

Armenia

GENERAL INFO

Area

29743 km² (similar to the Belgium and Albania's territory sizes).

Population

Population – as of January 1, 2018, the permanent population of Armenia (calculated based on the census of 2011) is 2 972 732.

Ethnic Breakdown

Armenians (98,1%), Yezidis, Russians, Assyrians, Ukrainians, Kurds, Greeks, and Others (According to the 2011 census results).

Religion

Christian (Armenian Apostolic Church), the majority of the population profess to be Christian.

Climate

Dry-land.



GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Armenia is located in the Southwest Caucasus region, at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. It is a landlocked country bordered by Georgia to the north, Azerbaijan to the east, Iran to the south, and Turkey to the west.

Armenia's land area is 29,800 square kilometers (11,505 square miles), and the population is 3.3 million. The maximum distance from north to south is 360 kilometers, and from east to west 200 kilometers. About five percent of the country's territory is covered by lakes, the biggest of which is Lake Sevan. Armenia's borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan have been closed since the 1990s due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Automobile roadways and railways via Georgia and Iran are the principal land routes to/from the country, and the aviation system features extensive international network coverage (for more details see the Flight Connectivity section of the Guide). The nearest seaport is Poti in Georgia, through which Armenia has access to the countries of the Black Sea region.

The new railroad project connecting Armenia to Iran will provide routes all the way out to the Persian Gulf, providing access to neighboring Central Asia, the Middle East, India and China. Currently the railway network extends northwest to Port Poti in Georgia. Armenia also has a highway with Iran.



CLIMATE

Armenia has a tremendously diverse climate for a relatively small geographical area, from the sunny Ararat valley with its bountiful fruit gardens, to the snowcapped mountain ranges that serrate the land. Several microclimates exist because of the country's mountainous terrain. A sunny and hot day in the Ararat Valley may at the same time feature quite brisk weather near the windswept mountainous lakes, and snow may fall in the upper regions of Mount Aragats. The rolling hills and high fests seem sculpted especially for rugged cross-country skiing in the winter, while Lake Sevan in the summertime is a wonderful destination for swimming, sunbathing, and relaxation. Average temperatures in the country's capital, Yerevan, range from -5°C in winter to 30°C in summer, although the thermometer may fall to -10°C and rise to over 40°C. Average precipitation ranges from less than 12 inches per year in the lower Arax river valley to about 36 inches per year at the highest altitudes. In Armenia, an average of 280 days a year are sunny.



FLORA AND FAUNA

Armenia is a popular destination for nature-based tourism. People looking forward to experiencing natural scenery, through outdoor activities while caring about the sustainability and the impact on the environment of these activities, will find their happy place in Armenia. Whether you're interested in bird-watching, stargazing, camping or photography, Armenia has a lot to offer.

Despite Armenia's relatively small geographic size, the country is home to diverse fauna and flora. Before transitioning to the worship of national deities, Armenians were nature worshippers and upon visiting the country it becomes clear why. The beautiful mountainous terrains allow for creation of diverse habitats. The country is full of forests and generally wooded areas. Overall woods occupy over 12% of the area of the country, mostly concentrated in the northeast and southeast. Armenian flora covers over 3,200 species, out of which 106 are endemic to the area.

Armenia is an extremely important area for migratory animals. The area of the country is also where most of the world's domesticated animals originated, including animals such as mouflon and sheep. Bird-watchers from all around the world come to Armenia due to its diverse wildlife. Over 372 bird species have been recorded in Armenia, out of which over 240 species breed here.



NATURAL RESOURCE

Armenia is a mountainous country, and therefore rich in mineral resources such as iron, copper, molybdenum, lead, zinc, gold, silver, antimony, aluminum, as well as other scarce and hard-to-find metals. Iron and copper ore, especially, are exported in significant volume. More than 670 solid mineral mines, including 30 metal mines, are currently registered in the state inventory of mineral resources. About 400 of these are exploited, including 22 metal mines: Seven copper-molybdenum mines, four copper mines (operated in the southern part of the country in Kadjaran, Dastakert and Agarak), 14 gold mines (operated in Soda and Meghradzor) and gold-poly-metallic mines, two poly-metallic mines, two iron ore mines, and one aluminum mine. Armenia's territory is divided into three zones with metal deposits: Alaverdi-Kapan, Pambak-Zangezur and Sevan-Amasia. Armenia also possesses some of the world's most diverse non-metallic minerals, including almost all types of mineral rocks. Other resources such as tuff, perlite, pumice-stone, zeolite, scoria, basalts, granites, nepheline syenite, and marble are widely used in construction. Non-metallic mines for minerals such as quartzite, carbonate, zeolite, scoria and pumice-stone, clay, bentonite, diatomite, gypsum, also comprise a significant part of Armenia's mining sector. Armenia is rich in mineral water as well. The cities of Jermuk, Dilijan, Bjni, Arzni, Hankavan, and Sevan are well known in the world for both the medicinal and organoleptic qualities of their waters.

INDUSTRY



The Armenian economy has traditionally been driven by industrial investment. During the Soviet era, Armenia had one of the best-developed industrial sectors in the USSR. The industrial sector is still considered as one of the most important sectors of the economy, with a 15% share of GDP in 2010. The fastest-growing Armenian industries include mining and metallurgy, food production, pharmacology, cloth manufacturing and jewelry. There is also great potential for information technology, light industry, chemicals, biotechnology, machinery, instrument-making, electrical, and construction materials.

ECONOMY

A. FOOD PROCESSING

Agriculture is a major sector for the Armenian economy, accounting for 18% of the country's GDP for the years 2006-2010. Armenia has a fast-growing food processing sector with excellent export potential based on ecologically-friendly "green" agro-products. As one of the country's most developed sectors, and the second in terms of export volumes (14% of the total), food processing plays an important role in the economy. The most important products are canned food production, and alcoholic beverage production, especially wine and brandy made from locally grown grapes. Armenia's



principal food processing exports are alcoholic beverages, fish, cheese, canned fruits, jams, coffee, and mineral water. Some exporters also ship frozen fruits and vegetables. Armenia's soil and climate conditions, high altitude, and limited use of chemical fertilizers account for flavorful produce. This produce can be successfully introduced to international markets with modern processing and packaging technologies that currently used to export such Armenian products as soft drinks, mineral water, cigarettes, alcohol, canned fruits and vegetables, milk and dairy products, meat and meat products, and mixed feed.

B. MINING AND QUARRYING

The subsurface of Armenia is rich in certain mineral resources. More than 480 deposits of a range of mineral resources have been discovered here. Mining is a key contributor to the Armenian economy and is one of the fastest growing export sectors in recent years, with ores and metals accounting for over half of the country's exports. Armenia has rich deposits of iron, copper, molybdenum, lead, zinc, gold, silver, aluminum, and nepheline syenite. Currently there are seven copper-molybdenum mines, three copper mines, thirteen gold and gold-polymetallic mines, two polymetallic mines and two iron-ore mines operating in Armenia. Environmental safety is among the key challenges for the sector. In view of this, the state will give preference to the use of most up-to-date and safe technologies when approving the mine development programs.

C. ENERGY

Energy is one of Armenia's most fully operational and cost-effective sectors, and the country is nearly self-sufficient in energy. There is an independent energy regulator for the electricity, natural gas and heating sectors, and significant progress has been made in streamlining the licensing process, eliminating cross-subsidies and establishing cost-effective pricing and tariff structures. Lacking industrial fuel resources, Armenia places a high emphasis on development of its own renewable energy sources, such as hydro, wind and solar energy.

D. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY/TELECOMMUNICATIONS

The information technology (IT) and telecommunications sector is one of the most productive in Armenia. The Government has declared IT a priority and is supporting it through various institutions, such as the IT Development and Support Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, and the Enterprise Incubator Foundation. Armenia's IT and telecommunications industry has already attracted global brands such as Synopsis, which has located a considerable part of their operations in Armenia, Microsoft, National Instruments, Mentor Graphics, Ericson, and Orange. Currently, there are more than 300 IT and telecom companies in Armenia.

E. CHEMICAL/PHARMACEUTICAL

Thanks to its tradition of producing high quality chemical products, over the last decade Armenia's pharmaceuticals industry has grown into one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy. Exports account for 57% of output, and average annual export growth has been 24% from 2003. Such growth is based on a skilled and highly educated workforce, enthusiastic and effective entrepreneurs, and significant domestic and foreign direct investment.

TRANSPORTATION

Roadway System

Roads provide access to employment, markets, education, and health services, and thus are crucial for economic development. Since 1990, road networks have expanded in all developing countries in Asia except Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan. China and India account for almost two-thirds of the roads in Asia. Armenia has slightly less than 8,000 kilometers of roads, 94 percent of which are paved; however, some of the paved roads need major rehabilitation.

Rail Transportation

Armenia's railway network plays a crucial role in providing mobility for people and freight. The network includes the metro system that serves commuters in Yerevan. The metro has limited coverage and in recent years has lost some of its market share to minibuses.

Most of Armenia's railways were built during the Soviet era. Central planning dictated that rail would be the primary mode of transport, so little emphasis was placed on costs and market needs. The system was designed to handle large traffic volumes and, in some cases, served remote areas. The former Soviet Union rarely updated its railway technology after the 1960's.

The railway system has seen its operations shrink 10-fold since independence, primarily due to the closing of Armenia's borders with Azerbaijan and Turkey. The growing mining industry in southern Armenia has become a major market for freight service, as the mine output needs to be transported to ports on the Black Sea. About 370

km. of 732 km. network are fully operational. Armenia relies on its railway system for about 70 percent of imports and exports, but there used to be a lot more passengers and freight.

The former Soviet Union rarely updated its railway technology after the 1960's

Since June 2008, a subsidiary of Russian Railways, the South Caucasus Railway, has been operating the Armenian rail system. They have invested more than \$250 million in upgrading the infrastructure and modernizing the system.

In 2012, a contract was awarded to Dubai-based Rasia FZE (a Rasia Group investment company) for the feasibility, design, financing, construction, and operation of a new railway link between Armenia and Iran. The Armenia-Iran railway is called the Southern Armenia Railway project. The feasibility study results indicated that the route will be 305 km. long and would cost approximately \$3.5 billion to build. As the key missing link in the International North-South Transport Corridor, the Southern Armenia Railway would create the shortest transportation route from the ports of the Black Sea to the ports of the Persian Gulf.

Air Transportation

Air traffic has increased significantly in much of East, South, and Southeast Asia since 1990. There were smaller increases, and even some declines in air traffic in Central and West Asia and the Pacific. Azerbaijan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Turkmenistan had lower levels of air traffic in 2012 than in 1990. However, Armenia had a 20 percent growth of air passenger flow in 2014.

Armenia has three main airports: Zvartnots, Shirak, and Erebuni. Zvartnots Airport is the principal gateway to Armenia. The new, two-story terminal building that was built by a private developer for \$173 million is able to handle about 3.2 million passengers a year, which should be able to accommodate the ever-growing demand until 2030.

In October 2013, Armenia passed the “open skies” policy for air transportation. According to this policy, the civil aviation in the country is now open to all airlines that meet international standards. It was expected that this policy would spur economic development and the reduction of airfares. However, the latest data indicates that the number of operating air carriers in Armenia has decreased from 35 to 27 since the launch of the “open skies” policy. Czech Airlines and Alitalia are two of the major airlines that stopped flying to Armenia, and Etihad Airlines is planning to discontinue its operation in September 2015.

Moscow airports are becoming the main air hub for Armenian passengers as a result of three Russian airlines—Aeroflot, Transavia, and S7—providing regular daily flights. Approximately 50 percent of flights from Zvartnots Airport land in the Russian capital.

CULTURE AND TRADITION

Armenia is a land rich with cultural heritage and traditions. While some traditions date back thousands of years, like its people, they have evolved to benefit the modern age and are still celebrated today. The culture of Armenia encompasses many elements that are based on the geography, language, faith, literature, architecture, dance, and music of the people.

Christianity in Armenia

Armenia is the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as a state religion in 301 A.D. Christianity was introduced into Armenia much earlier, during the first century (60-68 A.D.) by two of Christ's disciples Bartholomew and Thaddeus. They came to Armenia from Asorestan and Cappadocia. They baptized stately families and common people, and are known as the "First Illuminators of the Armenian World."



Armenian Music

One of the most important parts of Armenian culture is the music, which has brought new forms of music in recent years, while maintaining traditional styles too. This is evidenced by the world-class Armenian Philharmonic Orchestra that performs at the beautifully refurbished Aram Khachaturian Concert Hall in the Yerevan Opera House, where one can also attend a full season of

opera. In addition, several chamber ensembles are highly regarded for their musicianship, including the Komitas Quartet, Hover Chamber Choir, National Chamber Orchestra of Armenia and the Serenade Orchestra.

Armenian Language

The Armenian language dates to the early period of Indo-European differentiation and dispersion some 5000 years ago, or perhaps as early as 7,800 years ago according to some recent research. Trade and conquest



forced the language to change, adding new words into people's vocabulary. Literature and books written in Armenian appeared by the 4th century. The written language of that time, called classical Armenian or Grabar, remained the Armenian literary language, with various changes, until the 19th century. Meanwhile, spoken Armenian developed independently of the written language. Many dialects appeared when Armenian communities became separated by geography or politics, and not all of these dialects are mutually intelligible.

Armenian Dance



The Armenian dance heritage has been one of the oldest, richest and most varied in the Near East. From the fifth to the third millennia B.C., in the higher regions of Armenia there are rock paintings of scenes of country dancing. These dances were probably accompanied by certain kinds of songs or musical instruments. In the 5th century Moses of Khorene (Movsés Khorenats'i) himself had heard of how the old descendants of Aram (Armenians) make mention of these things (epic tales) in the ballads for the lyre and their songs and dances.

Armenian Literature

Literature began in Armenia around 401 A.D, when Mesrop Mashtots created the Armenian alphabet. This event which took place in the 5th century is considered to be one of the most important turning points of Armenian Literature. The majority of the literary arts were created by Moses of Khorene. Through the years the elements of literature have changed as the stories and myths were passed on through generations.



Armenian Art

The National Art Gallery in Yerevan has more than 16,000 works that date back to the Middle Ages, which indicate Armenia's rich tales and stories of the times. It houses paintings by many European masters as well. The Modern Art Museum, the Children's Picture Gallery, and the Martiros Saryan Museum are only a few of the other noteworthy collections of fine art on display in Yerevan. Moreover, many private galleries are in operation, with many more opening every year, featuring rotating exhibits and sales.



Armenian Architecture



Classical Armenian architecture is divided into four separate periods. The first Armenian churches were built between the 4th and 7th Century, beginning when Armenia converted to Christianity, and ending with the Arab invasion of Armenia. The early churches were mostly simple basilicas, but some with side apses. By the 5th century the typical cupola cone in the center had become widely used. By the 7th century, centrally-planned churches had been built and a more complicated niche buttress and radiating Hrip'simé style had formed. By the time of the Arab invasion, most of what we now know as classical Armenian

architecture had formed.

Carpet Weaving in Armenia

Though women historically dominated carpet-weaving in Armenian communities, several prominent carpet-weavers in Karabakh are known to have been men, and in some cases whole families took up the art. The oldest extant Armenian carpet from the region, referred to as Artsakh during the medieval era, is from the village of Banants (near Gandzak) and dates to the early 13th century. The first time that the Armenian word for carpet, gorg, was used in historical sources was in a 1242-1243 Armenian inscription on the wall of the Kaptavan Church in Artsakh.



Lacemaking in Armenia

Like laces, Armenian needle lace seems to be an obvious descendant of net making. Where laces adds decorative stitches to a net ground, Armenian needle lace involves making the net itself decorative. There is some archaeological evidence suggesting the use of lace in prehistoric Armenia and the prevalence of pre-Christian symbology in traditional designs would certainly suggest a pre-Christian root for this art form. In contrast to Europe where lace was the preserve of the nobility, in Armenia it decorated everything from traditional headscarves to lingerie.



TOURISM

Tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors of the economy. With its rich historical, cultural and natural resources, Armenia has the potential to offer attractive and competitive tourism products and high-quality services. The number of tourist visits to the country has grown annually by 25% in recent years. In 2011, the number of tourist visits was around 800,000. Armenia's tourism policy objectives area are established by the law of the Republic of Armenia "On Tourism and Touristic Activities" and the Tourism Development Plan.

Top Destinations

Garni Temple

Churches and Monasteries.

The symbol of pre-Christian Armenia – Garni is a pagan temple that sits on a cliff overlooking a ravine surrounded by mountains, making it one of the most iconic attractions in Armenia.



Holy Mother of God Church, Areni
Churches and Monasteries

The 1321 church was commissioned by the same Bishop Hovhannes. It was designed by the architect, sculptor and miniaturist Momik

Geghard Monastery

Churches and Monasteries

The medieval monastery in the Kotayk province of Armenia is surrounded by cliffs and partially carved out of the adjacent mountain. It is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



Hayravank

Churches and Monasteries

Located along the southwest shores of Lake Sevan, Hayravank is a 9th to 12th century Armenian monastery. There are several magnificent khachkars in the churchyard and a small souvenir shop.

Havuts Tar

Churches and Monasteries

This formidable 11th century walled monastery stands half ruined on an outcrop across the Garni River gorge from the village of Goght.

