notable is the large cross carved in high relief on the front flanked by the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus and another saint. Below and just above the portal to the second floor are the motifs of a bull and lion. Above the larger window on the right façade is a motif of a large bird with a geometric rosette on its chest holding a hooved animal in its talons. On the left façade is a mountain goat, and on the rear is a large

cat pouncing upon a goat. Adjacent to the church are the remains of a chapel foundation. Khachkars and graves are nearby.

## MAYRAVANQ MONASTERY, SOLAK

Description: The Medieval Armenian architectural monument Mayravanq is located on the front hill of Solak village. Hovhanness Mayrevanetsi built the spectacle in the 7th century; later St. Astvatsatsin church of Mayravanq was built between the 11th and 12th centuries. Currently the monastery is in half ruined condition. But in 2015 by patroness of the Armenian Apostolic church will begin the full reconstruction of the monastery complex.

## HAVUTS TAR MONASTERY COMPLEX

The Havuts Tar monastery complex is located to the east of Garni on the left bank of the Azat River and was one of the major religious and cultural centres of medieval Armenia. This formidable 11th century walled monastery stands half ruined on an outcrop across the Garni River gorge from the village of Goght. Havuts Tar can be reached in just under an hour on foot, either from Goght or from the dirt road at the bottom of the gorge, accessible by car from Garni. When leaving Goght take the track that starts at the end of the village square and past the ruined church and then fork to the left on the road at the end and through a gate into a farmyard. Passing through the farmyard take a path to the right and down some concrete steps to a small wooden bridge across the river and up to the monastery. Most of the way up, a clear path goes right and you will reach a cluster of small shrines/tombs with the monastery lying just beyond.

Havuts Tar, which was destroyed by an earthquake in 1679, was reconstructed by Catholicos Astvatsatur in the 18th century. The monastery complex consists of two groups of buildings. The western group which dates from the 13th century and is built with plain reddish tuff contains the main church. The architecture is multicolored and is richly carved although the dome is now ruined. Two half-ruined and one-nave shrine join the church on the south. The eastern group of edifices was fully reconstructed in the first half of the 18th century using the original masonry. To the north the partial outline of the St. Karapet Church which was started by Catholicos St. Astvatsatur in 1721, but lies unfinished due to Lezgin's first invasion. Habitable rooms are adjacent to the fences on the northern side, and a vaulted guest-house is on the south-western side. Beyond this on an outcrop lies the Amenaprkich church which was built in 1013 by the young Grigor Pahlavuni, son of the lord of Bjni and nephew of the sparapet Vahram Pahlavuni. A fascinating character that went down in history as Grigor Magistros from the Byzantine imperial titles he received after the Armenian kingdom of Gagik II Bagratuni passed into Byzantine hands in 1045. Having given his own lands to the Emperor, Grigor Magistros received estates in Mesopotamia and was ultimately appointed governor of large tracts of historical Armenia.



### **The Memorial House – Museum of the Brothers Orbeli**

The museum is open daily, from 11a.m. to 18 p.m. Closed on Mondays.,  
12 Orbeli Street, Tsaghkadzor, Armenia  
Tel: +374 022 360552

In a picturesque nook of Armenia, in the town of Tsaghkadzor, stands the house museum of the Orbeli brothers. The museum was opened in the house where Levon Orbeli was born, the Ministry of Culture decided to turn the house into a museum to glorify their memory with the aims at preserving and passing to the generations all the relics and exhibits of the Orbeli family. There are 1700 exhibits in the museum, organized by the staff members of the museum together with the relatives, friends and pupils of the Orbelis. The famous sculptor Artashes Hovsepian's bas relief stands in the nearby square named after the Orbeli brothers, where ceremonies and festivities take place. The Museum's interior and exhibits guarantee an instructive, educational, and emotional experience.

The museum organizes jubilees, anniversaries, temporary exhibitions, master classes, presentations, festivities, meetings and scientific competitions. Meanwhile evenings are dedicated to the Orbeli brothers. During these meetings the brothers' favorite melodies are played and passages from their letters are read.

### **“ARSEN PANOSYAN” House Museum**

Address: 1st Street #4, Argel Village, Kotayk Region  
Tel: +374 99 241652 (Nubar Karapetyan, wife)  
+374 55 309314 (Paruyr Panosyan, son)

Entering Argel village you cannot miss the glorious complex of unique round Khachkars, made by engraver, sculptor and illustrator Arsen Panosyan and his sons, dedicated to 1700th anniversary of Christianity in Armenia.

Arsen Panosyan created more than 60 pieces of work during his life. Panosyan considers his masterpiece to be the big vase with the multi-layer engraving for which he received a medal in the name of “Movses Khorentsi”. On this vase he worked for 23 years, working 6 to 12 hours each day. He has also received three major prizes by participating in international festivals throughout the years and his work has been exhibited from India to Great Britain.

Arsen Panosyan had a dream to remodel his home and surround it with his creations as a museum, which will be his present to the villagers of Argel. “My home already looks like a museum what with all the creations. If a tourist comes around here he most definitely pays a visit to the museum. I have already left this home/museum as a will to the village. All I need to do is remodel it a little so they can come and see it” recalls the words of Arsen Panosyan. Sadly Arsen passed away before completing his vision and the task continues with his wife and son Paruir who open the house to visitors and show the works of Arsen while telling interesting stories about a great Sculptor.

### **“RUBEN BABAYAN” Artist - Studio**

Address: 44 Grigor Zohrap Str., village Garni  
Tel: +374 91 545690

Ruben is an internationally established artist and one of the leading lights behind the Garni Art School. His house, which is over three floors perched on the edge of the Garni Gorge is the location of his studio where visitors can see the master at work and purchase some of his paintings.

**Hayk Grigoryan Woodcarving, Alapars Village**  
+374 94 050898

### **Levons Divine Underground**

Art Museum, 9th house, 5th Street, Arinj Village  
Tel 077 178850

If you wish to escape from the noisy routine of life, you need only visit the village of Arinj, and ask for Lyova (Levon) Arakelyan's house. Every single man here old or young will willingly accompany you to this handmade unique cave of the 21st Century that has attracted already the attentions of 40,000 visitors, not only from Armenia, but also from the US, Poland, Germany, Iran, Japan, Israel and many other countries. Wonders lie on the other side of the gates to Arakelyan's simple and nondescript house. The gentle 64-year-old cave-maker with smiling eyes opens the heavy iron handled door of his 'temple' and leads you into an underground world of his own creation. Stairs carved in the grey basalt lead down from our surface life to a depth of 21 meters (equal to a 7-story building) and an underground world. After 80 stairs you find yourself in a round hall with decorated alcoves, then on to another room with columns, before entering a hall that calls to mind the interior of a church. The atmosphere of mysterious silence underground and the coolness of the carved stone gives an unusual sense of peace. You feel as if you have ascended rather than descended from the surface of the earth. Arakelyan hasn't put down his cutter and hammer for 20 years. He says: “I do not want to go out from here; this seems to be like my space, my spiritual life that is fully separate from the secular world and its problems.” He has removed 450 trucks of soil and stones from here, used more than 20 cutters and hammers, and gone through innumerable pairs of shoes and clothes that Arakelyan's wife now preserves to show in the museum in the future.



## MUSEUM OF ARMENIAN AND RUSSIAN PEOPLES' FRIENDSHIP

Barekamutyan Sq., Abovyan

Tel +374-222-21524

This fascinating museum is a testament to the enduring fraternal links between the Russian and Armenian peoples.

### Other attractive sites:

**Aramus village,**

“**Kanach Heqiat**” St. Hakob Church – 1867 y., **St. Mariam Astvatsatsin**, near the graveyard

**Argel village**

**Archeological site**, Caves – Pre-human dwelling place which is approximately. 30,000 years old. Archeologist – Benik Yeritsyan

**Ancient tomb field**, AGZBIR Church, Half ruined from 5th century

**Arzakan village:**

**St. Mariam Church**, Though it is half ruined, it still has a glorious view

**Aragyugh village:**

**St Karapet Church**, **St. Astvatsatsin**, **Tukh Manuk Chapel**,

**Alapars village: St. Vardan Church**, **St. Mariam Astvatsatsin Church**,

**Alapars village**, **Tukh Manuk Chapel** – 5th century,

**Solak village:**

**St. Astvatsatsin Church** – 1820 y., **Tukh Manuk** and **St. Hovhannes Shrine**,

**Shek Avetaran Shrine**, **Hmail Shrine**, **Very old village house**,

+374 94 347184 Grandma Emma

**Marmarik village**

**St. Hovhannes Church** 9th century

**Meghradzor village**

**St. Astvatsatsin Church Complex**, **Medieval Fortress** and **graveyard**

**Hanqavan:**

**Greek Catholic Church**







## 5. Potential Niche Markets

### 5.1 Nature and Wildlife Tourism

The Khosrov Reserve is the largest national park in Armenia and contains an impressive array of flora and fauna in a dramatic landscape setting. Visitors to this park are unfortunately scarce, in fact this year there were less than 2000 guests. This in spite of the fact that a new fully equipped residential visitor's centre and camp site have recently been constructed with international support. In spite of the very high quality of visitor facilities arrivals appear to be constrained by a shortage of trained rangers necessary to escort visitors through this wilderness area.

Activities in the Reserve are supported by the Sunchild Foundation and the Caucasus Wildlife Refuge. Although based in Urtsadzor in Ararat where they run an Eco Training Centre the Foundation also offers a number of activities through the Garni Khosrov Visitors Centre. This includes overnight hiking and horse riding tours through the Khosrov reserve.



### 5.2 Extreme Sports Tourism

The rural areas of the Marz have considerable potential for the development of adventure tourism activities, in particular the mountainous areas that constitute the western portion of the province. Excluding the Khosrov State Reserve protected area the most promising area for the development of adventure tourism activities would appear to lie in on the ski slopes of Tzaghkadzor and in the Garni Gorge.

The development of the mountains around Tzaghkadzor for adventure-based activities of the summer period would be suitable for the development of a number of extreme sports activities, such as mountain biking and 'Iron Man' strength and endurance events. In addition the gentle nursery ski slopes would be suitable for offering 'zorbing' a new activity which involves hill descents for participants inside an inflatable transparent sphere.

The spectacular topography of the Garni Gorge with its sheer cliffs plunging down to the river below offers the potential to develop a different offer of extreme sports activities centred on Garni. Such activities as bungee jumping and zip lining could be developed here, capitalising on the stunning vistas and precipitous cliffs of the Azat River Gorge.



### 5.3 Gambling Tourism

There are a numbers of gambling establishments in Kotayk although, with the exception of the Shangri La outside Abovyan, they are relatively modest in scale and limited in the breadth of their entertainment offer.

### 5.4 Epicurean or Food Tourism

Culinary tourism or food tourism, sometimes known as ‘taste trekking’, is experiencing the cuisine of the country, region or area, and is now considered a vital component of the tourism experience. Dining is a well-established core activity for tourists, coming after transport and accommodation in expenditure ranking.

Armenia has a rich and ancient culinary tradition as well as exceptionally high quality organic produce, increasing the number of the health-conscious western consumers. In Kotayk efforts should be made to identify regional produce and recipes to further incorporate it into the tourists’ experience.

### 5.5 Arts and Crafts Tourism

The Marz has a considerable number of artists and traditional craftsmen notably, carpet makers, painters, potters and sculptors who practice their art in a number of locations in Ararat. Not only are the studios of these craftsmen interesting additions to the tourism itinerary but they also have the potential to host residential teaching courses for tourist or city dwellers.



## 5.6 Spas

### General

With its majestic mountains and pure waters Kotayk has long been a centre of health tourism capitalizing on a range of mineral water sources and clean mountain air to offer a range of wellness and medical treatments. First established during the Soviet-era a number of spa centres were established in the province, in more recent years, with the emergence of an affluent middle class and in line with international trends there has been a strong move towards the development of lifestyle or ‘wellness’ centres. Some of the spa destinations in Kotayk are set out in the following section.



### Arzni Sanatorium

The Arzni Sanatorium is located in the village of Arzni to the northwest of Abovyan at an altitude of 1250 metres above sea level. The resort, which was established in 1969, offers spa treatments, leisure and entertainment activities, as well as business meetings. The main therapeutic attractions of the resort are its carbonic sodium chloride carbonate waters, as well as the local climatic conditions of the mountain region.

The Arzni resort offers baths with Arzni mineral water, pine baths, clay therapy, hydrotherapy, inhalation and oxygen therapy as well as acupuncture. In addition to spa and well-being treatments the resort also offers a number of medical treatments for coronary artery disease as well as treatments for the gastrointestinal tract. Leisure facilities are available in the resort area with activities such as billiards room, tennis, and chess. In addition Arzni has a mini football, basketball and volleyball grounds, and an indoor swimming pool.



## Aya Maria Wellness and Spa Resort Centre

The Aya Maria Wellness and Spa Resort is a small modern wellness centre located in the village of Dzoraghbyur, just to the north of Yerevan. This is a luxury facility offering bespoke therapy courses to wealthy urbanites and foreign tourists. The resort, which has six luxury suites offers fasting and other detox therapies, weight loss programs, yoga, psychological counseling and other activities enhancing harmony of body and mind ensuring a healthy lifestyle. Within this small complex Aya Maria provides a range of spa services including: hydrotherapies, massages, mud wrappings, body scrub, sauna, and other body care methods.



## “NICOLA INTERNATIONAL ARMENIA” AIELLO BRAND

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Factory: Armenia, 2211, Kotayk Marz, Aramus village

Tel: +374-222-62527

www.aiello.am

“Nicola International, Armenia” LLC has been operating in Armenia for more than 10 years and are mainly engaged in the olive business. The company imports high quality olives from Greece and Egypt with primary growers, processes them in their own factory, and cans them in tins and glass jars.

Nicola International is the only olive processing company located in the region operating in what is a highly competitive sector. The main brand is “Aiello” but they also offer private labeling for retail and food services with a variety of packaging options available. The products are sold in Armenia and exported to Georgia and Russia.

Though they have no tourism experience they have showed an interest in building a visitors centre, where tourists will taste the variety of AIELLO products, as well as learn about the preparation of olives.

## Proshyan Brandy Factory

2 Ashtarak Highway 2

Yerevan

Phone: +374-10-395641, +374-10-319144, +374-10-350612

The Proshyan Brandy Factory has been strengthening its position in the international and local markets for decades. Preserving the best traditions in the production of cognac and wine the Proshyan Brandy Factory keeps up with the innovations of the production of alcoholic beverages and constantly modernizes its technical facilities. Along with the technological development, the factory is constantly being updated with modern equipment used in the production of drinks. As a result of cooperation with foreign partners, the factory has radically increased its exports to Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Germany, USA, Greece, Poland, Israel, South Korea, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and the Baltic countries. Although the factory is mainly famous for its brandy, the production of wines and liqueurs plays a significant role in the company activity as well. The factory is also well-known for its original fruit wines, made from the sweet fruits of Ararat Valley.





## 6. Potential Key Attractions and Itineraries

Two key tourism development clusters have been identified, namely the areas around Garni and the Tzaghkadzor Mountain Area. The Garni Cluster is centred on the village of Garni and extends to include the northern areas of the Khosrov State Reserve, the Azat River Gorge and the site of Geghard Monastery. While the focus of this cluster is predominantly cultural and historic the area also contains significant unique nature and wildlife assets. The second cluster is centred on the Tzaghkadzor ski resort and extends over a significant mountain and encompasses a number of neighbouring settlements as well as an extensive skiing and trekking network.



### 6.1 Garni Tourism Circuit

The Garni Circuit has been formulated in order to demonstrate that within a short distance from the village of Garni there are an incredible number of sights, attractions and activities for tourists. This tight circuit may be visited by car or could equally be accomplished, albeit in a longer period, by cycle or on foot.

The proposed circuit incorporated a number of developed and potential attractions into its itinerary, including:

- Garni: Starting early in the morning enjoy a traditional Armenian breakfast at one of the hotels such as the Garni Toun perched on the edge of the precipitous Azat River Gorge. See traditional lavash bread being prepared for the meal in a tonir oven and eat as the sun rises over the Khosrov Reserve and the



Garni Temple, a temple dedicated to the sun god Mithra. Walk to the nearby temple through the picturesque village streets lined with apple orchards.

- Garni Temple: A guided tour of the Temple and Garni Fort tour the temple and learn of its origins and ancient practices before moving on to the remains of the royal summer palace and its adjoining bath house. Beyond this area, and within the walls of the Garni Fort tour the archeological site of the fort's garrison, only partially excavated and still holding many secrets of Garni millennia old history. In addition to the tour, there is also a wealth of artifacts that can be viewed in Yerevan's National Museum.
- Garni Art Centre: Moving on from the Temple, and still on foot, visit the Garni Art Centre which is located in the Village Square. This impressive centre offers visitors the opportunity to view and perhaps purchase locally produced art including paintings, tapestry and pottery, much of the items are produced by local children and resident artists, some of whom are renowned worldwide.
- Garni Gorge: In the Village Square assemble for a walk from Garni descending into the Azat River Gorge below the village where a picnic barbecue lunch should be offered beside the Azat River. Keen fishermen may be offered the opportunity to catch their own lunch from the fast flowing Azat. After lunch proceed to the entry of the Khosrov Reserve to embark on a guided jeep tour of the northern areas of the reserve.
- Khosrov Reserve: Assemble at the Garni Khosrov Visitors Centre for a briefing on the reserve and its wildlife. Particular stress is placed on the timing of this tour in the late afternoon when, along with the early morning, wildlife viewing opportunities are considered to be optimal. View abandoned villages as well as the remains of Havuts Tar Monastery. Dependent upon the season seize opportunities to incorporate wildlife and bird watching activities into the tour. Return to the Visitors Centre where motorised transport should take visitors back to overnight accommodation in Garni.
- Garni: Returning to Garni a traditional evening meal accompanied by folk music, dance and song with the opportunity of a late night excursion around floodlit Garni Temple.
- Goght: Following breakfast in Garni embark for the Village of Goght stopping to view the 'Symphony of Stones' rock formation of the wall of the Azat Gorge as well as Havuts tar Monastery
- Geghard Monastery: Stopping for lunch in a panoramic restaurant overlooking Geghard and then to the monastery in the early afternoon. Detailed guided tour of the monastery complex stopping to purchase local food specialties on the site.
- Garni: End of Day 2, return to Garni and onward to Yerevan stopping to view distant Mount Ararat if weather conditions permit







## 6.2 Tzaghkadzor Mountain Circuit

The proposed circuit incorporated a number of developed and potential attractions into its itinerary, including:

- Tzaghkadzor:
- Sports training centre:
- Ski slopes:
- Mountain Trekking: As an add-in activity suitably equipped groups could be offered mountain trekking packages, with overnight tented accommodation in expeditions of two to three nights across the mountain range to neighbouring communities such as Bjni or to Lake Aparan in Aragatsotn Province to the west.
- Kecharis Monastery:
- Bjni:
- Aghveran:
- Tzaghkadzor: End of Day 2, return to Tzaghkadzor and onward journey to Yerevan or second destination such as Garni.

For the Tzaghkadzor circuit a completely different offering could be developed for the summer and winter seasons depending on local weather conditions. A winter itinerary could, for example offer possibility of a day's skiing or ski instruction as an alternative to mountain trekking.





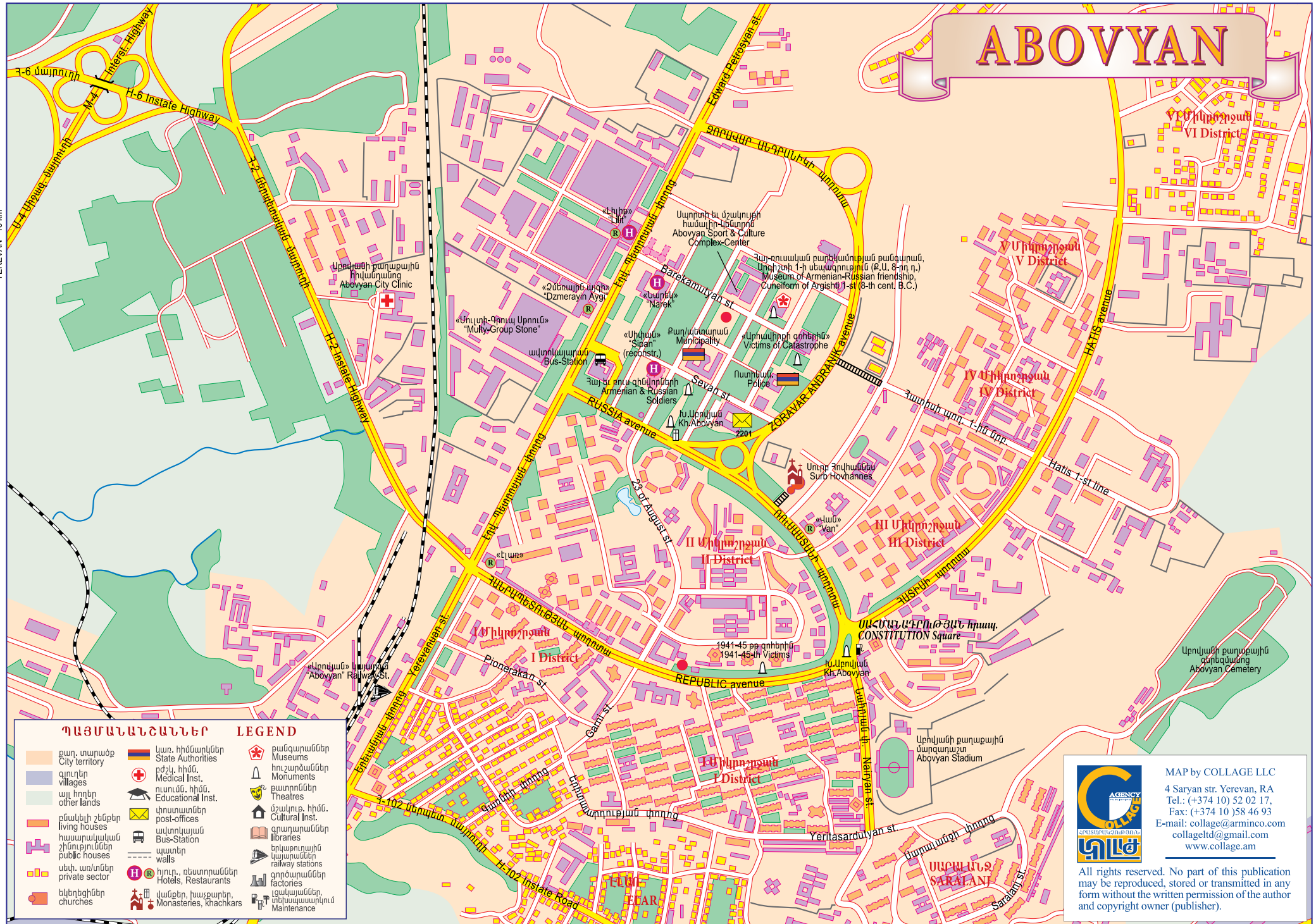




SEVAN - 45 km

YEREVAN - 16 km

# ABOVYAN



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# TZAGHKADZOR

## BRIEF INFORMATION • КРАТКАЯ ИНФОРМАЦИЯ

Distance from Yerevan — 56km/км — Расстояние из Еревана  
 Altitude — 1820-1890m/м — Высота над уровнем моря  
 Average temperature:  
 August: +18°C — +25°C Август: +18°C — +25°C  
 January: -2°C — +6°C Январь: -2°C — +6°C  
 Count. sunny days: — 280-290 days/дней — Кол. солнечных дней:  
 Snow depth of about 1 meter  
 Высота снежного покрова около 1-го метра



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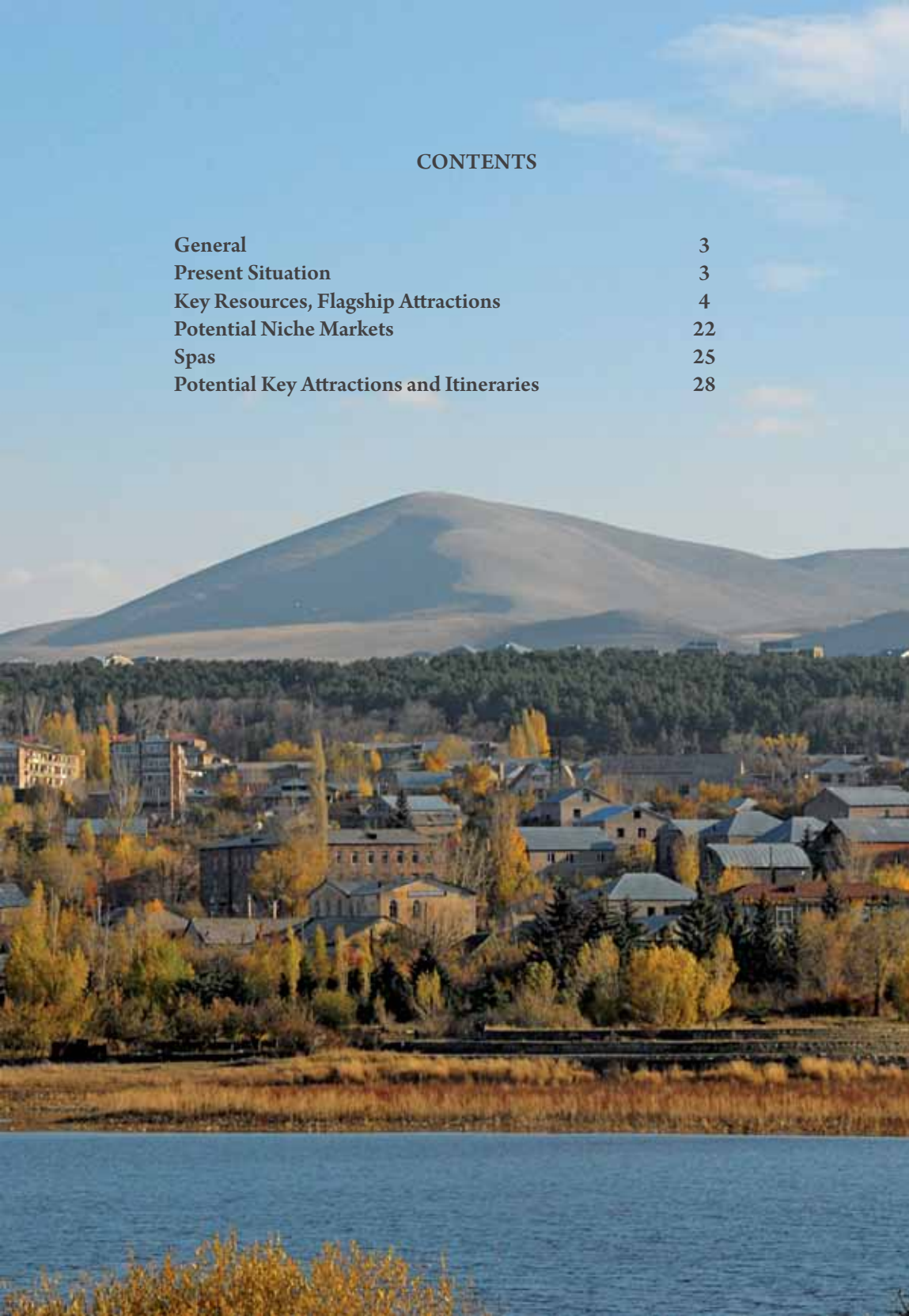
## LEGEND

- |  |                     |  |                  |
|--|---------------------|--|------------------|
|  | Municipality        |  | Rope Way         |
|  | Hotels, Rest Houses |  | Ski Slopes       |
|  | Restaurants         |  | Monuments        |
|  | Bistro, cafe        |  | Museums          |
|  | Post office         |  | Pools            |
|  | Police              |  | Public Buildings |
|  | Markets             |  |                  |



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**GUIDE BOOK**