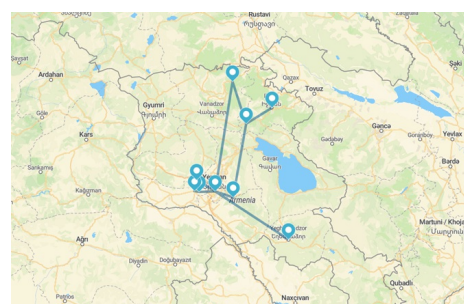




Armenia, 9 Days · Tailor-made by car

Silk Route and its Monasteries

The whole of Armenia will enamour you. Pretty much off the tourist trail, it's a truly authentic country that has its roots in one of the world's oldest civilisations. Straddling Europe and Asia and landlocked between Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Iran, Armenia boasts a rich architectural heritage with some fabulous ancient monasteries, many of them listed as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. This is because, back in the year 301, this jewel embedded in the Caucasus was the first nation to adopt Christianity as its official religion, and its long-lasting influence is perfectly reflected in the very identity of the Armenian people. Its cultural legacy also features the traces of the ancient Silk Road, probably the most important trade route in history and which for centuries connected East with West. In Armenia you can discover first-hand the famous caravanserai, the roadside inns dotted along the arduous route designed to welcome travelling merchants for a night's rest. You'll also fall in love with Armenia's stunning landscapes of volcanic plateaus and deep valleys, always under the watchful eye of the majestic and omnipresent Mount Ararat, where Noah's Ark is said have run aground. And also with the affable and hospitable character of the Armenians, who are always willing to help you and to offer you their friendship. Don't miss out on the chance to embark upon this fabulous road trip and become one of the first travellers to explore Armenia, a country that will enamour you mile after mile after mile.



CULTURAL

Departure date: Departures from May 2026 till May 2027

From: Dublin, Shannon, Cork

Travel details

● DAY 1 · CITY OF ORIGIN - YEREVAN

Flight departure from the city of origin to Yerevan.

Night on board.

DAY 2 · YEREVAN

Arrival and rental car pick-up.

The Armenian capital is the ideal base camp for driving around this beautiful and remote country of the Caucasus, as well as being a great tourist destination in its own right. Founded in 782 BC, which makes it one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world, it's home to a third of Armenia's total population, which just about reaches three million. Start off your visit at the famous Cascade, a gigantic monument-cum-stairway ascending 302 metres from bottom to top and built during the Soviet era. Formed by several terraces adorned with spectacular fountains and waterfalls, the Cascade houses the Cafesjian Centre for the Arts, an important museum criss-crossed by a network of escalators. Make sure you climb to the top of this enormous monument to admire the best views of the city, especially at sunset, with the omnipresent Mount Ararat in the background. Simply amazing! The social hub of Yerevan is Republic Square, which brims with life and activity seven days a week. What's more, every night from 9.00 pm to 11.00 pm, you'll get to see the fantastic Dancing Fountains show in the square. We recommend dinner at a traditional restaurant in the area to savour the tasty Armenian cuisine, which features dishes such as dolma (minced meat mixed with rice and wrapped in vine or cabbage leaves, with a summer variety including a filling of tomatoes, aubergines and peppers), and lahmajoon (the so-called Armenian pizza, made from a flat piece of dough topped with a thin layer of spicy lamb). Simply delicious!

Overnight stay in Yerevan.

DAY 3 · YEREVAN

Inherited from the ancient nomadic culture, dairy products play a very important role in Armenian cuisine. In fact, the so-called "panir" cheese has for centuries been the staple ingredient of the typical Armenian breakfast, the "Hahts u Panir" (literally, bread and cheese), which is the ideal way to kick-start the day. There's even a local saying that goes: "Hahts u Panir, gortst banir", in other words, "Eat bread and cheese and work with ease". Another traditional breakfast in Armenian cuisine, which is usually eaten in winter due to its high nutritional content, is "khash". This dish is prepared by boiling beef shanks until they form a thick broth, which is then eaten with garlic and "lavash" (the traditional flatbread of Armenia) baked in "tonir", an underground oven. Continue your tour of the Armenian capital in Freedom Square. This major focal point of city life stands in a beautiful park with a pond, landscaped areas and several pavement cafés. Standing majestically there is the Yerevan Opera Theatre, an imposing building that plays host to performances and concerts throughout the year. One of the key attractions of the Armenian capital is its varied range of museums. Highlights include the History Museum of Armenia, which exhibits a 5,500-year-old leather shoe (the oldest in the world), and the Children's Art Museum, which showcases works by children and teenagers between the ages of four and seventeen both from Armenia and other parts of the globe. It's a vibrant space full of light and colour that will surprise you with the amazing quality of many of its exhibits. (Note: Check the websites for prices and times. Not included). If you want to take a stroll and have a drink, there's nowhere better than Northern Avenue, where you try out some more Armenian dishes such as basturma (air-dried beef and wrapped in a thin layer of cumin), "harissa" (a type of porridge with chicken meat), and "khashlama" (boiled beef with potatoes, tomatoes and onions). In the afternoon, head over to the Matenadaran (library in Armenian), one of the most outstanding manuscript repositories on the planet. Its collection includes documents dating back to the year 405, coinciding with the creation of the Armenian alphabet, and it consists of about 300,000 files. On the outskirts of Yerevan is the Armenian Genocide Museum, a key place to learn about the recent history of this ancient country. Built in 1968, this memorial is the most emotional yet poignant places in the whole of Armenia, as it pays tribute to the nearly 1.5 million victims of the genocide suffered by the Armenian population and committed by Turkey between 1915 and 1922. Although it's a century since this atrocity, it's still very present and the issue of the genocide crops up in many conversations with Armenians. A heartbreaking visit, but essential.

Overnight stay in Yerevan.

● DAY 4 · YEREVAN - ZVARTNOTS - ECHMIADZIN - OSHAKAN - YEREVAN

Just twenty kilometres from the Armenian capital is one of the most important tourist attractions in the country, the extraordinary Etchmiadzin Cathedral. To reach to the location of one of the first Christian churches in history, you need to take the M5 westbound. As a teaser, stop off five kilometres before arriving in Vagharshapat at the ruins of Zvartnots Cathedral (which translates as heavenly angels). This circular sanctuary built in the middle of the seventh century by the Catholicos (bishop of the Armenian Apostolic Church) Nerses III, nicknamed the builder, had remained buried until it was discovered in the early twentieth century. Dedicated to the founder and patron saint of the Armenian church, Gregory the Illuminator, the site today houses the foundations and part of the old cathedral, whose interior is decorated with stunning mosaics, as well as the remains of the Catholicos' palace and a wine cellar. Then continue westwards on the M5 again over to Vagharshapat and its fabulous monastic-cathedral complex, known as the Armenian Vatican as it's the headquarters of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Built between 301 and 303 and called the Mother See, it was the world's first Christian cathedral, as this is where the new religion was first adopted. Composed of several buildings or groups of buildings dating from the fourth to the seventeenth centuries, such as the churches of Saint Hripsime (618), Saint Gayane (630), Shoghakat (7th century) and Astvatsatsin, which means Mother God (seventh century), the religious complex of Echmiadzin and the archaeological site of Zvartnots were listed as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000. Once you've finished exploring this architectural wonder, head north on the M3 and drive the fifteen kilometres up to the small village of Oshakan, one of the oldest in the area. It was already important in the times of the Arshakuni (Arsacid) Dynasty that governed the fate of the kingdom of Armenia from the year 54 until the year 428. This is the burial place of Saint Mesrop Mashtots, the creator of the Armenian alphabet in 405 BC, in the eponymous cathedral built between 1875 and 1879 by Catholicos George IV of Armenia. This alphabet was designed in order to make the Bible more accessible to Armenians and to spread the new religion known as Christianity. The entrance to the church is decorated with thirty-six khachkars, traditional Armenian engraved cross-stones (listed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity), which represent the thirty-six original letters of the Armenian alphabet created by Saint Mesrop. Near Oshakan is the Armenian Alphabet Monument, built in 2005 to commemorate the 1,600th anniversary of its creation. Return to Yerevan by taking the Ashtarak Highway (AH81) eastbound for the twenty-eight kilometres that separate it from Oshakan.

Overnight stay in Yerevan.

DAY 5 · YEREVAN - MOUNT ARARAT - KHOR VIRAP MONASTERY - VAYOTS DZOR PROVINCE - NORAVANK MONASTERY - YEGHEGNADZOR - YEGHEGIS - YEREVAN

The fourth part of the road trip brings you closer to the legendary Mount Ararat, part of the historical and religious heart of the country. Located forty-two kilometres south of Yerevan on the E117, this impressive landscape was the first sacred land of Christian Armenia and is considered the resting place of Noah's Ark. And although it has been part of Turkey since the 1920s, Mount Ararat still appears in many photos seen in the country because of its profound symbolism. On the well-known Ararat Plain, at the foot of this majestic mountain that soars 5,165 metres above sea level, you can visit the stunning Khor Virap Monastery, a very popular destination in Armenia located just a few metres from the Turkish border. Armenian for deep dungeon, as Gregory the Illuminator was imprisoned here for thirteen years, Khor Virap was founded in the seventh century and rebuilt in the thirteenth century. This complex, classified as a historical monument by the Armenian authorities, features the main Saint Astvatsatsin Church and a smaller one dedicated to Saint Gregory, several outbuildings, fortified walls and typical elements such as crosses, rosettes and commemorative discs of engraved stone. (Note: Check prices and opening times. Admission not included). Continue east towards the 'marz' (province in Armenian) of Vayots Dzor, where you'll find the Noravank Monastery, located about eighty-five kilometres away from Khor Virap. A major religious and cultural centre from its construction in the 12th century until the end of its activity in the 19th century, this complex is perched on a rocky mound more than 1,500 metres above sea level in a spectacular gorge carved out by Amaghu River. The importance of this architectural landmark was endorsed when both the Monastery and the Amaghu Valley were declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 2000. To the northeast and very close to Noravank is the town of Yeghegnadzor, famous for the wine produced here. It's also home to the fascinating Geological Museum of Yeghegnadzor, opened in 2002, and the regional headquarters of the History Museum of Armenia, the Matenadaran Institute of Ancient Manuscripts and the National Gallery of Armenia, so you can truly soak up the culture of this wonderful Transcaucasian country. (Note: Check the websites for prices and times. Not included). Keep heading north on the M10 until you reach your next destination, the village of Yeghegis and its incomparable historical legacy. A major crossing point of the "Silk Road", which in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries turned it into one of Armenia's most important cities, Yeghegis cherishes treasures such as a medieval Jewish cemetery and Zorats Church. The breathtaking cemetery is full of tombstones with inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic dating from 1266 to 1346. Meanwhile, Zorats dates back to the tenth century and has a unique structure among Armenian temples, as it was built to bless soldiers before they would leave for battle...on horseback! Once you're ready, it's time to head back to the Armenian capital. Take the H10 first and then the E117 to cover the 140 kilometres between the legendary Yeghegis and Yerevan.

Overnight stay in Yerevan.

DAY 6 · YEREVAN - NORATUS CEMETERY - ORBELIAN'S CARAVANSERAI - SEVANAVANK MONASTERY - HAGHPAT MONASTERY - SANAHIN MONASTERY - DILIJAN AREA

Today you'll really get to experience the famous "Silk Road" by visiting the medieval Orbelian's Caravanserai, built along the Selim Pass. A roadside inn for merchants travelling the most famous trade route in history, it was built in 1332 by Prince Orbelian Chesar in the true heyday of the "Silk Road". To get to this historic site, head eastbound on the M4 until you reach the western shore of the spectacular Lake Sevan, the second largest high-altitude lake in the world. Along with Lake Van (currently in Turkish territory) and Lake Urmia (now in Iran), Lake Sevan is part of the so-called 'Seas of Armenia', a nickname inherited from the times when the three lakes were part of the historic kingdom of Armenia. Then take the M10 southbound skirting Lake Sevan until you reach Orbelian's Caravanserai. Halfway along, you'll come across Noratus Cemetery, which you can visit on the way to Vardenyats Mountain Pass, or when you head towards the Dilijan region, located north of Lake Sevan, where you'll spend the night. Noratus Cemetery boasts the highest concentration of khachkars in the whole country (a total of 900) and offers a self-guided itinerary with signs that explain the key details of the pieces. Once you've explored Orbelian's Caravanserai and Noratus Cemetery, head northbound on the M10 up to Sevanavank Monastery (or Monastery of the Holy Apostles of Sevan), located about a hundred kilometres away from the caravanserai and right beside the town of Sevan. This monastic complex, dating from the year 874, is one of the most-visited tourist attractions in the country not just for its historical importance, but also for its excellent views over the great Armenian lake and the imposing mountain ranges in the environs. Sevan is also one of the gateways to the stunning area of Dilijan, which is home to two further UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin. Important cultural centres during the Kiurikian dynasty, which ruled these lands between the tenth and thirteenth centuries, both monasteries perfectly depict the heyday of Armenian religious architecture, where Byzantine and Caucasian elements converge. What's more, Sanahin was famous for many years for its school of calligraphers and illuminators.

Overnight stay in the Dilijan area.

DAY 7 · DILIJAN AREA - DILIJAN - DILIJAN NATIONAL PARK - GOSHAVANK AND HAGHARTSIN MONASTERIES - IJEVAN - DILIJAN AREA

Spend the morning exploring the so-called "Armenian Switzerland", the town of Dilijan and the nearby surroundings, famous for their incredible natural landscapes. Don't miss the main square, adorned with a large fountain and the tower hall as a backdrop. Located to the northeast of Yerevan, the town is embraced by densely-forested valleys, imposing mountains and verdant meadows that make up Dilijan National Park, the most wooded area of Armenia. During the Soviet domination, it was a tourist centre widely revered for its medicinal springs and its well-preserved traditional habitats. Within the Dilijan National Park are the monastery complexes of Haghartsin and Goshavank, as well as the small Lake Parz. The first of these beautiful monasteries is located along a wooded gorge some thirteen kilometres northeast of the town of Dilijan, which you can reach by taking the M4 first and then the turn-off onto Haghartsin Road (H50). It's considered the largest cultural centre of medieval Armenia, and is one of the few perfectly preserved examples of local architecture from between the tenth and thirteenth centuries. And twenty kilometres southeast of Haghartsin Monastery is the monastic complex of Goshavank. (Note: Check prices and opening times. Admission not included). Built in the twelfth century, it houses some of the finest examples of the delicate cross-stones carved by local artisans in the Middle Ages. When you've finished exploring both monasteries, head east for about twenty-five kilometres on the M4 towards the town of Ijevan. Legend has it that two thousand years ago King Artavasdes I gathered only the beautiful girls and the handsome boys from all over Armenia, so that later they would get married and settle in the newly established town. Myths aside, though, the area has been a resting point on the trade route between the Near East and the Northern Caucasus since the beginning of time. Ultimately, the town of Karavansara, whose name came from the roadside inns dotted along the Silk Road, was founded in 1780 straddling both sides of the River Agstev. In 1919, during the Democratic Republic of Armenia (or First Republic of Armenia), the town changed its name to Iljevan, which remains to this day. Unlike the rustic Dilijan, the town of Iljevan is reminiscent of the typical Armenian settlement with a Soviet past: austere, practical and with several colossal construction projects left half finished, such as the failed attempt to emulate the Yerevan Cascade. Take a drive around the surroundings and venture into the Sanctuary Park, a protected wildlife area that is perfect for adventure activities such as ziplining, mountain biking or "canopy walking". (Note: Check the websites for prices and times. Not included).

Overnight stay in the Dilijan area.

DAY 8 · DILIJAN AREA - GARNI - GEGHARD MONASTERY - YEREVAN

Today it's back over towards Yerevan to discover some of the fascinating attractions outside the city. For example, the town of Garni and its fabulous Greco-Roman style temple. Leaving from Dilijan, take the M4 southbound for about 110 kilometres. The Temple of Garni, consecrated to the god Mitra and dating from the 1st century, is the only pagan temple in the entire Caucasus region and is a must-see on any trip to Armenia. Flattened by an earthquake in 1679, and then rebuilt between 1969 and 1974, its excellent location commands breathtaking views to immortalise with your camera. (Note: Check prices and opening times. Admission not included). Some three hundred metres below the temple is Garni Gorge, one of the most spectacular yet unknown natural attractions in Armenia. Formed by basalt stone and furrowed by the Azat River, this geological feature boasts imposing walls split into dozens of metres of hexagonal columns. A true marvel! If you continue eastbound on the H3, you'll reach Geghard Monastery after just ten kilometres. This is another of the most important tourist attractions in the country, as along with the Upper Azat Valley it was listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site in 2000. Explore the nooks and crannies of this architectural wonder carved in the rock during the fourth century by the omnipresent Gregory the Illuminator. You won't regret it! Return to Yerevan on H3 westbound and drive the 40 kilometers away that separate the Armenian capital from Geghard Monastery.

Overnight stay in Yerevan.

DAY 9 · YEREVAN - CITY OF ORIGIN

The activities on the last day of the road trip depend on the departure time of your flight back home.

If you still have a few hours to continue enjoying Yerevan, we recommend a visit to its popular covered Central Market located on Mashtots Avenue. Rectangular in shape and with a clear Persian style, its characteristic semicircular bronze entrance leads you into a hubbub of stalls selling local products with intoxicating aromas. Another recommendation is the Vernissage, a fantastic open-air art market located along Aram and Buzand streets. You can buy different pieces of Armenian handicrafts here.

Arrival at the airport with enough time to drop off your rental car and flight back to the city of origin.

Arrival. End of the trip and our services.

Your trip includes

Your trip includes

- ✓ Return flight.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Yerevan.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Yerevan.
- ✓ Stay in selected hotel in Dilijan.
- ✓ Selected meal plan in Dilijan.
- ✓ Rent-a-car.

Your trip doesn't include

- ✗ Possible toll charges.
- ✗ Insolvency protection.

Destinations Visited

Yerevan



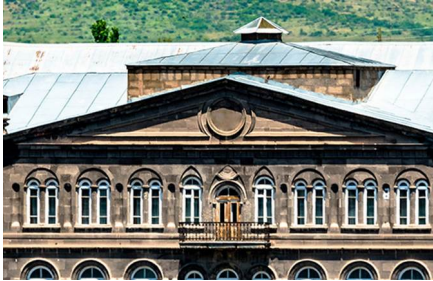
Zvartnots



Vagharshapat



Oshakan



Yeghegnadzor



Haghpat



Dilijan



Ijevan



Garni



Important remarks

- Driving in Armenia. 1. It's compulsory to wear seat belts in the front of the car. 2. Speed limits. 2.1 Built-up areas up to 60 km/h. 2.2 Single carriageways up to 90 km/h. 2.3 Motorways up to 110 km/h. 3. A red warning triangle and a reflective yellow vest must always be carried in your rental car in the event of breakdown or accident. 4. Children under twelve must sit in the back. 5. Away from the big cities, make sure you have a full tank as there may be stretches with few petrol stations. 6. When planning your time at the wheel each day, bear in mind that the main roads are in good conditions, but some of the secondary roads may not be in the best state of repair and signalling may sometimes be poor.

- Triple rooms in Europe are generally rooms with twin beds or a double, in which a folding bed is installed to accommodate the third person. Due to the inconvenience this causes, we advise against using this option as far as possible.

- Check-in time at the hotel on the day of arrival depends on each establishment, but in no case will it be before 3:00 p.m., unless otherwise indicated.

- The proposed excursions and tours for each day are purely suggestions, as you can tailor the trip to suit your times, tastes and needs.

- A credit card is considered a guarantee, so sometimes you will need one for check-in at hotels.

- Hotels usually have cots available. Otherwise, babies will have to share a bed with an adult.

- To pick up your rental car, you'll need a credit (not debit) card in the name of the person who made the booking, who must also be the named driver of the vehicle.

- Consult the necessary documentation to enter the destinations visited and for transit in the countries where air stopovers are made.