



## EnoGastronomic Tour in Armenia



Wine making technics have a long history in Armenia. **One of the oldest wineries in the world** was discovered in Armenia. Historically, wineries in Armenia were concentrated along the **Ararat valley** and in actual district of Vayots Dzor. Winemaking took a downward plunge in the years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, but is undergoing a revival, with the addition of **world-class labels**.

A yearly **wine festival**, held in Areni, is popular with the locals and features wines from official wineries as well as homemade hooch of varying quality. Armenian wines are predominantly red



and are **sweet, semi-sweet (Vernashen, ljevan), or dry (Areni)**. In addition to grapes, wines have been made with other fruit, notably pomegranate, apricot, quince, etc.

And of course, don't miss the opportunity to take part at annual Yerevan Wine Days usually in the first week of May.

**Armenian cuisine** is one of the **oldest cuisines of the world** which has been developed together with Mediterranean and later on also with neighbor countries cuisines. But in spite of the mutual influences there are **certain qualities may generally be taken to characterize Armenian cuisine**.

The preparation of meat, fish, and vegetable dishes in an Armenian cuisine requires stuffing, frothing, and puréeing. Lamb, eggplant, fresh herbs, tan – a kind of liquid yogurt and bread (lavash) are basic features of Armenian cuisine.







## Itinerary

### **Day 1: Departure from homeland**

### **Day 2: Arrival – City tour in Yerevan – Ararat Brandy Factory – Matenadaran**

Arrival in Zvartnots international airport in Yerevan. Meet the guide at arrival hall. Private transfer to the hotel. Check in and accommodation.

Breakfast at the hotel. City tour in Yerevan. Stop over the Cascade monument which hosts Modern Art Museum (Botero, Chihuly, Arshile Gorky, Jennifer Bartlett, Lynn Chadwick, Barry Flanagan, and Jaume Plensa). Next visit is to Tsitsernakaberd Memorial and Genocide Museum dedicated to the victims of the massacres in 1915. After lunch visit Matenadaran manuscript museum and Ararat Brandy Factory which has a century history. Cognac tasting. Dinner at a traditional Armenian restaurant. Overnight at the hotel.

### **Day 3: Yerevan – Khor Virap monastery – Areni wine region (Areni-1 cave) –Gastro Yard - “Old Bridge” Winery - Yeghegnadzor**

Breakfast at the hotel. Check out and departure for Ararat region. Visit **Khor Virap** monastery (4-17 cen.) a noticeable pilgrimage center which offers the best and the closest view to Mt. Ararat.

Continue to Vayots Dzor region which is one of the historical and ancient wine producing regions of Armenia. It's a home to world's ancient winery in **Areni 1 cave** and world's oldest leather shoe which is exhibited in State History Museum in Yerevan. Visit the cave.

Lunch at a local gastro yard in Areni village. It's a place, where the guests can enjoy tasty Armenian food, homemade wine and have a good time in the wonderful yard of the house.

After lunch visit **Noravank** monastery 9-14 cen. which stands over the amazing Gnishik river canyon, surrounded by red rocks, and is a real masterpiece of great Armenian medieval architect Momik.

The last visit of today is at one of the local wineries. This time it's «**Old Bridge**». The vineyards are located on the right-hand bank of the Arpa River, next to the little village of Arpi at an altitude of 1250-1300m above the sea level. In the production of wines, they combine traditional Armenian (especially from Vayots Dzor region) and modern winemaking technologies and equipment. Wine tasting.

«Old Bridge» is also a cozy B&B where you can stay with small friendly group or we can arrange the overnight in Yeghegis village at a boutique hotel.



#### **Day 4: Yeghegnadzor – Mikaelyan's family cheese farm – Noraduz – Sevan**

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to the north of Armenia via Vardenyants pass on which is a former Silk Road Route. Short stop at **Orbelyan's Caravanserai**. Continue to Gavar town and visit **Mikaelyan's family cheese farm**. Tasting of a variety of unique cheeses that will please any customer including the famous «drunken» cheese made in wine and cognac. Not far from Gavar visit **Noraduz** village cemetery which is home of the biggest cluster of Armenian cross stones. Lunch near the lake **Sevan** tasting Sevan trout or Sig – a whitefish from Lake Sevan, native to northern Russian lakes. Visit the monasteries on the peninsula and have a breathtaking view to the lake from the top of the peninsula.

#### **Day 5: Sevan –Garni – Armenian bread baking master class - Ghegard – Yerevan**

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive **Garni** pagan temple of 1<sup>st</sup> cen. dedicated to the God of Sun. Lunch in a local house in Garni village which offers the best pork barbeque prepared in Armenian underground stove named “tonir”. Participation at Armenian bread **lavash** baking process. It's a traditional thin bread that forms an integral part of Armenian cuisine. Its preparation requires great effort, coordination and special skills. Women work in groups to bake lavash, which is commonly served rolled around local cheeses, greens or meats. It plays also a ritual role in weddings. Where it is placed on the shoulders of newlyweds to bring fertility.

Continue to **Ghegard** monastery of 12- 13 cen. where the Holy Lance was kept for centuries. The monastery is included in UNESCO World Heritage List.

Return back to Yerevan. Overnight in Yerevan.

#### **Day 6: Yerevan – “ ArmAs “ winery – Hovanavank monastery –“Armenia” winery – Yerevan**

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to **Hovanavank** moastery 5 – 13 sec. where Johannes the Baptist relics were maintained. The monastery is situated over the beautiful gorge of Qasagh river.

Continue the tour to **“ArmAs” winery**. A young producer of wines which cooperates with Italian wine making specialists. Produces Areni red wine and rose wine. The huge estate tour includes a visit to the wine yards and of course a wine tasting and lunch at the estate.

After lunch drive to **“Armenia” winery** which cooperates with French specialists and develops super – premium wines. Return back to Yerevan and optional visit In Vino Wine Bar and Store to taste Armeau – first Armenian ice wine which is offered only in this bar.

Dinner and overnight in Yerevan.



*Optional overnight in near Armas winery in a boutique hotel overlooking the Armas Estate and the Mt. Ararat.*

### **Day 7: Yerevan – Echmiadzin – Zvartnots – Master class by Zara at her gastro yard - “Maran” winery – Vernissage – Yerevan**

Breakfast at the hotel. Drive to **Echmiadzin** which is the Armenian Orthodox Apostolic Church center. Visit the Holy Echmiadzin Cathedral build in 4<sup>th</sup> cen. and return back to Yerevan visiting the ruins of **Zvartnots** Cathedral of 7<sup>th</sup> cen. UNESCO.

Lunch at **Zara's place** participating at Armenian pasta *arishta* making process and baking Armenian traditional sweet *gata* by yourselves. She offers also a delicious home made nut liqueur for dessert.

Visit also **“Maran” winery**. It's a boutique winery built on the basis of the biggest winery of Soviet Armenia. It was built by German prisoners of II World War and had 12 cellars 2 of which are in use today. “Maran” winery is famous for its “Bagratouni” and “Bagratouni reserve” brands.

Return back to Yerevan and if week end visit Vernissage open – air handcraft market. Farewell dinner at the restaurant with live music.

Optional dinner in famous “Dolamama” restaurant opened in Yerevan in 1998. It's the most famous restaurant of Yerevan visited by the president of Republic of Armenia and many international famous celebrities that visited Armenia.

### **Day 8: Departure**

Transfer to airport. Departure.

#### **Guide to several Armenian dishes**

***Khorovats*** – the Armenian word for barbecued or grilled meats, the most representative dish of Armenian cuisine enjoyed in restaurants, family gatherings, and as fast food. A typical *khorovats* is chunks of meat grilled on a skewer.

***Tolma*** - is prepared from minced lamb or beef mixed with rice, fresh herbs and spices, wrapped in grape or cabbage leaves. Armenians use seasonings such as coriander, dill, mint, pepper and cinnamon. There is an annual festival dedicated to this dish during which more than 70 types of *tolma* are served.

***Harissa*** - is a porridge made of wheat and chicken cooked together for a long time, originally in the *tonir* but nowadays over a stove.

***Fishes*** – ***Ishkhan*** Sevan trout (endangered species), served steamed, grilled on a skewer, or stuffed and baked in the oven, ***Sig*** – a whitefish from Lake Sevan, native to northern Russian lakes (endangered species in Armenia), ***Karmrakhayt*** a river trout also produced in high-altitude artificial lake.



*Armenian soups – **spas**, made from matzoon, hulled wheat and herbs and **aveluk** soup made from lentils, walnuts, and wild mountain sorrel (which gives the soup its name).*

***Cheese Chechil (tel panir)** – braided and pickled string cheese. also chanakh, lori, yeghegnadzor and others made from sheep, cow's and goat milk.*

***Khash** - which started off as a laborer's meal, consists of beef or lamb feet that have been slow-cooked overnight in water. It is eaten at breakfast over crumbled dried lavash bread, with crushed garlic and liberal portions of vodka or spirits. Khash is typically eaten in winter.*

