





For a city that is relatively compact and walkable, there are plenty of things to do in Yerevan. In fact, when locals are asked how long a visitor should stay in Yerevan, they say, how much time do you have? You can easily fill in time by gazing at the Soviet-era architecture, wandering through markets and visiting all the museums. Some of the must-see attractions in the Armenian capital include:

- 1) **The Cascade:** The Cascade is a giant stone staircase outside the Cafesjian Museum of Art. It's incredibly unique and each level of the complex showcases different micro gardens and sculptures. A climb to the top of the 570 stairs is completely worth the effort as the unrivalled view sweeps across the city's skyline to Mt Ararat, which can be seen on a clear day. The area is like a public square and is one of the best things to do in Yerevan for free.
 
- 2) **Opera Theatre:** This is one of the best examples of heavy Soviet architecture and a must see for anyone who enjoys seeing remnants of the Soviet past in the region. It was designed and built by the Soviets in 1930s and holds ballet and opera performances regularly. The surrounding park area is also popular for families to congregate on sunny afternoons and summer evenings.
- 3) **Katoghike Holy Mother of God Church:** This Orthodox church is the oldest in Yerevan, dating back to the 1260s. There's a tiny chapel next to a newer cathedral and it's right in the middle of the city. You'll find people stopping to pray as they pass the church and it's a nice spot to just observe the local devotion to faith.
 
- 4) **Republic Square:** This huge imposing square is the heart of the city and where you'll find a lot of the streets' buzz emanating from. In summer, the fountains are full of water and people relax on one of the benches, especially of an evening when the dancing fountains, lights and music are turned on for everyone to enjoy. It's quite impressive and when you enter the square for the first time, it's impossible not to be taken aback by the grand stone buildings, which are very reminiscent of the Soviet era.
- 5) **The History Museum of Armenia** is located at Republic Square and is well worth a visit. This multilevel display showcases various artefacts and history of both the country and the region from the Stone Age all the way up to the present day. It's open every day and costs 2000 AMD (GBP 4.00) for entry.

- 6) **Blue Mosque:** Although the majority of the population is Christian and have been since the first century AD, you might be surprised to find a mosque in the centre of Yerevan. It's known as the Blue Mosque and is the biggest place of worship for the city's Shia Muslim community. The Iran Embassy is technically the guardian of the place, and it will remind you of the tiled mosques that you find in Iran. It's open to the public to enter, except at prayer times. You should dress conservatively before entering.

- 7) **Sergei Parajanov House Museum:** Yerevan has some great museums and a lot of them. There's apparently around 50 museums in the city and you can pick and choose from them depending on your interests. That said, a personal highlight of many is the Sergei Parajanov House Museum. An unassuming place that is dedicated to the life of Parajanov, a pioneering artist, author and screen writer of the 20th century. You'll find strange and eccentric artwork and displays, some of which make underlying gestures and commentary about the world we live.



- 8) **Kond Neighbourhood:** One of the best things to do in Yerevan is to explore the Kond neighbourhood, which is one of the oldest parts of the city and where you can get a glimpse of what the city was like before the imposing Soviet buildings sprung up in the city centre. It's a very rundown part of town and it's not technically a tourist sight but the charm is just in walking the laneways and streets. It is a residential area though so don't be too nosy or aggressive about taking photographs as many people may not understand why you're so interested in their neighbourhood. Still, Armenians are extremely friendly people and although the area is easy to get lost in, there's always someone around to ask directions.

- 9) **Vernissage Market and GUM Market:** Yerevan has some excellent markets. The Vernissage Market is an open-air flea market which is held daily but best to visit on weekends when it's most busy. There's everything from Soviet memorabilia to carpets to jewelry and any souvenir you could possibly want. You can easily spend a couple of hours here looking at each stall.



**The GUM Market** is a large covered fresh produce market where locals come to buy all their food from local vendors. You can find butchers, bakers, farmers as well as vendors with dried fruit and nuts. One of the highlights is watching the traditional Armenian bread, lavash, being made and sold.

- 10) **Genocide Museum and Memorial:** A moving monument up on the hill above the city is dedicated to the 1.5 million victims of the Armenian Genocide. There is an eternal flame inside the concrete monument which you can enter to pay your respects. The Genocide Museum can also be found at the complex, which documents in raw and eye-opening detail what happened to the Armenian people at the hands of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. It's extremely well presented with English descriptions and it's a must-see in Yerevan to fully understand the people of Armenia. It's still considered a contentious international issue, as some countries, including Turkey, do not recognise the genocide as ever happening.