

Itinerary – Chili Reisen Spiritual Armenia 2017

Brief Itinerary

Day 1. Departure

Day 2. Arrival in Yerevan. Khor-Virap.

Day 3. Yerevan City Tour

Day 4. Talin / Mastara / Gyumri / Marmashen

Day 5. Gyumri / Sanahin / Haghpat

Day 6. Haghpat / Haghartsin / Goshavank / Sevan / Tsakhkadzor

Day 7. Tsakhkadzor / Noraduz / Selim / Sisian

Day 8. Sisian / Tatev / Khndzoresk / Goris

Day 9. Goris / Noravank / Yerevan

Day 10. Garni / Geghard / Tstitsernakaberd

Day 11. Yerevan / Echmiadzine / Zvartnots

Day 12. Check-out from the hotel, transfer to the airport & departure.

Duration of the tour: 12 Days / 11 Nights

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1. – Departure.

Day 2. - Arrival in Yerevan. Khor-Virap

Early morning arrival in Yerevan. Meeting and assistance at the Airport and transfer to the hotel. Check-in.

After breakfast excursion to **Khor-Virap** – one of the holiest sites in Armenia, the site of the underground pit where Gregory the Illuminator was imprisoned before converting King Tiridat III to Christianity. Monastery has a spectacular view to a biblical Mountain of Ararat.

Back to Yerevan.

Lunch at a local restaurant. Rest.

Overnight: Yerevan

In the second half of the day meeting at Armenian Catholic Center in Yerevan.

Day 3. – Yerevan City Tour

Sightseeing tour of Yerevan along major avenues and squares of the city. Visiting most popular public buildings and below museums:

Matenadaran Museum - The Matenadaran is one of the richest book-depositories in the world. Its collection of about 17000 manuscripts includes almost all the areas of ancient and medieval Armenian culture and sciences as well as manuscripts in Arabic, Persian, Greek, Syrian, Latin, Ethiopian, Indian, Japanese and others. Since 1998 Matenadaran was included in the register of **“Memory of the World” UNESCO program.**

The History Museum of Armenia was founded in 1919 as Ethnographic-Anthropological Museum-Library. It is located in the very heart of Yerevan - on the Republic Square. The museum presents the rare traces of cultural interrelations with the ancient eastern countries in the Armenian Highland: Egypt, Mitanni, the Hittite kingdom, Assyria, Iran, the Seleucid state, Rome and the Byzantine Empire. It also owns an enormous and exceptional collection of the 3rd-2nd millennia BC bronze specimens, which belong to the world treasury of masterpieces. The History Museum of Armenia possesses the sumptuous historical-cultural heritage of Urartu, the powerful Armenian state in the Ancient East: exceptional cuneiform inscriptions, bronze statuettes, wall-paintings, painted ceramics, arms and weapons with sculptural ornamentation, unique specimens of gold, silver and bone.

Overnight: Yerevan

In the evening meeting at the Congregation of the Armenian Sisters of the Immaculate Conception - Working in Armenia Following the Devastating 1988 Earthquake.

Day 4. – Yerevan / Talin / Mastara / Gyumri / Marmashen

After breakfast visit to **Gyumri** – the second largest city of the country. This city is located at the North-West of Armenia. In 1988 the dreadful earthquake destroyed more than 80% of the city. Since that a number of virtuous people from the all of the world were focused on Gyumri and help to rebuild. And now, the citizens fill hope and strongly believe that they will have in coming future restored and beautiful New City.

On the way to Gyumri we can visit the **Talin cathedral and Mastara church** - one of the oldest settlements of this region.

Proceed from Gyumri to **Marmashen** - built between 986 and 1029 by Prince Vahram Pahlavuni. With an umbrella shaped cupola, the church is constructed of huge stones, some of which are two meters high. The only entrance is on the west. Like the exterior walls, the drum of the cupola is adorned with half columns, which produce a beautiful decorative effect.

Overnight in Gyumri. Dinner and rest.

Overnight: Gyumri

Day 5. – Gyumri / Haghpat / Sanahin / Haghpat

Breakfast at the hotel. Check-out and proceed forth to the Northern Armenia.

Reach the Northern part of Armenia famous for its breathtaking nature: thick forested mountains, pure, wild rivers and various fauna. Here in the very heart of nature two monastic complexes are founded: **Sanahin and Haghpat** - (10th to 13th century) which represent the highest flowering of religious architecture in Medieval Armenia. Both monuments are included in the **UNESCO World Heritage List**. During visiting the above mentioned sites we will have lunch in the town of Alaverdi.

Check-in at the hotel in Haghpat. Dinner and rest.

Overnight: Haghpat

Near Gyumri meeting and mess at the Catholic Center.

Day 6. – Haghpat / Haghartsin / Goshavank / Sevan / Tsakhkadzor

Breakfast at the hotel, check-out.

Sunday Mess in Haghpat or Haghartsin and meeting with German speaking priest in Haghartsin

Haghartsin & Goshavank Monasteries - built in the 13th century AD with lavish decorations of carved stone. The monastery complexes are situated in an impressive forest of oak trees located very close to the city of Dilijan mostly famous for its sanatoriums and forested mountains.

Lake Sevan (located at 60 km from Yerevan) – the largest lake in Armenia and one of the largest high-altitude lakes in the world. Its surface is at an altitude of 1,950 m above sea level. Along with Lake Van and Lake Urmia, Sevan was one of the three great lakes of the Armenian Kingdom, referred to as the seas of Armenia, and it is the only one within today's Republic of Armenia. Armenians called it "The Blue Pearl". This fresh water lake of volcanic origin is like a mirror, reflecting the sky and changing color several times a day.

While at Sevan we will visit **Sevanavank** – one of the most significant historic sites near the lake, and have an enjoyable stroll full of amazing discoveries along the shore of the lake.

Arrival in Tsakhkadzor resort town. Check-in at the hotel. Rest.

Overnight: Tsakhkadzor

Day 7. Tsakhkadzor / Noraduz / Selim / Sisian

Breakfast at the hotel, check-out.

Noradouz - the "forest of Khachkars" (cross-stones) is dating as far back as 10th century AD. The Khachkar is unique to Armenian tradition, incorporating both pagan and Christian symbols into a spiritual and artistic form that endures to the present day. The first developed khachkars appeared in the 9th century. Noraduz itself is an old graveyard with approx. 900 khachkars from various periods and of various styles.

Selim Pass - where the best preserved caravanseray in Armenia is situated. The dim light through the smoke holes in the roof adds a proper medieval flavor to the whole construction. **Selim Caravanseray** is located on the celebrated "Silk road". Located on the Selim Mountain whose summit is 2410m above sea level, this unique inn was founded as a transit point along the most famous of the caravan routes of old. **Marco Polo** is known to have passed through this locale and described how the local Armenians lived amidst the rugged mountains. The caravanserai was built in 1332 by order of the prince Chezar Orbelyan and its interior covers 298 square meters.

Check-in at the hotel in Sisian. Dinner and rest.

Overnight: Sisian

In Sevan meeting with seminarists.

Day 8. - Sisian / Khndzoresk / Tatev / Goris

The first visit is **Khndzoresk village** with its miraculous grottoes and caverns that were used by the ancient human as a dwell. This is a unique site, where the time seems to have stopped. Isolated from the rest of the world people have lived here for centuries. The number of caverns and grottoes reaches hundreds and have history of over a thousand years.

Visit to **Tatev monastery** built during the 9-13th cc as an Armenian intellectual center where philosophers, musicians, painters, calligraphers, and monks lived. This monastery's teachers produced manuscripts for the whole Armenian world. The complex was begun between 895 and 906. St. Gregory the Illuminator, who spread the word of Christ throughout Armenia, is buried here in a small church built in 1295. The tall "Gavazan" was engineered and erected in 904, with a khachkar on top. Amazingly, this column was used to predict seismic activity in ancient times by its patterns of motion. The column was badly damaged in the 1931 by an earthquake. The periphery of this rocky terrain is covered with a variety of structures: homes, utility and subsidiary buildings, among them a vaulted font and fortification walls, date back to the 17th century. Here we will have the chance for an enjoyable trip on the aerial tramway taking us directly to Tatev Monastery over the gorge of Vorotan River. The newly-built double-reversible tramway spans 5.7 kilometers in a single journey lasting approximately 11 minutes, gliding up to 330 meters above the gorge. It is a major attraction, providing magnificent views of the mountainous landscape and the historical and natural landmarks in the valley below.

Check-in at the hotel in Goris. Dinner and rest.

Overnight: Goris

Day 9. - Goris / Noravank / Yerevan

Arrival at **Noravank** – a unique monastery situated in Noravank canyon (near Town of Yeghegnadzor). The road to Noravank monastery is an adventure itself. The high rocks on both sides of the path almost cover the sky above until the picturesque view of one of the most remarkable monastery complexes in Armenia opens. Here we will have lunch in the refectory.

On the way back to Yerevan we will take a short stop in **Areni** village to taste Armenian wine.

Arrival in Yerevan. Dinner and rest.

Overnight: Yerevan

Day 10. - Garni / Geghard / Tsitsernakaberd

Geghard - was initially known simply as Ayrivank (Cave Monastery). The present buildings, which are carved right into the solid rock, date back to 10th - 13th centuries AD, at which time it was renamed as Geghard meaning "lance" in Armenian. The name refers to the biblical lance used by a Roman soldier to pierce Christ's body. The lance was kept in Geghard for a long time before being moved to the museum of Echmiadzin Cathedral.

While in Geghard, we will have the opportunity to hear the fabulous spiritual songs of the **Geghard choir** consisting of professional singers. They will present us the fabulous sounds of Armenian religious music filling our hearts with joy and tranquility.

Lunch at a rustic house in Garni where we will witness the traditional methods of baking national Armenian flat bread called "**lavash**". This opportunity will take us back to the ancient times and traditions, away from the modern world and civilization where the harmony between the human being and the nature is dominating.

Garni - Hellenistic temple of Garni it was built in the 1st century AD and served as a summer residence for Armenian kings. It is the only pagan temple on the territory of modern Armenia, others were destroyed after the adoption of Christianity. The view of the temple on calm summer evenings, under the moonlight, is breathtaking.

Back to Yerevan and visit **Tsitsernakaberd** – the memorial complex dedicated to the victims of the Great Armenian Genocide committed by Ottoman Turks in 1915. The 44 meter stele symbolizes the national rebirth of Armenians. 12 slabs are positioned in a circle, representing 12 lost provinces in present day Turkey. In the center of the circle, in depth of 1.5 meters, there is an eternal flame.

Overnight: Yerevan

Day 11. - Yerevan / Echmiadzine / Zvartnots

Visit to **Echmiadzin Cathedral** - the religious center of Armenian Apostolic Church, a real must to see while being in Armenia. Its grandeur and beauty astonishes at first sight and leaves a deep impression in the hearts of people witnessing it. In the year of 2003 Echmiadzin celebrated the 1700th anniversary of Christianity in Armenia. Armenia was the first country in the religious world to adopt Christianity as a state religion in the year of 301 AD. **Echmiadzin Cathedral** is also included in the **UNESCO World Heritage List**. Besides the Cathedral Church we will also visit the churches of St. Hripsime and St. Gayane, located in the town of Echmiadzin which has served as a residence of Armenian Patriarchs since the 15th century.

Meeting with Priests from Echmiadzine

Zvartnots - on the way back to Yerevan we will visit the ruins of the outstanding temple of Zvartnots, built in 642-662 AD. The temple stood for 300 years, and was destroyed in a disastrous earthquake. However, the ruins of this luxurious building speak of its majestic beauty and richness.

Back to Yerevan.

Free time in the second half of the day.

Evening farewell Dinner in typical restaurant with live folk show.

Overnight: Yerevan

Day 12. - Check-out from the hotel, transfer to the airport & departure.

Check-out. Transfer to the airport. Departure.
End of our services.