



Armenian National Committee of Australia

Armenia and Artsakh Sites of Interest

The Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin



Located in Armenia's fourth-largest city, Vagharshapat (commonly known as Etchmiadzin), the Mother See is the spiritual centre of the Armenian people and administrative headquarters of the worldwide Armenian Apostolic Church.

It hosts the Pontifical Residence of the Catholicos as well as Armenia's mother church, the Etchmiadzin Cathedral. The construction of the Mother Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, dates back to the 4th century after Armenia became the first nation to adopt Christianity as a national religion under the auspices of St. Gregory the Illuminator and King Trdat III (or Tiridates).

The spiritual centre also contains the the Gevorkian Theological Seminary, the Christian Education Centre, an Open Air Altar and a Printing House.

To strengthen the architectural foundations of the ancient Etchmiadzin Mother Cathedral, a major renovation and reconstruction is currently underway by local and international experts.

Did you know?

According to scripture, Jesus Christ appeared to Saint Gregory the Illuminator in a vision, requesting that a cathedral be built within the ancient city. In the vision, Jesus Christ showed the exact spot where the proposed structure should lie, striking the ground with a golden hammer in His hands. The cathedral was dedicated in turn to the Virgin Mary, and aptly named "Etchmiadzin" or "the descent (eetchnel) of the only begotten (miadzin)".



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Tsitsernakaberd



On a hilltop overlooking much of the city and Mt. Ararat is the dramatic Monument dedicated to the Armenian Genocide. Built in 1967, each year on April 24 Remembrance Day thousands of Armenians gather at the memorial to commemorate the victims of the genocide.

Over the years, a wide range of world leaders, politicians, artists, musicians, athletes and religious figures from around the world have visited the memorial, laying wreaths at the eternal flame and planting trees in tribute to the victims of the Armenian Genocide.

The Tsitsernakaberd complex includes the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, first opened in 1995. The Republic of Armenia has turned visiting the museum into part of state protocol and many official foreign delegations have already visited the museum. These delegations have included Pope John Paul II, Pope Francis, President Vladimir Putin, Presidents of France Jacques Chirac, Francois Hollande and Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other well-known public and political figures.

Did you know?

The 44-metre stele symbolises the national rebirth of Armenians, while the twelve slabs positioned in a circle surrounding the eternal flame represent the twelve lost Armenian provinces in present-day Turkey. Along the park at the memorial, there is a 100-metre wall with the names of towns and villages where massacres and deportations are known to have taken place.

The delegation will have the opportunity to lay wreaths at the eternal flame, plant trees in permanent tribute to the victims of the Armenian Genocide and take a guided tour of the newly-renovated Armenian Genocide Museum and Institute. The only Federal Australian politicians to plant a tree at Tsitsernakaberd were Joe Hockey and Joel Fitzgibbon.



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Tumo



The Tumo Centre for Creative Technologies is a free of charge digital media learning centre established in 2011 in Yerevan.

There are now four TUMO centres in Armenia — Yerevan Dilijan, Gyumri, and Stepanakert — and two international centres in Beirut and Paris. More are on the way in Koghb, Masis and other locations in Armenia and abroad.

The centre has provided thousands of students aged 12–18 an open environment where they can use the latest in digital tools, learn from media professionals, and explore the intersection of technology and art.

Did you know?

On her visit to Tumo last year, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel said: "I'm shocked in a real positive way. This Tumo is not for Armenia only. It's international. It's a philosophy."



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Temple of Garni



Commonly referred to as Garni, the temple is the only standing Greco-Roman pagan temple in Armenia, which was dedicated to the Armenian sun god Mihr. It was built in the 1st century and is the best-known structure and symbol from pre-Christian Armenia.

Did you know?

The temple was commissioned by King Tiridates in the 1st century. Tiridates was a devout Zoroastrian with a particular curiosity for Roman culture as recorded by Roman historian Tacitus. It is thought Tiridates was inspired to construct the Temple following a visit to Rome where he met with Emperor Nero, and sought to erect the temple as a monument to the ties between the Roman and Armenian civilisations.



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The Geghard Monastery



This UNESCO World Heritage Site is a medieval monastery in the Kotayk province of Armenia.

The complex of medieval buildings is set into a landscape of great natural beauty, at the entrance to the Azat Valley. High cliffs from the northern side surround the complex while the defensive wall encircles the rest. While the main monastic chapel was completed in the 13th century AD, the complex was founded in the 4th century by St Gregory the Illuminator at the site of a sacred spring inside the cave.

Did you know?

The monastery of Geghard contains a number of churches and tombs, most of them cut into the rock, which illustrate the very peak of Armenian medieval architecture. Thus, its previous name was Ayrivank, meaning “the Monastery of the Cave”.



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Yerevan Ararat Brandy Factory Tour



Founded in 1887, this company is most famous for producing Ararat Brandy, a world-renowned cognac which tops many lists, including “Product of the Year” in Russia for several consecutive years.

Did you know?

Armenian Brandy was Winston Churchill’s brandy of choice. It is reported that 400 bottles of brandy were shipped to Churchill annually, and to honour this legacy, Russian President Vladimir Putin more recently gifted then-UK Prime Minister David Cameron with Armenian Brandy.



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Megerian Carpets



The Megerian family, originally from Armenia and based in New York, have been involved in the buying, selling, cleaning and repair of fine hand-made rugs and tapestries for over 100 years. Megerian Rugs was fundamental in revitalising traditional Armenian rug weaving and Armenian artistic creativity after the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

Initially, Megerian Rugs' focus was solely on selling new and antique rugs. Over time, however, they began to apply their extensive understanding of natural dyes, wool characteristics and traditional Armenian knotting techniques to restore any existing antiques.

Megerian rugs also operates 22 rug weaving facilities within Armenia with thousands of employees. In addition to its 5th Avenue location in New York City, the company has showrooms in Italy, France, Switzerland and Germany.

Did you know?

Conan O'Brien, Pope Francis, Charles Aznavour, Kim and Khloe Kardashian have all recently visited Megerian Carpets in Yerevan.



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Grand Candy



Grand Candy is the largest Armenian confectionary producer, with a 40% share of the Armenian confectionary market. The company is also the largest food producer in Armenia, and the only South Caucasian processor of cocoa beans.

Based in Yerevan, the company was founded in 2000 by Hrant Vardanyan. The company has its own wholesale retail network of over 270 trucks, eight regional warehouses, and 29 brand stores in addition to a trading network which supplies at total of 8450 stores.

Did you know?

In 2010, the company set a Guinness World Record in producing the largest chocolate bar ever - Armenia's first industrial record.



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New Yerevan Park



The New Yerevan Park, connecting City Hall with Republic Square, reopened in 2019 following two-years of construction to transform this once neglected park into a vibrant green space.

The park was a gift to the municipality from the Vardanyan brothers, the Montreal-based family behind Grand Candy.

The park was dedicated to the 2800th anniversary of Yerevan, which was celebrated in October 2018.



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Khachkar



A khachkar, also known as an Armenian cross-stone, is a carved rock and are characteristic of Medieval Christian Armenian art.

About 40,000 khachkars survive today. Most of them are free-standing, though they can be built into monastery walls. Many khachkars is carved to tell a story from the bible.

A large portion of khachkars, which were created in historic Armenia and surrounding regions, in modern times have become the possession of Turkey, Azerbaijan, and partly Georgia and Iran. As a result of systematic eradication of khachkars in Turkey, today only a few examples survive. Unfortunately these few survivors are not cataloged and properly photographed.

Did you know?

The oldest khachkar with a known date was carved in 879. Erected in Garni, it is dedicated to queen Katranide I, the wife of king Ashot I Bagratuni.

Since 2010, khachkars, their symbolism and craftsmanship are inscribed in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Despite their protected status, in the early 2000s, Azerbaijan destroyed thousands of khachkars in Nakhchivan, a historically Armenian region that underwent ethnic cleansing at the hands of Azerbaijan following its incorporation in the Soviet Union.



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Republic Square



Republic Square, known locally as “Hraparak” is the central town square in Yerevan.

The square is surrounded by five major buildings in the neoclassical style with extensive use of Armenian motifs. This architectural ensemble includes the Government House, the History Museum and the National Gallery, Armenia Marriott Hotel and the ministries of Foreign Affairs and Transport and Communications.

As Armenia's and the city's "most important civic space", Republic Square was the main site of demonstrations during the 2018 Velvet Revolution.

Did you know?

During the Soviet period, it was called Lenin Square and a statue of Vladimir Lenin stood at the square. After Armenia's independence, Lenin's statue was removed and the square was renamed.



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Opera House



Armenian National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet named after Alexander Spendiaryan, and simply known by locals as “Opera”, was officially opened in Yerevan on 20 January 1933.

Being located right in the heart of Yerevan, this building is considered to be the symbol of music and culture, as exhibited by its luxury and classic beauty.

In front of the building, there is the area called Azatutyun Square where you can see two beautiful statues. The first one is the statue of great Armenian poet Hovhannes Tumanian, the second statue is Aleksandr Spendarian.

The Square is a favorite spot of Armenians, not only because of the Opera’s cultural significance, but also the vibrant atmosphere in the cafes and restaurants it is surrounded by.



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Yerevan Cascade



The Cascade is a monumental stairway in northern downtown Yerevan.

The Cascade directly faces Mount Ararat, offering unobstructed views of the mountains that have featured so prominently in Armenian history and mythology, and a sweeping panorama of Yerevan.

Construction of the Cascade Complex began in 1971 and was partially completed in 1980. The second phase of the complex began in 2002 and was completed in 2009, with planned extensions to come.

The complex's patron is Armenian-American magnate Gerard Cafesjian who founded the Cafesjian Museum Foundation and the Cafesjian Center for the Arts, located underneath the Cascade Complex.

Over one million people have visited the centre annually since its opening in 2009.



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Khor Virap



Khor Virap, which translates to “deep dungeon”, is a monastery located in the Ararat plain near the current Armenian-Turkish borders, with a stunning vantage for viewing Mount Ararat.

Khor Virap’s notoriety as a site for pilgrimage is attributed to the fact that Gregory the Illuminator was initially imprisoned here for about 14 years by King Tiridates (Trdat) III of Armenia.

Did you know?

Scripture has it that Gregory the Illuminator was kept alive by a Christian woman from a neighbouring village, who dropped fresh-baked loaves of bread into the pit for thirteen years.

That was until the King fell ill and was convinced by his sister (via a prophetic dream) to release Gregory, who eventually cured him.

This was all King Trdat III needed to convert, and in 301 Armenia became the first official Christian nation in the world, while “Grigor” became the revered Gregory the Illuminator.



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Areni



Areni is a village in the southern province of Vayots Dzor known for being the principal wine-making region of Armenia, as well as one of the most archaeologically significant regions in the country.

The Areni-1 Cave has provided an invaluable insight into ancient Armenian civilisation. The Early Bronze Age discoveries, dating back to 5000BC, has included human bones and the oldest preserved brain tissue, as well as Bronze Age artifacts dating to 4200BC including the world's oldest leather shoe and significant agricultural and horticultural discoveries.

Those discoveries also included a 6100 year old winery. Continuing this ancient tradition of wine-making, Areni continues to be the centre of the Armenian wine industry. In fact, the grape seeds discovered in the Areni caves are still used in Armenian winemaking today.

Did you know?

In 2017, Armenian wine companies were awarded 23 medals – 10 gold and 13 silver – at the Mundus Vini Grand International Wine Awards in Neustadt, Germany.



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Tatev Monastery



Tatev Monastery is a 9th century historical monument. It is one of the oldest and most famous monastery complexes in Armenia.

During medieval times Tatev Monastery was a vital scholastic, enlightenment and spiritual center and played a singular role in the country's history.

Restoration of the monastery, re-establishing its educational legacy and reviving monastic life at Tatev is one of the main goals of Tatev Revival Program, a part of which is Wings of Tatev aerial tramway.



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The Wings of Tatev



The Wings of Tatev is an aerial tramway located in the southern province of Syunik.

The 5.7km cableway between Halidzor and Tatev monastery, crossing the Vorotan gorge, is the longest reversible aerial tramway in the world.

The engineering marvel was constructed as part of the *Tatev Revival Project* and funded by Ruben Vardanyan's IDeA Foundation.

Did you know?

The project, part of an effort to revitalise Armenian regional economies, has seen over 650,000 passengers since opening in 2010.

It has supported the operation of more than 20 new bed & breakfasts, hotels, restaurants and cafes in the region, and hundreds of seasonal jobs providing employment to the local community.



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Lake Sevan



Set 1900m above sea level, the great blue expanse of Lake Sevan covers 940 sq km, and is 80km long by 30km at its widest.

The largest lake in the Caucasus, it's also one of the largest freshwater high-altitude lakes in the world. The lake supports a healthy fish population, including the endangered ishkhhan (prince trout).

Located in Armenia's east, Lake Sevan is a large, high-altitude lake known for its beaches.

This area is also home to an array of ancient ruins, including monasteries, cemeteries with khachkar memorials and fortresses built by the Urartian civilisation in the 8th century BC.

Did you know?

The Sevanavank Monastery on the shore of Lake Sevan was founded in 874 by Princess Mariam (daughter of future King Ashot). Being a woman in the 9th century, she was not allowed to watch sermons in the church, therefore made a small window in the corner of the room from which she secretly participated.



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American University of Armenia



The American University of Armenia (AUA) was founded in 1991 by the University of California (UC) in collaboration with the Armenian General Benevolent Union and the Armenian government.

As of 2015, it was the first and only U.S.-accredited institution in the former Soviet Union that provides undergraduate and graduate education. Servicing over 1800 students, the AUA offers master's degrees in nine fields. The undergraduate program, first introduced in 2013, offers bachelor's degrees in 5 fields.

In addition to its academic services, the AUA also accommodates research centres and incubators, many of which have driven Armenia's booming start-up tech economy.