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9 Day Classical Tour in Armenia & Karabagh

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

The day begins with a visit 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, the bus takes you to the Genocide Memorial, a solemn reminder of the first genocide of the 20th century. You will continue to your hotel in Yerevan for some rest and have free evening in Yerevan for your own explorations. (60 km/6 hours)

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

Day 3

After breakfast you will head to Karabagh, en route visiting some not to be missed sites 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 Grigor Lusavorich was sentenced to death by King Trdat for preaching Christianity in Armenia during the 3rd century. Nowhere else in Armenia does the biblical mountain of Ararat seem within arm's 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 6,000-year old observatory, also

known as the "Armenian Stonehenge" is in order. In conclusion to the day's tour, a visit is made to Stepanakert – the capital of Karabagh. (365 km/11 hours)

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

Day 4

This day is dedicated to Nagorno Karabagh exploration, you will head to Vank village where Gandzasar monastery is situated. In translation from Armenian it means Treasure Mountain and supposed there are treasures hidden here on the hill, there is another opinion that the treasure is the monastery itself as architectural complex. The first evidence about Gandzasar Monastery goes back to 10th century, and today the monastery is the see of Catholicos of Nagorno Karabagh. Your next stop is city Shushi, where you'll have a city tour. The fortress of Shoushi was built in the 8th century, having good location city enlarged and later became important stop in caravans' route. Shushi was one of the biggest and most important cities in the South Caucasus in the 19th century. (150 km/7 hours)

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

Day 5

This day is dedicated to the pearl of Armenian Medieval architecture, the Monastery and University of Tatev. Thanks to its strategic location, Tatev was unreachable for centuries by foes of the Armenian Kingdom and 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 and scenic landscape. After lunch one can enjoy a walk through the "Arpa" River Canyon to admire the Jermuk Waterfall. You will continue your way to Yerevan for rest and overnight. (420 km/11 hours)

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

Day 6

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. (85 km/ 6 hours)

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

Day 7

This day you will head to Lake Sevan, the “Blue Pearl of Armenia” and one of the highest freshwater lakes in the world at about 2000 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 Sharambeyan 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’ shops are filled with handmade jewelry, carpets, ceramics and wood carvings. You will continue to Hagartsin Monastery dramatically located among picturesque mountains covered with dense forest. In the evening you be back to Yerevan for rest and overnight. *(Total drive 230 km / 8 hours)*

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

Day 8

After breakfast at hotel you will head to Saghmosavank Monastery located atop the yawning gorge carved by the Kasakh River. Amazing view on the Canyon opens in front of you once you reach the monastery. Your next stop on the trip will be the monument of Armenian Alphabet which was opened on 2005 to celebrate the 1600th anniversary of alphabet foundation. You will continue uphill to the Amberd fortress proudly standing on the foot of Mount Aragats encompassed by two deep canyons (2300 meters above sea). In the evening you will be back to your hotel in Yerevan. *(Total drive 130 km / 6 hours)*

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

Day 9

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*

Day 10

Departure day.