Armenia

This article is about the modern-day republic. For other uses, see Armenia (disambiguation). “Hayastan” and “Hayasdan” redirect here. For other uses, see Hayastan (disambiguation).

Coordinates: 40°N 45°E / 40°N 45°E

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Armenia ( [aɪˈrɪmiːnə] /-ˈmiːniə/), Armenian: Հայաստան, tr. Hayastan, IPA: [hɑjɑsˈtɑn] (lower-alpha 1)), officially the Republic of Armenia (Armenian: Հայաստան, tr. Hayastani Hanrapet’yun), is a sovereign state in the South Caucasus region of Eurasia. Located in West Asia, on the “Armenian Highlands”, it is bordered by Turkey to the west, Georgia to the north, the de facto independent Nagorno-Karabakh Republic and Azerbaijan to the east, and Iran and Azerbaijan’s exclave of Nakhchivan to the south. The Republic of Armenia constitutes only one-tenth of historical Armenia.

Armenia is a unitary, multi-party, democratic nation-state with an ancient cultural heritage. Urartu was established in 860 BC and by the 6th century BC it was replaced by the Satrapy of Armenia. In the 1st century BC the Kingdom of Armenia reached its height under Tigranes the Great. Armenia became the first state in the world to adopt Christianity as its official religion. In between the late 3rd century to early years of the 4th century, the state became the first Christian nation. The official date of state adoption of Christianity is 301 AD. The ancient Armenian kingdom was split between the Byzantine and Sasanian Empires around the early 5th century. Under the Bagratuni dynasty, the Bagratid Kingdom of Armenia was restored in the 9th century. Declining due to the wars against the Byzantines, the kingdom fell in 1045 and Armenia was soon after invaded by the Seljuk Turks. An Armenian principality and later a kingdom Cilician Armenia was located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea between the 11th and 14th centuries.

Between the 16th century and 19th century, the traditional Armenian homeland composed of Eastern Armenia and Western Armenia came under the rule of the Ottoman and Iranian empires, repeatedly ruled by either of the two over the centuries. By the 19th century, Eastern Armenia had been conquered by the Russian Empire, while most of the western parts of the traditional Armenian homeland remained under Ottoman rule. During World War I, Armenians living in their ancestral lands in the Ottoman Empire were systematically exterminated in the Armenian Genocide. In 1918, following the Russian Revolution, all non-Russian countries declared their independence after the Russian Empire ceased to exist, leading to the establishment of the First Republic of Armenia. By 1920, the state was incorporated into the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic, and in 1922 became a founding member of the Soviet Union. In 1936, the Transcaucasian state was dissolved, transforming its constituent states, including the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic, into full Union republics. The modern Republic of Armenia became independent in 1991 during the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

The Republic of Armenia recognises the Armenian Apostolic Church, the world’s oldest national church, as the country’s primary religious establishment. The unique Armenian alphabet was invented by Mesrop Mashtots in 405 AD. Armenia is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, the Council of Europe and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Armenia supports the de facto independent Nagorno-Karabakh Republic, which was proclaimed in 1991.

1 Etymology

Main article: Name of Armenia

The native Armenian name for the country is Հայաստան (Hayastan). The name in the Middle Ages was extended to Հայաստան (Hayastan), by addition of the Persian suffix -stan (place).

The name has traditionally been derived from Hayk (Հայ), the legendary patriarch of the Armenians and a great-great-grandson of Noah, who, according to the 5th-century AD author Moses of Chorene, defeated the Babylonian king Bel in 2492 BC and established his nation in the Ararat region. The further origin of the name is uncertain. It is also further postulated that the name Hayk comes from one of the two confederated, Hittite vassal states—the Ḫayaša-Atzii (1600–1200 BC).

The exonym Armenia is attested in the Old Persian Behistun Inscription (515 BC) as Arminia (Armenia (disambiguation))
The ancient Greek terms Ἀρμενία (Armenia) and Ἀρμενίων (Arménioi, “Armenians”) are first mentioned by Hecataeus of Miletus (c. 550 BC – c. 476 BC).[34] Xenophon, a Greek general serving in some of the Persian expeditions, describes many aspects of Armenian village life and hospitality in around 401 BC. He relates that the people spoke a language that to his ear sounded like the language of the Persians.[35] According to the histories of both Moses of Chorene and Michael Chaminian, Armenia derives from the name of Aram, a lineal descendant of Hayk.[36][37] The world's earliest known leather shoe,[38] skirt,[39] and wine-producing facility.[40]

Several Bronze Age states flourished in the area of Greater Armenia, including the Hititites (at the height of their power), Mitanni (southwestern historical Armenia), and Hayasa-Azzi (1500–1200 BC). The Nairi people (12th to 9th centuries BC) and Urartu (1000–600 BC) successively established their sovereignty over the Armenian Highlands. Each of the aforementioned nations and tribes participated in the ethnogenesis of the Armenians.[41][42][43][44] A large cuneiform lapidary inscription found in Yerevan established that the modern capital of Armenia was founded in the summer of 782 BC by King Argishti I. Yerevan is the world's oldest city to have documented the exact date of its foundation.

During the late 6th century BC, the first geographical entity that was called Armenia by neighbouring populations was established under the Orontid Dynasty within the Achaemenid Empire, as part of the latter's territories. The kingdom became fully sovereign from the sphere of influence of the Seleucid Empire in 190 BC under King Artaxias I and began the rule of the Artaxiad dynasty. Armenia reached its height between 95 and 66 BC under Tigranes the Great, becoming the most powerful kingdom of its time east of the Roman Republic.

In the next centuries, Armenia was in the Persian Empire's sphere of influence during the reign of Tiridates I, the founder of the Arsacid dynasty of Armenia, which itself was a branch of the Parthian Empire. Throughout its history, the kingdom of Armenia enjoyed both periods of independence and periods of autonomy subject to contemporary empires. Its strategic location between two continents has subjected it to invasions by many peoples, including Assyria (under Ashurbanipal, at around 669–627 BC, the boundaries of Assyria reached as far as Armenia and the Caucasus Mountains),[45] Medes, Achaemenid Empire, Greeks, Parthians, Romans, Sassanian Empire, Byzantine Empire, Arabs, Seljuk Empire, Mongols, Ottoman Empire, the successive Safavid, Afsharid, and Qajar dynasties of Iran, and the Russians.

Religion in ancient Armenia was historically related to...
2.2 Middle Ages

Main article: Medieval Armenia

After the Sasanian period (428–636), Armenia emerged as Arminiya, an autonomous principality under the Umayyad Caliphate, reuniting Armenian lands previously taken by the Byzantine Empire as well. The principality was ruled by the Prince of Armenia, and recognised by the Caliph and the Byzantine Emperor. It was part of the administrative division/emirate Arminiya created by the Arabs, which also included parts of Georgia and Caucasian Albania, and had its centre in the Armenian city, Dvin. Arminiya lasted until 884, when it regained its independence from the weakened Abbasid Caliphate under Ashot I of Armenia.

The reemergent Armenian kingdom was ruled by the Bagratuni dynasty and lasted until 1045. In time, several areas of the Bagratid Armenia separated as independent kingdoms and principalities such as the Kingdom of Vaspurakan ruled by the House of Artsruni in the south, Kingdom of Syunik in the east, or Kingdom of Artsakh on the territory of modern Nagorno-Karabakh, while still recognising the supremacy of the Bagratid kings.

In 1045, the Byzantine Empire conquered Bagratid Armenia. Soon, the other Armenian states fell under Byzantine control as well. The Byzantine rule was short lived, as in 1071 the Seljuk Empire defeated the Byzantines and conquered Armenia at the Battle of Manzikert, establishing the Seljuk Empire. To escape death or servitude at the hands of those who had assassinated his relative, Gagik II of Armenia, King of Ani, an Armenian named Ruben I, Prince of Armenia, went with some of his countrymen into the gorges of the Taurus Mountains and then into Tarsus of Cilicia. The Byzantine governor of the palace gave them shelter where the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia was eventually established on 6 January 1198.
under Leo I, King of Armenia, a descendant of Prince Ruben.

Cilicia was a strong ally of the European Crusaders, and saw itself as a bastion of Christendom in the East. Cilicia’s significance in Armenian history and statehood is also attested by the transfer of the seat of the Catholicos of the Armenian Apostolic Church, the spiritual leader of the Armenian people, to the region.

The Seljuk Empire soon started to collapse. In the early 12th century, Armenian princes of the Zakarid family drove out the Seljuk Turks and established a semi-independent principality in northern and eastern Armenia known as Zakarid Armenia, which lasted under the patronage of the Georgian Kingdom. The Orbelian Dynasty shared control with the Zakarids in various parts of the country, especially in Syunik and Vayots Dzor, while the House of Hasan-Jalalyan controlled provinces of Artsakh and Utik as the Kingdom of Artsakh.

2.3 Early Modern era

Further information: Iranian Armenia (1502–1828), Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, and Russian Armenia

During the 1230s, the Mongol Empire conquered Zakarid Armenia and the remainder of Armenia. The Mongol invasions were soon followed by those of other Central Asian tribes such as the Kara Koyunlu, Timurid dynasty and Ağ Qoyunlu, which continued from the 13th century until the 15th century. After incessant invasions, each bringing destruction to the country, with time Armenia became weakened.

In the 16th century, the Ottoman Empire and the Safavid dynasty of Iran divided Armenia. From the early 16th century, both Western Armenia and Eastern Armenia fell to the Safavid Empire.\(^\text{[54]}\)\(^\text{[55]}\) Owing to the century long Turco-Iranian geopolitical rivalry that would last in Western Asia, significant parts of the region were frequently fought over between the two rivaling empires. From the mid 16th century with the Peace of Amasya, and decisively from the first half of the 17th century with the Treaty of Zuhab until the first half of the 19th century,\(^\text{[56]}\) Eastern Armenia was ruled by the successive Safavid, Afsharid and Qajar empires, while Western Armenia remained under Ottoman rule.

From 1604 Abbas I of Iran implemented a "scorched earth" policy in the region to protect his north-western frontier against any invading Ottoman forces, a policy which involved a forced resettlement of masses of Armenians outside of their homelands.\(^\text{[57]}\)

In the 1813 Treaty of Gulistan and the 1828 Treaty of Turkmenchay, following the Russo-Persian War (1804–13) and the Russo-Persian War (1826–28), respectively, the Qajar dynasty of Iran was forced to irrevocably cede Eastern Armenia, consisting of the Erivan and Karabakh Khanates, to Imperial Russia.\(^\text{[58]}\)\(^\text{[59]}\) While Western Armenia still remained under Ottoman rule, the Armenians were granted considerable autonomy within their own enclaves and lived in relative harmony with other groups in the empire (including the ruling Turks). However, as Christians under a strict Muslim social structure, Armenians faced pervasive discrimination. When they began pushing for more rights within the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Abdul Hamid II, in response, organised state-sponsored massacres against the Armenians between 1894 and 1896, resulting in an estimated death toll of 80,000 to 300,000 people. The Hamidian massacres, as they came to be known, gave Hamid international infamy as the “Red Sultan” or “Bloody Sultan.”\(^\text{[60]}\) This period is known as Russian Armenia.

During the 1890s, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, commonly known as Dashnaktsutyun, became active within the Ottoman Empire with the aim of unitifying the various small groups in the empire that were advocating for reform and defending Armenian villages from massacres that were widespread in some of the Armenian-populated areas of the empire. Dashnaktsutyun members also formed Armenian fedayi groups that defended Armenian civilians through armed resistance. The Dashnaks also worked for the wider goal of creating a “free, independent and unified” Armenia, although they sometimes set aside this goal in favour of a more realistic approach, such as advocating autonomy.

The Ottoman Empire began to collapse, and in 1908, the Young Turk Revolution overthrew the government of Sultan Hamid. In April 1909, the Adana massacre occurred in the Adana Vilayet of the Ottoman Empire resulting in the deaths of as many as 20,000–30,000 Armenians. The Armenians living in the empire hoped that the Committee of Union and Progress would change their second-class status. Armenian reform package (1914) was presented as a solution by appointing an inspector general over Armenian issues.\(^\text{[61]}\)
2.4 World War I and the Armenian Genocide

Main article: Armenian Genocide

When World War I broke out leading to confrontation between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire in the Caucasus and Persian Campaigns, the new government in Istanbul began to look on the Armenians with distrust and suspicion. This was because the Imperial Russian Army contained a contingent of Armenian volunteers. On 24 April 1915, Armenian intellectuals were arrested by Ottoman authorities and, with the Tehcir Law (29 May 1915), eventually a large proportion of Armenians living in Anatolia perished in what has become known as the Armenian Genocide.

The genocide was implemented in two phases: the wholesale killing of the able-bodied male population through massacre and subjection of army conscripts to forced labour, followed by the deportation of women, children, the elderly and infirm on death marches leading to the Syrian desert. Driven forward by military escorts, the deportees were deprived of food and water and subjected to periodic robbery, rape, and massacre.\[62\],[63] There was local Armenian resistance in the region, developed against the activities of the Ottoman Empire. The events of 1915 to 1917 are regarded by Armenians and the vast majority of Western historians to have been state-sponsored mass killings, or genocide.\[64\]

Turkish authorities deny the genocide took place to this day. The Armenian Genocide is acknowledged to have been one of the first modern genocides.\[65\],[66] According to the research conducted by Arnold J. Toynbee, an estimated 600,000 Armenians died during deportation from 1915–16. This figure, however, accounts for solely the first year of the Genocide and does not take into account those who died or were killed after the report was compiled on 24 May 1916.\[67\] The International Association of Genocide Scholars places the death toll at “more than a million”,\[68\] The total number of people killed has been most widely estimated at between 1 and 1.5 million.\[69\] Armenia and the Armenian diaspora have been campaigning for official recognition of the events as genocide for over 30 years. These events are traditionally commemorated yearly on 24 April, the Armenian Martyr Day, or the Day of the Armenian Genocide.

2.5 First Republic of Armenia

Main article: First Republic of Armenia

Although the Russian Caucasus Army of Imperial forces commanded by Nikolai Yudenic and Armenians in volunteer units and Armenian militia led by Andranik Oznian and Tovmas Nazarbekian succeeded in gaining most of Ottoman Armenia during World War I, their gains were lost with the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. At the time, Russian-controlled Eastern Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan attempted to bond together in the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. This federation, however, lasted from only February to May 1918, when all three parties decided to dissolve it. As a result, the Dashnaktsutyun government of Eastern Armenia declared its independence on 28 May as the First Republic of Armenia under the leadership of Aram Manukan.

The First Republic’s short-lived independence was fraught with war, territorial disputes, and a mass influx of refugees from Ottoman Armenia, bringing with them disease and starvation. The Entente Powers, appalled by the actions of the Ottoman government, sought to help the newly founded Armenian state through relief funds and other forms of support.

At the end of the war, the victorious powers sought to divide up the Ottoman Empire. Signed between the Allied and Associated Powers and Ottoman Empire at Sèvres on 10 August 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres promised to maintain the existence of the Armenian republic and to attach the former territories of Ottoman Armenia to it. Because the new borders of Armenia were to be drawn by United States President Woodrow Wilson, Ottoman Armenia was also referred to as “Wilsonian Armenia.”
In addition, just days prior, on 5 August 1920, Mihran Damadian of the Armenian National Union, the de facto Armenian administration in Cilicia, declared the independence of Cilicia as an Armenian autonomous republic under French protectorate.\[70\]

There was even consideration of possibly making Armenia a mandate under the protection of the United States. The treaty, however, was rejected by the Turkish National Movement, and never came into effect. The movement used the treaty as the occasion to declare itself the rightful government of Turkey, replacing the monarchy based in Istanbul with a republic based in Ankara.

Advance of the 11th Red Army into the city of Yerevan

In 1920, Turkish nationalist forces invaded the fledgling Armenian republic from the east. Turkish forces under the command of Kazım Karabekir captured Armenian territories that Russia had annexed in the aftermath of the 1877–1878 Russo-Turkish War and occupied the old city of Alexandropol (present-day Gyumri). The violent conflict finally concluded with the Treaty of Alexandropol on 2 December 1920. The treaty forced Armenia to disarm most of its military forces, cede all former Ottoman territory granted to it by the Treaty of Sèvres, and to give up all the “Wilsonian Armenia” granted to it at the Sèvres treaty. Simultaneously, the Soviet Eleventh Army, under the command of Grigoriy Ordzhonikidze, invaded Armenia at Karavansarai (present-day Ijevan) on 29 November. By 4 December, Ordzhonikidze’s forces entered Yerevan and the short-lived Armenian republic collapsed.

After the fall of the republic, the February Uprising soon took place in 1921, and led to the establishment of the Republic of Mountainous Armenia by Armenian forces under command of Garegin Nzhdeh on 26 April, which fought off both Soviet and Turkish intrusions in the Zangezur region of southern Armenia. After Soviet agreements to include the Syunik Province in Armenia’s borders, the rebellion ended and the Red Army took control of the region on 13 July.

2.6 Soviet Armenia

Main article: Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic

Armenia was annexed by Bolshevist Russia and along with Georgia and Azerbaijan, it was incorporated into the Soviet Union as part of the Transcaucasian SFSR (TFSR) on 4 March 1922.\[71\]\[72\] With this annexation, the Treaty of Alexandropol was superseded by the Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Kars. In the agreement, Turkey allowed the Soviet Union to assume control over Adjara with the port city of Batumi in return for sovereignty over the cities of Kars, Ardahan, and Iğdır, all of which were part of Russian Armenia.\[71\]\[72\]

The TFSR existed from 1922 to 1936, when it was divided up into three separate entities (Armenian SSR, Azerbaijan SSR, and Georgian SSR). Armenians enjoyed a period of relative stability under Soviet rule. They received medicine, food, and other provisions from Moscow, and communist rule proved to be a soothing balm in contrast to the turbulent final years of the Ottoman Empire. The situation was difficult for the church, which struggled under Soviet rule. After the death of Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin took the reins of power and began an era of renewed fear and terror for Armenians.\[73\]

Armenia was not the scene of any battles in World War II. An estimated 500,000 Armenians (nearly a third of the population) served in the military during the war, and 175,000 died.\[74\] Fears decreased when Stalin died in 1953 and Nikita Khruschev emerged as the Soviet Union’s new leader. Soon, life in Soviet Armenia began to see rapid improvement. The church, which suffered greatly under Stalin, was revived when Catholicos Vazgen I assumed the duties of his office in 1955. In 1967, a memorial to the victims of the
Armenian Genocide was built at the Tsitsernakaberd hill above the Hrazdan gorge in Yerevan. This occurred after mass demonstrations took place on the tragic event’s fiftieth anniversary in 1965.

During the Gorbachev era of the 1980s, with the reforms of Glasnost and Perestroika, Armenians began to demand better environmental care for their country, opposing the pollution that Soviet-built factories brought. Tensions also developed between Soviet Azerbaijan and its autonomous district of Nagorno-Karabakh, a majority-Armenian region separated by Stalin from Armenia in 1923. About 484,000 Armenians lived in Azerbaijan in 1970.\[75\] The Armenians of Karabakh demanded unification with Soviet Armenia. Peaceful protests in Yerevan supporting the Karabakh Armenians were met with anti-Armenian pogroms in the Azerbaijani city of Sumgait. Compounding Armenia’s problems was a devastating earthquake in 1988 with a moment magnitude of 7.2.\[76\]

Gorbachev’s inability to alleviate any of Armenia’s problems created disillusionment among the Armenians and fed a growing hunger for independence. In May 1990, the New Armenian Army (NAA) was established, serving as a defence force separate from the Soviet Red Army. Clashes soon broke out between the NAA and Soviet Internal Security Forces (MVD) troops based in Yerevan when Armenians decided to commemorate the establishment of the 1918 First Republic of Armenia. The violence resulted in the deaths of five Armenians killed in a shootout with the MVD at the railway station. Witnesses there claimed that the MVD used excessive force and that they had instigated the fighting.

Further firefights between Armenian militiamen and Soviet troops occurred in Sovetashen, near the capital and resulted in the deaths of over 26 people, mostly Armenians. The pogrom of Armenians in Baku in January 1990 forced almost all of the 200,000 Armenians in the Azerbaijani capital Baku to flee to Armenia.\[77\] On 23 August 1990, Armenia declared its sovereignty on its territory. On 17 March 1991, Armenia, along with the Baltic states, Georgia and Moldova, boycotted a nationwide referendum in which 78% of all voters voted for the retention of the Soviet Union in a reformed form.\[78\]

2.7 Restoration of independence

Main article: History of Armenia § Independent Armenia (1991-today)

On 21 September 1991, Armenia officially declared its independence after the failed August coup in Moscow. Levon Ter-Petrosyan was popularly elected the first President of the newly independent Republic of Armenia on 16 October 1991. He had risen to prominence by leading the Karabakh movement for the unification of the Armenian-populated Nagorno-Karabakh.\[79\] On 26 December 1991, the Soviet Union ceased to exist and Armenia’s independence was recognised.

Ter-Petrosyan led Armenia alongside Defense Minister Vazgen Sargsyan through the Nagorno-Karabakh War with neighbouring Azerbaijan. The initial post-Soviet years were marred by economic difficulties, which had their roots early in the Karabakh conflict when the Azerbaijani Popular Front managed to pressure the Azerbaijan SSR to instigate a railway and air blockade against Armenia. This move effectively crippled Armenia’s economy as 85% of its cargo and goods arrived through rail traffic.\[79\] In 1993, Turkey joined the blockade against Armenia in support of Azerbaijan.\[80\]

The Karabakh war ended after a Russian-brokered ceasefire was put in place in 1994. The war was a success for the Karabakh Armenian forces who managed to capture 16% of Azerbaijan’s internationally recognised territory including Nagorno-Karabakh itself.\[81\] Since then, Armenia and Azerbaijan have held peace talks, mediated by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The status of Karabakh has yet to be determined. The economies of both countries have been hurt in the absence of a complete resolution and Armenia’s borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan remain closed. By the time both Azerbaijan and Armenia had finally agreed to a ceasefire in 1994, an estimated 30,000 people had been killed and over a million had been displaced.\[82\] As it enters the 21st century, Armenia faces many hard-
3 Geography

Main article: Geography of Armenia

Armenia is a landlocked country in the geopolitical Transcaucasus (South Caucasus) region, that is located in the Southern Caucasus Mountains and their lowlands between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, and northeast of the Armenian Highlands. Armenia is bordered on the north by Georgia, the east by Azerbaijan; the south by Iran; and the southwest and west by Turkey. Armenia lies between latitudes 38° and 42° N, and meridians 43° and 47° E.

3.1 Topography

The Republic of Armenia has a territorial area of 29,743 square kilometres (11,484 sq mi). The terrain is mostly mountainous, with fast flowing rivers, and few forests. The climate is highland continental, which means that Armenia is subjected to hot summers and cold winters. The land rises to 4,090 metres (13,419 feet) above sea level at Mount Aragats, and no point is below 390 metres (1,280 ft) above sea level.

Mount Ararat

Mount Ararat, which was historically part of Armenia, is the highest mountain in the region. Now located in Turkey, but clearly visible in Armenia, it is regarded by the Armenians as a symbol of their land. Because of this, the mountain is present on the Armenian national emblem today.
3.2 Environment

Armenia has established a Ministry of Nature Protection and introduced taxes for air and water pollution and solid-waste disposal, whose revenues are used for environmental protection activities. Waste management in Armenia is underdeveloped, as no waste sorting or recycling takes place at Armenia’s 60 landfills.

Despite the availability of abundant renewable energy sources in Armenia (especially hydroelectric and wind power), the Armenian Government is working toward building a new nuclear power plant at Metsamor near Yerevan.\textsuperscript{[91]}

3.3 Climate

Main article: Climate of Armenia

The climate in Armenia is markedly continental. Summers are dry and sunny, lasting from June to mid-September. The temperature fluctuates between 22 and 36 °C (72 and 97 °F). However, the low humidity level mitigates the effect of high temperatures. Evening breezes blowing down the mountains provide a welcome refreshing and cooling effect. Springs are short, while autumns are long. Autumns are known for their vibrant and colourful foliage.

Winters are quite cold with plenty of snow, with temperatures ranging between −10 and −5 °C (14 and 23 °F). Winter sports enthusiasts enjoy skiing down the hills of Tsakhkadzor, located thirty minutes outside Yerevan. Lake Sevan, nestled up in the Armenian highlands, is the second largest lake in the world relative to its altitude, at 1,900 metres (6,234 ft) above sea level.

4 Government and politics

Main articles: Government of Armenia and Politics of Armenia

Politics of Armenia takes place in a framework of a semi-presidential representative democratic republic. According to the Constitution of Armenia, the President is the head of state and of a multi-party system. Executive power is exercised by the government. Legislative power is vested in both the government and parliament.

The unicameral parliament (also called the Azgayin Zhoghov or National Assembly) is controlled by a coalition of four political parties: the conservative Republican party, the Prosperous Armenia party, the rule of law party and the Armenian Revolutionary Federation. The main opposition party is Raffi Hovannisian’s Heritage party, which favours eventual Armenian membership in the European Union and NATO.

The Armenian government’s stated aim is to build a Western-style parliamentary democracy as the basis of its form of government. It has universal suffrage above the age of eighteen.

International observers of Council of Europe and US Department of State have questioned the fairness of Armenia’s parliamentary and presidential elections and constitutional referendum since 1995, citing polling deficiencies, lack of co-operation by the Electoral Commission, and poor maintenance of electoral lists and polling places. Freedom House categorised Armenia in its 2008 report as a “Semi-consolidated Authoritarian Regime” (along with Moldova, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia) and ranked Armenia 20th among 29 nations in transition, with a Democracy Score of 5.21 out of 7 (7 represents the lowest democratic progress).\textsuperscript{[92]}

Since 1999, Freedom House’s Democracy Score for Armenia has been steadily on the decline (from 4.79 to 5.21).\textsuperscript{[93]} Furthermore, Freedom House ranked Armenia as “partly free” in its 2007 report, though it did not categorise Armenia as an “electoral democracy”, indicating an absence of relatively free and competitive elections.\textsuperscript{[94]} However, significant progress seems to have been made and the 2008 Armenian presidential election was hailed as largely democratic by OSCE and Western monitors.\textsuperscript{[95]}

4.1 Foreign relations

Main articles: Foreign relations of Armenia, Armenia and the European Union, and Armenia–Turkey relations

Armenia presently maintains good relations with almost every country in the world, with two major exceptions being its immediate neighbours, Turkey and Azerbaijan. Tensions were running high between Armenians and Azerbaijanis during the final years of the Soviet Union. The Nagorno-Karabakh War dominated the region’s politics throughout the 1990s.\textsuperscript{[96]} Armenia’s borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan are very closed to this day, and a permanent solution for the conflict has not been reached despite the mediation provided by organisations such as the OSCE.
Armenia is a member of more than 40 international organisations, including the United Nations; the Council of Europe; the Asian Development Bank; the Commonwealth of Independent States; the World Trade Organization; World Customs Organization; the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation; and La Francophonie. It is a member of the CSTO military alliance, and also participates in NATO’s Partnership for Peace program.

Turkey also has a long history of poor relations with Armenia over its refusal to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide. Turkey was one of the first countries to recognise the Republic of Armenia (the 3rd republic) after its independence from the USSR in 1991. Despite this, for most of the 20th century and early 21st century, relations remain tense and there are no formal diplomatic relations between the two countries due to Turkey’s refusal to establish them for numerous reasons. During the Nagorno-Karabakh War and citing it as the reason, Turkey illegally closed its land border with Armenia in 1993. It has not lifted its blockade despite pressure from the powerful Turkish business lobby interested in Armenian markets.\footnote{96}

On 10 October 2009, Armenia and Turkey signed protocols on normalisation of relations, which set a timetable for restoring diplomatic ties and reopening their joint border.\footnote{97} The ratification of those had to be made in the national parliaments. In Armenia it passed through the legislatively required approval of the Constitutional Court and was sent to parliament for final ratification. The President had made multiple public announcements, both in Armenia and abroad, that as the leader of the political majority of Armenia he assured the ratification of the protocols if Turkey also ratified them. Despite this, the process stopped, as Turkey continuously added more preconditions to its ratification and also “delayed it beyond any reasonable time-period”.

Due to its position between two unfriendly neighbours, Armenia has close security ties with Russia. At the request of the Armenian government, Russia maintains a military base in the northwestern Armenian city of Gyumri\footnote{98} as a deterrent against Turkey. Despite this, Armenia has also been looking toward Euro-Atlantic structures in recent years. It maintains good relations with the United States especially through its Armenian diaspora. According to the US Census Bureau, there are 427,822 Armenians living in the country.\footnote{99}

Because of the blockades by Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia continues to maintain solid relations with its southern neighbour Iran especially in the economic sector. Economic projects such as a gas pipeline going from Iran to Armenia are being developed.

Armenia is also a member of the Council of Europe, maintaining friendly relations with the European Union, especially with its member states such as France and Greece. A 2005 survey reported that 64% of Armenia’s population would be in favour of joining the EU.\footnote{100} Several Armenian officials have also expressed the desire for their country to eventually become an EU member state,\footnote{101} some predicting that it will make an official bid for membership in a few years. In 2004 its forces joined KFOR, a NATO-led international force in Kosovo. It is also an observer member of the Eurasian Economic Community and the Non-Aligned Movement.

A former republic of the Soviet Union, Armenia is an emerging democracy and as of 2011 was negotiating with the European Union to become an associate partner. Legally speaking, it has the right to be considered as a prospective EU member provided it meets necessary standards and criteria, although officially such a plan does not exist in Brussels.\footnote{102}\footnote{103}\footnote{104}\footnote{105} The Government of Armenia, however, has joined the Customs Union of Be-
Military, Kazakhstan and Russia\cite{106} and the Eurasian Economic Union.\cite{107}\cite{108} Armenia is included in the European Union’s European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) which aims at bringing the EU and its neighbours closer.

4.2 Human rights

Main article: Human rights in Armenia

Armenia faces considerable human rights problems. Armenia is classified “partly free” by Freedom House, which gives it “freedom rating” of 46.\cite{109}

4.3 Military

Main article: Armed Forces of Armenia

The Armenian Army, Air Force, Air Defence, and military command remains in the hands of the General Staff, headed by the Chief of Staff, who is currently Colonel General Yuri Khachaturov. Active forces now number about 81,000 soldiers, with an additional reserve of 32,000 troops. Armenian border guards are in charge of patrolling the country’s borders with Georgia and Azerbaijan, while Russian troops continue to monitor its borders with Iran and Turkey. In the case of an attack, Armenia is able to mobilise every able-bodied man between the age of 15 and 59, with military preparedness.

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which establishes comprehensive limits on key categories of military equipment, was ratified by the Armenian parliament in July 1992. In March 1993, Armenia signed the multilateral Chemical Weapons Convention, which calls for the eventual elimination of chemical weapons. Armenia acceded to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as a non-nuclear weapons state in July 1993. Armenia is member of Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) along with Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It participates in NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PiP) program and is in a NATO organisation called Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC). Armenia has engaged in a peacekeeping mission in Kosovo as part of non-NATO KFOR troops under Greek command.\cite{110} Armenia also had 46 members of its military peacekeeping forces as a part of the Coalition Forces in Iraq War until October 2008.\cite{111}

\textit{Armenian Army BTR-80s}

\textit{Armenian soldiers at the 2010 Moscow Victory Day Parade}

Border Guard comprise the four branches of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia. The Armenian military was formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and with the establishment of the Ministry of Defence in 1992. The Commander-in-Chief of the military is the President of Armenia, Serzh Sargsyan. The Ministry of Defence is in charge of political leadership, currently headed by Colonel General Seyran Ohanyan, while...
4.4 Administrative divisions

Main article: Administrative divisions of Armenia

Armenia is divided into ten provinces (marzer, singular marz), with the city (kaghak) of Yerevan (Երևան) having special administrative status as the country’s capital. The chief executive in each of the ten provinces is the marzpet (marz governor), appointed by the government of Armenia. In Yerevan, the chief executive is the mayor, appointed by the president.

Within each province are communities (hamaynkner, singular hamaynk). Each community is self-governing and consists of one or more settlements (bnakavayer, singular bnakavyr). Settlements are classified as either towns (kaghakner, singular kaghak) or villages (gyughner, singular gyugh). As of 2007, Armenia includes 915 communities, of which 49 are considered urban and 866 are considered rural. The capital, Yerevan, also has the status of a community. Additionally, Yerevan is divided into twelve semi-autonomous districts.

† 2011 census
Sources: Area and population of provinces.

5 Economy

Main article: Economy of Armenia

The economy relies heavily on investment and support from Armenians abroad. Before independence, Armenia’s economy was largely industry-based – chemicals, electronics, machinery, processed food, synthetic rubber, and textile – and highly dependent on outside resources. The republic had developed a modern industrial sector, supplying machine tools, textiles, and other manufactured goods to sister republics in exchange for raw materials and energy. Recently, the Intel Corporation agreed to open a research centre in Armenia, in addition to other technology companies, signalling the growth of the technology industry in Armenia.

Agriculture accounted for less than 20% of both net material product and total employment before the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. After independence, the importance of agriculture in the economy increased markedly, its share at the end of the 1990s rising to more than 30% of GDP and more than 40% of total employment. This increase in the importance of agriculture was attributable to food security needs of the pop-
ulation in the face of uncertainty during the first phases of transition and the collapse of the non-agricultural sectors of the economy in the early 1990s. As the economic situation stabilised and growth resumed, the share of agriculture in GDP dropped to slightly over 20% (2006 data), although the share of agriculture in employment remained more than 40%.\(^{[117]}\)

New buildings in the Ajapnyak District of Yerevan.

Yerevan is the economic and cultural centre of Armenia.

Armenian mines produce copper, zinc, gold, and lead. The vast majority of energy is produced with fuel imported from Russia, including gas and nuclear fuel (for its one nuclear power plant); the main domestic energy source is hydroelectric. Small deposits of coal, gas, and petroleum exist but have not yet been developed.

Like other newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, Armenia’s economy suffers from the breakdown of former Soviet trading patterns. Soviet investment in and support of Armenian industry has virtually disappeared, so that few major enterprises are still able to function. In addition, the effects of the 1988 Spitak earthquake, which killed more than 25,000 people and made 500,000 homeless, are still being felt. The conflict with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh has not been resolved. The closure of Azerbaijani and Turkish borders has devastated the economy, because Armenia depends on supplies of energy and most raw materials. Land routes through Georgia and Iran are inadequate or unreliable. The GDP fell nearly 60% between 1989 and 1993, but then resumed robust growth.\(^{[116]}\) The national currency, the dram, suffered hyperinflation for the first years after its introduction in 1993.

Nevertheless, the government was able to make wide-ranging economic reforms that paid off in dramatically lower inflation and steady growth. The 1994 cease-fire in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has also helped the economy. Armenia has had strong economic growth since 1995, building on the turnaround that began the previous year, and inflation has been negligible for the past several years. New sectors, such as precious-stone processing and jewellery making, information and communication technology, and even tourism are beginning to supplement more traditional sectors of the economy, such as agriculture.

This steady economic progress has earned Armenia increasing support from international institutions. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), and other international financial institutions (IFIs) and foreign countries are extending considerable grants and loans. Loans to Armenia since 1993 exceed $1.1 billion. These loans are targeted at reducing the budget deficit and stabilising the currency; developing private businesses; energy; agriculture; food processing; transportation; the health and education sectors; and ongoing rehabilitation in the earthquake zone. The government joined the World Trade Organization on 5 February 2003. But one of the main sources of foreign direct investments remains the Armenian diaspora, which finances major parts of the reconstruction of infrastructure and other public projects. Being a growing democratic state, Armenia also hopes to get more financial aid from the Western World.

A liberal foreign investment law was approved in June 1994, and a law on privatisation was adopted in 1997, as well as a program of state property privatisation. Continued progress will depend on the ability of the government to strengthen its macroeconomic management, including increasing revenue collection, improving the investment climate, and making strides against corruption. However, unemployment, which was 18.5% in 2015,\(^{[118]}\) still remains a major problem due to the influx of thousands of refugees from the Karabakh conflict.

Armenia ranked 85th on the 2015 UNDP Human Development Index, the lowest among the Transcaucasian republics.\(^{[119]}\) In the 2015 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), Armenia ranked 95 of 168 countries.\(^{[120]}\) In the 2016 Index of Economic Freedom, Armenia ranked 54th, ahead of countries like France, Portugal and Italy.\(^{[83]}\)
6 Demographics

Main articles: Demographics of Armenia and Armenians

Armenia has a population of 3,238,000 (2008 est.) and is the second most densely populated of the former Soviet republics. There has been a problem of population decline due to elevated levels of emigration after the break-up of the USSR. In the past years emigration levels have declined and there is steady population growth.

Armenia has a relatively large external diaspora (8 million by some estimates, greatly exceeding the 3 million population of Armenia itself), with communities existing across the globe. The largest Armenian communities outside of Armenia can be found in Russia, France, Iran, the United States, Georgia, Syria, Lebanon, Argentina, Australia, Canada, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Poland, Ukraine and Brazil. 40,000 to 70,000 Armenians still live in Turkey (mostly in and around Istanbul).

About 1,000 Armenians reside in the Armenian Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem, a remnant of a once-larger community. Italy is home to the San Lazzaro degli Armeni, an island located in the Venetian Lagoon, which is completely occupied by a monastery run by the Mechitarists, an Armenian Catholic congregation. Approximately 139,000 Armenians live in the de facto country of Nagorno-Karabakh where they form a majority.

6.1 Ethnic groups

Ethnic Armenians make up 98.1% of the population. Yazidis make up 1.2%, and Russians 0.4%. Other minorities include Assyrians, Ukrainians, Greeks (usually called Caucasus Greeks), Kurds, Georgians, Belarusians, and Jews. There are also smaller communities of Vlachs, Mordvins, Ossetians, Udis, and Tats. Minorities of Poles and Caucasus Germans also exist though they are heavily Russified. As of 2016, there are an estimated 35,000 Yazidis in Armenia.

During the Soviet era, Azerbaijans were historically the second largest population in the country (forming about 2.5% in 1989). However, due to the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, virtually all of them emigrated from Armenia to Azerbaijan. Conversely, Armenia received a large influx of Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan, thus giving Armenia a more homogeneous character.

6.2 Languages

Main article: Languages of Armenia

Armenian is the only official language. Due to its Soviet past, Russian is still widely used in Armenia and could be considered as a de facto second language. According to a 2013 survey, 95% of Armenians said they had some knowledge of Russian (24% advanced, 59% intermediate) compared to 40% who said they knew some English (4% advanced, 16% intermediate and 20% beginner). However, more adults (50%) think that English should be taught in public secondary schools than those who prefer Russian (44%).

6.3 Cities

See also: List of municipalities of Armenia

6.4 Religion

See also: Religion in Armenia

Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as a state religion, an event traditionally dated to AD 301. The roots of the Armenian Church go back to the 1st century. According to tradition, the Armenian Church was founded by two of Jesus’ twelve apostles – Thaddaeus and Bartholomew who preached Christianity in Armenia between AD 40-60. Because of these two founding apostles, the official name of the Armenian Church is Armenian Apostolic Church.

Over 93% of Armenian Christians belong to the Ar-
The Armenian Apostolic Church, a form of Oriental (Non-Chalcedonian) Orthodoxy, which is a very ritualistic, conservative church, roughly comparable to the Coptic and Syriac churches.[146] The Armenian Apostolic Church is in communion only with a group of churches within Oriental Orthodoxy.

The Armenian Evangelical Church has a very sizeable and favourable presence among the life of Armenians with over several thousand members throughout the country. It traces its roots back to 1846 which was under patronage of the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople the aim of which was to train qualified clergy for the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Other Christian denominations practising faith based on Nicene Creed in Armenia are the Pentecostal branches of Protestant community such as the Word of Life, the Armenian Brotherhood Church,[147] the Baptists which are known as of the oldest existing denominations in Armenia and were permitted by the authorities of Soviet Union,[148][149] and Presbyterians.[150]

Catholics also exist in Armenia, both Latin rite and Armenian rite Catholics. The Mechitarists (also spelled “Mekhitarists” Armenian: Մխիթարեան), are a congregation of Benedictine monks of the Armenian Catholic Church founded in 1712 by Mekhitar of Sebastia. They are best known for their series of scholarly publications of ancient Armenian versions of otherwise lost ancient Greek texts.

The Armenian Catholic denomination is headquartered in Bzoummar, Lebanon.

Armenia is home to a Russian community of Molokans which practice a form of Spiritual Christianity originated from the Russian Orthodox Church.[151]

The Yazidi Kurds, who live in the western part of the country, practice Yazidism. As of 2016, the world’s largest Yazidi temple is under construction in the small village of Aknalish.[128] There are also non-Yazidi Kurds who practice Sunni Islam.

There is a Jewish community in Armenia diminished to 750 persons since independence with most emigrants leaving for Israel. There are currently two synagogues in Armenia – in the capital, Yerevan, and in the city of Sevan located near Lake Sevan.

6.5 Health

Life expectancy at birth was 70 for males and 76 for females in 2006.[152] Health expenditures were about 5.6% of GDP in 2004.[152] Most of those expenditures were outside the private sector.[152] Government expenditures on health were US$112 per person in 2006.[153] Vast improvements of health services occurred in the past decade. Such improvements consisted of easier accessibility to health-care services and an Open Enrollment program which allows Armenians to freely choose their healthcare service provider.[154]

6.6 Education

Main article: Education in Armenia

In its first years of independence, Armenia made uneven progress in establishing systems to meet its national requirements in social services.[155] Education, held in particular esteem in Armenian culture, changed fastest of the social services, while health and welfare services attempted to maintain the basic state-planned structure of the Soviet era.[155]

A literacy rate of 100% was reported as early as 1960.[155] In the communist era, Armenian education followed the standard Soviet model of complete state control (from Moscow) of curricula and teaching methods and close integration of education activities with other aspects of society, such as politics, culture, and the economy.[155] As in the Soviet period, primary and secondary education in Armenia is free, and completion of secondary school is compulsory.[155]
In the early 1990s, Armenia made substantial changes to the centralised and regimented Soviet system. Because at least 98% of students in higher education were Armenian, curricula began to emphasise Armenian history and culture. Armenian became the dominant language of instruction, and many schools that had taught in Russian closed by the end of 1991. Russian was still widely taught, however, as a second language.

On the basis of the expansion and development of Yerevan State University a number of higher educational independent Institutions were formed including Medical Institute separated in 1930 which was set up on the basis of medical faculty. In 1980 Yerevan State Medical University was awarded one of the main rewards of the former USSR – the Order of Labor red Banner for training qualified specialists in health care and valuable service in the development of Medical Science. In 1995 YSMU was renamed to YSMU and since 1989 it has been named after Mkhitar Heratsi, the famous medieval doctor. Mkhitar Heratsi was the founder of Armenian Medical school in Cilician Armenia. The great doctor played the same role in Armenian Medical Science as Hippocrates in Western, Galen in Roman, Ibn Sīnā in Arabic medicine.

7 Culture

Main article: Culture of Armenia

Armenians have their own distinctive alphabet and language. The alphabet was invented in AD 405 by Mesrop Mashtots and consists of thirty-nine letters, three of which were added during the Cilician period. 96% of the people in the country speak Armenian, while 75.8% of the population additionally speaks Russian, although English is becoming increasingly popular.

7.1 Media

Main article: Media of Armenia

Television, magazines, and newspapers are all operated by both state-owned and for-profit corporations which depend on advertising, subscription, and other sales-related revenues. The Constitution of Armenia guarantees freedom of speech and Armenia ranks 78th in the 2015 Press Freedom Index report compiled by Reporters Without Borders, between Lesotho and Sierra Leone. As a country in transition, Armenia’s media system is under transformation.

Frequent attacks on journalists of non-state sponsored media is a serious threat to Armenia’s press freedom. The number of assaults has recently declined, but the physical integrity of journalists remain at stake.
7.2 Music and dance

Main article: Music of Armenia

Armenian music is a mix of indigenous folk music, perhaps best-represented by Djivan Gasparyan’s well-known duduk music, as well as light pop, and extensive Christian music. Instruments like the duduk, the dhol, the zurna, and the kanun are commonly found in Armenian folk music. Artists such as Sayat Nova are famous due to their influence in the development of Armenian folk music. One of the oldest types of Armenian music is the Armenian chant which is the most common kind of religious music in Armenia. Many of these chants are ancient in origin, extending to pre-Christian times, while others are relatively modern, including several composed by Saint Mesrop Mashtots, the inventor of the Armenian alphabet. Whilst under Soviet rule, Armenian classical music composer Aram Khatchaturian became internationally well known for his music, for various ballets and the Sabre Dance from his composition for the ballet Gayane.

Traditional Armenian dance.

The Armenian Genocide caused widespread emigration that led to the settlement of Armenians in various countries in the world. Armenians kept to their traditions and certain diasporans rose to fame with their music. In the post-Genocide Armenian community of the United States, the so-called “kef” style Armenian dance music, using Armenian and Middle Eastern folk instruments (often electrified/amplified) and some western instruments, was popular. This style preserved the folk songs and dances of Western Armenia, and many artists also played the contemporary popular songs of Turkey and other eastern beaten countries from which the Armenians emigrated. Djivan Gasparyan is perhaps the most famous artist of the traditional “kef” style, and the Yosibikan Band was notable in the 1960s and 1970s for developing their own style of “kef” music. The influence of the popular Arthur Bigyan Band has been significant in stemming from the Middle Eastern Armenian diaspora. Pop music, influenced by Continental European (especially French) pop music, the Armenian pop music genre grew to fame in the 1960s and 1970s with artists such as Adiss Harmandian and Harout Pamboukjian performing to the Armenian diaspora and Armenia; also with artists such as Sirusho, performing pop music combined with Armenian folk music in today’s entertainment industry.

Other Armenian diasporans that rose to fame in classical or international music circles are world-renowned French-Armenian singer and composer Charles Aznavour, pianist Sahan Arzruni, prominent opera sopranos such as Hasmik Papian and more recently Isabel Bayrakdarian and Anna Kasyan. Certain Armenians settled to sing non-Armenian tunes such as the heavy metal band System of a Down (which nonetheless often incorporates traditional Armenian instrumentals and styling into their songs) or pop star Cher. In the Armenian diaspora, Armenian revolutionary songs are popular with the youth. These songs encourage Armenian patriotism and are generally about Armenian history and national heroes.

7.3 Art

Yerevan Vernissage (arts and crafts market), close to Republic Square, bustles with hundreds of vendors selling a variety of crafts on weekends and Wednesdays (though the selection is much reduced mid-week). The market offers woodcarving, antiques, fine lace, and the hand-knotted wool carpets and kilims that are a Caucasus speciality. Obsidian, which is found locally, is crafted into assortment of jewellery and ornamental objects. Armenian gold smithery enjoys a long tradition, populating one corner of the market with a selection of gold items. Soviet relics and souvenirs of recent Russian manufacture – nesting dolls, watches, enamel boxes and so on – are also available at the Vernissage.

Across from the Opera House, a popular art market fills another city park on the weekends. Armenia’s long history as a crossroads of the ancient world has resulted in a landscape with innumerable fascinating archaeological sites to explore. Medieval, Iron Age, Bronze Age and even Stone Age sites are all within a few hours drive from the city. All but the most spectacular remain virtually undiscovered, allowing visitors to view churches and fortresses in their original settings.
Ancient Armenian Khachkars (cross-stones).

Queen Zabel's Return to the Palace, Vardges Surenants, (1909).

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 exhibitions and sales.

On 13 April 2013, the Armenian government announced a change in law to allow freedom of panorama for 3D works of art.  

7.4 Sport

Main articles: Sport in Armenia and Chess in Armenia
A wide array of sports are played in Armenia, the most popular among them being wrestling, weightlifting, judo, association football, chess, and boxing. Armenia’s mountainous terrain provides great opportunities for the practice of sports like skiing and climbing. Being a landlocked country, water sports can only be practised on lakes, notably Lake Sevan. Competitively, Armenia has been successful in chess, weightlifting and wrestling at the international level. Armenia is also an active member of the international sports community, with full membership in the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) and International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). It also hosts the Pan-Armenian Games.

Prior to 1992, Armenians would participate in the Olympics representing the USSR. As part of the Soviet Union, Armenia was very successful, winning plenty of medals and helping the USSR win the medal standings at the Olympics on numerous occasions. The first medal won by an Armenian in modern Olympic history was by Hrant Shahinyan (sometimes spelled as Grant Shaginian), who won two golds and two silvers in gymnastics at the 1952 Summer Olympics in Helsinki.

To highlight the level of success of Armenians in the Olympics, Shahinyan was quoted as saying:

“Armenian sportsmen had to outdo their opponents by
several notches for the shot at being accepted into any Soviet team. But those difficulties notwithstanding, 90 percent of Armenians athletes on Soviet Olympic teams came back with medals.\(^{[161]}\)

Armenia first participated at the 1992 Summer Olympics in Barcelona under a unified CIS team, where it was very successful, winning three golds and one silver in weightlifting, wrestling and sharp shooting, despite only having 5 athletes. Since the 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, Armenia has participated as an independent nation.

Armenia participates in the Summer Olympic Games in boxing, wrestling, weightlifting, judo, gymnastics, track and field, diving, swimming and sharp shooting. It also participates in the Winter Olympic Games in alpine skiing, cross-country skiing and figure skating.

Wrestling has been a successful sport in the Olympics for Armenia. At the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, Armen Nazaryan won the gold in the Men's Greco-Roman Flyweight (52 kg) category and Armen Mkrtchyan won the silver in Men's Freestyle Paperweight (48 kg) category, securing Armenia's first two medals in its Olympic history.

Traditional Armenian wrestling is called Kokh and practised in traditional garb; it was one of the influences included in the Soviet combatsport of Sambo, which is also very popular.\(^{[162]}\)

The government of Armenia budgets about $2.8 million annually for sports and gives it to the National Committee of Physical Education and Sports, the body that determines which programs should benefit from the funds.\(^{[163]}\)

Due to the lack of success lately on the international level, in recent years, Armenia has rebuilt 16 Soviet-era sports schools and furnished them with new equipment for a total cost of $1.9 million. The rebuilding of the regional schools was financed by the Armenian government. $9.3 million has been invested in the resort town of Tsaghkadzor to improve the winter sports infrastructure because of dismal performances at recent winter sports events. In 2005, a cycling centre was opened in Yerevan with the aim of helping produce world class Armenian cyclists. The government has also promised a cash reward of $700,000 to Armenians who win a gold medal at the Olympics.\(^{[163]}\)

Armenia has also been very successful in chess, winning the World Champion in 2011 and the World Chess Olympiad on three occasions.\(^{[164]}\)

### 7.5 Cuisine

Main article: Armenian cuisine

Armenian cuisine is as ancient as the history of Armenia, a combination of different tastes and aromas. The food often has quite a distinct aroma. Closely related to eastern and Mediterranean cuisine, various spices, vegetables,
Armenian cuisine

Fish, and fruits combine to present unique dishes. The main characteristics of Armenian cuisine are a reliance on the quality of the ingredients rather than heavily spicing food, the use of herbs, the use of wheat in a variety of forms, of legumes, nuts, and fruit (as a main ingredient as well as to sour food), and the stuffing of a wide variety of leaves.

The pomegranate, with its symbolic association with fertility, represents that nation. The apricot is the national fruit.

8 See also

- Outline of Armenia
- Index of Armenia-related articles
- Armenia – Wikipedia book

9 Notes

[1] Standard pronunciation is in Eastern Armenian ([hajɑsˈtɑn]). Western Armenian: [hajɑsˈdɑn].

9.1 References


[13] The population of Armenia as of 1 December 2016 according to UN, p. 100.


[27] Smaller nations that have claimed a prior official adoption of Christianity include Osroene, the Silures, and San Marino. See Timeline of official adoptions of Christianity.


[29] The republic has separation of church and state


[36] Moses of Chorene, The History of Armenia, Book 1, Ch. 12 (Russian)

[37] History of Armenia by Father Michael Chamich from B.C. 2247 to the Year of Christ 1780, or 1229 of the Armenian era, Bishop’s College Press, Calcutta, 1827, page 19: "[Aram] was the first to raise the Armenian name to any degree of renown; so that contemporary nations... called them the Armenians, or followers of Aram, a name which has been corrupted into Armenians; and the country they inhabited, by universal consent, took the name of Armenia."


[119] Western Europe, Russia and Central Asia 2004 – Page 74 by Imogen Gladman, Taylor & Francis Group


9.1 References


[88] Natasha May Azarian (2007). *The Seeds of Memory: Narrative Renditions of the Armenian Genocide Across Generations*. ProQuest. p. 96. ISBN 978-0-549-53005-3. Retrieved 28 April 2013. Mount Ararat is considered the ‘heart’ of historical Armenia as it is Armenian folklore which considers the majestic mountain to be the place where Noah’s Ark landed. Armenian businesses, households, and schools almost ubiquitously have at ...


[90] James Minahan (1998). *Miniature empires: a historical dictionary of the newly independent states*. Greenwood Publishing Group. pp. 2–3. ISBN 978-0-313-30610-5. Retrieved 28 April 2013. Mount Ararat, the legendary landing place of Noah’s Ark, is located in what is now modern Turkey. Situated near the border, the peak is visible from nearly every area of Armenia. Historically, the mountain has been the Armenian people’s most ...


[113] Armstat:Provinces, area and population


Statistical Yearbook 2007, Armenia National Statistical Service, Yerevan


Turay, Anna. “Tarihte Ermeniler”. Bolsohays/Istanbul Armenians Like many other ethnicities Armenians in India too have played a role historically and had an impact historically. Today however the community has been reduced to about a hundred living in Calcutta. Archived from the original on 9 February 2008. Retrieved 4 January 2007.


Aragatsotn

Tavush

Kotayk

Vayots Dzor

Syunik

Shirak

Lori

Gegharkunik

Ararat

Yerevan

Artsakh

Ararat
10 Further reading


11 External links

Government

- President.am, Official site of the President of Armenia

General information

- Armenia at DMOZ
- Armenia profile from the BBC News
- Wikimedia Atlas of Armenia
- Geographic data related to Armenia at OpenStreetMap
- Key Development Forecasts for Armenia from International Futures
12.2 Images

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