

# Legends of Nature

Protected Areas of the Southern Caucasus



ARMENIA



Implemented by:

KFW



## Arevik

### Arevik National Park

Sunny Mountains – Arevik National Park, embedded in the catchment of the rivers Meghri, Shvanidzor and Nrnadzor, is one of the youngest protected areas of Armenia.

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## Dilijan

### Dilijan National Park

Beauty in Harmony with Nature - Armenia's Little Switzerland fascinates with unequalled Caucasian woodlands, flowering highland sceneries, curative springs and clear lakes.

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## Khosrov Forest

### Khosrov Forest State Reserve

Natural Forces and Royal Temples – Visitors to Khosrov Forest State Reserve can experience the results of nature's elementary forces on the shape of the landscape.

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## Lake Arpi

### Lake Arpi National Park

Beauty on the Border – Open plains, extensive wetlands, gentle slopes and ever-changing seasonal colours make Lake Arpi an ideal place for birdwatching and reflection.

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## Sevan

### Sevan National Park

Armenia's "Blue Pearl" – Lake Sevan is one of the largest and highest freshwater lakes in the world and a paradise for birdwatchers.

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## Shikahogh

### Shikahogh State Reserve

Treasures of Nature – Shikahogh is one of the few places in Armenia where dense pristine broadleaf forests have survived.

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## Zangezur & Plane Grove

### Zangezur & Plane Grove Sanctuaries

Plane Grove and Zangezur sanctuaries are famous for their ancient trees and have the potential to develop some of Armenia's best scenic trails.

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### Cross-border Routes

Discover fascinating contrasts of the Caucasus from ice-capped high mountain peaks to subtropical landscapes, continental steppes and dense forests. Two cross-border routes through Armenia and Georgia include highlights of protected areas and cultural monuments in the Lesser and Greater Caucasus.

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# Welcome

to Armenia and the fascinating Caucasus region, one of the richest and yet most threatened reservoirs of plant and animal life on Earth.



The “Caucasus ecoregion”, including Armenia, is a biological melting pot of animal and plant species originating in Europe, Asia and Africa, and naturally also of special Caucasian features found nowhere else in the world. Currently 10% of the Caucasus ecoregion is under legislative protection of some kind but this natural treasure is still threatened and much work remains to be done for the future. We need to extend and create areas of protection, to establish habitat corridors and to develop transboundary management approaches.

In Armenia, the conservation and preservation of natural heritage is safeguarded by the Ministry of Nature Protection. Apart from issues related to nature protection such as conservation management, scientific research and environmental education, we also consider the interests of people living in

the areas and wish to improve socio-economic living standards. The development of sustainable tourism has become a major issue in this context since it offers promising potential for generating additional income while also enabling us to fulfil our responsibilities regarding the treasures of nature.

But apart from appreciating our heritage from a national point of view, it is essential that we also see our role in contributing to a vital network of protected areas in order to care for the Caucasus ecoregion as a whole. In this context I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and to KfW Development Bank, both of which have been actively engaged in this field for more than a decade. Much of the progress made in protected area networking and development results from this long-lasting cooperation.

Finally, this publication has only been possible thanks to this involvement and the efficient teamwork of dedicated individuals, agencies and organisations, all of whom deserve our thanks. The making of the brochure was part of a funded transboundary programme involving the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. It has given us the opportunity to combine our regional issues and views with a unified approach to market ecotourism in the Southern Caucasus.

This publication contains feedback gained from regional and local representatives of conservation and tourism bodies, protected areas and tour operators. Their contributions highlight the special qualities of protected areas and what they can offer to the tourist willing to respect their sensitivities. We are aware that the implementation of sustainable tourism is an on-going journey with many tasks to be fulfilled and we will proceed along this route. Finally, both sustainable tourism and the promotion of the idea of conserving our precious natural environment will be essential for both the people living in the areas and the protection of biodiversity.

This brochure is designed to stir enthusiasm for the wonders nature has created in Armenia and the Caucasus ecoregion as a whole and to raise awareness for their protection.

**Simon Papyan**

*First Deputy Minister of Nature Protection  
of the Republic of Armenia*

March 2013

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Educational trails / theme trails



Birdwatching



Wildlife watching



Guided tours



Organized tours over several days



Hiking



Climbing / mountaineering



Caving



Cycling / mountain-biking



Horse trekking



Cross-country skiing / ski-touring



Boating



Swimming



Nature accommodation



Visitor centre



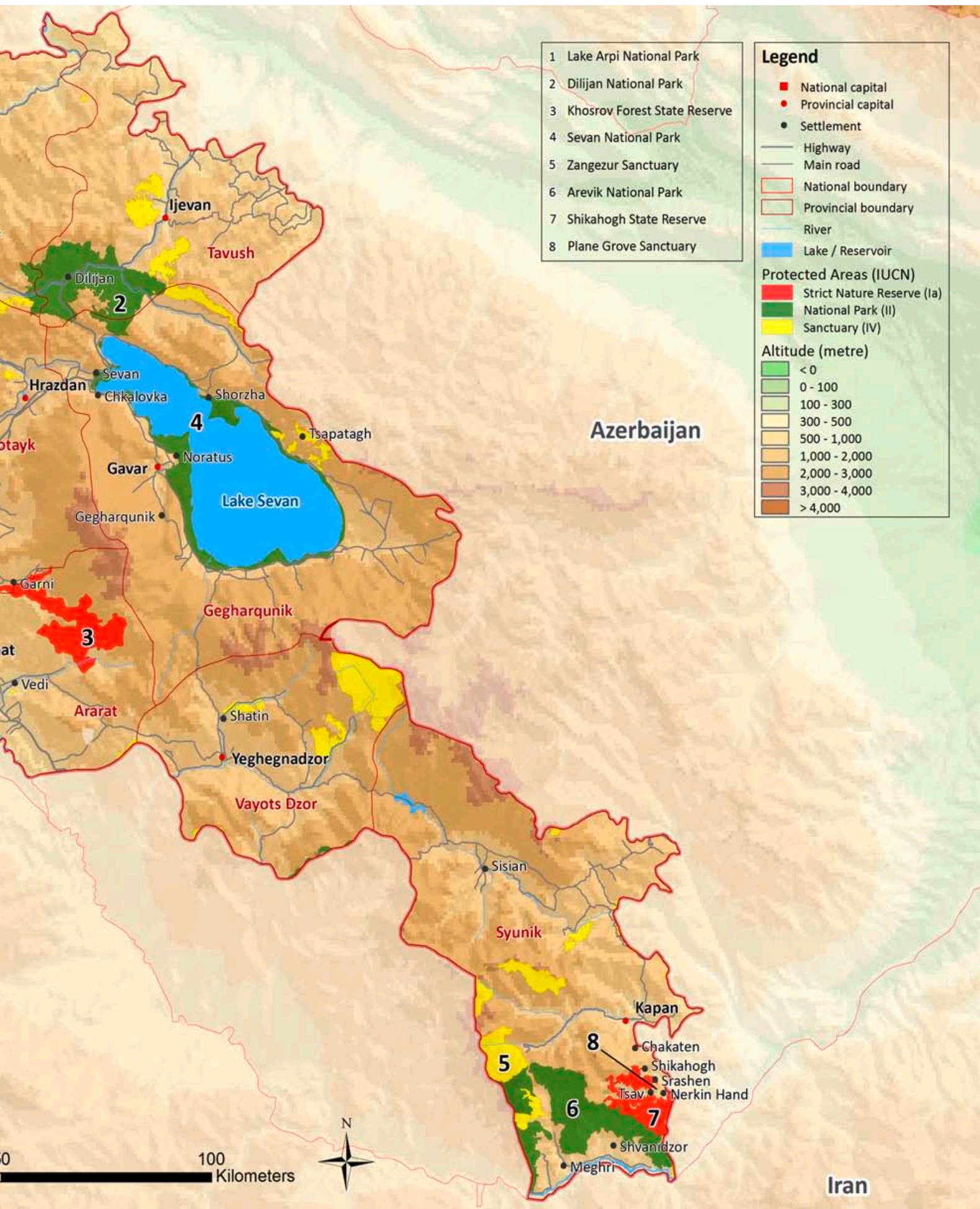
Museum



Spa tourism









# Treasures to Discover – Treasures to Protect

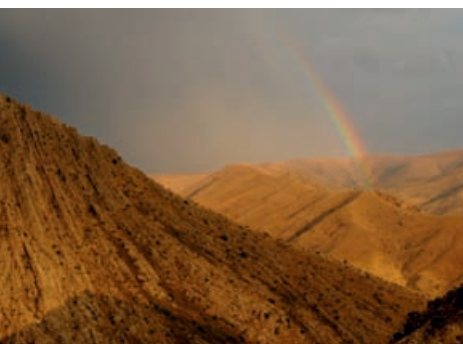
Come and enjoy the fascinating world of the **Caucasus ecoregion**.  
Magnificent colours, wild contrasts, misty forests and wide open spaces  
will inspire you to listen to nature's legends and stories.



COLOURFUL REMINDER OF TROPICAL  
TIMES: COLCHIC FOREST IN MTIRALA  
NATIONAL PARK, GEORGIA.



A TRUE LOCAL!  
ARMENIAN MOUFLON ONLY OCCUR  
IN THE CAUCASUS ECOREGION.



DRY BEAUTY: ARID GRASSLANDS AND  
MOUNTAIN STEPPES HOST VERY  
SPECIAL FAUNA AND FLORA IN  
KHOSROV FOREST STATE RESERVE,  
ARMENIA.

The ecoregion of the Caucasus has many stories to tell. Caucasian temperate forests show the greatest biological diversity of their kind worldwide. Vast primary forests uninfluenced by human cultivation can still be found here and, in the case of the so-called colchic forest, some trees and shrubs can even be traced back to geological times long before human existence.

The reason for the outstanding biodiversity of the Caucasus ecoregion is its extraordinary location. The whole region, which is about the size of the Iberian Peninsula, is situated between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea and is thus at a fascinating cultural and biological crossroads covering parts of Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and Iran. Plant and animal species show a stunning mix of European, Asian and African influences and have furthermore developed unique Caucasian representatives such as the west and east Caucasian tur, Caucasian black grouse, Cau-

casian salamander and special varieties of rhododendron.

Divided by the South Caucasus depression, the ecoregion comprises two main mountain chains - the Greater Caucasus in the north and the Lesser Caucasus mountains in the south, which also surround the volcanic Southern Highlands. Caucasian landscapes are characterized by high mountain sceneries and colourful alpine meadows, rivers and gorges, wetlands and lakes, steppes and semi-deserts. There is a rapid change of altitudes ranging from areas below sea-level to high-mountain peaks of more than 5,000 metres. Along with the special situation between the two seas, this has resulted in an amazing mix of climatic conditions. Nine of eleven major climate zones worldwide are present in the Caucasus. Thus, the Caucasus includes Mount Mtirala, the rainiest place in Europe with an annual rainfall of 4.5 metres, and dry semi-deserts where gazelles and reptiles live.

## Protected areas in the Caucasus (IUCN category)

- **Strict Nature Reserves / State Reserves (Ia)** indicate that priority is given to scientific use. They are defined as areas of high ecological, scientific, and historical-cultural value endowed with special beauty and resources. The natural environment may develop without direct human intervention. Access is limited primarily to scientific research and some educational activities. However, in recent years also some access for visitors has been made possible.
- **National Parks (mostly II)** are areas of special ecological, historical-cultural and aesthetic interest. They consist of natural and cultural landscapes and thus involve human activities along with nature protection issues. National parks require a zoning system with areas specially designated to strict protection, to recreational and to economic activities.
- **Natural Monuments (III)** aim at the conservation of unique or typical natural objects of special scientific or historic-cultural value.
- **Sanctuaries / State Reservations / Managed Nature Reserves (mostly IV)** aim at conservation through management intervention. The focus is on special habitats and species for conservation and reproduction. Today's sanctuaries often go back to ancient hunting reserves, which are now transformed under new objectives making them into landscape, botanical or zoological sanctuaries.
- **Protected Landscapes (V)** indicate the protection and management of areas where the interaction of people and nature has produced a distinct character of aesthetic, ecological or cultural value. Maintaining the traditional interaction, conservation and recreation are major objectives of this protected area category.



The natural patchwork has produced a diversity of plants and animals which is twice as great as that of the neighbouring European and Asian regions. Scientific assessments have identified 6,500 different vascular plants, at least a quarter of which are unique to the region, while 400 species of bird, 150 species of mammal, 130 species of fish and more than 80 species of reptile have been listed.

#### Hotspot for protection

However the ecological situation is far from ideal. Only about a quarter of the region remains in good natural condition. Many species are threatened and their habitats have decreased. The Caucasian leopard still appears in the Caucasus but is endangered. The bezoar goat, Caucasian chamois, bearded vulture and golden eagle can be observed but are declining in numbers. Economic overuse, hunting and poaching are major threats to the natural resources. Moreover, financial resources are limited and aware-

ness of the richness of the region and the need for its protection are only starting to develop.

This is the reason why Conservation International has classified the Caucasus as one of the globe's 25 most diverse and endangered "biodiversity hotspots" and why it is amongst the WWF "Global 200" regions, which are defined as the most biologically diverse.

#### Naturally cross-border

Currently 10% of the Caucasus ecoregion is under legislative protection of some kind. However, it is still facing severe threats and much work remains to be done for the future. The full range of biodiversity in the Caucasus is not covered by protection at present. A need exists to enlarge and establish new areas for protection. Moreover, it will be essential to go beyond a national approach and develop a vital network in order to create habitat corridors and effective transboundary management.

#### Some guidelines for visitors

- Stay on the marked and signposted trails.
- Pay attention to trail markers.
- Respect the guidelines and advice provided by your guide or the park administration.
- Take your litter and cigarette ends home. Even when buried, they damage the landscape.
- Enjoy looking at plants but take care. Leave plants, rocks and natural objects as you find them.
- Be silent and leave animals in peace.
- Only light fires in locations specifically designated for this purpose.
- Enjoy the use of non-smoking shelters and respect the rules of non-smoking.
- Leave shelters clean and take your rubbish home.
- Take special care in fog. Always use proper walking boots, raingear and a hat.
- Finally, enjoy the wonderful sounds of nature – do not make unnecessary noise.





*NATURE GOES BEYOND BORDERS: THE JAVAKHQ-SHIRAK PLATEAU INCLUDING LAKE ARPI NATIONAL PARK HAS A UNIQUE BIODIVERSITY STRETCHING ACROSS ARMENIA, GEORGIA AND TURKEY.*

#### **International support**

The past 10 years have seen a remarkable expansion of protected areas in the Caucasus ecoregion. A number of international programmes and initiatives have helped in assisting and financing protection issues and have fostered cross-border approaches. International bodies which actively engage in the Caucasus ecoregion include the governments of Germany, Norway, and of the United States, multilateral organisations like the EU, the Global Environment Facility and UNEP, international NGOs like WWF and IUCN as well as nature conservation trust funds such as CNF, private companies and scientific institutions.

#### **German Cooperation in the Caucasus Ecoregion**

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) has a history of active cooperation with the environmental sector in the Southern Caucasus countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The "Ecoregional Nature Protection Programme for the Southern Caucasus", financed by the BMZ through KfW Development Bank, serves as a key instrument of this cooperation and focuses on the protection of biodiversity in the region. It aims at harmonizing protection objectives and instruments in a cross-border approach with sustainable socio-economic development and local participation as

major guiding principles. The programme is supported by three main pillars:

##### *(1) Investments in Protected Areas*

This pillar serves to support the protected areas in the Caucasus ecoregion through investments aimed at establishing and developing individual areas. The investments lead to improvements in management plans and infrastructure (including administrative headquarters, visitor centres and walking trails) and are also used for training measures directed at administrative staff. The investments additionally support socio-economic developments in local communities living near the protected areas.



### *(2) The Caucasus Nature Fund - CNF*

To ensure the sustainability of direct investments in the protected areas, the Federal Republic of Germany also provides financial support to the "Caucasus Nature Fund" (CNF), thus addressing the problem caused by a lack of long-term financing for the operational costs of the protected areas.

CNF is a conservation trust fund working in public-private partnership with the national governments. CNF's aim is to stop the loss of biodiversity by providing long-term funding for protected areas in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, improving management practices, and promoting sustainable development. In addition to the support of the German government, CNF is widely supported by major conservation organisations including the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Conservation International and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund. Find out how you can donate and help protect the magnificent nature of the Caucasus: [www.caucasusnaturefund.org](http://www.caucasusnaturefund.org)

### *(3) The Transboundary Joint Secretariat - TJS*

The third pillar provides support to the "Transboundary Joint Secretariat". It complements the cooperation between Germany and the Southern Caucasus countries, benefiting protected areas in the ecoregion through transboundary cooperation and harmonization of national policies. The TJS works to put important regional aspects and international knowledge on biodiversity on the national agendas.

### **The World Wide Fund for Nature - WWF**

WWF focuses strategically on places and species which are particularly important for the conservation of the earth's biodiversity. In the early 1990s WWF started implementing nature conservation projects in the Caucasus. Based on wide assessments by more than 140 experts of all six Caucasus countries defining threats and priorities for conservation WWF has been involved in elaborating the first "Ecoregional Conservation Plan for the Caucasus". The plan is now ready in its second revised edition of 2012. With its long- and midterm targets and actions, it shall help those involved in conservation to plan and coordinate their activities in the entire ecoregion.

### **On the way to sustainable tourism**

Sustainable tourism has the potential to play a major role in the future protection of the Caucasus ecoregion. It can help the local economy to generate additional income while simultaneously providing support on protection issues. In order to fulfil this objective, it will be necessary to foster sustainable regional tourism development which reflects the needs of the area in cooperation with local stakeholders. On this basis, tourism can be guided in a sustainable direction resulting in carefully planned visitor services, the well-being of the population and greater awareness of the natural and cultural heritage.



GET THE REAL EXPERIENCE OF THE CAUCASIAN HIGHLANDS ON HORSEBACK.



A PERFECT MATCH – THE PATH TO NATURAL TREASURES OFTEN LEADS PAST STUNNING CULTURAL MONUMENTS. GOSHAVANK MONASTERY NEAR DILIJAN NATIONAL PARK, ARMENIA.

# Armenia's Green Treasures

Armenia is home to an essential part of the natural treasures of the Caucasus ecoregion. The landscapes of the Lesser Caucasus mountain range from semi-deserts in Arevik National Park, extraordinary woodlands in Dilijan, volcanic rocks and deep canyons in Khosrov Forest to the wetlands of Lake Arpi and Lake Sevan.

The history of nature protection goes back to ancient times, when people started to worship special natural spaces and trees for religious reasons and defined them as sacred. Today, the example of the oriental plane tree can be discovered in Plane Grove Sanctuary. The next stage came in the Middle Ages, when the aristocracy established hunting grounds, such as today's Khosrov Forest State Reserve, which goes back to the hunting forest of King Khosrov II Kotack (330-338 AD).

In 1958, a more complex conservation system of "Specially Protected Nature Areas" (SNPA) was initiated with the establishment of Armenia's first legally protected areas - Dilijan, Khosrov Forest and Shikahogh. In 2012, approximately 380,000 hectares, which is about 12,5% of the country, were covered by legal protection, including three state reserves, four national parks - Lake Sevan being the first (1978), 26 state sanctuaries and 230 natural monuments.

Discovering Armenia's natural heritage will in all likelihood be combined with a revelation of Armenia's history. Cultural monuments from past centuries, many of them designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, range from medieval monasteries, prehistoric mystical stone sites, and delicately elaborated stone crosses (khatchkars) to ancient fortresses, rustic villages, Hellenistic temples, and cave dwellings. This rich and colourful history of the world's oldest Christian nation is interwoven with stories and legends such as the landing of Noah's Ark and Marco Polo's voyages along the Silk Road.



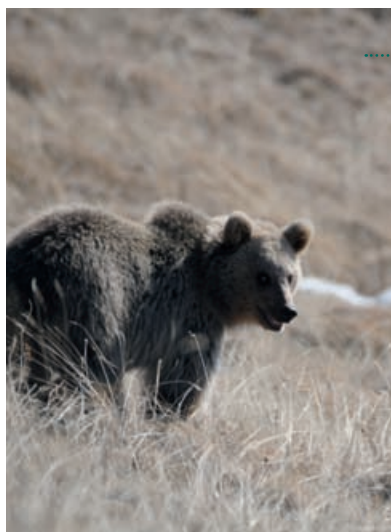
## Arevik National Park

**Sunny Mountains** - Arevik National Park, embedded in the catchment of the rivers Meghri, Shvanidzor and Nrnadzor, is one of the youngest protected areas of Armenia.

Arevik is important for the protection of endangered and rare species such as the Caucasian leopard, the Armenian mouflon and the Mediterranean turtle. Visitors will find oak and juniper forests covering more than two thirds of the National Park. But they can also explore semi-deserts, mountain plains and alpine meadows, and admire an extraordinary diversity of flowers. Since the park is young, tourism is

also in its early stages and visitor facilities are soon to be developed. The special ecology of Arevik National Park reflects its location in the border region in the very south of the country, where Iranian, Anatolian, Caucasian and Central Asian fauna come together, making it a particularly interesting place to visit from an ecological point of view.





## In Touch with Nature

Visitors to Arevik can enjoy unique and beautiful mountain sceneries with the park's specific biodiversity. Moreover the region has a rich historical-cultural heritage to offer. Tourists can observe various species of the National Park like the bezoar goat, one of its protected and precious representatives, and also a wide range of different bird species like quail, partridge, eagle and falcon. The Araks river is rich with fish. The best time to visit the National Park is June to October. The park can be explored on foot or on horseback. However, getting there will sometimes require an off-road vehicle.

## Local Products

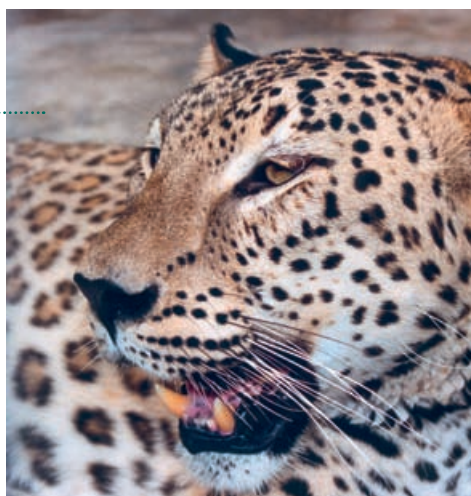
The charming town of Meghri at the Iranian border is known as the "sweet part of Armenia". The moderate subtropical climate with hot summers and mild winters favours the growth of delicious fruits. Figs, pomegranates, persimmons and kiwis grow lavishly in abundant orchards. The sweet temptations produced by local factories will not let any visitor depart without bringing home some sweet memories such as a bottle of the famous pomegranate wine. However, it is not only culinary delights which the town of Meghri has to offer. Discover Meghri's churches, monastery and fortress during the morning hours, when early birds swarm over the silhouette of ruins and the landscape is immersed in a warm and glowing orange light.



## Did you know

... that leopards were still abundant in the Caucasus until the early twentieth century? However, their survival has been jeopardized by various threats like poaching, military action, and deforestation. The Iranian region, bordering Arevik National Park, is considered to be today's main source area of the Caucasian leopard.

Well-managed protected areas and transboundary "habitat corridors" in the Caucasus countries play a key role in boosting the survival of the big cat.



## FACTS AND FIGURES

**Location:** South Armenia, Syunik Province  
**Size:** 34,402 hectares  
**Altitude:** 450 m – 3,500 m  
**Year of establishment:** 2009

### Landscape:

Broad leaf forests, juniper open woodlands, subalpine and alpine meadows, semi-deserts, mountain steppes, rivers, high-mountains

### Flora:

Juniper, oak, hornbeam, maple, ash

### Fauna:

Caucasian leopard, bezoar goat, brown bear, otter, Caspian snowcock, Caucasian black grouse, Armenian mouflon, colchic pheasant, striped hyena, Armenian viper, Mediterranean turtle

### Accommodation:

Guesthouses/private accommodation in Meghri town, Shvanidzor village

### How to get there:

370 km from Yerevan, 5 hrs by car, 6 hrs by mini-bus/bus



Birdwatching



Wildlife watching



Hiking



Horse trekking



# Dilijan National Park

**Beauty in Harmony with Nature** - Dilijan National Park was created in 2002, when the Armenian Government decided to stop the exploitation of Dilijan's natural resources by tourism and unsustainable agriculture.

Dilijan, also known as "Little Armenian Switzerland", provides ideal climatic conditions for the famous Caucasian woodlands of oak, ash and elm. Unequalled forests and wonderful highland sceneries are an invitation for hiking and photography and are home to bears, wolves and many other rare species. Curative mineral springs and clear lakes such as Lake Parz attract spa tourists from all over Armenia. Moreover the experiencing of natural beauty is accompanied by the discovery of historical monuments such as the many monasteries the region has to offer.





## In Touch with Nature

Famous natural heritage sites include the yew grove of Aghavnavank, the beech woodlands of Haghartsin, the oak woodlands of Khachardzan, Lake Parz and Lake Tzlka. Twelve way-marked ecotourism trails reveal an attractive landscape of great diversity with evergreen forests, lush grazing fields and deciduous woodlands. The area is a haven for flower lovers, who can discover stunning wildflowers with colourful highlights in different seasons. Hikers will be fascinated by the rapid change in flora depending on the altitude which can sometimes be experienced within a few minutes' walk. The visitor centre provides licensed guides, nature observation kits, bicycles and skis. Get a real feel of pure nature by renting a tent, sleeping bag and cooking stove and spending the night in the heart of the park.

## Local Products

Dilijan National Park is blessed with a wide range of wild fruits and berries such as pears, walnuts, medlars, dog-roses and raspberries. During your visit you can also enjoy local honey, mineral water and clear spring waters. Take part in the baking ritual of the traditional Armenian "lavash" bread. Lavash is very thin and has a dry texture. It is baked in a small earth oven, framed with stones and heated by a small fire. The traditional baking of lavash originates in sacrifice rituals of pagan times.



## Did you know

... that a picturesque monastery lies hidden in the misty forests of a gorge only half an hour's drive from Dilijan? Here in Haghartsin you can discover two churches with magnificent carvings, explore the large entrance hall and dining hall and find several medieval cross-stones and a massive hollow tree. If you are lucky, the resident priest living in a small house down a path will guide you around.



## FACTS AND FIGURES

**Location:** North-east Armenia, Tavush Province

**Size:** 33,765 hectares

**Altitude:** 1,070 m - 2,900 m

**Year of establishment:** 2002

### Landscape:

Woodlands, lakes and rivers, curative mineral springs, mountain meadows, middle and high mountain landscapes

### Flora:

Deciduous forests: oak, beech, hornbeam; coniferous forests: pine, juniper, yew; decorative plants: iris, orchids; tertiary relict species: yew stands, Caucasian rhododendron

### Fauna:

Caucasian black grouse, bearded eagle, Caspian snowcock, red deer, brown bear, lynx, wild cat

### Accommodation:

Guesthouses/private accommodation and hotels in Dilijan town, camping

### How to get there:

95 km from Yerevan, 1:20 hrs by car, 2:10 hrs by mini-bus/bus



**Educational / theme trails**



**Birdwatching**



**Guided tours** hiking, horse trekking, plant observation, birdwatching



**Hiking**



**Cycling / mountain-biking**



**Climbing / mountaineering**  
planned activities



**Horse trekking**



**Boating**



**Cross-country skiing**



**Visitor centre** Dilijan town, National Park visitor center



**Museum** Dilijan town: National Park museum, Dilijan museum



**Nature accommodation**  
camping in the park



**Spa tourism**  
Dilijan town



# Khosrov Forest State Reserve

**Natural Forces and Royal Temples** - Visitors to Khosrov Forest State Reserve can experience the results of nature's elementary forces on the shape of the landscape.



The reserve is crossed by a mountain range consisting of a dense network of main and branch ridges, high plateaus and deep canyons towered over by volcanic shield massifs and peaks. Intense wind combined with hot weather and the impact of water once shaped stunning geological figures like pyramids, towers and

niches. The reserve harbours rare animal species such as the Caucasian leopard, the bezoar goat and the brown bear. Discover the heritage of natural forces and dive into a rich world of deserts and semi-deserts, mountain steppes, woodlands, alpine and subalpine meadows.





## In Touch with Nature

Five routes are suggested for ecotourists wishing to explore the reserve. Explore the natural and cultural treasures of Khosrov Forest on horseback on the Khachadzor trail, which stretches for 18.8 km through the picturesque Mankuk river gorge towards the eastern part of Khosrov Forest. It passes ancient villages and churches, decorated cross-stones and story-telling gravestones, amazing landscapes and natural lakes. The bezoar goat is one of the specific representatives of Khosrov Forest's fauna. The area is also rich in bird and reptile species. It is possible to find wild pear, amygdalus (almond tree), elaeagnus (oleaster), rose and white birch.

## Historical Places

Discover the amazing cultural history of Khosrov Forest with its old shrines, monasteries, churches and abandoned villages. The "Sun Temple" of Garni fascinates with its many historical layers. Archaeologists surmise that it originates in the 3rd century BC, when a fortress was erected at Garni and served as a summer residence for the Armenian Orontid and Artaxiad royal dynasties. The Hellenistic sun temple inside the fortress was probably built under king Tiridates I of Armenia during the Roman Empire. It is thought that the temple was dedicated to Mithra, the sun god.



More historical sites of the reserve include the remnants of the famous Havuts Tar church (10th-13th centuries), located in the Garni district, and Kaqavaberd, a beautiful fortified castle located on the right side of the river Azat in the Kaqavaberd district. It is built on the top of a high inaccessible mountain surrounded on three sides by deep gorges. The fortress offers a breathtaking view of the river Azat.



## Did you know

... that the leopard, which is one of Khosrov Forest's protected albeit still rather rare species, was quite widespread in ancient times? Visit Geghama ridge and you will find proof in prehistoric petroglyphs depicting hunters and their prey: bezoar goats and leopards.



## FACTS AND FIGURES

**Location:** South-west Armenia, Ararat Province

**Size:** 23,213 hectares

**Altitude:** 700 m - 2,800 m

**Year of establishment:** 1958

**Landscape:** Mountain ranges, rocks and cliffs, semi-deserts, mountain / high mountain steppes, open juniperous woodlands and oak forests

**Flora:** Umbellifelliferous plants (aphanopleura trachysperma, hohenackeria excapa, prangos lophoptera), allium schchianae, knapweed (centaurea arvensis), cousinia armena, erucastum takhtajanii, bellflower (campanula bayerniana)

**Fauna:** Caucasian leopard, bezoar goat, brown bear, wild boar, black vulture, Caspian snowcock, Armenian viper

**Accommodation:** Guesthouses/ private accommodation in Garni village; camping near park entrance of Garni; basic accommodation and camping in the visitor centre near park entrance of Vedi

**How to get there:** 30 km from Yerevan to Garni entrance, 45 minutes by car, 1 hr by mini-bus/bus to Garni village; 53 km from Yerevan to Vedi town, 50 minutes by car, 1 hr by mini-bus/bus



**Educational / theme trails**



**Wildlife watching** bezoar goats, near Shatin village



**Birdwatching**



**Guided tours** nature tours, birdwatching, historical-cultural tours by tour agencies in Yerevan



**Hiking**



**Horse trekking**



**Visitor centres** at park entrances near Garni village and near Vedi town



**Museum** reserve museum, Vedi town

# Lake Arpi National Park

**Beauty on the Border** – Open plains, gentle slopes and everchanging seasonal colours make Lake Arpi a place for discovery and reflection.



This very young National Park aims to promote sustainable community development and to conserve the typical biodiversity of the volcanic Javakhq-Shirak plateau. Here mountain steppes, subalpine grasslands and high alpine rocky outcrops are intertwined with a wealth of lakes, wetlands and rivers. Spring and summer await tourists with a profusion of colourful flowers. The vast openness of the endless hillside invites those on horseback to gallop through the pristine countryside, famous for its prehistoric history. Birdwatchers discover an abundance of rare species in this globally-important area for birds.





## In Touch with Nature

The tourism centre in Mets Sepasar near the park provides various ecotourism services including hiking and horseback-riding trips, birdwatching tours and services for cross-country skiing. The lakes and marshes of Lake Arpi National Park are famous as excellent birdwatching sites where one can observe breeding birds from May to July and migratory birds resting during spring and autumn. Discover reviving winter sport traditions at Arpi, an insider tip for every nature friend, who will enjoy a rustic winter sport experience remote from the perfect comfort of conventional winter sport destinations. Tour operators organize cross-country skiing and winter-hiking tours on trails ranging from 1 - 10 km.

## Historical Places

Besides the impressive monastery complex of Marmashen, located north of Gyumri on the way to Lake Arpi National Park, visitors can trace prehistory at the excavations of a 5,000 year old temple at Mets Sepasar and the megalith stones found at Zuygaghpur. But it is not only about prehistory. Evidence of contemporary history can be noticed all around when travelling throughout the area.



## Did you know

... that the Dalmatian pelican, which breeds exclusively at Lake Arpi in Armenia, does not always eat whilst fishing? When it sweeps its bill underwater to catch small fish, shrimps, worms and beetles, it often just fills the characteristic large pouch under its bill to save the prey for a later meal.



## FACTS AND FIGURES

**Location:** North-west Armenia, Shirak Province

**Size:** 21,179 hectares

**Altitude:** 2,025 m – 3,196 m

**Year of establishment:** 2009

### Landscape:

Mountain steppes, subalpine meadows, lakes, wetlands, rivers

### Flora:

Orchids, gladiolus, iris, papaver, meadow saffron (colchicum), cyclamen (Caucasian scilla rosenii), Siberian iris, alpine auricula (primula auriculata)

### Fauna:

Dalmatian pelican, Armenian gull, Eurasian otter, brown bear, Darevski's viper

### Accommodation:

Guesthouse/private accommodation in Berdashen and Ardenis village, hotel in Torosgyugh village, several hotels and guesthouses in Gyumri town

### How to get there:

180 km from Yerevan, 2:50 hrs by car, 3:50 hrs by mini-bus/bus



### Birdwatching



**Guided tours** birdwatching, horse trekking, cross-country skiing, historical-cultural tours



### Hiking



### Horse trekking



### Cross-country skiing/ ski-touring



**Visitor centres** Ghazanchi village, tourism information centre: Mets Sepasar village



**Museum** nature museum in visitor centre



**Nature accommodation** park guesthouse, Berdashen



## Sevan National Park

**Armenia's "Blue Pearl"** - Lake Sevan is one of the largest and highest freshwater lakes in the world.

Its stunning landscape shaped by millions of years of volcanic eruptions is today a place where once steaming waters have cooled down to a refreshing temperature and snow-capped mountains touch whipped clouds. The picturesque coastline is characterized by thick woods, steep white rocks, mountain steppes and alpine meadows, pebble beaches and wide bright strips of sea-buckthorn and pine trees. The territory

around Lake Sevan belongs to the National Park, which harbours 267 bird species of which 39 species are included in the Red Book of Armenia. A true paradise for birdwatchers! Lake Sevan also harbours several sites of great historical relevance. One of them is Sevanavank monastery with its stunning scenery on a peninsula enclosed by Sevan's dark blue waters with bare volcanic mountains in the background.





## In Touch with Nature

Sevan National Park incorporates a number of strict nature reserves. Norashen Reserve – known as “Gull Island” – was established to protect a unique and well-known breeding ground of Armenian gulls. Norashen Reserve also harbours other species including the great cormorant and great crested grebe, while a variety of shorebirds such as the green sandpiper and little ringed plover forage along the shorelines of the lake. Small groups of migrating geese, common shelducks and other ducks can be observed during spring and autumn. Common and red-crested pochards traverse the area and often stop here to take a rest. Flocks comprising hundreds of garganeys and common teals also make a stopover at Lake Sevan before they continue their journey further south.

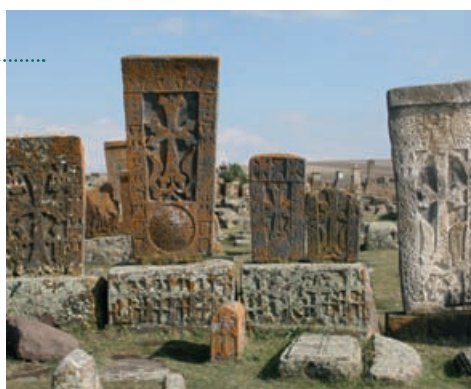
## Be part of it - Events

The annual harvest festival known as Vardavar is celebrated on a Sunday in July, usually 98 days after Easter. “Vardavar” derives from the Armenian word for rose and dates back to pagan times, when people offered roses to Astghik, the goddess of water, beauty, love and fertility. Later it was integrated into the Christian baptism ceremony. International tourists are likely to remember “bucket day” for all children and youngsters are allowed to pour a full bucket of water on anybody on this day. The region of Gegharqunik near Lake Sevan is particularly famous for its traditional Vardavar celebrations, during which people throw water with roses on each other to cleanse their souls.



## Did you know

... that the cemetery at Noratus village is home to the largest Armenian collection of “khatchkars”? Here you will find 900 cross-stones varying in style and age. The prominent feature of many khatchkars, most of which date from 13th– 17th centuries, is a cross surmounting a solar disc. The rest of the stone is decorated with leaves, grapes, pomegranates or abstract patterns.



## FACTS AND FIGURES

**Location:** Central Armenia,

Gegharqunik Province

**Size:** 147,343 hectares

**Altitude:** 2,000 m

**Year of establishment:** 1978

**Landscape:** Fresh water ecosystems, pebble beaches, woods, steep rocks, mountain steppes, alpine meadows, islands

**Flora:** Wallis fescue (*festuca valesiaca*), dwarf sedge (*carex humilis*), alpine meadow-grass (*poa alpine*), wild barley (*hordeum violaceum*), variegated brome (*bromopsis variegata*), clustered bellflower (*campanula glomerata*), burnet rose (*rosa spinosissima*), dog rose (*rosa canina*)

**Fauna:** Sevan trout, Armenian gull, otter, brown bear, marten, forest cat

**Accommodation:** Guesthouses/ private accommodation and hotels in the settlements surrounding Lake Sevan (e.g. Tsapatagh, Sevan town, Shorzha, Chkalovka)

**How to get there:** 65 km from Yerevan, 50 mins. by car, 1:15 hrs by mini-bus/bus



**Birdwatching**



**Guided tours** wildlife, birdwatching, geology, science, architecture, ethnography



**Hiking**



**Horse trekking**



**Boating**



**Swimming**



**Museum** natural history, Sevan town



**Nature accommodation** public and private beaches with shelters, camping, cabins

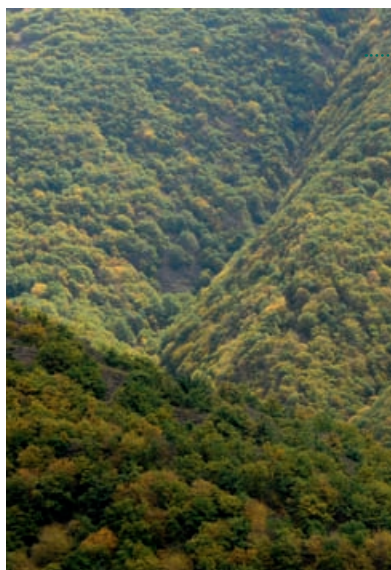
# Shikahogh State Reserve

**Treasures of Nature** - Shikahogh is one of the few places in Armenia where dense pristine broadleaf forests have survived.



An inimitable landscape is created by lush vegetation flourishing in a humid and warm climate, rugged terrain, crystal-clear streams, cliffs and deep gorges. Some parts of the Meghri ridge are marked by steep rocky massifs protruding from the forest. Flora and fauna represent a unique combination of species with a high diversity of relict and endemic species. The extremely steep terrain brings about a great diversity of climatic conditions with almost every gorge exhibiting its own microclimate. Apart from the rich natural heritage, the local environment still retains the old rustic Armenian traditions and customs. Visitors will discover historical monuments ranging from Iron Age tombs, populated and abandoned settlements to medieval churches and monasteries hidden in deep gorges or situated on rocky slopes along the route.





## In Touch with Nature

The best time to explore Shikahogh State Reserve is from June to October, when the lush and rich mountain landscapes provide ideal conditions for nature friends and hikers to go on a tour on the reserve's "ecotourism routes". Guided one-day tours can be arranged for individuals and small groups on foot or horseback. One of the ecotourism routes starts at Tsav, continues to the ancient settlement of Sanan and follows the Mtnadzor river to the abandoned village of Mtnadzor with its quaint church. Days in Mtnadzor canyon will be characterized by perpetual twilight due to the north-south orientation of the tall canyon sides and the thick virgin oak forest. It is one of the most picturesque and untouched parts of the reserve.

## Historical Places

On the way from Yerevan to Shikahogh State Reserve near Sisian, you can discover "Armenia's Stonehenge" - Karahunj - which is actually 3,500 years older than its English equivalent. There may be a mystical connection between the two, since "stone" in Armenian is "kar" and the word "henge" corresponds to Armenian "hunj" for voice, sound, echo. Mystical, fertility and cosmic powers have been ascribed to the circle of about 204 stones on a seven-hectare site. According to scientists, a temple consisting of 40 stones built in honour of Ari, the pagan sun god, was situated in the central part of Karahunj. The temple wings were dedicated to a large observatory and a university.



## Did you know

... that the inaccessible rough and steep mountainous landscape in Shikahogh is an ideal habitat for the bezoar goat? You can watch these animals from the observation point near Chakaten, which offers a spectacular view of the typical reddish mountain scenery of Shikahogh.



## FACTS AND FIGURES

**Location:** South Armenia, Syunik Province

**Size:** 12,137 hectares

**Altitude:** 700 m – 2,400 m

**Year of establishment:** 1958

### Landscape:

Mountain ranges, small streams, springs, gorges, cliffs, virgin broad-leaf forests (oak, hornbeam), rocky massifs, subalpine meadows, caves

### Flora:

Georgian and Caucasian oak, Caucasian hornbeam, plane groves, oriental beech, honeysuckle, pomegranate, date-plum, common fig, orchids

### Fauna:

Caucasian leopard, bezoar goat, brown bear, wild boar, Caucasian black grouse, Caspian snowcock, Armenian viper, wild cat

### Accommodation:

Guesthouses/private accommodation in Shikahogh, Nerkin Hand, Tsav; accommodation facilities in administrative building of the reserve in Shikahogh village

### How to get there:

320 km from Yerevan, 5 hrs by car, 7 hrs by mini-bus/bus



**Educational / theme trails**



**Birdwatching**



**Wildlife watching** observation platforms in Mtnadzor, Navsaqar



**Guided tours** nature observation, historical-cultural tours, provided by visitor centre of the reserve



**Hiking**



**Horse trekking**



**Visitor centre**  
Shikahogh village











# Zangezur & Plane Grove Sanctuaries

**The Shikahogh State Reserve** is also responsible for the management of the Plane Grove and Zangezur State Sanctuaries, established in 1958 and 2009 respectively.

Plane Grove State Sanctuary covers a relatively small territory of 64 hectares and aims at protecting the last remaining natural plane grove in Armenia with its majestic trees. The 17,368 hectare territory of Zangezur State Sanctuary is dominated by snow-covered mountain formations. The highest peak reaches 3,904 metres above sea level. Zangezur was established with the aim of protecting the landscape and biodiversity of subalpine and grassland meadows of the Bargushat ridge and the eastern slopes of the Zangezur ridge.

## Future Trails of Zangezur

Ecotourism experts have been studying a range of scenarios to develop hiking trails in the Zangezur State Sanctuary. One of the main objectives of these scenarios is to generate new income sources through tourism services. Future hiking trails promise to be among the best scenic trails in Armenia and are intended to include the fascinating ruined villages of Vorotan gorge. Following narrow footpaths, the visitor will hike from village to village, entering another era in a place where time seems to have stood still.

## Millennium Trees of Plane Grove

Plane Grove Sanctuary, located near Shikahogh State Reserve and close to Nerkin Hand village in the Tsav river valley, comprises the biggest natural oriental plane grove of the Caucasus. It was established in 1958 and was handed over to Shikahogh State Reserve in 2004. To mitigate human impact, the sanctuary is surrounded by a 100 metres wide buffer zone which encompasses the lands of Nerkin Hand and the Kapan Forestry. The grove's core shelters spectacular trees that are more than 1,200 – 1,250 years old and have survived until today, reaching 30 - 35 metres in height. A pleasant eight-hour cultural-ecotourism tour is on offer, starting

from Srashen village, passing Nerkin Hand village and ending at the mystic Plane Grove Sanctuary. During the hike visitors may also explore the Oriental Beech Grove and visit the St. Hripsime church dating from the 17-18th century.

## Did you know

... that the formation of protected areas goes back to ancient times and was determined by religious cults and ruling classes? Unique territories as well as certain tree and animal species were protected as sacred. Among these were also the oriental plane trees, which were grown near shrines and not utilized for economic purposes. Today Plane Grove Sanctuary is home to the only natural plane grove of the Caucasus.







### CROSS-BORDER ROUTES THROUGH PROTECTED AREAS OF ARMENIA AND GEORGIA

The Caucasus is a fascinating region with a highly diverse natural and cultural heritage. Experience it to the full with a cross-section of stunning contrasts and highlights ranging from ice-capped high mountain peaks to subtropical landscapes, continental steppes and dense forests. Take your time for a minimum of two weeks to discover two different countries of this legendary region. The two following cross-border route suggestions through Armenia and Georgia have been prepared by members of "forum anders reisen e.V.", a German association of tour operators dedicated to sustainable tourism principles.



#### ■ ROUTE 1:

**From the Lesser Caucasus  
to South Armenia**

Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park -  
Sataplia Nature Reserve - Khosrov  
Forest State Reserve - Shikahogh  
State Reserve

#### Days 1 & 2:

**Arrival in Georgia, Uplistsikhe cave  
town, Lesser Caucasus**

After arrival and a restful night in Tbilisi, Georgia's bustling metropolis, a minibuss takes us along the Mtkvari river to the Lesser Caucasus. On the way, we visit the ancient cave city of Uplistsikhe with its coffered ceilings carved into basalt. We spend the night in a charming family guesthouse in the spa town of Borjomi, just at the edge of Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park.

#### Day 3:

**Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park:  
„Romanoff Trail“ part 1**

Today we start with our hiking tour through Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park, which is characterized by large, contiguous forests and subalpine meadows covered with flowering plants. At Likani Gate, at

about 1,050 metres, we start a six-hour 15 km hike which takes us to Lomismta ranger hut at about 1,800 metres. In the ranger hut we set up our night camp.

#### Day 4:

**Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park:  
„Romanoff Trail“ part 2**

We continue our trail, passing subalpine meadows and enjoying breathtaking scenic views of the Caucasus mountains. Through forests and riverbeds, we descend to Sachvlari refuge, which is located at 1,300 metres. The ranger hut is our well-deserved night's lodging after an energetic 18 km walk.

#### Day 5:

**Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park:  
„Romanoff Trail“ part 3**

Our final part of the Romanoff Trail takes us through the valley of the Shavtvala river. After four to five hours we arrive at





the small village of Marelisi in the district of Kharagauli, on the northern side of the mountain. We can recover from our 13 km hike in a cosy wooden guesthouse with an open fireplace.

## Day 6:

### Kutaisi, Sataplia Nature Reserve

After a drive of about 3.5 hours, we arrive in Kutaisi, the capital of Imereti Region. In the Sataplia Nature Reserve, with its mighty pines, beech trees and undergrowth of boxwood and cherry laurel, the path leads through an extinct volcano to a large cave with stalactites and stalagmites. The protected area became widely known due to the giant dinosaur foot prints which were discovered there. The Prometheus cave, another wellknown limestone cave, can be explored on a boat trip.

## Day 7:

### Academy of Gelati, Tbilisi city tour

The next morning we set out towards Tbilisi, Georgia's lively capital. On the way, we stop at the Academy of Gelati, a great monastic complex dating from the 12th century and a UNESCO World Heritage

Site. We have a relaxing rest, meeting a Georgian family whose members give us an interesting insight into the art of hand-made ceramics. Upon arrival in Tbilisi, we explore the ancient history of the Georgian capital.

## Day 8:

### Drive to the Armenian border

After a two hours' drive, we arrive at the Armenian border, where we visit the impressive monasteries of Haghbat and Sanahin, both registered as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The journey continues along Sevan, a mountain lake at 2,000 metres which was created by volcanoes. The „blue pearl“ of Armenia is surrounded by mountain ranges up to 3,000 metres and provides a stunning backdrop to the Sevanavankh monastery, built on a peninsula in the 9th century. In Garni village we stay in a guesthouse.

## Day 9:

### Khosrov Forest State Reserve, Geghard Monastery, Garni Temple

Today we visit Geghard monastery, with its beautiful churches embedded in the forested hillsides and volcanic rocks of

the Azat river gorge. We continue to Khosrov Forest Reserve, where we can observe wild sheep and griffon vultures, and follow the tracks of brown bears, wolves and wild cats. Our trail starts at an abandoned village, passes a fortress from the 9th-10th century and leads up to a plateau. Descending the gorge, we reach the Hellenistic sun temple of Garni dating back to the 1st century. A local family in Garni offers us a place to sleep and bakes the traditional lavash flatbread with us.

## Day 10:

### Drive to Southern Armenia

On our way southwards, we visit the monastery of Khor Virap, the most famous pilgrimage place of Armenia, with its stunning view of the biblical Mount Ararat. A most mysterious kind of Armenian Stonehenge awaits us at Karahunj close to Sisian. The prehistoric cultural and astronomic site, set on top of a windswept plateau, dates back to the 2nd millennium BC. In the early evening, we reach the southern tip of Armenia at Kapan, where we are accommodated for the following nights.

## Day 11:

### Shikahogh State Reserve

Shikahogh State Reserve is characterized by its huge diversity of species and various types of forest. Endemic Caucasian leopards, brown bears, wolves, bezoar goats, ibex and eagles roam its forests. The hiking route takes us to a mediaeval church in Shikahogh village. We continue along the picturesque gorge of the river Shikahogh to the ancient settlement of Kartor and arrive at a beautiful waterfall. Yew forests and floriferous subalpine meadows are our companions along the way.





## Day 12:

### Shikahogh State Reserve

Today's hike begins at the visitor centre of the protected area in Shikahogh village. On the way, we pass through picturesque historical villages, historical settlements and ruins and a virgin oak forest. After this eventful tour, we are especially looking forward to the traditional meal to which we are invited by an Armenian family.

## Day 13:

### Drive to Yerevan, Areni, Noravank monastery

The journey takes us back to the north, to the Armenian capital of Yerevan. Along the way, we avail of the opportunity to taste wine in the village of Areni. The remaining route leads through scenic mountain passes until we reach the monastery of Noravank (13th-14th century), located in a beautiful side canyon with red-coloured rocks which form a unique harmony with the monastery. In Yerevan, we stay in a favourably located hotel.

## Days 14 & 15:

### Yerevan city tour, return flight

During a city tour of Yerevan, we immerse ourselves in this diverse and bustling modern metropolis of Armenia, which originates from the fortress of Erebuni,

established in 782. By no means will we miss the Historical Museum with its exhibits of prehistoric times, church architecture and Armenian culture. We also visit Tsitsernakaberd, the important memorial complex, dedicated to the Armenian victims of the events of 1915/16. After a final night in the Southern Caucasus, we leave on our return flight.

## ■ ROUTE 2:

### Greater Caucasus mountain range and „Armenian Switzerland“

Satapia Nature Reserve, Tusheti National Park, Dilijan National Park, Khosrov Forest State Reserve

## Days 1 & 2

### Arrival in Tbilisi, Georgia; Kutaisi, Prometheus cave

After arrival and a restful night in Tbilisi, we set out for new adventures: After a drive of about 3.5 hours, we arrive in Kutaisi, the capital of Imereti Region. We visit the famous Prometheus cave, a limestone cave which we explore on a short boat trip. We spend the night in a guesthouse in Kutaisi.

## Day 3:

### Bagrati, Satapia Nature Reserve, Gelati monastery

After breakfast we undertake a walk to

Bagrati cathedral, which was restored in 2012 and is registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Then we visit the nearby Satapia Nature Reserve, with its mighty pines, beech trees and an undergrowth of boxwood and cherry laurel. The path leads through an extinct volcano to a large cave with stalactites and stalagmites. The protected area became widely known due to giant dinosaur footprints which were discovered there. Afterwards we visit the Gelati Academy, a great monastic complex dating from the 12th century and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We stay in a comfortable guesthouse in Kutaisi.

## Day 4:

### Uplistsikhe, Tbilisi city tour

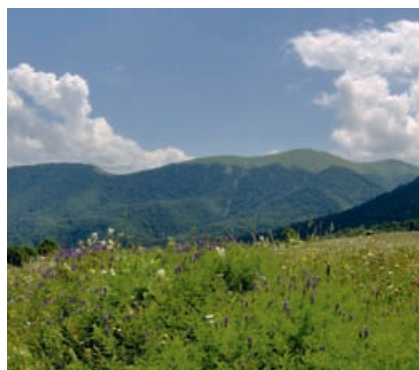
On our way back to Tbilisi, we undertake an excursion to the ancient cave city of Uplistsikhe with its coffered ceilings carved into basalt. On the way, we visit a family who produces hand-made ceramics. In the afternoon there is time to explore the old history of Tbilisi, Georgia's lively capital, where we stay the night.

## Day 5:

### Drive to Tusheti National Park

We travel from Tbilisi to Alvani by minibus. From there it takes us another five hours by four-wheel drive for the remain-





ing 100 km. On the way we have fantastic views far into the Alazani plain. Finally, beyond Abano Pass at nearly 3,000 metres, we enter the hidden alpine world of Tusheti National Park. Here time seems to have stood still. Ancient towers watch over the old villages where unchanged Christian and pagan customs have survived over centuries. We see Georgian cowboys riding on horseback through rugged valleys and large flocks of sheep grazing on lush summer meadows. In the evening we reach Omalo, where we stay in a cosy guesthouse.

## Day 6:

### **Tusheti National Park (Shenako, Diklo, Dartlo)**

In the morning we travel by jeep to the village of Shenako, where we get another insight into the unique atmosphere of this remote region. We continue to Diklo. From there we set off on an approximately seven-hour hiking tour to Dartlo. On the way, we enjoy the beautiful views of the vast meadows and bizarre mountains of Tusheti. We spend the night in a quaint guesthouse in Dartlo.

## Day 7:

### **Tusheti National Park (Kwawlo, Girewi, Parsma)**

Today's hiking tour includes the village of Kwawlo, located on a small elevation. Then we descend into the Pirikita Alazani valley, following the river's course and passing through several typical villages until we reach Girewi village. After several hours of eventful hiking, we drive back to Diklo, where our guesthouse is waiting for us.

## Day 8:

### **Drive to Telavi**

The road takes us back via the Abano Pass, where we finally enter the wine region of Kakheti. On the way, we visit Alaverdi cathedral, with the tallest spire in Georgia. Our final destination for today is

the family winery "Tkupebi", where the twins Gia and Gela Gamtkitsulashvili cultivate "organic wine" according to old family traditions and await us with a special wine tasting. We sleep in the estate's own guest house.

## Day 9:

### **Drive to the Armenian border, Dilijan National Park**

After a three-hour drive across the Gombori mountains, we reach the Armenian border. We visit the UNESCO-protected monasteries of Haghbat and Sanahin. The trip continues towards the spa town of Dilijan, which is located in the lushly forested and water-rich northern Province of Tavush in the Lesser Caucasus. In the evening, we explore the monastery of Haghartsin and stay at a typical Armenian guest house in the town of Dilijan.

## Day 10:

### **Dilijan National Park**

After breakfast we set out for the Dilijan National Park. The National Park is known for its diverse forest ecosystems and rich biodiversity. Above Dilijan town we start a six-hour hike, which takes us through rolling hills, flowering meadows and dense forests, and ends at lake "Parz Lich". On our way we find a mineral spring which carries acidic healing waters. In the afternoon we accompany a beekeeper at work before returning to our guesthouse.

## Day 11:

### **Dilijan, Geghard monastery**

In the morning we take our time to stroll and explore the charming spa town of Dilijan. In the afternoon we continue our tour to Garni. On our way, we stop at Geghard monastery, with its beautiful churches (12th – 13th century) embedded in the forested hillsides and volcanic rocks of Azat river gorge. The monastery, one of the most superb historical sites in the Caucasus, is registered at UNESCO. We spend the night in a guesthouse in Garni village.

## Day 12:

### **Khosrov Forest State Reserve, Garni temple**

Today we continue to Khosrov Forest State Reserve. Khosrov Forest is located in the southwest of Armenia, in the Ararat Province. The region is famous for its rich and endemic animal species, its unique woodlands and its rich historical and cultural heritage. We can observe wild sheep and griffon vultures, and follow the tracks of brown bears, wolves and wild cats. Our



trail starts at an abandoned village, passes a fortress from the 9th-10th century and leads up to a plateau. Descending the gorge, we reach the Hellenistic sun temple of Garni dating back to the 1st century. After an eight-hour hike, we arrive in Garni, where a local family bakes the traditional lavash flatbread with us. We spend the night in a guesthouse in Garni village.

## Day 13:

### **Khosrov Forest State Reserve, Yerevan**

Today we have another opportunity for a hike within Khosrov Forest State Reserve. Today's hike begins at the abandoned village Poqrshen. The trail continues through several gorges to another abandoned village. A shady spot here is ideal for a break and a picnic. The 5 km hike takes about 6 hours (including breaks and sightseeing). In the afternoon we drive to Yerevan, the Armenian capital. We stay in a three-star hotel.

## Days 14 & 15:

### **Yerevan city tour, return flight**

During our city tour of Yerevan we immerse ourselves in the diverse and bustling modern metropolis of Armenia, which goes back to the fortress of Erebuni, established in 782. By no means will we miss the Historical Museum with its exhibits of prehistoric times, church architecture and Armenian culture. We also visit Tsitsernakaberd, the important memorial complex, dedicated to the Armenian victims of the events of 1915/16. After a final night in the Southern Caucasus, we leave on our return flight.



## USEFUL CONTACTS



### State Agency – Protected Areas

Ministry of Nature Protection  
of the Republic of Armenia  
Bioresources Management Agency  
1/3, Pavstos Byuzand Street,  
Yerevan 0010, Armenia  
Phone: +374 10 527 952  
E-mail : min\_ecology@mntp.am  
www.mntp.am

### ■ Arevik National Park SNCO

Park Administration  
Megri Town 3401,  
Syunik Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 286 2968  
E-mail arevikmeghri@mail.ru  
www.arevikpark.am

### ■ Dilijan National Park SNCO

Park Administration  
2, Tbilisi Highway, Dilijan Town 3901  
Tavush Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 268 27032  
E-mail: dilijannp@mail.ru  
www.dilijanpark.am

### ■ Khosrov Forest State Reserve SNCO

Park Administration  
79, Kasyan Street, Vedi Town 0601  
Ararat Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 234 23247  
E-mail: khosrov@mail.am  
www.khosrov.am

Visitor Information  
Tourism Information Centre - Cultural Centre  
6, Shahumyan Street, Garni Village 2215  
Kotayk Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 91 584 258  
E-mail: geghardvalley@mail.ru  
www.garnigeghard.com





# USEFUL CONTACTS

## ■ Lake Arpi National Park SNCO

Park Administration  
Berdashen Community 2805  
Shirak Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 91 388 106 (mob.), +374 245 60908  
[www.lakearpi-nationalpark.com](http://www.lakearpi-nationalpark.com)

Visitor Centre of Lake Arpi National Park  
Ghazanchi Community 2806  
Shirak Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 93 949 592

Visitor Information  
Tourism Information Centre  
Mets Sepasar Community, 2807  
Shirak Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 94 833 190



## ■ Sevan National Park SNCO

Park Administration  
56, Karmir Banaki Street, Sevan Town 1501  
Gegharqunik Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 261 24044  
E-mail: [sevanap@inbox.ru](mailto:sevanap@inbox.ru)  
[www.sevanpark.am](http://www.sevanpark.am)

Visitor Information  
Sevan Municipality  
164, Nairyan Street, Sevan Town 1501  
Gegharqunik Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 991 99555  
E-mail: [sevanhamaynq@mail.ru](mailto:sevanhamaynq@mail.ru)

## ■ Shikahogh State Reserve SNCO Plane Grove & Zangezur Sanctuaries

Park Administration  
Shikahogh Community 3318  
Syunik Province, Armenia  
Phone: +374 285 60655  
E-mail: [office.shikahogh@mail.ru](mailto:office.shikahogh@mail.ru)  
[www.shikahogh.am](http://www.shikahogh.am)



## USEFUL CONTACTS



### ORGANISATIONS

#### Armenian Association of Travel Agents (AATA)

3-11, Spondaryan, Yerevan 0002, Armenia

Phone: +374 91 412 107 (mob.)

E-mail: info@cts.am · www.cts.am

#### Armenian Ecotourism Association

2, H.Hakobyan Street, Apt. 22, Yerevan 0033, Armenia

Phone: +374 10 278 728, +374 91 224 346 (mob.)

E-mail: zhanna@netsys.am

www.ecotourismarmenia.com

#### Armenian Guides Guild

38, A. Pushkin, Yerevan 0002, Armenia

Phone: +374 93 565352 (mob.),

+374 93 7001143 (mob.)

E-mail: guild-atg@hotmail.com

www.armenian-guides.am

#### Armenian Society for the Protection of Birds

7, P. Sevak, Yerevan 0014, Armenia

E-mail: armbirds@yahoo.com

Phone: +374 10 208 725 · www.aspbirds.org

#### BMZ – German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

Southern Caucasus Desk

Dahlmannstr. 4, D-53113 Bonn, Germany

www.bmz.de

#### Caucasus Nature Fund (CNF)

54, rue de Clichy, F-75009 Paris, France

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t = top, c = centre, b = bottom, l = left, r = right





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