

Food & Wine Armenia

Day 1: Yerevan Trip

Armenia culinary adventure starts in Yerevan and in the morning we visit Yerevan History Museum housed by City Hall. This is an excellent introduction to the history of Yerevan, reputedly one of the oldest cities in the world to have been continuously inhabited. A walking tour of Yerevan center to explore layers of its history - medieval shrines hidden behind imposing Soviet-style façades, narrow streets of the old center with sunlight playing on its pink walls, Railway Station with an impressive monument of David of Sasun, national hero, Republic Square, Cascade and Mother Armenia, Opera House and Northern Avenue. Time to learn about Armenian food during a visit to Gum Market, wonder among the stalls piled with fresh, dried and marinated fruits and vegetables, say hello to the spices and herbs you will use during the days to come. No visit to Yerevan will be complete without the Brandy Factory. Wander in the cellars and among the oak barrels, see every step of the process from fresh grapes to the delicious, internationally acclaimed beverage; the visit concludes with brandy tasting. (B)

Day 2: Armenian Food Basics

We leave the frantic pace of Yerevan and drive east to the magnificent Temple of the Sun in Garni and the legendary Monastery of Spear in Geghard. Explore the mosaic ancient baths and ruins of the royal palace, immerse yourself in the atmosphere of this mythical place and examine remarkable cross stones carved into sheer rock. We head to Khosrov Nature Park, one of Armenia's best kept secrets and a true wilderness with a rich variety of plant and animal life. This is a prime hiking area where we enjoy a relaxing afternoon on foot actively experiencing nature and feasting our eyes on abundant birdlife in beautiful undisturbed forests. At the Park Lodge we are greeted by our host, Sergei and have our first cooking class starting with the basics - lavash, Armenian flat bread and tonri khorovats, Armenian traditional barbeque in wood burning oven in the ground. Learn about the techniques used in lavash making, roll up your sleeves and proceed to your first task of making your own bread; then marinate meat for the barbeque. Time for leisurely nature walks (guided by park team) before starting the barbeque-making: meat, fresh tomatoes, shiny eggplants and peppers take turns to become crusty, mouth-watering components of the finest barbeque you will ever have. Enjoy the dinner in the balmy and relaxed evening atmosphere of the reserve. (BD)

Day 3: Wine and Southern Armenia Cuisine

We start our culinary adventures in Southern Armenia with the visit to the royal prison of **Khor Virap** at the border with Turkey, proceed to explore **Noravank Monastery** in majestic Gorge of Bamboos. We are in the agricultural heart of Armenia and do not miss the chance to sample some of the fantastic produce during a private wine touring in maran cellars of a small winery in Aghavnadzor along with an organic lunch with fresh honey, butter, cheese and matsun yogurt – secrets behind Armenian longevity. Continue to meet Shirak, the owner of our hotel, where we start our hands-on cooking session focusing on traditional Southern Armenian cuisine characterized by extensive use of wild herbs and nuts in savory dishes. Begin preparing the evening meal, karshim, vegetarian soup made up from lentil and wild herbs along with some freshly prepared salads where the prominent ingredient is goat cheese. Dinner in the garden

of the hotel will consist of the dishes you have prepared accompanied by excellent local wine. (BLD)

Day 4: Lake Sevan

We set off for the “Pearl of Armenia”, **Lake Sevan** through rugged Selim Pass. Climbing steep paths, enjoying the wild Caucasian landscapes and ever-changing views of unspoilt nature and Lake Sevan below, reach the amazingly intact Selim Caravanserai, an important trading post on historic Silk Road. Check-in at your chalet-style hotel at the beach perfect for rest and relaxation. With water-skiing, swimming and boat trips on offer, you may find it hard to just lie on these paradise beaches. Historical and architectural gems are never far away - the ancient Sevanavank monastery on the peninsula, the Stone Garden with unique carved cross-stones and much more. (B)

Day 5: Armenian String Cheese and Rural Cooking

In the morning you will be expected at a cheese farm in the midst of beautiful rolling hills of Tavush. You will tour the farm and see the making of Armenian string cheese typical to the region; thereafter tasting of cheeses at various stages of maturation will be offered. A short drive to Odzun village well away from regular tourist trails. Welcome drinks on the terrace of the farmhouse and half day dedicated to Armenian cooking home-style. Today we prepare tolma, stuffed vegetable dish, the most famous of traditional Armenian food. In addition to grape leaves (winter tolma), we also stuff cabbage leaves, eggplants, tomatoes and peppers (summer tolma). Armine, the village headman’s wife, demonstrates techniques passed down through generations. Later traditional feast keff at the open terrace of the farm with breathtaking views. The head of the family will be your tamada (toastmaster) governing the event with age-old rules of **Caucasian hospitality**. (BD)

Day 6: Passionate about Fish, Northern Armenia

Welcome to Gyumri, a vivid town with a distinct urban fabric and friendly locals, famous for their indelible sense of humor. Walk at Kumayri historic district and feel the atmosphere of the 19th century Gyumri, the outpost of the Russian Empire in the Southern Caucasus. Visit the ethnography museum with its remarkable collection and continue to Marmashen Monastery, the impressive monastic complex on a picturesque shelf above Akhurian River. Late afternoon we drive to the house of Arthush, our host today, to enjoy our dinner in a warm family circle. Are you ready for another culinary experience? Trout in clay pot, Gyumri style, is on the menu today. Help your host marinate the fish and gradually uncover the secrets of the preparation of this fascinating dish. Even in the oven, it smells fantastic! Enjoy your dinner with white wine, prepare to laugh a lot as Artush shares anecdotes about his town and its inhabitants, favorite characters of Armenian jokes. (BD)

Day 7: Contemporary Armenian Cuisine

Today we have a free day in Yerevan, visit to Sunday Vernisage market, the largest souvenir market in the Caucasus is a recommended option. Back to hotel to unwind. Your gala cooking class with a focus on contemporary Armenian cuisine begins at 17.00 following by a farewell dinner at trendy Ararat Hall Restaurant. Your guide will be Sedrak Mamulyan, a well-known chef from Armenian Cuisine Revival Association. He has won a number of awards, wrote cookery books and featured on television programs, all of which has added to his fame and that of the restaurant. Dinner with matching wines. (BD)

Included:

- Accommodation for 7 nights (3 star hotels)
- Meals as specified in the itinerary
- AdvenTour tour leader/driver fluent in English, local cooks and chefs
- Cooking classes followed by meals with matching local wines
- All recipes of dishes prepared during cooking classes
- All transfers in comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles