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7+3 days Classical Tour in Armenia

Day 1

You are met by your tour guide in your hotel lobby who will provide you with a pre-tour briefing, followed by an invitation to board one of our comfortable buses/minibuses and the city tour is commenced. The tour will start with a drive through our capital city, Yerevan, with various stops along the way allowing you to have a better understanding of day-to-day life in Yerevan. The city is geographically located over various terrains, giving you the opportunity to virtually experience aerial views from several points. The magnificent view of Mount Ararat is a perpetual part of the skyline. Yerevan's atmosphere has been described to be very much alive and warm. One of the stops included within the city tour is the "Matenadaran", which houses over 17,000 ancient and medieval manuscripts, making it the significant bearer of one of the largest collections in the world. Not to be missed is the Food Market of Yerevan, giving you the opportunity to wander through the aisles of locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables. Tourists enjoy Yerevan's vibrant nightlife with an abundance of outdoor cafés filled with eclectic people and the sounds of live music. (50 km/6 hours)

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan **Meals:** B, L

Day 2

After a relaxed breakfast at the hotel, the second day's tour involved a drive to the scenic canyon of the Azat River. The 7th century Geghard Cave Monastery is located deep at the bottom of the canyon and is listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The towering cliffs of its surrounds are part of the monastery's complex which is both carved from the adjacent mountain as well as partially built from local basalt stones. Once inside the monastery, its fascinating labyrinth of chambers are illusive to one's orientation within the complex. Following on from the tour of the monastery, the tour is continued by bus to Garni village, where the Hellenistic-inspired "Garni" temple lies. Built in 66 AD, Garni was a temple dedicated to the Armenian God of the Sun "Mitra". Garni's complex also consists of a royal bath which exhibits a fascinating hypocaust along with a well preserved original mosaic tiling. Lunch is enjoyed in the courtyard of a family in Garni, consisting of local traditional cuisine. A visit to the Museum of Armenian History is the final stopping point in conclusion to the day's tour. A permanent exhibition not to be missed, it will take you through a fascinating journey through the rich history of Armenia. Starting from the oldest shoe in the world discovered in southern Armenia, through the Stone, Bronze and Metal ages, Hellenistic through to Persian and Ottoman rule, and finally the first Republic and Soviet eras until modern day Armenia. (100 km/6 hours)

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan **Meals:** B, L

Day 3

We head to Lake Sevan, the "Blue Pearl of Armenia" and one of the highest freshwater lakes in the world at 1,900 meters above sea level. The stunning hilltop view of the azure lake framed by the surrounding mountains makes you feel inspired yet powerless by the same token. Lunch is enjoyed in a restaurant overlooking the lake with local lake-caught fish on the menu. After lunch, the journey continues by bus to Dilijan, a lush town known for its spa and retreat style hospitality. The most spectacular aspect of the drive is the landscape and changing weather conditions once you pass through a landmark tunnel. A stroll in the historical district on Sharmbeyan Street lets you experience the atmosphere of the old town as it

was in the 19th century. The imaginatively carved balconies so typical of 19th century Dilijan display the region's historical love for fine woodwork. In these streets of Dilijan, visitors are immersed in the finest culture of the past. Craftsmen's shops are filled with handmade jewelry, carpets, ceramics and wood carvings. Your hotel in Dilijan awaits with various amenities for your evening leisure. (120 km/5 hours)

Overnight: *Hotel in Dilijan* **Meals:** B, D

Day 4

After fresh coffee and a scrumptious breakfast, the day starts with a journey to the "Lori" region of Armenia, via Vanadzor, Armenia's third largest industrial city. The tour consists of a visit to the "Haghpat" Monastery and "Sanahin" Medieval University, which are both listed by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites. They are both outstanding masterpiece examples of Armenian medieval architecture.

Marvel at the intricate reliefs showing biblical scenes and characters whilst relishing the captivating old auditorium of Sanahin University. Both monasteries were important centers for scholars and many famous manuscripts were written here in the Middle Ages. In addition to the many architectural attractions, the Lori region delivers beautiful landscapes of lush forests, the rocky deep canyon of Debed river and quaint little villages scattered along the canyon. Lunch is served in a modest local restaurant where Armenian traditional dishes are introduced to the palate. (180 km/ 7 hours)

Overnight: *Hotel Dzoraget or in Haghpat* **Meals:** B, L

Day 5

Upon the journey returning to Yerevan, allow yourself to appreciate the view from the Lori highlands, where the nearby Pambak pass brings astounding views over the quadruple-peaked Mount Aragats, the highest mountain in Armenia peaking at an altitude of 4,095 meters above sea level. Freshen yourself up at our first stop in the city of Aparan, where one can find one of the most famous bakeries in Armenia known for their freshly baked bread and cookies. Following on from the stop in Aparan is a drive to Amberd Fortress which stands high up on a mountaintop encompassed by two deep canyons. The tour progresses on to stop at the "Saghmosavank" Monastery, located atop the yawning gorge carved by the Kasakh River. With nightfall nearing, we approach your hotel in Yerevan for rest, dinner and the evening at your leisure. (190 km/7 hours)

Overnight: *Hotel in Yerevan* **Meals:** B, D

Day 6

Day 6 begins with a visit to the Genocide Memorial, a solemn reminder of the first genocide of the 20th century. Following on from some time at the Museum by the Genocide Memorial, the tour progresses by bus to the Holy See of Etchmiadzin, the religious center of all Armenians around the world. The Catholicos, Supreme Patriarch of the Armenian Apostolic Church is based and resides in this complex, along the main Cathedral of Etchmiadzin, the first official Christian church in the world. After lunch in the city of Etchmiadzin, "Zvartnots" Temple is en route back to Yerevan, ruins of a stunning three story rotunda of the 7th century. Zvartnots Temple fell victim to a devastating earthquake just a few decades after its construction. (60 km/6 hours)

Overnight: *Hotel in Yerevan* **Meals:** B, L

Day 7

A free day allows one to enjoy their time in Yerevan visiting souvenir shops, outdoor cafes or some fine jazz clubs at one's liberty. Should this day of leisure fall upon a weekend, one should be lucky enough to visit Vernisaj, an art and craft market offering both souvenirs and a showcase of local Armenian craftsmanship for purchase or perusal. Another highlight of the tour is the opportunity to enjoy traditional Eastern Armenian cuisine at a local restaurant on the last evening before the conclusion of the tour.

Overnight: *Hotel in Yerevan* **Meals:** B, D

South Extension (3days)

Day 8

After breakfast, the tour begins with a journey to the south of Armenia. Roughly 40 km south of Yerevan lies “KhorVirap”, a historic site located amidst the Ararat Valley. It was at this very location that GrigorLusavorich was sentenced to death by Kind Trdat for preaching Christianity in Armenia during the 3rd century. Nowhere else in Armenia does the biblical mountain of Ararat seem within arm’ reach than at the site of KhorVirap on a clear day. “Noravank” Monastery is the next stop. A drive through a narrow canyon is in order to reach the valley of red rocks. This region of Armenia has been made famous for its unique grape sort “Areni” hence where “Areni” wines are derived from. One cannot pass through without a stop at a local winery for a tasting of some locally produced, exquisite wines. Continuing on south-east, a visit to “Qarahunge”, a 6,000yearold observatory, also known as the "Armenian Stonehenge is in order. In conclusion to the day’s tour, a visit is made to the town of Goris, encompassed by rocky caves and mountains. (280 km/ 9 hours)

Overnight: B&B in Goris **Meals:** Full board

Day 9

This day is dedicated to the pearl of Armenian Medieval architecture, the Monastery and University of Tatev. Thanks to its strategic location,Tatevwas unreachable for centuries by foes of the Armenian Kingdomand thus was relatively well preserved.Here, one has a chance to ride on the longest cable car in the world which flies over the 320 meter-deep Vorotan River Canyon (optional). On the way back a drive down to the bottom of Vorotan Canyon awaits and a passing over the “Devil’s Bridge”. The next stop is in the resort town of Jermuk,famous for its hot mineral springs andscenic landscape. After lunch one can enjoy a walk through the “Arpa” River Canyon to admire the Jermuk Waterfall. (180 km/ 7 hours)

Overnight: Hotel in Jermuk **Meals:** Full board

Day 10

After an early breakfast, we move through a section of the Great Silk Road towards the Selim Pass. On our way one will have a chance to visit the 14th century Selim Caravanserai - one of the most well preserved hostels along the ancient Great Silk Road. From here, one can enjoy the magnificent view over the wide valley and the surrounding mountains. Only after a few kilometers the landscape changes dramatically and one can immerse themselves in the surrounds of Lake Sevan, the blue pearl of Armenia, sitting at 1,900 meters above sea level. After some time is enjoyed through the Sevan region, the next stop is the resort town of Tsakhkadzor. This picturesque town situated amidst a lush, green gorge is surrounded by mountainous forests. In winter time, this town becomes the ever-so-popular ski resort in Armenia. One has the option to take the chairlift to the mountaintop and taste locally brewed Armenian beer, all whilst enjoying the beautiful landscape from atop. Tsakhkadzor is an excellent place for your lunch and leisure prior to one’s return to Yerevan. (310 km/ 8 hours)

Overnight: Hotel in Yerevan **Meals:** Full board