



Yerevan, Armenia's capital, is one of the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities — founded in 782 BC, it is even older than Rome. Today, Yerevan is a city of wide boulevards, pink tuff-stone buildings, leafy parks, and a vibrant café culture. With Mount Ararat looming on the horizon, the city offers a striking mix of ancient history, Soviet heritage, and modern life. Warm and welcoming, Yerevan is easy to navigate and quickly becomes a second home for visitors.:

- 1) **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.
- 2) **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.
- 3) **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.
- 4) **Matenadaran (Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts):** One of the world's richest repositories of medieval manuscripts, the Matenadaran houses thousands of priceless texts in Armenian and other languages. The monumental building itself, standing at the top of Mashtots Avenue, is a proud symbol of Armenia's intellectual heritage.



- 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) **Ararat Brandy Factory:** Armenia's famous brandy has been celebrated for generations, and the Ararat factory offers tours and tastings. Visitors learn about the distillation and aging process while sampling the brandy that once won praise from Winston Churchill.
- 7) **Erebuni Fortress:** The ruins of the ancient Urartian fortress founded in 782 BC give Yerevan its name (from "Erebuni"). The on-site museum explains the site's history and displays artifacts, while the hilltop location provides excellent views over the city.
- 8) **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.



- 9) **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



- 10) **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.

- 11) **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.



- 12) **Vernissage 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.
- 13) **The GUM Market:** 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.
- 14) **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.



Environs of Yerevan

- 15) **Garni Temple:** About 30 km from Yerevan lies the only surviving Greco-Roman colonnaded temple in the former Soviet Union. Perched dramatically above the Azat River Gorge, Garni is a symbol of pre-Christian Armenia. The setting is breathtaking, with basalt cliffs known as the "Symphony of Stones" nearby.
- 16) **Geghard Monastery:** A UNESCO World Heritage Site partly carved out of the surrounding rock, Geghard is only a short drive from Garni. The monastery is famous for its medieval stonework, acoustics, and role in Armenia's spiritual life. Pilgrims and tourists alike are drawn to its mystical atmosphere.
- 17) **Khor Virap Monastery:** Located near the Turkish border, this monastery is where Saint Gregory the Illuminator was imprisoned before converting Armenia to Christianity. The site offers the most iconic view of Mount Ararat rising across the border, a powerful image for Armenians and visitors alike.
- 18) **Sevan Lake:** About an hour from Yerevan, Lake Sevan is one of the largest high-altitude lakes in the world. Its deep blue waters, beaches, and hilltop monasteries make it a popular summer destination for swimming, hiking, and picnicking.



Weekend or Reading Week Trips

- 19) **Tbilisi, Georgia:** Just a 5–6 hour drive or a short flight away, Georgia's capital is a vibrant mix of history, cuisine, and warm hospitality. Wander the narrow streets of the Old Town, relax in sulfur baths, or enjoy Georgian food and wine — it makes an unforgettable weekend break.