

LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

WHY GYUMRI?

A PERSONAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE CITY'S TRANSFORMATION

GEORGIA'S TAX REFORM TRIGGERS DIGITAL NOMAD MIGRATION

AND ARMENIA IS READY TO WELCOME REMOTE WORKERS IN 2026

WHEN THE LAND SHAPES THE STORY

APPLYING THE FRENCH WINE PHILOSOPHY OF MINIMAL INTERVENTION IN VAYOTS DZOR

THE CULINARY PASSPORT FOR NOMAD CHEFS

HOW TO START YOUR GLOBAL POP-UP RESTAURANT CAREER FROM DILIJAN

5G REACHES 94.5% OF THE POPULATION

INTERESTING INSIGHTS FROM ARMENIA'S TELECOM SECTOR

HOW WE REALIZED ARMENIA COULD BECOME OUR HOME

THE STORY OF AN INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILY IN AN ARMENIAN VILLAGE

WHY ESTABLISH TECH R&D BACK OFFICES IN ARMENIA?

A SMALL COUNTRY WITH COMPUTING POWER ROUGHLY ON PAR WITH THE UK

MANAGING E-COMMERCE BUSINESS IN ARMENIA

HOW TO OVERCOME INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES AND ACCESS REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



MATHEW ZEIN

EDITOR'S LETTER

In 3 years, Life in Armenia released 34 magazine issues, published 400+ articles about Armenia, engaged 110+ international writers, and gained 25,000+ readers worldwide.

In 2025 alone, we won the Travel and Tourism Award in the UK as the Best Digital Nomad Guide in The World, partnered with 6 international conferences in Dubai and Berlin, supported 1 Armenian charity all year long, and promoted 3 social campaigns in the country.

Watching this magazine enter its fourth year is a dream come true. Our goals are bigger now, and the impact we want to achieve has gone far beyond what I thought possible when it all started.

But if there's one thing these three years have taught me, it's that a magazine is only as powerful as the community behind it. Every writer who pitched a story, every reader who shared an issue, every partner who believed in our mission, you've all shaped Life in Armenia into something far greater than a publication. You've turned it into a movement.

Mathew Zein



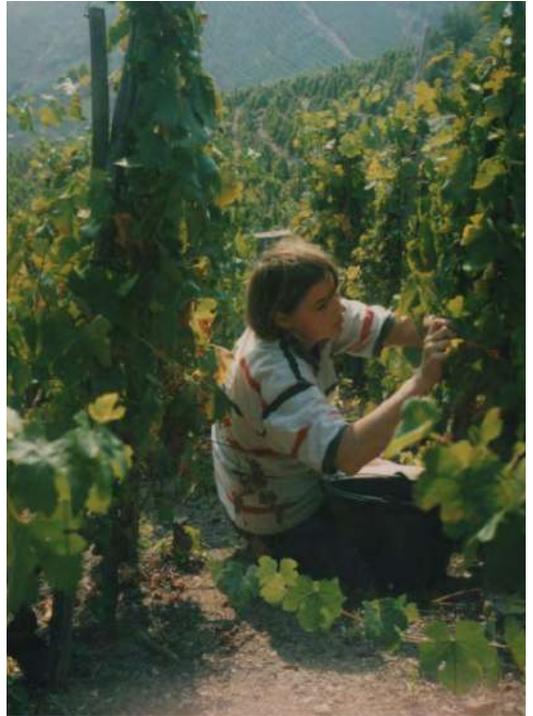
CONTENTS

JAN, 10TH 2026 | NO. 34 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

**HOW WE REALIZED ARMENIA COULD BECOME OUR HOME
THE STORY OF AN INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILY IN AN ARMENIAN VILLAGE**

P 09

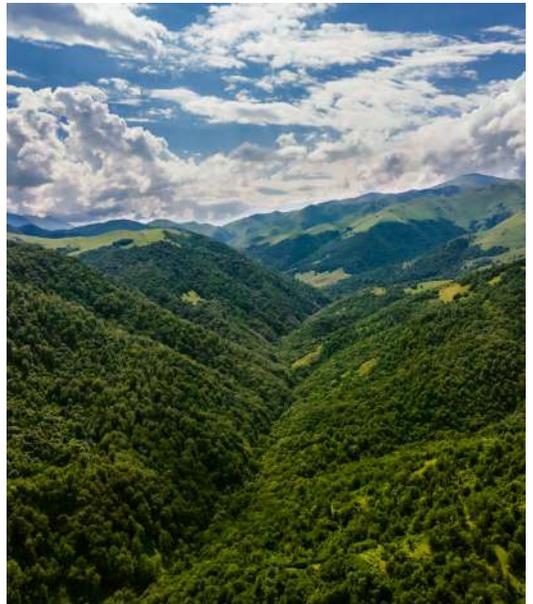
Can a remote-working family thrive in a traditional Armenian village? From Moscow and London to a historic stone house in Voskevaz, follow one international family's journey as they trade digital nomadism for rural Armenian roots. Discover how ancient wineries, mountain views, and a slower pace of life redefined their "home."



**GEORGIA'S TAX REFORM TRIGGERS DIGITAL NOMAD MIGRATION
AND ARMENIA IS READY TO WELCOME REMOTE WORKERS IN 2026**

P 18

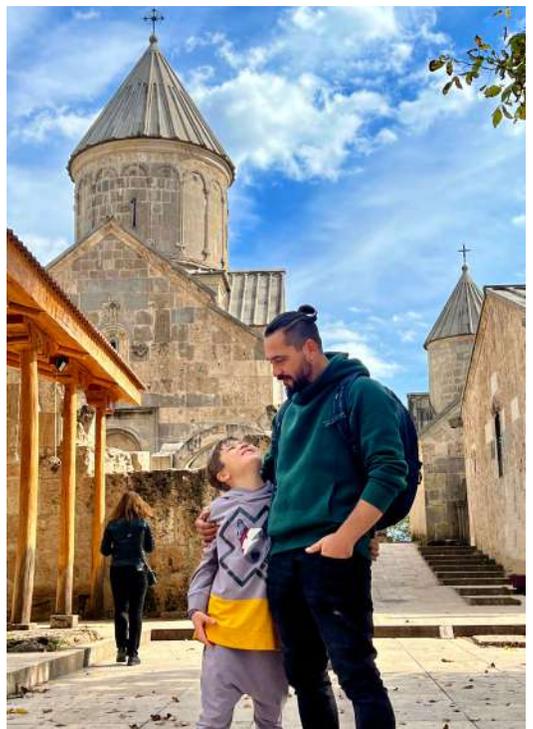
Georgia's shifting laws are triggering a digital nomad migration. Explore how Armenia is positioning itself to welcome talent with 0-1% tax regimes for tech professionals. This guide breaks down Armenia's competitive tax regimes and the easy overland journey from Tbilisi to Yerevan.



**WHEN THE LAND SHAPES THE STORY
APPLYING THE FRENCH WINE PHILOSOPHY OF MINIMAL INTERVENTION IN VAYOTS DZOR**

P 31

What happens when a French vigneronne from Côte-Rôtie meets a centuries old Armenian vineyard? Sophie Clusel wants to "let the mountains do the work." Discover the difference between technical wines and the soulful expressions of terroir that prove the hidden "1" in winemaking is nature itself, the difference between vigneronne and a winemaker



**THE CULINARY PASSPORT FOR NOMAD CHEFS
HOW TO START YOUR GLOBAL POP-UP RESTAURANT CAREER FROM DILIJAN**

P 39

Start your pop-up restaurant career from the mountains of Armenia. Discover how Dilijan's new international hospitality school, APICIUS Armenia, offers an elite Italian curriculum at a fraction of the cost, giving nomad chefs the global credentials and freedom to cook anywhere on Earth.

**WHY GYUMRI?
A PERSONAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE CITY'S TRANSFORMATION**

P 47

October 2026 is Gyumri's biggest moment yet. As Armenia hosts COP17, Gyumri is launching a month-long AI Fest, blending high-tech innovation with art and culture. From 19th-century streets to 5G-ready coworking hubs, Gyumri is redefining remote work. Discover why international tech experts are moving to Armenia's cultural capital.

CONTENTS

JAN, 10TH 2026 | NO. 34 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

**THE JOURNEY TO LAUNCH ARMENIA'S FIRST DOMESTIC SATELLITE - PART 1
WHY DOES A COUNTRY OF 3 MILLION NEED ITS OWN SPACE PROGRAM?**

Decades after the Soviet collapse, Armenia is reclaiming its cosmic legacy. Meet the visionary behind Hayasat-1 and see how a 10cm cube is proving that strategic focus, not billion-dollar budgets, is what truly opens the final frontier for small nations.

**5G REACHES 94.5% OF THE POPULATION
INTERESTING INSIGHTS FROM ARMENIA'S TELECOM SECTOR**

Armenia is proving that being a small nation is a major advantage for digital infrastructure. With 5G now reaching 94.5% of the population, Armenia has outpaced much of Europe in connectivity. Discover how this small country built a border-to-border network that's a dream for digital nomads.

**WHY ESTABLISH TECH R&D BACK OFFICES IN ARMENIA?
A SMALL COUNTRY WITH COMPUTING POWER ROUGHLY ON PAR WITH THE UK**

A nation of 3 million with the computing power of the UK? Discover how Armenia secured a \$4 billion megaproject featuring 50,000 NVIDIA GPUs, making it home to one of the world's top five largest AI clusters. See why the U.S. government trusts Armenia with its most restricted silicon.

**MANAGING E-COMMERCE BUSINESS IN ARMENIA
HOW TO OVERCOME INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES AND ACCESS REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

Armenia's e-commerce market is growing at 14% annually, offering a "multi-vector gateway" to the EAEU and beyond. Discover how to leverage 1st-in-Caucasus financial infrastructure and 5G connectivity to scale your online brand while going through real-world logistics puzzles.

**A DRAGON SIGHTED IN ARMENIA!
WEAVING A 3,500-YEAR-OLD DRAGON RUG BACK TO LIFE**

In 2025, a ten-year mission reached its peak: the recreation of a 3,500-year-old Armenian Dragon rug. Discover how artist Davit Mirzoyan used sacred geometry, the proportions of 5, 6, and 11, to weave a "cosmological diagram" that was nearly lost to history.

P 53

P 62

P 71

P 77

P 84



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معرض و مؤتمر الخليج العالمي للأمن المعلومات

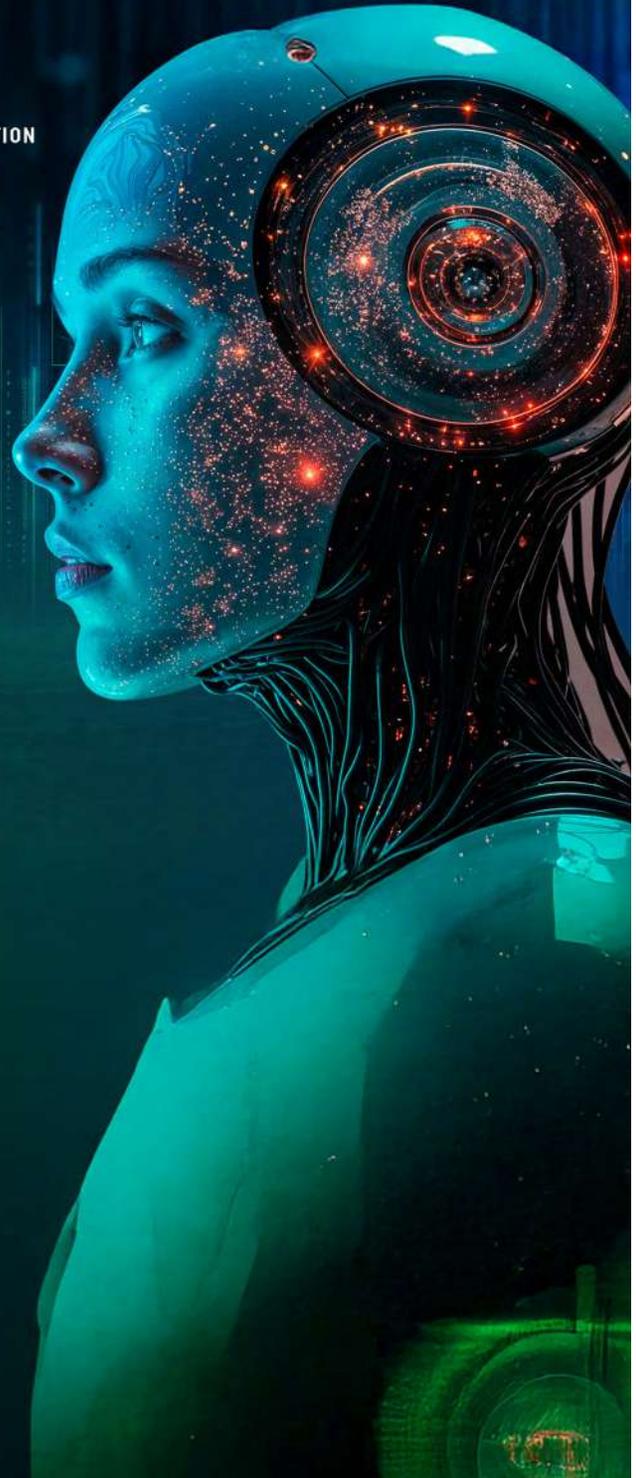
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HOW WE REALIZED ARMENIA COULD
BECOME OUR HOME

THE STORY OF AN INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILY IN AN ARMENIAN VILLAGE



in



**ELLEN
PEREZ**

JOURNALIST AND SOCIOLOGIST

HOW WE REALIZED ARMENIA COULD BECOME OUR HOME THE STORY OF AN INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILY IN AN ARMENIAN VILLAGE

We are José María Daniel, a freelance marketing strategist, and Ellen, a journalist and sociologist working in client analytics at Yandex. **We're an international family** with Basque and Russian roots, and parents to three children: Eva (13), Alejandro (10), and Ernesto (7), all of whom are homeschooled.

Before moving to Armenia in 2022, we lived a life of constant movement. We travelled a lot, lived in different cities and countries, worked remotely, and kept relocating. But it was here, in Armenia, that we felt something entirely new for the first time: "this place could be home". **A place where we could finally put down roots and raise our children.**

We chose rural Armenia and bought an abandoned historic house in the village of Voskevaz. That house has become the foundation of our international architectural and cultural project, **The House of the Golden Vine.**



How we realised Armenia could become our home

After three and a half years in Armenia, we're still discovering the country, but even in the very first months, **we felt something we hadn't felt in many years:** a sense of permanence.

Life here moves to a completely different rhythm. After living in London, Moscow, and Berlin, **it feels as though time in Armenia flows differently,** more slowly, more gently, without constant urgency or noise.

On our very first day, our eldest son said, "Armenia is a country of freedom: you can drink water straight from the tap, and no one tells you to fasten your seatbelt in a taxi."

We don't, of course, agree with the seatbelt part; that was a child's observation. But there is truth in his words. **Armenia has a particular kind of freedom, not administrative, but human.** The kind that exists where people breathe more deeply, live more simply, and follow unspoken rules shaped by care rather than control.

Here, our children felt freer. And **we felt calmer than anywhere we had lived before.** That's when we began to understand: maybe this place really is ours.



What life looks like in an Armenian village



We started out in Yerevan, a fascinating city with its own pulse. But after spending our first summer in the countryside, we realised that rural life suited us far better.

We now live in Voskevaz, in the Aragatsotn region, right at the foot of Mount Aragats. At first glance, village life looks like something from a romantic painting: narrow streets, old stone walls, fruit gardens, and warm-hearted elderly neighbours. But maintaining harmony between family life, work, children, and a major restoration project takes real effort.

Our day starts at six o'clock in the morning. While the children are still asleep, we open our laptops and work, focusing on our main sources of income, managing projects, planning tasks, and developing the social side of our restoration project: editing [YouTube](#) videos and building our social media presence.

At nine, the children begin their online classes. Their schedule is strict, and it keeps the whole family disciplined. Our home functions like a small co-working space: everyone has their own laptop, projects,

and responsibilities. After lunch, work shifts from digital to physical.

Daniel now spends most of his time restoring our house, a traditional rural Armenian home built from pink tuff stone, following architectural principles that date back centuries. At first glance, you can tell it was built with great love. Sadly, it stood abandoned for decades, and the land around it was neglected. We decided to bring life back to its walls and plant a new garden on this historic ground.

Our children are deeply involved in the restoration. Beyond the joy of working together, they're gaining practical life skills. Each of them can explain the principles of restoration design, the composition of strong concrete, the basics of permaculture gardening, and how to create ideal composting conditions. They apply maths, geometry, and biology daily, not from textbooks, but from real life. We truly value building this family project together.

In the evenings, when possible, we walk through the village, talk with neighbours, and watch the sun set behind the mountains. This rhythm feels natural now. It's hard to imagine how we ever lived differently.



The Golden Vine House: A story rebuilt by our hands

Buying rural property in Armenia wasn't part of our original plan. But the moment we saw this house, we felt its potential. It's a classic Armenian home, the construction of which began in the 1940s, a design common in the region since the mid-18th century. Similar houses can still be found in Ashtarak, Oshakan, and Voskevaz, though sadly, fewer survive each year.

In one of the basements, there is a traditional Armenian winery with karases, ancient clay vessels used for winemaking. They range from 700 to 2,000 litres and are over 150 years old. They were placed there when the cellar was first dug, and wine was produced in them until 1996. Remarkably, they are still in perfect condition. One of our goals is to restore the winery and produce our own wine there.

The Golden Vine House is more than a restoration project. Through it, we aim to:

- Preserve local architectural heritage
- Revive a historic winery
- Create a space for cultural dialogue between Armenia and the Basque Country
- Contribute to eco-business, agrotourism, and sustainable development in the region

There's also a symbolic link between Armenia and the Basque Country in our story. Daniel's ancestors were among the largest olive producers in the Basque region, involved in the full olive cycle, from growing trees to producing oil, since the 16th century. Today, we grow European olive trees ourselves, adapting them to the Armenian climate. We currently have 19 young trees in large pots, and this year they gave their very first harvest.

We want to bring the past and the future together under one roof. By sharing every stage of the restoration and our everyday village life on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, we hope to show how attractive rural Armenia can be for living, investing, and building meaningful projects.





How our children experience Armenia

To help this project grow and come to life more quickly, we've launched a [crowdfunding campaign](#). If our story resonates with you, and you'd like to support [The Golden Vine House](#), helping us complete the restoration of the house and bring the winery back into working life, you can do so via the reArmenia platform at the link here:



Our children are homeschoolers. They study online, attend creative workshops, and spend endless hours outdoors. **Most importantly, they live in direct connection with nature.** They know when peach trees bloom, when grapes ripen, and which plants attract pollinators, not from books, but from life itself. They're also **learning to cook traditional Armenian dishes.**

They love the sense of freedom and safety here, the ability to play outside until dusk, the kindness of people, the mild winters, and the long summers. Sometimes we realise **they're growing up much the way our parents once did**, in real harmony, rather than in an accelerated and distorted version of reality.

Work and home: A balance that found us

In big cities, we were constantly chasing time. Here, it feels different. Life moves more slowly, yet somehow we get more done. We work, raise our children, restore our home, read, play board games, talk with neighbours, and simply walk, without feeling that something essential is slipping away.

What we would say to digital nomad families

We'd be honest: Armenia isn't for everyone. But many will find something here. If you're looking for a place where:

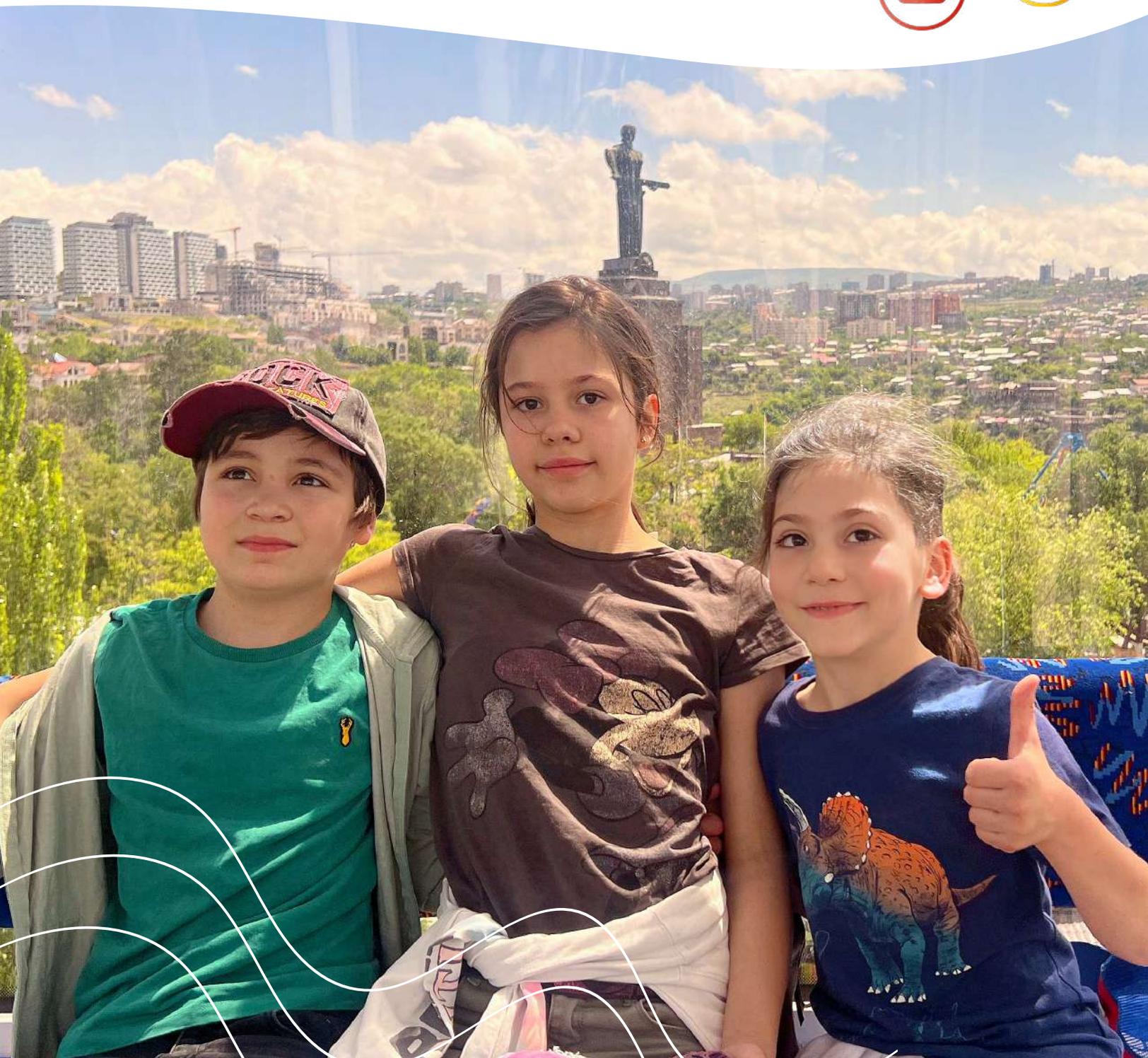
- You can work remotely without losing touch with real life
- Children can grow freely and safely
- Diverse climates exist within short distances
- Sunshine is abundant
- Life can be slower, but deeper
- Nature is part of everyday routine
- People genuinely care about one another

Then Armenia might feel right to you.



We often think that if someone had told us five years ago that we'd be living in an Armenian village, restoring a historic house, and working remotely with views of the Caucasus Mountains, **we wouldn't have believed it.** We didn't plan to stay in Armenia. We simply came to live here for a while, and one day realised we no longer wanted to leave. **We're no longer digital nomads. We're remote-working villagers.**

And if you'd like to get to know us a little better, follow our daily life and ongoing projects, or simply ask us questions about living in Armenia, you're very welcome to join us



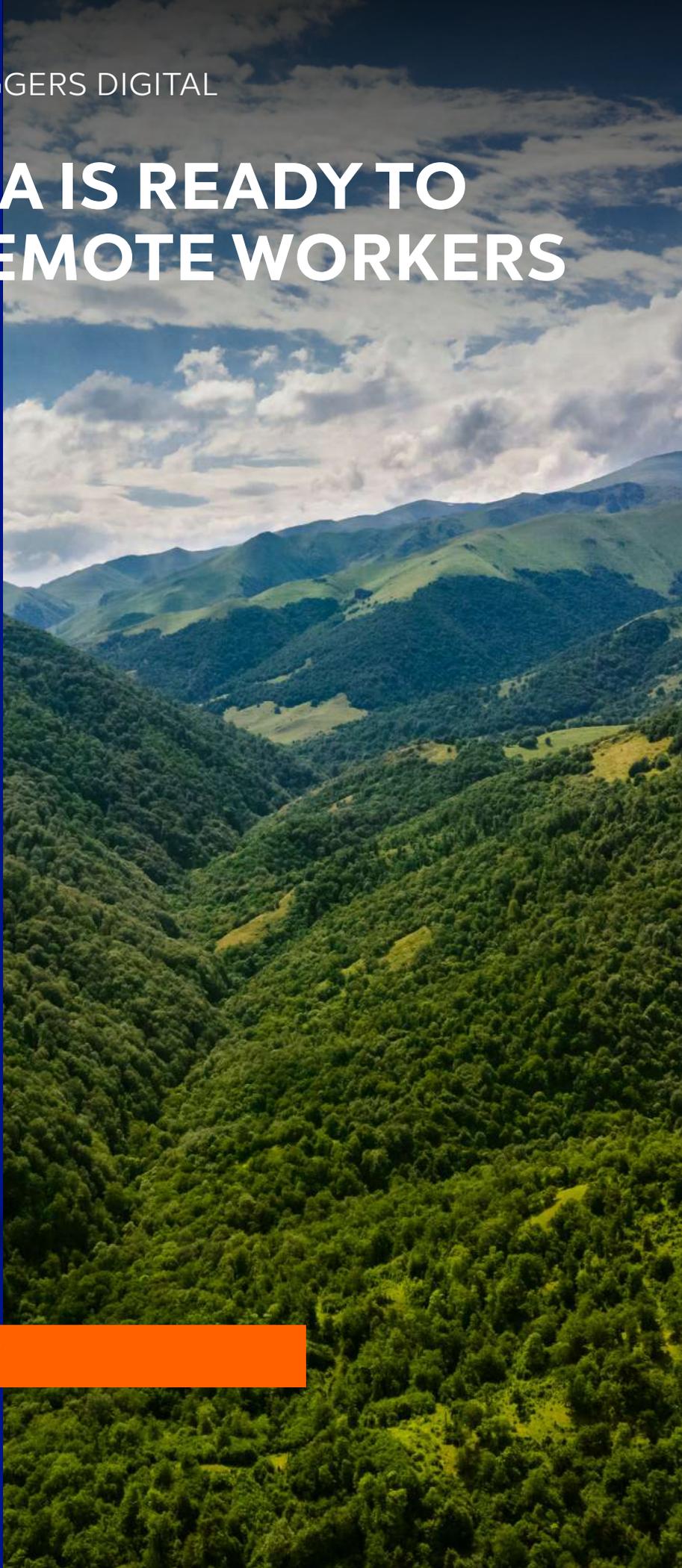
GEORGIA'S TAX REFORM TRIGGERS DIGITAL
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AND ARMENIA IS READY TO WELCOME REMOTE WORKERS IN 2026



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



GEORGIA'S TAX REFORM TRIGGERS DIGITAL NOMAD MIGRATION AND ARMENIA IS READY TO WELCOME REMOTE WORKERS IN 2026

For the past several years, Georgia has been a darling of the digital nomad world. However, on June 26, 2025, Georgia's Parliament passed labour migration reforms that will change things for foreign remote workers starting March 1, 2026.

While I have extensive experience with digital nomadism in Armenia, I needed a deeper look into the Georgian nomad ecosystem. I reached out to my friend, [Mika Vincheuski](#), an expert in nomad business setups and driving licenses in Georgia. Mika is one of those nomads who has called Georgia home for years and knows the ins and outs of the system perfectly.

Personally, I see Georgia's reforms as a natural evolution of a country that successfully attracted global talent and now needs to formalize those relationships. The country is transitioning from what was once an open-door policy to a more regulated system that requires work permits, government approval, and ongoing compliance.

Mathew Zein and Mika Vincheuski
in Yerevan, Armenia





Mika Vincheuski

Nomad Business Setup and Driving License in Georgia

In the past, digital nomads could open an Individual Entrepreneur Entity and a bank account even remotely, and pay 1% tax on gross turnover under 500,000 Lari (around \$185,000), as long as their business didn't operate in Georgia and didn't receive more than \$33,000 per year from Georgia. Most digital professions qualified for this tax regime. Compared to 20-45% taxes in the EU, Georgian 1% felt like a dream come true."

Under the new law, most foreign nationals with a local economic footprint (engaging in employment or business activity in Georgia) will need to obtain a government-issued work permit and a residence permit, in case they already stay in Georgia, or a D1 work visa, in case they are yet planning to come to Georgia and work from there.

This includes employees, self-employed individuals, registered entrepreneurs, and even remote workers for Georgian startups. Of course, with formal legal status there will be taxes; there always are! The days of "border runs" and informal remote work without government oversight are being replaced by a formal compliance framework.





Mika Vincheuski

Nomad Business Setup
and Driving License in
Georgia

There is still a lot of unclarity from the government side about the exact implications for the Individual Entrepreneurs who work completely remotely outside of Georgia (for example, digital Marketing, Programming etc.). Most probably they will be able to get the working permit online, and not require a residence permit. But this will only become clear after 1.03.2026. But it is important to stay alert and look out for alternative solutions. When one door closes, another open door might be awaiting just across the border.”

Armenia's Quiet Advantage

The first time I learned about this reform was through a LinkedIn post. I noticed Armenia's name circulating in many of the comments. As it turns out, many tech professionals were eyeing Armenia and considering relocating.

While Georgia tightens its regulations, Armenia has been positioning itself as an attractive alternative. The country's tax system for digital nomads and tech professionals is straightforward and, in some cases, more advantageous than Georgia's old regime.



Armenia operates a residence-based tax system for individuals. If you are a non-resident (staying fewer than 183 days per year), you are taxed only on Armenian-source income. However, if you become a tax resident (183+ days), you are technically liable for tax on your worldwide income, though you can often avoid double taxation through Armenia's 50+ tax treaties and foreign tax credits.

For those conducting business or freelancing in Armenia, the system offers three main pathways:



Personal Income Tax:

A flat 20% rate applies to standard employment and civil contract income.



Microbusiness Regime (0%):

Many freelancers and small businesses qualify for a 0% tax rate if their annual turnover is below 24 million AMD (~\$60,000 USD). This is the most popular choice for digital nomads, provided their activity is not on the "excluded list" (which includes consulting, legal, and accounting services).



Turnover Tax (1% to 10%):

For those who exceed the microbusiness limit or work in excluded fields, a simplified turnover tax is available for revenues up to 115 million AMD (~\$285,000 USD).

For digital nomads weighing their options, Armenia represents an alternative, one that might have been overlooked **simply because Georgia's story was so compelling.**

The Journey Between Two Worlds

Getting from Georgia to Armenia isn't complicated, but it's worth taking your time. The most common route is via the Sadakhlo-Bagratashen border crossing, the main highway linking Tbilisi and Yerevan. [The border operates 24/7 and is generally efficient](#), with most crossings taking between 15 to 60 minutes total. You'll exit Georgia, cross a bridge over the Debed River, and enter Armenia, two passport stamps in one journey.

There are several ways to make the trip. The overnight train between the capitals is scenic and comfortable. Marshrutkas (shared minivans) run regularly from Tbilisi's Avlabari station for around 50 GEL, taking five to six hours including the border crossing.



Mika Vinceuski

Nomad Business Setup and Driving License in Georgia
Just be aware that, starting from 2026, Georgia requires tourist insurance covering up to 30.000 Lari (around \$11,500) in case of medical emergencies. There are reported cases of rejected boarding because of the missing insurance confirmation. It can either be an international insurance or specific one for Georgia with a confirmation in either english or georgian.”



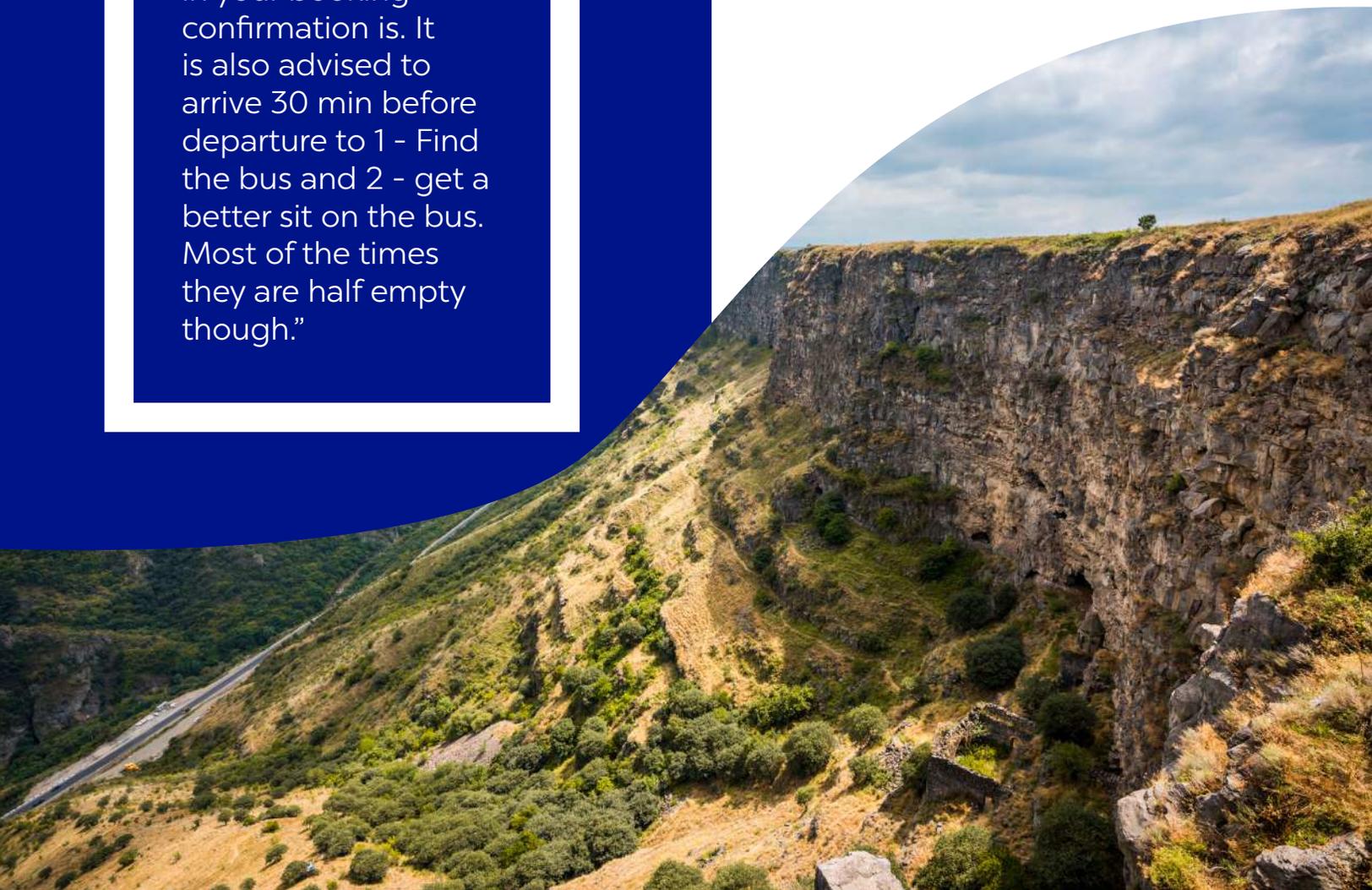
Mika Vinceuski

Nomad Business Setup
and Driving License in
Georgia

If you prefer to book online, you might find good options on this [website](#). Just make sure that you check the exact departure location twice, because often the minivan departs around the corner from where the pin in your booking confirmation is. It is also advised to arrive 30 min before departure to 1 - Find the bus and 2 - get a better sit on the bus. Most of the times they are half empty though.”

For those who prefer independence, renting a car and driving offers flexibility, just make sure your rental agreement includes cross-border coverage.

But here’s the thing about this journey: rushing from one capital to the other means missing one of the most culturally rich and historically significant regions in the Caucasus. The northern part of Armenia, specifically the Lori Province where you’ll enter, deserves more than a glance through a bus window.



Why Alaverdi Should Be Your First Stop

Alaverdi sits in the Debed Canyon, just a short drive from the Georgian border. It's a town with a dual identity, part medieval spiritual center, part Soviet industrial relic. During the Soviet era, Alaverdi was a major copper mining town, and the remnants of that industrial past still loom over the valley.

Alaverdi's real treasures are the UNESCO World Heritage monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin, both perched on plateaus above the canyon. [Masterpieces of medieval Armenian architecture](#) from a time when this region was a major cultural and spiritual center. The monasteries are quiet, contemplative spaces where you can feel the weight of centuries.

For digital nomads crossing the border, [Alaverdi offers a chance to decompress, recalibrate, and ease into Armenia before continuing to Yerevan.](#) Taking a few nights to settle, work, and explore at a more human pace can make all the difference.



Settling In at Vallex Garden Hotel

If you're taking my advice on Alaverdi, then you've also got to hear my personal recommendation on where to stay. Opened relatively recently in a tastefully renovated building, [Vallex Garden Hotel](#) is designed for exactly the kind of traveler who's crossing borders with a laptop and a flexible schedule.

The hotel has 37 rooms ranging from doubles to family suites, all well equipped with modern amenities. Don't worry about the internet coverage because besides the free Wi-Fi in the hotel, [I tested the 5G signal myself and it's strong.](#)

The rooms are designed with work in mind, each has a proper desk and comfortable seating, not just a decorative corner table. There's a 24-hour front desk, room service, and an on-site restaurant serving both local and international cuisine. The staff speaks English, which is a [genuine relief when you're entering a new country](#) and just need someone to answer your questions.



Located just 100 meters from the center of Alaverdi and close to the historic Sanahin Bridge (a 12th-century stone bridge that's a marvel in its own right), the hotel offers [easy access to both the town's practical services and its cultural attractions](#). The monasteries of Haghpat and Sanahin are about 10 minutes by car.

For someone who's just crossed an international border and is contemplating a major relocation decision, spending a few nights here means entering Armenia with positive energy. It's the difference between arriving in a new country feeling like you're starting from zero [versus feeling like you've already found your footing](#).



For nomads currently in Georgia, the message is clear: if you want to stay, start preparing for the permit process now. If you were planning to move there, factor in the new bureaucracy and timeline. And if you're looking for alternatives, **Armenia deserves serious consideration**, not as a second choice, but as a destination with its own compelling advantages.



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WHEN THE LAND SHAPES THE STORY

APPLYING THE FRENCH WINE PHILOSOPHY OF MINIMAL INTERVENTION IN VAYOTS DZOR



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

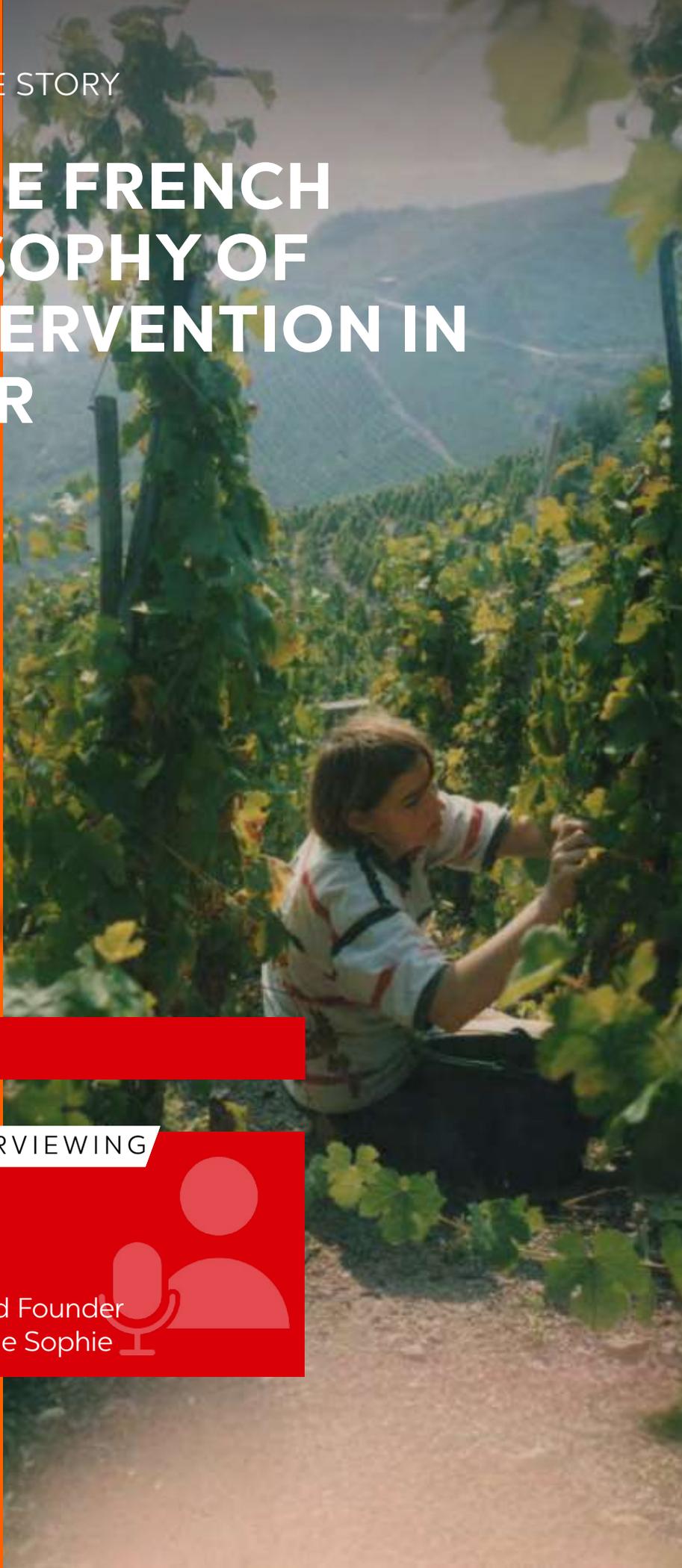
EDITOR IN CHIEF

INTERVIEWING



**SOPHIE
CLUSEL**

Vigneronne and Founder
of L'Euthymie de Sophie



WHEN THE LAND SHAPES THE STORY APPLYING THE FRENCH WINE PHILOSOPHY OF MINIMAL INTERVENTION IN VAYOTS DZOR

Vayots Dzor claims the world's oldest known winery, dating back 6,100 years, discovered in the Areni-1 cave complex in 2007. **Unfortunately, legacy alone doesn't translate to modern recognition.** Despite the many qualities of Armenian wine, it's still far from luxury wines produced in established regions like Bordeaux, Tuscany, or Napa Valley.

The real problem is philosophical. **Armenia needs to recover what was lost and rediscover what it still has.**

Ask The French!

Sophie Clusel is a French vigneronne and founder of L'Euthymie de Sophie who manages her own vineyard in Côte-Rôtie. She has Armenian roots in her family, and when Armenia called to her, she answered.

Sophie was invited to join SAROMM Grounds, an ambitious wine project situated atop a mountain in Aghavnadzor, Vayots Dzor. This luxury wellbeing ecosystem bases itself on such pillars as vitiviniculture, featuring centuries old vineyards, research, hospitality and culture.



She shared how her first experience in the region overwhelmed her. The environment, the beauty, the mountains, everything differed from what she knew in France. She removed her shoes, pressed her bare feet into the soil, and felt something shift. Drop by drop, her soul was taken. **When she returned to France, she understood that she had left part of herself in Aghavnadzor.**

I opened our conversation by asking her to compare her vine plots in France to the ones she's working on in Armenia.

“

The honor of practicing viticulture in the birthplace of wine carries responsibility. Its engagement with the oldest continuous wine-producing region in human history.”

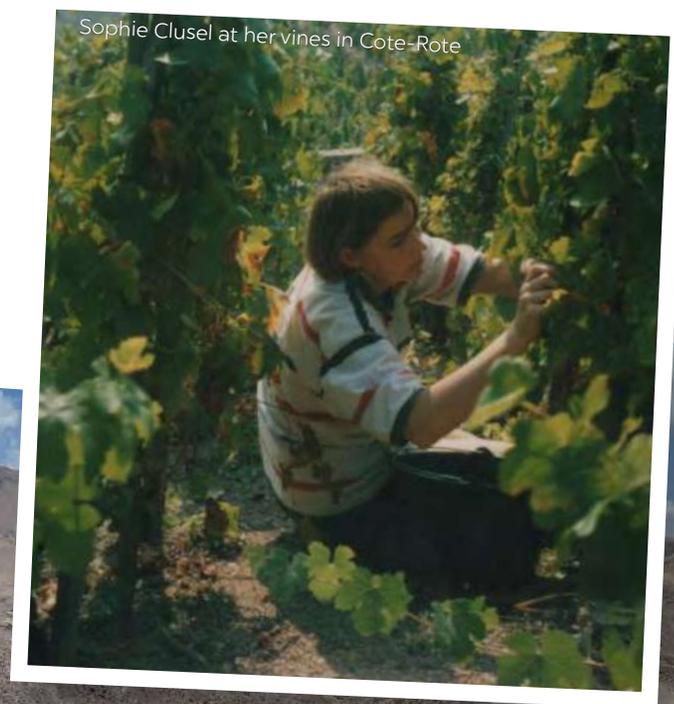


Two Terroirs, Two Stories

“Wine is made in the vineyard. If the grapes are good, nature does the rest. The winemaker’s role is simply to support what’s already happening, to step back rather than intervene, to become less visible as nature becomes more present.”

For Sophie, the best thing she could do is know when to step aside and let nature do the work. The ungrafted vines, volcanic soils, and extreme altitude provide conditions that winemakers elsewhere can only dream of.

Côte-Rôtie sits at modest elevations between 180 and 325 meters above sea level along the Rhône River. Vayots Dzor operates in an entirely different altitude band. The lowest point in the Areni valley sits at 850 meters, already higher than Côte-Rôtie’s peaks. From there, vineyards climb to 1,750 meters, where viticulture operates at the extreme edge of what’s possible.



One of SAROMM Grounds vines in Aghavnadzor, Vayots Dzor, Armenia

Both regions are products of violent geological activity, Côte-Rôtie's schist and granite formed through ancient metamorphic processes, while Vayots Dzor's volcanic soils are rich with basalt, tuff, and obsidian.

When phylloxera ravaged Europe, the solution was to graft European vines (*vitis vinifera*) onto resistant American rootstock. Many winemakers and scientists believe,

though debate continues, that **ungrafted vines produce wines with subtly different characteristics**; more mineral expression, more herbal notes, more tertiary complexity. In Vayots Dzor, it's thought that the sandy volcanic composition combined with extreme isolation and cold winters has protected the region from phylloxera. As a result, every vine

grows on its own roots, as it has for thousands of years.

“The payoff appears in the wine's character. High-altitude viticulture tends to produce wines that are light, fine, tonic, wines with freshness even when fully mature. Fruitiness, floral notes, and spice persist in ways that lower-elevation wines often express differently.”

The volcanic soils add another dimension. While Côte-Rôtie's schist and granite provide excellent drainage and mineral character, volcanic soils are known for producing wines with particular intensity and longevity. The minerality, the saline quality, the way these wines age, these characteristics have made volcanic wines from regions like Etna, Santorini, and Chile's Itata Valley sought after by sommeliers and collectors.



The Hidden “One”

During the Soviet period, Armenia was designated for brandy production. Fine wine was not the priority. Indigenous grape varieties were neglected. Traditional viticultural knowledge, passed from generation to generation for thousands of years, was interrupted.

The French vigneronne doesn't call herself a winemaker. The distinction matters. A winemaker works in the cellar, applying techniques to juice and must. A vigneronne oversees the entire process, from soil management and decisions in the vineyard through fermentation and aging in the cellar to the final commercialization. Being vigneronne is not being a winemaker.

She explained that ‘technical wine’ in her understanding is where modern equipment and approach takes the lead in the winemaking process, which always creates a safe $1 + 1 = 2$ formula. Modern equipment is fantastic but it should not interrupt the direct connection between the wine and the winemaker. Premium winemakers, however, don't focus only on technical perfection! For them, $1 + 1 = 3$ because they've learned that nature acts as a hidden “1” in this equation and that “1” is what sets them apart and takes their wine to the next level.



You cannot make wine that truly expresses terroir if you don't intimately know the land, the vines, the microclimate of each plot. The disconnect between vineyard and cellar produces what she calls technical wine, correct but soulless, wine where one plus one equals two.”



In Armenia, that hidden “1” already exists in the land; the ungrafted vines connecting directly to six-thousand-year-old genetics, the volcanic soils preserving mineral complexity found nowhere else, the extreme altitude creating conditions that push the boundaries of what’s possible. **What’s missing is the philosophical commitment to let that natural advantage express itself.**



What Armenia needs isn’t only marketing, though many assume it is. Marketing comes after. First comes the gradual recovery of the know-how (the movement is in action already), the know-how Armenia once owned and implemented 6,100 years ago, the patient work of learning what each terroir can express, the discipline to harvest when grapes are ready rather than when markets demand.”

The Path to Recognition

Côte-Rôtie’s rise required a generation of producers willing to invest in quality over quantity, to age wines properly, to reject the temptation of easy money for immediate consumption wines. Armenia needs the same discipline, but with less margin for error.

Fine wine is not about the pressure of maximizing short-term profits, planting high-yield clones, cutting corners on barrel aging. Fine wine is about continuous investment in vineyards despite the financial strain of waiting years for mature vines, maintaining standards even when buyers would happily pay for volume over quality.

Armenia will grow its wine differently if it's cared for differently. The potential exists in the land, in the vines, in the extreme terroir. What's needed is the philosophical commitment to let that potential express itself naturally, vintage after vintage. Not forcing nature to conform to preconceived ideas of what wine should be, but listening to what each plot can uniquely offer.

Can we get Armenian wine similar to the French wine you produce? This was my last question. She answered, "You'll get wine made by Armenian nature, unlike anything else in the world. You just need to let the mountains do the winemaking, let the land shape the story, then wait."



THE CULINARY PASSPORT FOR NOMAD CHEFS

HOW TO START YOUR GLOBAL POP-UP RESTAURANT CAREER FROM DILIJAN



in

**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



in

**KATYA
BREDIKHINA**

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in

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INTERVIEWING

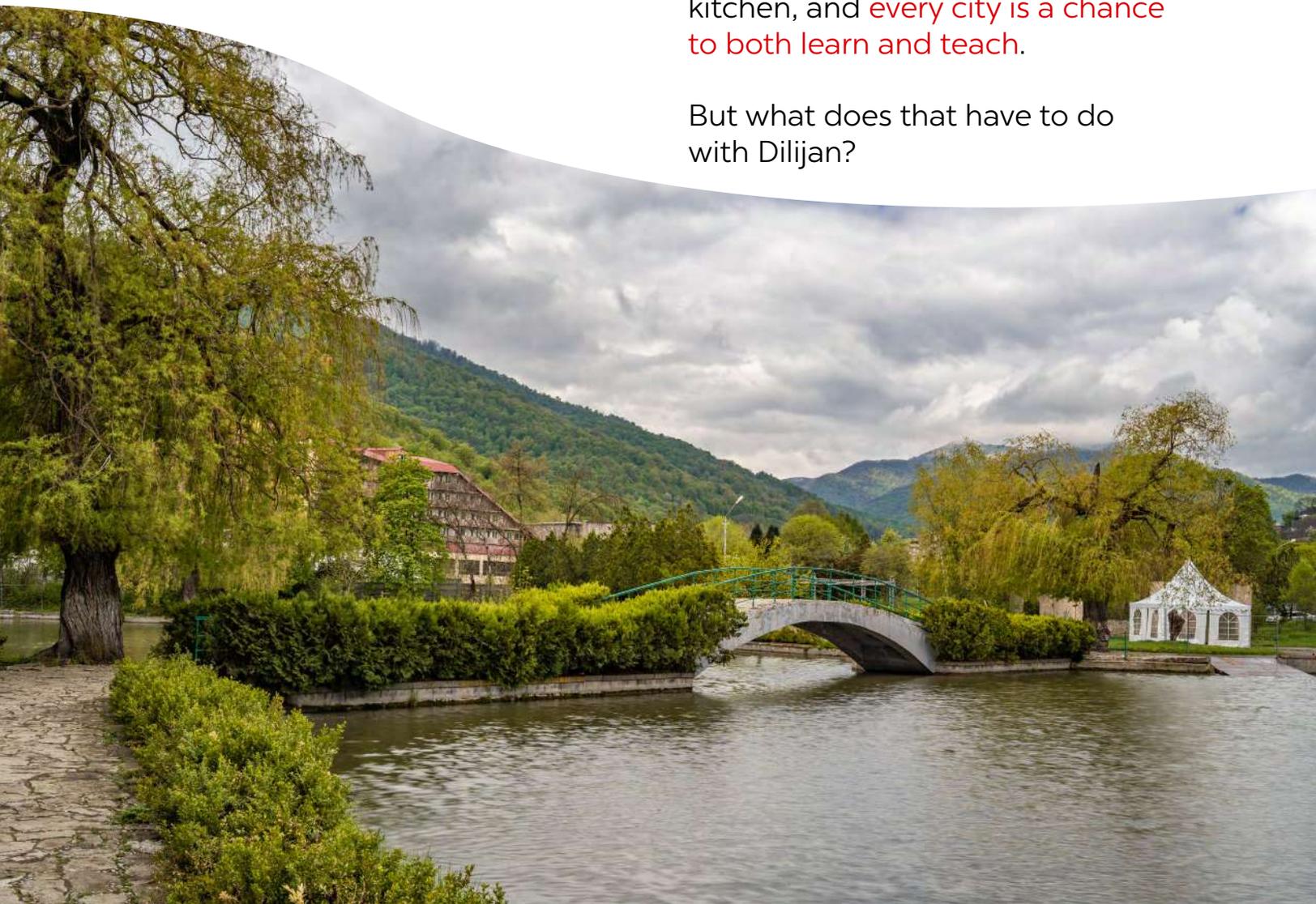


THE CULINARY PASSPORT FOR NOMAD CHEFS HOW TO START YOUR GLOBAL POP-UP RESTAURANT CAREER FROM DILIJAN

“Chefs don’t have the luxury of being sick!” I first heard this from a Michelin-starred chef in Miami, who shared how he can’t even afford to get ill because taking days off simply isn’t an option. If you’re in this industry, you know that’s the reality. I host a daily podcast in Miami for an audience of half a million US hospitality experts, where I interview chefs every day to discuss their career paths. Believe it or not, **I hear the exact same thing from almost every chef I interview.**

For that reason, a new movement has been taking place over the last couple of years, a new kind of chef emerging in the world, and they don’t want a Michelin star. **They want a passport full of stamps** and stories that start with “So I was cooking in this kitchen in...” These are the nomad chefs, culinary travellers who’ve figured out that the best education doesn’t end in a classroom, and the best career doesn’t keep you in one place. The whole world becomes your kitchen, and **every city is a chance to both learn and teach.**

But what does that have to do with Dilijan?





The Town That Feels Like a Secret

Dilijan sits about 90 kilometers from Yerevan, tucked into the Lesser Caucasus mountains like a secret between the trees. Locals call it “Little Switzerland” and **while every place I’ve been to seems to have a Switzerland comparison, this one actually fits.** Dense forests, alpine meadows, mountain springs, and air so crisp it feels medicinal.

During the Soviet era, Dilijan was a resort town with lots of sanatoriums hosting thousands of visitors every year. Musicians, painters, and thinkers came here to create and recharge. **Then the Soviet Union collapsed, and Dilijan went quiet.** The tourists stopped coming, the sanatoriums fell into disrepair, and for a couple of decades, the town faded. But something’s been happening over the past few years. **Dilijan is waking up again!**



With hundreds of millions in private capital flowing in, the scene in Dilijan is being completely redefined. Leading this is [Green Rock Management](#) and the [Green Rock Foundation](#), with **over \$160 million investments in hospitality projects** that promise to transform the industry’s culture from the ground up.



And a New Kind of Culinary Education

In 2024, the Green Rock Foundation partnered with [APICIUS Florence](#), one of the world's most respected hospitality schools, to open APICIUS ARMENIA in Dilijan in 2025. This is a full international hospitality school offering the same curriculum taught in Florence, with the same internationally recognized certifications, and with **Italian instructors bringing decades of experience.**

The school offers two tracks. If you have the resources and the time, you can do the full two-year program: first year in Dilijan, second year in Florence. If circumstances don't allow for international study, you can complete the entire program in Dilijan. Either way, **you graduate with credentials recognized across Europe and the United States.** This is crucial because most culinary schools trap you geographically; you learn French techniques in France, Italian in Italy, Japanese in Japan. **APICIUS ARMENIA gives you the foundation to go anywhere.**



The programs cover hospitality management, culinary arts, wine studies, and wellness; essentially everything you need to understand food culture from the ground up. But the interesting part is the cost! **An academic year at APICIUS in Dilijan costs €4,000.**

You're getting the same education, the same instructors, the same certification, for a fraction of the price. And you're learning it in a place where the cost of living is low enough that you can actually **focus on studying instead of working three side jobs to pay rent.**

Last month in Dilijan, I interviewed Salvatore Procopio, Hospitality Manager at the Apicius International School of Hospitality in Florence. He noted that Green Rock Foundation was their **first partner to insist on the full, authentic Italian experience without looking for shortcuts.** Rather than trying to reduce costs or scale back the hours of international trainers, they requested full engagement. They wanted to ensure that **students in Dilijan would receive a world-class education in the field.**



Katya Bredikhina, who directs both the Green Rock Foundation and APICIUS ARMENIA, recently presented the school at the World Gastronomy Summit in Barcelona. She explained how food is culture, identity, and community. And Dilijan, with its location, its history, and its growing infrastructure, is **positioned to become an international destination for hospitality education.**



Why This Matters for Nomad Chefs

Believe it or not, but many of the chefs I interview share a desire to break free from the system and reclaim their “me” time.

Traditional culinary school can feel like a trap. You go into debt for a degree that qualifies you to work 80-hour weeks in someone else’s kitchen for livable wages. If you’re lucky, you climb the ladder. If you’re not, you burn out before you’re 30. The whole system is built on the assumption that you want to stay in one place, work your way up, and eventually open your own restaurant in the same city where you trained.



But what if you don't want that? What if you want to see the world, learn from multiple culinary traditions, build an international network, and create your own path? **That's why the nomad chef model starts to make sense**, and that's where starting in Dilijan becomes a strategic move.

Think about geography. Dilijan sits in the South Caucasus, equidistant from Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. You're three hours from Tbilisi, Georgia. You're a short flight from Istanbul, and Dubai. Europe is accessible. Central Asia is reachable. **You're not stuck on the edge of the world; you're at the crossroads of it.**

The Practical Path

So what does this actually look like in practice?



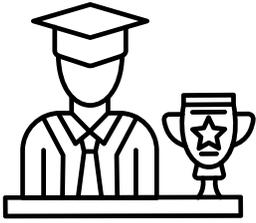
Year One: You enroll at APICIUS ARMENIA. You're living in Dilijan, where rent is affordable and the pace is human. **You're learning classical techniques from Italian instructors**, but you're also immersed in Armenian food culture. On weekends, you're hiking or driving to Yerevan to eat at the new wave of restaurants there.



Year Two (Option A): You go to Florence. Now you're in Italy, the food and tourism capital of the world, refining what you learned. You're staging at Michelin-starred restaurants, learning from chefs who've been working at the highest level for decades. You're also building a network of classmates from around the world.



Year Two (Option B): You stay in Dilijan and complete your training here. Maybe you can't afford Italy, or maybe you've decided the Caucasus and Middle East are where you want to build your career. **You graduate with the exact same certification**, and you've saved enough money that you're not starting your career in debt.



Post-Graduation: You're not locked into one city or one job. You could do a stint at a hotel in Dubai, the hospitality industry there is massive and always hiring. You could work at a wine bar in Tbilisi during the summer season. You could do a stage at a fine-dining restaurant in Istanbul. You could run pop-ups in different cities, testing ideas and building a following. All you need to do is to **book a one-way ticket to your next destination**. The key is mobility. You're building a portfolio of experiences, connections, and skills that make you valuable anywhere.

The Bigger Picture

What's happening in Dilijan is **part of a larger shift in how people think about careers**. The old model, train in one place, work in one place, stay in one place, doesn't fit how people want to live anymore. Especially in the culinary world, where inspiration comes from movement, **where the best learning happens in unfamiliar kitchens**, and where building a global reputation means being globally mobile.

The nomad chef is a practical response to a changing industry. Restaurants are expensive and fragile. Pop-ups are flexible and experimental. Cities are interconnected. Digital platforms make it easy to build a following from anywhere. And **many diners value authenticity, story, and diversity** over Michelin stars and white tablecloths.

The culinary passport starts in a forested town in the Armenian mountains. From there, the world opens up. And the only question left is: where do you want to go first? Armenia is not just welcoming digital nomads; as of today, it's **welcoming chef nomads as well**.



WHY GYUMRI?

A PERSONAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE CITY'S TRANSFORMATION



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

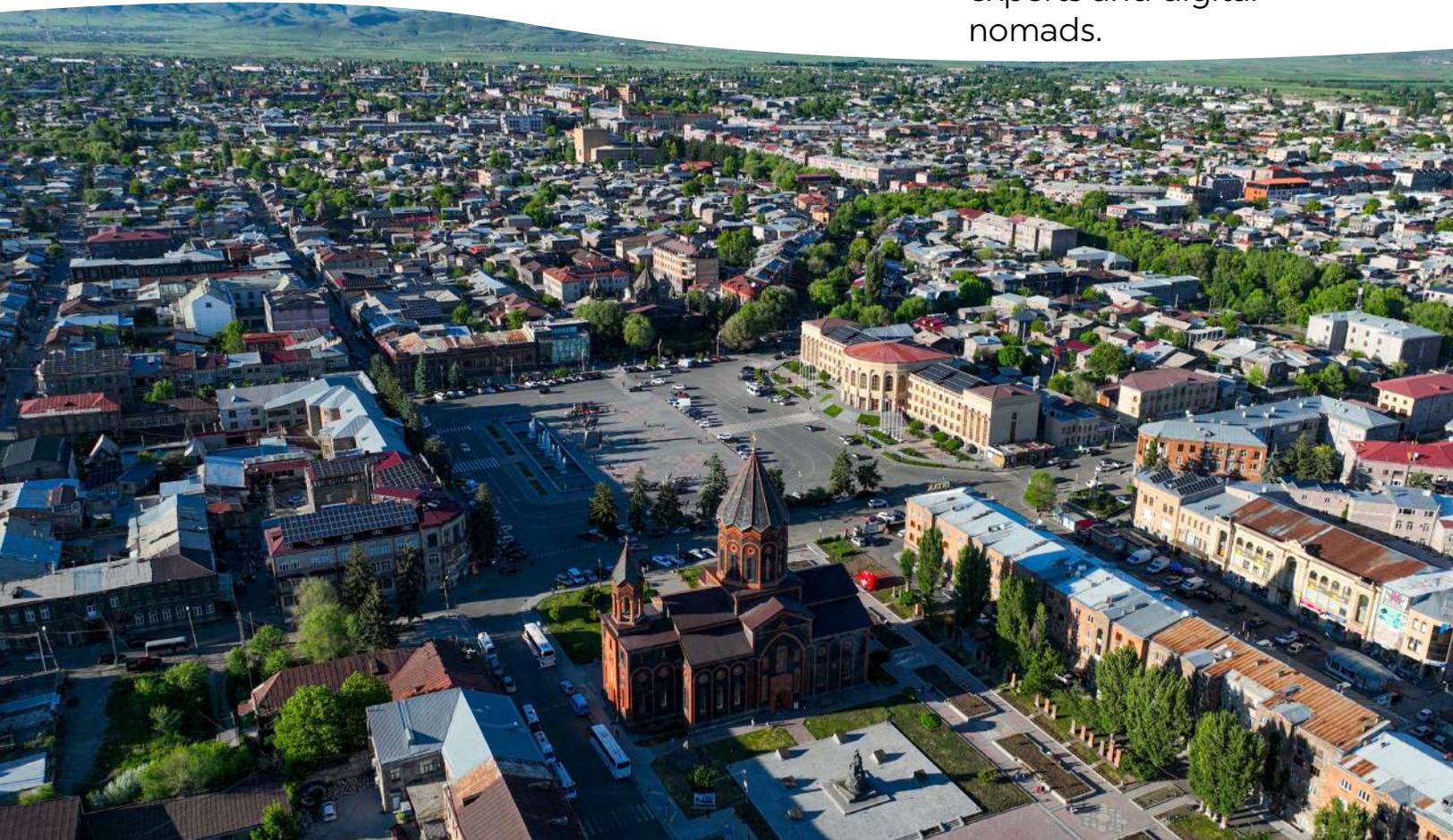
WHY GYUMRI?

A PERSONAL JOURNEY THROUGH THE CITY'S TRANSFORMATION

When I visited Gyumri for the first time almost eight years ago, everyone told me it's the cultural capital and the second-largest city in Armenia, but I honestly couldn't tell what I was supposed to be seeing or feeling there! People told me about iconic Armenian films shot here decades ago, but I've never seen them. As a foreigner, Gyumri wasn't my favorite Armenian city, it wasn't even in my top ten.

Times have changed, though. These days, I look for any excuse to visit Gyumri, and sometimes I don't even need one! I take the train with my laptop for a [full day of remote work in the city before heading back to Yerevan](#). Every city has its moment. For Gyumri, that moment is happening right now. It doesn't mean the city has figured out everything! [Change is happening as you read, and there is much to be done if you decide to be part of it.](#)

If you're looking for a list of the best restaurants and sights in Gyumri, you're in the wrong place. I don't do traditional tourist guides; there are enough of those out there already. [This is Gyumri from a different angle, one that matters to a tech professional visiting from abroad.](#) And to start with, here is my brief checklist that shows Gyumri is emerging on the map for international tech experts and digital nomads.



Inside the construction site of the first co-living/coworking facility in Armenia



Remote Work Infrastructure: Check

Infrastructure is the foundation of any tech destination. Besides fiber optic internet, Gyumri has full 5G coverage, which I tested myself as part of a nationwide journey to map Armenia's 5G connectivity last year. The city's cafe culture is moving toward a remote-friendly model, and the ecosystem is maturing. In fact, Armenia's first co-living/coworking facility is set to open its doors in Gyumri this May, which I'll talk about in more detail later in this article.

When I first visited Gyumri, all I could see was a Republic Square and a Northern Avenue that felt like smaller, older versions of Yerevan's. I remember telling Lana it felt like going back in time! **There was no way I could work remotely there.**

But that's not the case anymore; **you can work remotely in Gyumri from spots you won't even find in Yerevan.** Some are operated by locals, while others are by diasporans who decided to repat from the US and the EU. The vibe in Gyumri today is completely different. It's nothing like the capital, it's Gyumri, and **I can finally say I feel the city.**

Even the food variety has changed a lot. The restaurant offerings are now international, and the service quality, although still improving, has come a long way. Something that will capture your attention is how all the staff members there speak English really well; **you don't have to think twice before asking in English** and receiving a clear reply. It has become the norm.

This isn't the Gyumri I visited before, this is an upgraded version, **perfectly suited for remote workers looking for a unique experience.**



Together with Hagop Panossian at Honey & Herbs Cafe in Gyumri on a remote work visit

The Tech Community: Check

World-class tech work can come from places the world has written off. Major tech companies have established offices in Gyumri, including Synopsys, Digital Pomegranate, Volo, and D-Link. Key institutions like the Gyumri Technology Center (GTC) and the Gyumri IT Center (GITC) nurture the ecosystem.

In recent years, the city has also become a destination for Gyumri Tech Week, a large-scale event that brings together hundreds of developers and startups. [The list goes on, and a quick search online will show you even more names and institutions](#), but here's a short story that says it all.



**DIGITAL
POMEGRANATE**



When Todd Fabacher, an American entrepreneur and investor, founded Digital Pomegranate in Gyumri in 2013, [he couldn't find a single developer in the city](#). He had to train his team one by one. Now, they have over 100 engineers and have developed hundreds of products for clients in over 20 countries.

In fact, [his company is the number one Armenian software exporter to Japan](#). But numbers only tell half the story. I share these to show you exactly where Gyumri started and where it's heading now. And just for the record, the last time I visited Todd at the office, I met team members from Brazil, Canada, the US, Lebanon, and Russia. [All of them had relocated to Gyumri and, more importantly, they stayed.](#)

And if you remember the co-living/coworking space I mentioned earlier, Todd is opening it as the first of its kind in the country, and a unique concept even worldwide. [International travelers can visit the city for two weeks with an idea and leave with a functional mobile application](#), without any coding experience. This is Digital Pomegranate's latest innovation called IdeaBoxes, and it was developed right here in Gyumri.

I'm writing this article as Nomad Armenia's events manager puts together a remote work meetup in Gyumri for later this month. We want to bring the whole community together, locals and internationals, to talk about what's available in the city and what else we need.



AI Development: Check

Infrastructure and community are no longer enough to build a tech hub and attract remote workers. Since the rise of AI language models in 2023, the script has flipped. AI maturity is now a core pillar for evaluating any destination. How much a city develops and embraces AI now dictates the quantity and the quality of talent it attracts.

Gyumri is declaring October as AI Month! 30 days dedicated to AI innovation, education, and implementation with a focus on supporting the goals of COP17, which Armenia will host during the same month. What makes this credible to me is that Digital Pomegranate is leading the initiative.

They are working with the city on focusing on what it will take to move Gyumri into an AI-first focused city. And as the soul of Armenian culture, Gyumri is launching an AI Fest, from a global AI film festival to AI-powered music, poetry, and art; in other words, the city is exploring every corner of the tech-creative world.

I hope I've got you interested in Gyumri. You can find plenty of rankings online for food and accommodation to help plan your stay.

If you need my help, email me at matt@lifeinarmenia.com I'd be happy to accompany you to the city if you're ready to make the move.

THE JOURNEY TO LAUNCH ARMENIA'S FIRST
DOMESTIC SATELLITE – PART 1

WHY DOES A COUNTRY OF 3 MILLION NEED ITS OWN SPACE PROGRAM?



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



**AVETIK
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Co-Founder of Bazoomq Space
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the First Armenian Domestic Satellite's
Design Team

INTERVIEWING



THE JOURNEY TO LAUNCH ARMENIA'S FIRST DOMESTIC SATELLITE – PART 1

WHY DOES A COUNTRY OF 3 MILLION NEED ITS OWN SPACE PROGRAM?

On December 1, 2023, Armenia, a landlocked nation of three million people still recovering from decades of conflict and economic challenge, **launched its first locally designed and built satellite into space**. The satellite Hayasat-1 was a 10-centimeter cube weighing

just one kilogram. It rode into orbit aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California, joining over 80 other countries in what's known as the Space Club. **And here is where the story begins...**



When I was first invited to the [Bazoomq Space Research Laboratory](#) in Yerevan, I kind of had a certain image in mind. I expected a large site with massive rocket test facilities and scientists in white coats rushing through sterile corridors. In reality, it was nothing like that. Not even close to that. **There was only a small sign on the wall to tell you a space program was being built inside!** [Avetik Grigoryan](#), Co-founder and CEO of Bazoomq, greeted me at the door., “You can see that we started small.” These were the first words he said to me.

In a culture where we often think it’s “go big or go home,” this man is showing the Armenian youth that **you can start with very little and still reach the stars**. What a human being! You can’t fully get what I mean until you meet him in person and hear for yourself.

“We Need to Have Our Own Capacity.”

Avetik doesn't look like the stereotype of a space entrepreneur. He's soft-spoken, thoughtful, and when he talks about satellites and orbital mechanics, he's clear. He's been thinking about space since 1988, when he founded an extracurricular club for students that would later become the [AYAS Aerospace Society](#). That was during the collapse of the Soviet Union, when **Armenia's entire scientific and educational ecosystem was disintegrating.**

“We need to have our capacity to develop satellites, launch them, and give them the functions and tasks we want,” he told me. “Because otherwise we would be dependent on big powers that may or may not be willing to support us.”

Think about what satellites actually do. They monitor borders. They monitor natural disasters and environmental conditions. They provide communication infrastructure. They enable agriculture through precision monitoring. They support emergency response. For a small country like Armenia, the ability to independently observe and understand what's happening on and around your territory is existential.

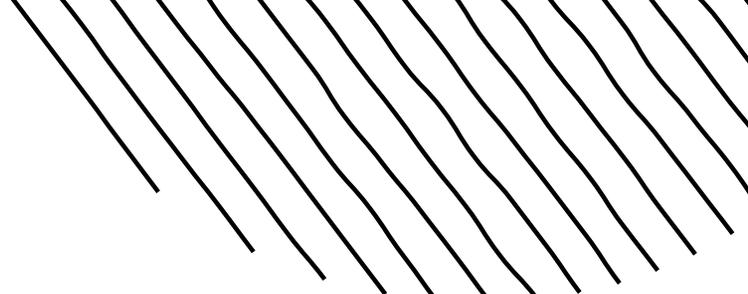
“Armenia had already launched a satellite in 2022,” Avetik explained, “but ArmSat-1 was built by foreign contractors with no involvement of Armenian specialists. Hayasat-1 was different. It was designed, assembled, configured, and tested entirely in Armenia by Armenians. That matters.”

He paused, then added, “This is about the resumption of Armenia's space-related activities.”

Mathew Zein and Avetik Grigoryan at Bazoomq



The Soviet Legacy and the Lost Decades



What Avetik means by “resumption” is that **Armenia wasn’t always starting from zero.** During the Soviet era, Armenian scientists and engineers made contributions to the USSR’s space program. They worked on guidance, tracking, and optical systems. They were part of something monumental.

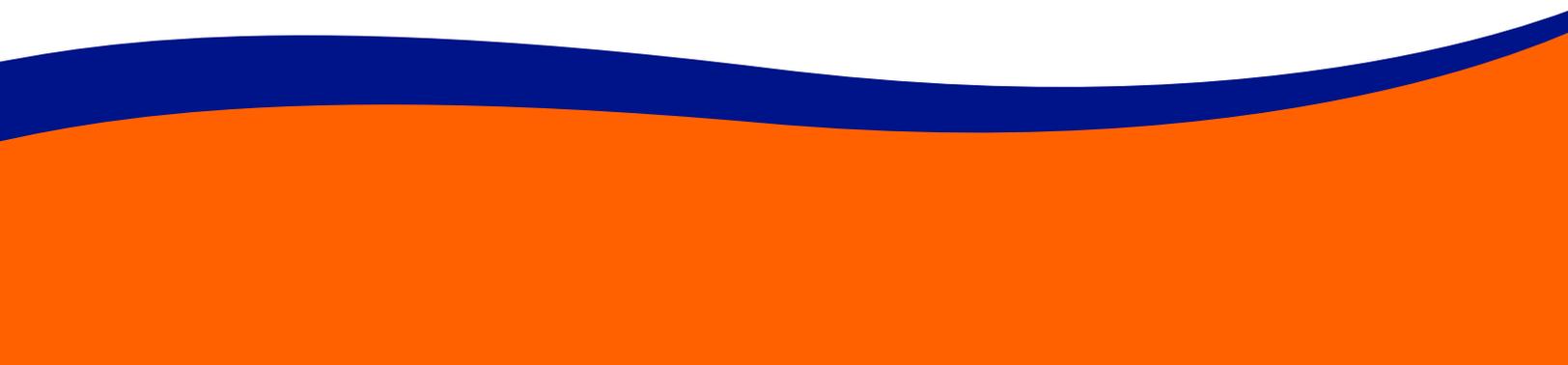
Then, in 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed. Armenia went into chaos. The brain drain was catastrophic. Scientists emigrated. Research institutions shuttered. Entire generations grew up without access to the kind of scientific education and infrastructure their

parents had known. For three decades, **Armenia’s space ambitions existed only in memory** and in the minds of people like Avetik, who refused to let them die completely.

AYAS, the aerospace society he founded together with his students, kept the spark alive. About 300 students passed through its programs over the years, learning about aeronautics, astronomy, and satellite technology in an after-school club and weekend workshops. **It was volunteer-driven, and it was miraculous that it survived at all.** However, it turns out that the miracle lies deep within the

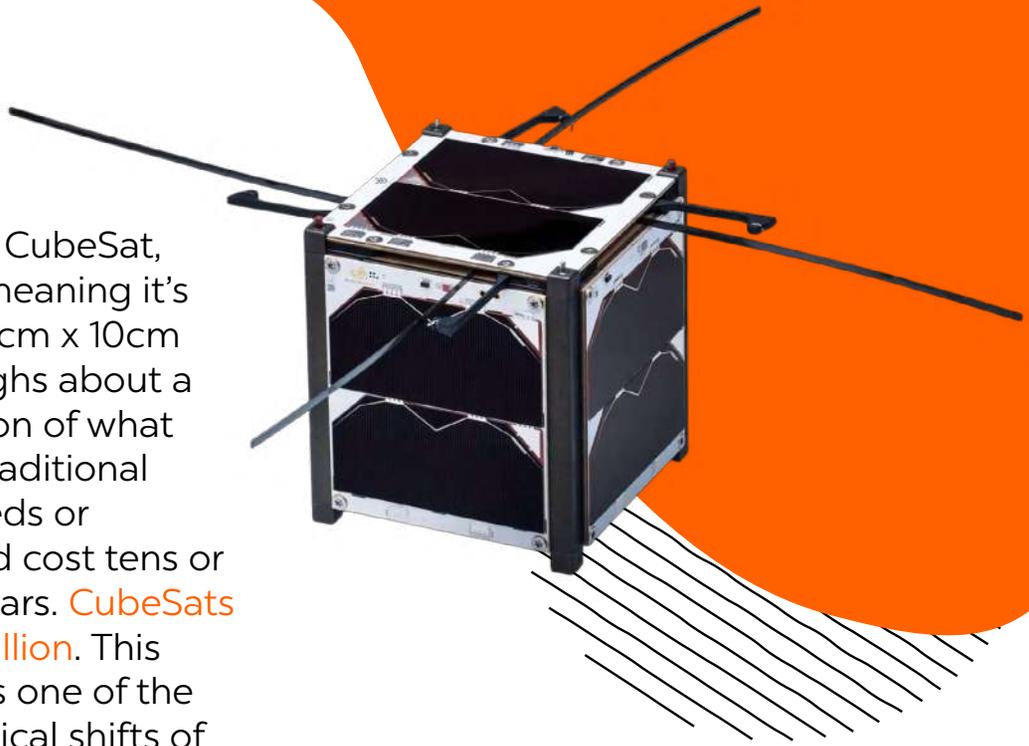
specific educational methodology developed by Avetik. It is so efficient, and the graduates are so grateful to have passed through that forge that **they become devoted volunteers and supporters of Avetik’s mission for life.**

In 2020, Avetik and several AYAS alumni decided it was time to scale up. They founded Bazoomq Space Research Laboratory as a nonprofit to **establish and continuously develop capabilities for space research, education, and startups in and for Armenia.**



Small is Big!

Hayasat-1 is what's called a CubeSat, specifically a 1U CubeSat, meaning it's one unit of the standard 10cm x 10cm x 10cm cube format. It weighs about a kilogram and costs a fraction of what traditional satellites cost. Traditional satellites can weigh hundreds or thousands of kilograms and cost tens or hundreds of millions of dollars. **CubeSats can be built for under \$1 million.** This democratization of space is one of the most interesting technological shifts of the past two decades.



The use of commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) components, miniaturization of electronics, and the rise of private launch providers like SpaceX have made space accessible to countries, universities, and even private companies that would never have dreamed of it in the Apollo era.

“The space economy was \$350 billion globally in 2016,” Avetik told me, citing research from Morgan Stanley and Bank of America. “Estimates suggest it will reach somewhere between \$1.1 trillion and \$2.7 trillion by 2040. More than 80 countries now have satellites in orbit. The entry barrier has collapsed.”

For Armenia, this timing is everything. You don't need billions of dollars and decades of infrastructure development anymore. You need smart engineers, determination, and strategic partnerships.

Mathew Zein and Avetik Grigoryan at Bazoomq

Building a Satellite in a Small Country

The Hayasat-1 project officially began in January 2022. Bazoomq partnered with the [Center for Scientific Innovation and Education \(CSIE\)](#) to implement the project. They established a joint team (Hayasat) and a facility for research, development, assembly, and testing of the non-flying units of small satellites (flatsats). They set up a semi-clean room (which I also visited), a specialized laboratory environment required for working with those units, and brought together a team of scientists, engineers, and students.



I asked Avetik what the biggest challenges were. I expected him to talk about funding or technology. Instead, he talked about knowledge. “We had to build capacity from scratch,” he said. “We had people with brilliant theoretical understanding, but no one, more or less young in Armenia, had actually assembled and tested a satellite destined for space. We had to learn by doing.”

The team worked through 2022 and most of 2023. They acquired the satellite’s structure and subsystems with integrated sensors to measure spaceflight factors, configured the onboard computer, and used Bazoomq’s ground station to test sending instructions and receiving data from the satellite.

They powered it with a combination of batteries and solar panels. They tested, retested, and tested again. After gaining this experience, they assembled, configured, and tested the satellite's flying unit in A. Alikhanyan National Laboratory's cleanroom.

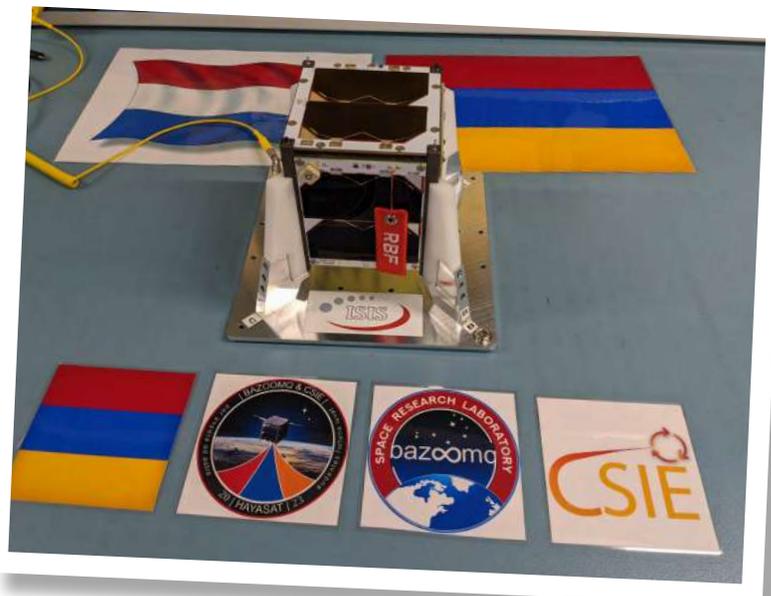
On one side of the satellite, they inscribed in English: "ARMENIA IN SPACE FOR SCIENCE."



In September 2023, Bazoomq received its official [license](#) for space activities from Armenia's Ministry of High-Tech Industry. Minister Robert Khachatryan personally delivered it, calling it "a significant event" and noting that **Bazoomq was the first private entity in Armenia to receive such a license.**

The license allowed Bazoomq to start working with the flying unit and then export it abroad for vibration verification and launch. But more importantly, it signaled government commitment.

Armenia was serious about space. Testing wrapped up by late September. The satellite was shipped to the Netherlands for vibration qualification, then to California in October for launch. Then came the wait.





Launch Day: December 1, 2023

The launch was originally scheduled for late November but was delayed twice, a common occurrence in the space industry, where weather, technical checks, and launch manifest coordination can shift schedules on short notice. [Finally, on December 1, 2023, Hayasat-1 rode into orbit](#) aboard a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket as part of a rideshare mission carrying multiple payloads.

Back in Yerevan, the Hayasat team gathered in Bazoomq's flight control room, a modest space with computer terminals and communication equipment.

After the lift-off, the room erupted. It was a total Hollywood moment: people throwing papers into the air for no reason and jumping euphorically. At the same time, a similar reaction occurred at the Yerevan Congress Hotel, where a [live broadcast](#) was conducted on all Armenian media. Minister Khachatryan, who attended the event, called it “very remarkable and heartening. **”Avetik spoke about it being “only the first step.”**



As the rocket cleared the atmosphere and deployed its payloads, they waited for the signal.

But the next morning, the team didn't record any signal; the satellite was silent. In the evening, Avetik called Hayk Martirosyan, Bazoomq's co-founder, CTO, and chief engineer, to share his concern: there had been dangerous solar outbursts on the eve of the launch, which could force the satellite to go silent.

Right during that call, Hayk looked up on the Internet the recent recordings posted by amateur radio enthusiasts around the world – the [signals](#) received by their ground stations from new and yet unidentified satellites. He picked one at random, decoded the text message, and calmly sent it to Avetik. And there, among all the other odds and ends, Avetik saw the message stored in the memory of Hayasat-1: “[Armenia In Space For Science.](#)”

At this very moment, something erupted within him, a mixture of incredible excitement and pride for his country,

for the team, for the difficult path they've all passed over the years, for the long-awaited success, and for the great beginning this message promised.

The satellite entered a sun-synchronous orbit at approximately 550 kilometers altitude, completing one full revolution around Earth every 90 minutes. Its expected lifespan is about five years. [From that day forward, Hayasat-1 has been sending data back to Armenia.](#) The team was communicating with it directly from the Bazoomq lab, receiving telemetry and sending instructions. It involved monitoring the satellite's health, testing the reliability of its systems, providing valuable experience for future missions, and more ambitious missions.



5G REACHES %94.5 OF THE POPULATION

INTERESTING INSIGHTS FROM ARMENIA'S TELECOM SECTOR



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

5G REACHES %94.5 OF THE POPULATION INTERESTING INSIGHTS FROM ARMENIA'S TELECOM SECTOR

94.5% is the percentage of Armenia's population now living within reach of 5G network coverage. For context, Armenia is roughly the size of Maryland, and has achieved better 5G population coverage than many European nations. The network covers 48 cities, over 600 communities, major highways, and even border crossing points.

Following my recent collaboration with Ucom, the first Armenian telecom to release a 5G digital nomad package at the airport, I attended their annual press conference in December 2025. I'm writing this article to provide a focused look at the Armenian telecom sector to give you a better idea of what to expect here. And for the sake of transparency, my insights are limited to Ucom, since I attended their briefing and tested their network myself all over the country, which you can read about in our November-December 2025 issue.



Border-to-Border

Ralph Yirikian, Ucom's General Director, called 2025 a breakthrough year. In June, Ucom launched 5G in Yerevan. **By October, coverage had reached 91.2% of the population. By December, 94.5%**, including border checkpoints at Bagratashen, Bavra, and Agarak; connectivity at these points matters for security, logistics, and the flow of people and goods.

Ucom built this network in partnership with Nokia, using their AirScale radio access equipment, 5G Core, IMS Voice Core, and IP routing solutions. **This is the same gear rolling out in major European and Asian markets.**

Connectivity & Content

Uplay, which I subscribe to at home, is Ucom's new entertainment platform which allows users to access over 200 TV channels and an extensive library of Armenian and international films across up to five devices simultaneously from a single account. The platform launched in partnership with MediaKind, a British global leader in media technology.

This is the convergent operator model, bundling mobile, fixed internet, TV, and content into unified packages that work across devices. Ucom's data shows that over 75% of their nearly 144,000 fixed-line subscribers now use convergent services.



Gurgen Khachatryan

Chairman of Ucom's Board

“The launch of 5G marks a strategic investment in Armenia's future. Beyond faster internet, this network lays the foundation for long-term economic development, from empowering rural communities with reliable connectivity to enabling industrial innovation and smarter infrastructure.”

The platform also becomes a laboratory for local content creation. Ucom co-produced “13 Seconds,” a multi-episode film that premiered on Uplay in November. Thus, Armenia has a vertically integrated pathway from production to distribution that doesn't depend on foreign platforms or gatekeepers.

5G

Ucom

Boring Stuff That Matters

Ucom received ISO 37301:2021 and ISO 37001 certifications in 2025 for compliance management and anti-corruption/anti-bribery management. International investors and partners want **assurance they're dealing with companies that operate transparently and ethically.**

For a country that's still building its post-Soviet institutional frameworks and trying to attract foreign investment, having telecom operators with internationally recognized compliance certifications sends a positive signal. And for Armenia's broader business environment, Ucom setting this standard **creates pressure (in a good way) for other companies to follow suit.**

“

Ralph Yirikian

General Director
at Ucom

Ucom will continue to lead with innovation, contributing to Armenia's digital development and strengthening its global competitiveness.”



Let's talk about business metrics, because they reveal the health of the telecom sector more broadly. According to Q3 2025 data, Ucom posted 4% subscriber growth and a 7.3% increase in revenue in the fixed broadband market compared to the same period in 2024. Mobile subscribers increased 7%, reaching 754,515. EBITDA from January to September 2025 hit AMD 13.813 billion with a 46% EBITDA margin.

Let's Connect Some Dots

Armenia is investing in its high-tech sector. The government has made technology a priority, the diaspora is engaged, and there's a growing startup ecosystem. But none of that works without connectivity infrastructure. This is the foundation layer. **Everything else depends on this working reliably and universally.**

I did a little research and found out that Armenia did this **faster than most countries with ten times the population and a hundred times the GDP.** Deploying infrastructure to 94.5% of three million people is logistically simpler than covering 30 million or 300 million, even accounting for mountainous terrain. **Small countries can move faster precisely because they're small.**

Infrastructure is boring until it's not there, and then it's catastrophic. But that's exactly why it matters. When earthquakes hit, when conflicts flare up, when pandemics close borders, **connectivity becomes the difference** between isolated communities and connected ones, between economic paralysis and adaptation, between information and disinformation.



There Has to Be Something About AI



Ucom mentioned implementing artificial intelligence in remote customer service software solutions as part of their digital transformation. **This is worth paying attention to because it hints at what's next.** AI-powered customer service means identifying network issues before customers notice them, suggesting better plans based on actual usage patterns, and resolving common technical issues without human intervention.

But AI in telecom goes deeper. Network optimization using machine learning can **dynamically allocate bandwidth based on usage patterns**, predict congestion, and route traffic more efficiently. And here's where Armenia's small size becomes an advantage again. It's easier to experiment with new technologies in a market of three million than one of 300 million. **Pilots and rollouts happen faster, you can learn and iterate more quickly**, and if something doesn't work, the downside is limited.

All in all, the signal is strong. **You are welcome to come and see for yourself**; the real question is what Armenia will build with it.





Matt's Personal Recommendation

A Reliable Accountant And Tax Advisor in Armenia

During my first year in Armenia, I did what I usually do in every new destination. I looked for a trustworthy accountant to make my life easier for an extended stay. I visited nearly ten different offices. Each time, I asked them to walk me through Armenian tax regulations, and each time they quoted their hourly rate, around \$50 to \$60, which seemed fair.

While I learned a lot about Armenian law, none of the professionals I met felt like "the one" I wanted to hire. I never felt comfortable with any of them. I've always joked that picking your accountant is like picking your barber: you need to feel comfortable with them, and that kind of connection isn't easy to find.



Then a friend recommended I visit someone he knew. That was in 2017 when I first met Armine Sahakyan. From the very beginning, she refused to be paid for the time we spent discussing the law. She told me I could ask all the questions I had, regardless of whether we signed a contract or not. I asked for a pen, paper, and a coffee with sugar. She had someone bring them to me, and we had a two-hour conversation about Armenian tax regulations. By the end, I told her I wanted her to handle all my accounting in Armenia.



Nine years later, I had a few questions about establishing a larger entity in Armenia and told her I needed to meet at the office. The moment I walked in, she immediately asked someone to bring a pen, paper, and coffee with sugar. It's a minor detail, but to me, it's the kind of VIP treatment I have always appreciated. I'm not a million-dollar business, but I like to be treated as one.

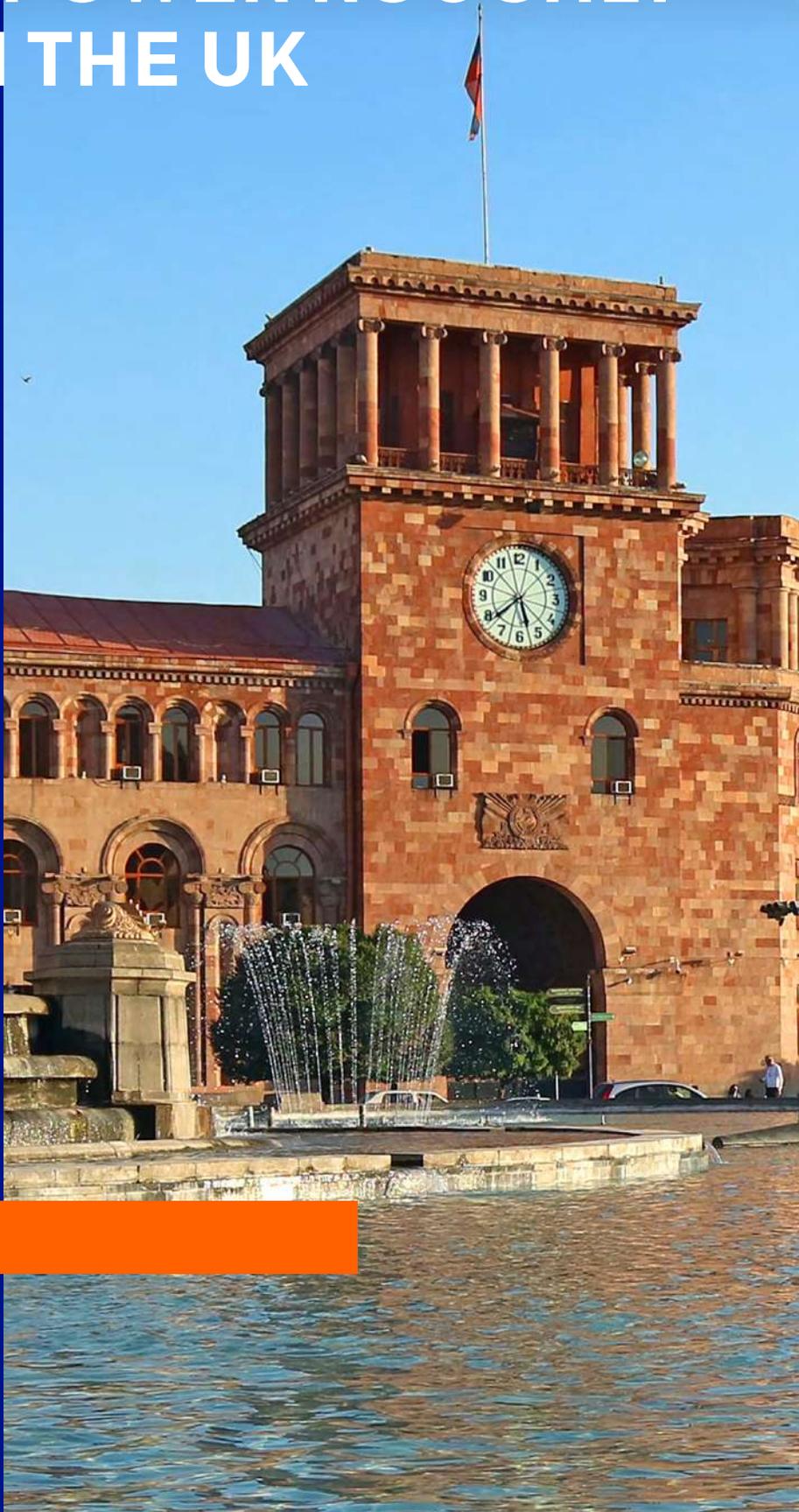
The reason I'm writing this piece for Life in Armenia is that last October, Armine celebrated the 20th anniversary of her company, Smart MT. Her firm has been servicing clients in Armenia and abroad for two decades, and I was honored to be invited to give a short speech at the celebration.

This article is my little gift to Armine and her team. For nine years, they have ensured I am legally covered, paying my taxes on time, filing my reports, and abiding by Armenian law, all without me needing to understand the language. This is not a paid advertisement; this is a personal recommendation based on nearly a decade of experience as a foreigner who arrived here knowing neither the language nor the law.



WHY ESTABLISH TECH R&D BACK OFFICES IN
ARMENIA?

A SMALL COUNTRY WITH COMPUTING POWER ROUGHLY ON PAR WITH THE UK



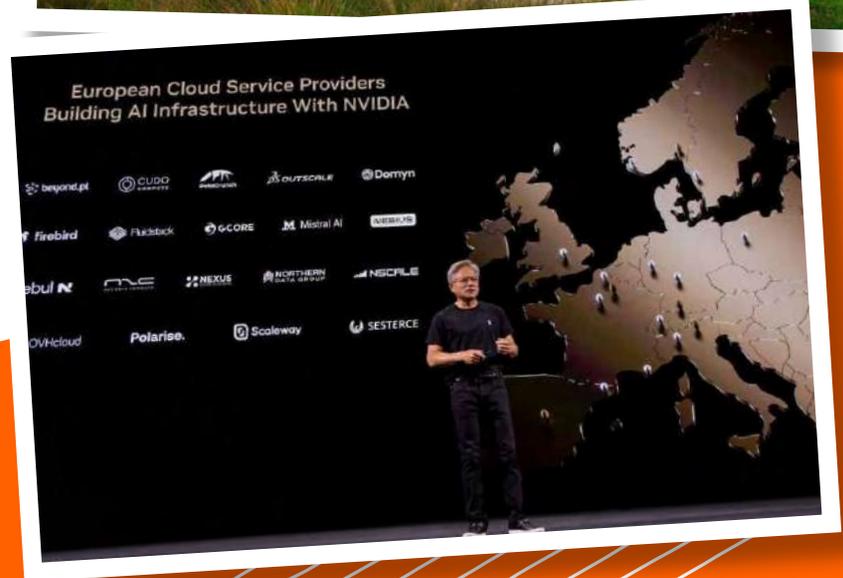
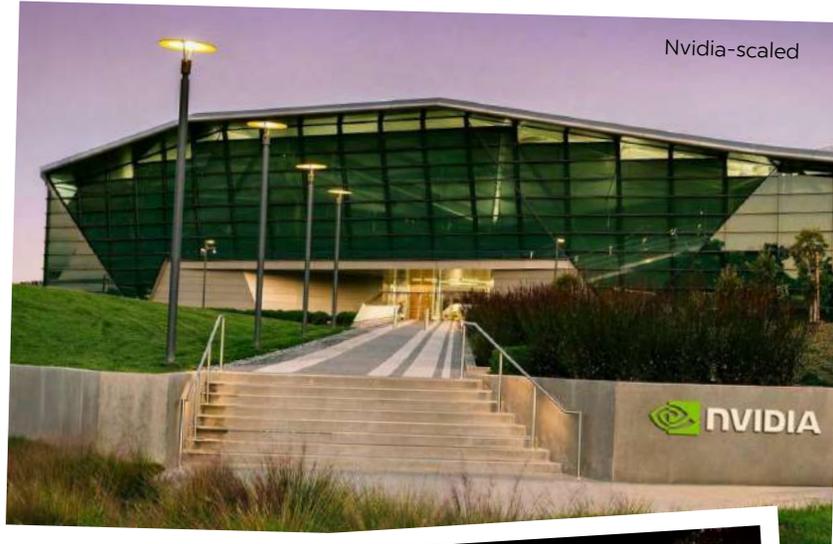
**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

WHY ESTABLISH TECH R&D BACK OFFICES IN ARMENIA? A SMALL COUNTRY WITH COMPUTING POWER ROUGHLY ON PAR WITH THE UK

NVIDIA relocated its Russian office here. Synopsys expanded to over 1800 employees. Cisco acquired a local firm. Adobe opened R&D operations. EPAM established two engineering hubs. BROADCOM set up an office. Oracle and Microsoft followed. Microchip Technology acquired a local subsidiary. And in June 2025, NVIDIA's CEO Jensen Huang announced a \$500 million AI supercomputer. *All of this is happening in Armenia!*

And when the US government approves export of one of its most restricted chips to this small country, you should ask yourself why!



Blackwell in the Caucasus

In the early 1990s, Armenia's tech sector collapsed. What was once "the Silicon Valley of the Soviet Union" employing approximately 100,000 people in the tech industry by the late 1980s and producing 30% of Soviet electrotechnical equipment, ended due to wars and economic chaos.

Armenia's past created an institutional memory and a culture of innovation that persists across generations. In 2025, the country's tech industry **contributed 7% to the national GDP, generating \$2.3 billion in revenue and employing 59,000 professionals.**



Last year, the U.S. government approved the export of advanced NVIDIA chips to Armenia for Firebird AI, the \$500 million AI supercomputer project. **Advanced chips like these are export-controlled technology**, and the U.S. doesn't grant such approvals lightly. This decision signals Armenia's position as a trusted technology partner in a strategically important region.

This 100-megawatt facility, scheduled to become operational by mid-2026, will house thousands of NVIDIA Blackwell GPUs, the company's most advanced chips designed specifically for generative AI.

To put this in perspective, this single data center will consume electricity equivalent to a city of 120,000 residents and will give Armenia computing power roughly on par with the United Kingdom. A country of 3 million people will have computational resources comparable to a G7 nation of 67 million.





Just so you know, NVIDIA's involvement in Armenia didn't start in 2025. The company established its presence here in 2022 by relocating its Russian office to Yerevan. Rev Lebedian, NVIDIA's Vice President of Omniverse and Simulation Technology, now leads operations from Armenia, describing the country as having "great demand for AI factories" and positioning those who know how to build and operate them as having "an advantage over everyone else."

Why Intel, AMD, and Siemens Chose Armenia

Armenia hasn't tried to become everything to everyone. Instead, it has found its specialized niche in semiconductor design and electronic design automation (EDA). Major multinational firms including Synopsys, Microchip, AMD, Siemens, and Intel maintain operations in Armenia specifically for chip design and testing.



Synopsys Armenia, which established its first office in Yerevan in 2004, has become **one of the largest IT employers in the country with over 1,000 employees specializing in EDA**, design for manufacturing, and semiconductor intellectual property solutions.

In 2025, Armenia took another step by partnering with Levi Semiconductor to establish the country's first plant for the production of multi-component semiconductor and silicon photonic microchips. This \$34 million investment will produce at least 12,000 microchip substrates annually.

The government signed an AI and **Semiconductor Innovation Partnership Memorandum of Understanding with the United States** in August 2025, explicitly outlining plans to explore opportunities to further develop Armenia's semiconductor ecosystem through private sector investment and public-private partnerships.



Professionals Need Professional Workplaces

For R&D operations, the quality of physical workspace matters more than many companies realize. Engineers and researchers need environments designed for deep

thinking, collaboration, and the kind of creative problem-solving that drives innovations. **Generic office space** doesn't cut it when you're competing for talent with Silicon Valley and European tech hubs.



When Firebird AI comes online and begins drawing researchers, engineers, and entrepreneurs from around the region and beyond, they'll need somewhere world-class to work. That's where Armenia's new generation of business centers comes in.

Construction started on Dalan Technopark exactly three years ago. I was lucky enough to be there on-site back when it was nothing but empty land and an ambitious vision. **It's the first tech and business center in Armenia built to international workplace standards.**

Currently under construction with a total investment of \$160 million, this vertical business district is being developed according to LEED and BOMA Class A standards. **The same benchmarks required by tech giants like Google and Amazon** for their corporate headquarters.

The two main buildings of Dalan Technopark were connected at the 15th floor in late 2024, with construction approximately 80% complete as of late 2025. **The project is scheduled for completion by the end of 2026, which aligns with the launch of the Firebird AI factory.**



By the end of 2026, Armenia will have operational AI infrastructure that most countries don't have, semiconductor manufacturing capabilities most regions don't have, and workplace standards available in global tech hubs.

NVIDIA didn't wait. Synopsys didn't wait. In a few years, the real cost will be trying to explain why you did.

MANAGING E-COMMERCE BUSINESS IN ARMENIA

HOW TO OVERCOME INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES AND ACCESS REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



INTERVIEWING

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Co-Founder of e-Logi Fest

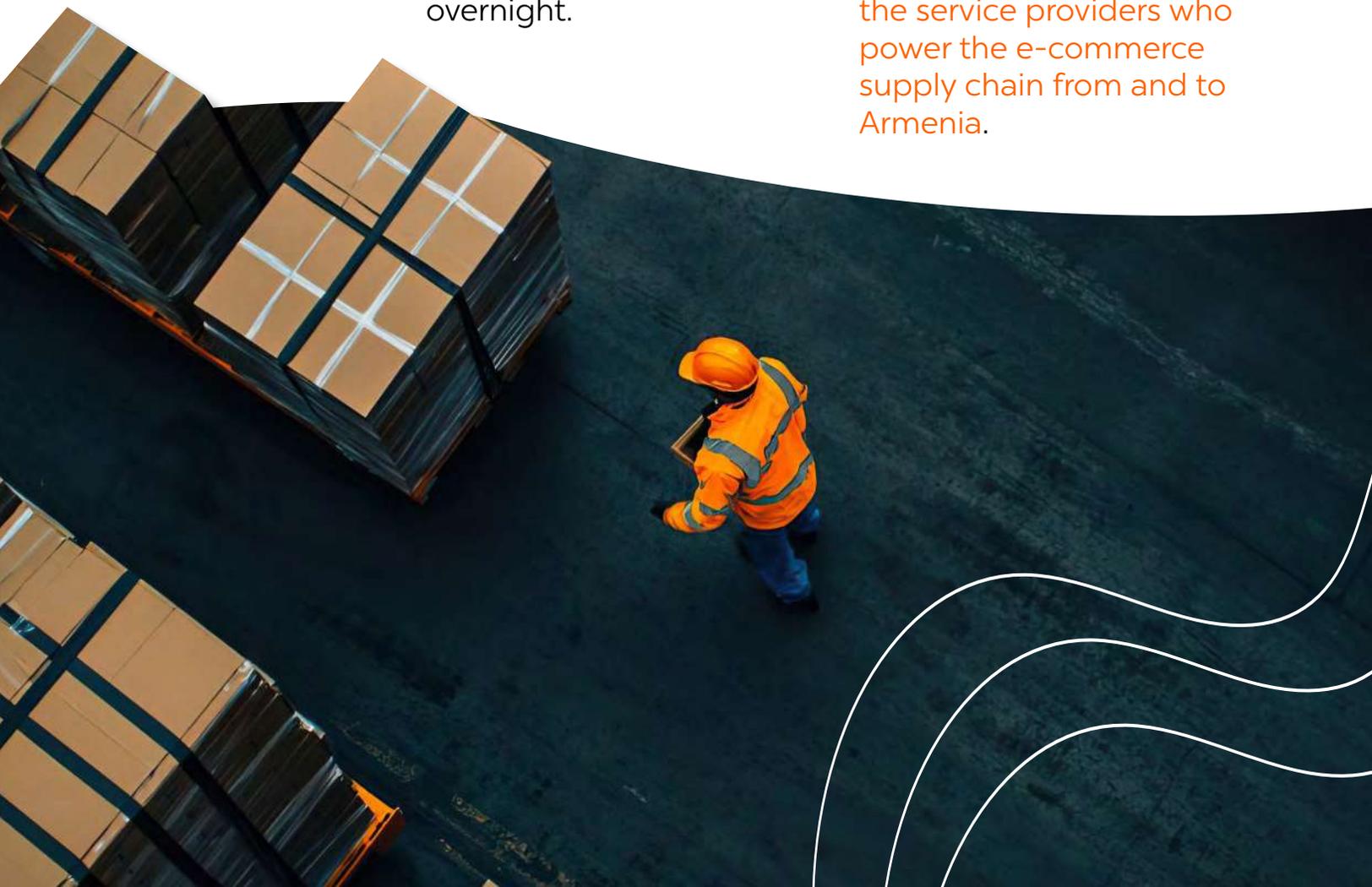


MANAGING E-COMMERCE BUSINESS IN ARMENIA HOW TO OVERCOME INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES AND ACCESS REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Armenia's e-commerce market is **growing at 14% annually and projected to hit \$900 million by 2027**, but running an online business here means facing real infrastructure constraints that won't disappear overnight.

Your products are ready, your website is live, but the logistics map looks like a puzzle with missing pieces. Welcome to doing e-commerce in Armenia! The e-commerce market here is **growing at 14% annually and projected to hit \$900 million by 2027**, but running an online business here means facing real infrastructure constraints that won't disappear overnight.

If you're new to the market, consider this your **"E-commerce in Armenia 101" guide**, a practical roadmap to help you overcome local challenges and scale your operations. But before you get started, mark your calendar! For the second year in a row, Armenia is hosting e-Logi Fest, the local and international logistics and e-commerce expo and summit, this 5-7 June. It's a great opportunity to **meet the service providers who power the e-commerce supply chain from and to Armenia**.



Tip #1: Shipping Worldwide



In Armenia, don't rely on a single freight company. **Work with at least two logistics providers; one for urgent/high-value shipments, one for bulk/economy.** A good advice here is to under promise and over deliver. If standard delivery to regions takes 3-5 days, communicate 5-7 days. If you deliver in 4, customers are delighted. If customs holds shipments and you promised 3 days, customers are angry.

Major international freight forwarders maintain operations in Armenia, while **Haypost offers a network of over 1,000 branches for domestic distribution.** Local companies like Mira Trans, Prime Logistic Services, and Garant Logistics offer different strengths. International operators like Hellmann Worldwide Logistics and CEVA Logistics provide reliability at higher cost but give you leverage when dealing with complex international shipments.

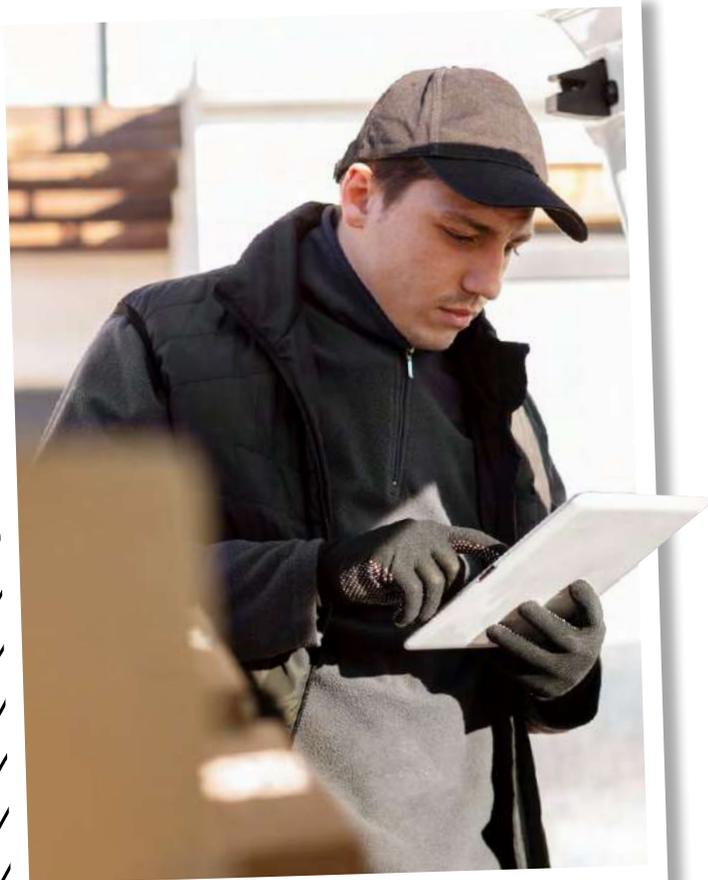
Russian e-commerce platforms Wildberries and Ozon have entered Armenia and are expanding. This works both ways; **you can sell on these platforms to reach Russian consumers without establishing a Russian entity** (though tax and regulatory complexities exist). Wildberries became a major player in Armenia within months of launching in 2021. Study their playbook.



If you're selling physical goods, **warehouse inventory inside Armenia rather than dropshipping from abroad.** Yes, this ties up capital, but it eliminates customs delays on every order and dramatically reduces delivery times. By warehousing in Armenia, you can **pivot between EAEU (Russia-led) and TRIPP (Western-led) routes.**

Tip #2: Managing Payments

Armenia's banking and fintech sectors are modernizing. Payment processing is getting easier, digital wallets are expanding, and consumer comfort with online payments is rising. While PayPal doesn't work with Armenian banks for now, **you can easily integrate Visa, Mastercard, Apple Pay, Google Pay.**



Maintain cash on delivery as an option for the local market. The Armenian national card payment system (ArCa) is worth supporting for local transactions. **Don't force customers into uncomfortable payment methods or you'll lose sales.**

It's worth noting that just a few days ago, Startup Blink's Innovators Business Environment Index ranked Armenia **1st in the Caucasus in the Access to Capital & Financial Infrastructure Functional Category**, which measures credit availability, banking connectivity, investment channels, and financial-tool accessibility.

Tip #3: Accessing Markets

Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union gives you tariff-free access to **Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, a combined market of 180 million people.**

Whether importing inventory or facilitating cross-border sales, **Armenian customs can be slow and unpredictable.** The Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) membership should theoretically streamline this for Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, but **internal barriers and regulatory uncertainty persist.**

Iran represents an underutilized opportunity constrained by international sanctions and poor infrastructure, but **it's a market of 85 million people next door.** For non-sanctioned goods (food products, certain consumer goods, services), exploring Iranian demand makes sense but **requires specialized knowledge of sanctions compliance and local partners.**



Tip #4: Operating Online

Armenia has world-class software developers at competitive rates compared to Western Europe or North America. If you're building an e-commerce platform, custom integrations, or need technical talent, hire locally. **This is one of Armenia's genuine competitive advantages.**

This means you can run sophisticated digital marketing campaigns, implement advanced analytics, use AI-powered customer service, and operate complex backend systems without technical limitations. **Your website can be as advanced as anything operating in Silicon Valley or London.**

A large, bold, orange number '4' is positioned on the right side of the page, partially overlapping the orange background and the white background.A large, light gray number '5' is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping the white background and the orange background.

Tip #5: Leveraging Regulations

E-commerce legislation is evolving but still focused primarily on physical trade. **Gaps exist around returns, damages, delivery failures, and consumer protection.** Write clear terms of service, honor them consistently, and build reputation through action rather than relying on legal frameworks to protect you.



The government and EBRD are investing in logistics infrastructure, including customs centers in Syunik and potential transit corridors as part of the “Crossroads of Peace” initiative. These take years to materialize, but directionally, logistics should improve. The government is investing in the North-South Highway and plans for a logistics hub in Gyumri. **Watch these developments and when infrastructure improves**, adjust your strategy to leverage it.



Intellectual property enforcement remains weak; counterfeit goods and unlicensed products circulate. This means that protecting your IP is harder, but competitive pressure from copycats is real.

Armenia can't compete to be another Asian manufacturing hub or European distribution center. In 2026, **Armenia's true value lies in its role as a high-tech, multi-vector gateway**. Success here doesn't come from following a global template; those who build deep local roots while keeping a wide regional lens **are the ones defining the market**.

For anyone serious about scaling e-commerce in or through Armenia, success depends on piecing together multiple service providers.



Events like eLogi Fest play an important role in accelerating this ecosystem's maturation. It's a meeting point where Armenia's fragmented e-commerce ecosystem connects.

A DRAGON SIGHTED IN ARMENIA!

WEAVING A -3,500YEAR-OLD DRAGON RUG BACK TO LIFE



**DAVIT
MIRZOYAN**

ARTIST WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE IN ART AND ART
THEORY FROM BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY



A DRAGON SIGHTED IN ARMENIA! WEAVING A -3,500YEAR-OLD DRAGON RUG BACK TO LIFE

Let's journey back to the Bronze and Iron Ages in the Armenian Highlands. The Vishap worshipped here was a deity of waters, emerging from chaos and proceeding to creation. **The Armenian Dragon is a creator deity central to prehistoric mythology and cosmology.**

It was as a student in the Art Department of the Armenian State University that I truly understood the rug's significance. I realized it was not just a utilitarian object or a piece of antique tapestry, but the core of my identity, passed down through generations. **I felt this with every fiber of my being, a conviction stemming from the deepest layers of my identity.** This realization grew gradually, eventually igniting a powerful, almost genetic urge to continue the cycle. That urge later solidified into a mission: to recreate this Dragon rug, which by then was dangerously close to disintegration.

This conviction, however, came later. From my first years of university, I felt strongly drawn to Armenian folk art, especially carpet weaving. My research in the field revealed nothing similar to my ancestral rug, leading me to understand I had inherited something unique. By comparing available designs and applying logic to vast historical data, I concluded that my rug was not a folk art. **It had ancient origins, stemming from knowledge possessed by ancient temple priests at least 3,500 years ago**, a time when dragon worship was abruptly and violently terminated in Armenia. I theorized that these priests must have gone underground, keeping the Dragon rug weaving alive in secret, passing the designs and skills to their descendants through the generations.



I also discovered that since wool rugs are perishable and easily lost to time, each generation would weave an exact copy of their ancestral rug. With reverence, they would then retire the worn-out one, thus preserving the design for the future. This act of recreation was essential for safeguarding the rug's iconography. Upon realizing how old, unique, and important this iconography was, I saw clearly the value of the millennia-old chain of recreations and the immense mission placed upon my shoulders.

This rug now stands as a witness to the most recent performance, in 2025, of a millennia-old sacred ritual. It keeps the design alive and passes it on. **It is a contemporary masterpiece that is simultaneously an ancient artifact**, the most recent link in an unbroken chain that nearly snapped in 1915.



The significance of the design

At first glance, you see a unified legion of dragons, woven in rows based on the sacred proportions of 5, 6, and 11. **These are not random numbers, but a coded language**, a sacred geometry from the cosmology of our prehistoric ancestors

- Five can represent the female principle.
- Six represents the male principle, associated with creation.
- Eleven, the union of male and female, signifies sacred unity.

Together, they form a mathematical formula encoding a worldview into the rug's very structure. This is not decoration; it is a cosmological diagram. Looking closer, you'll see that each dragon is a guardian, cradling a unique 'Tree of Life' symbol within its form.

Each tree, with its distinct shape and colors, represents a different facet of creation. In the spaces between the dragons, rows of vibrant fertility symbols create a tapestry of life protected by dragon power. The composition stems from "vishap" worship in Armenia, a spiritual tradition that was the heart of the land long before empires rose and fell.



Woven with pure sheep's wool on a cotton warp (330cm x 130cm), the rug is a map of an ancient spirituality. The weaving is executed with such flawless mastery that it would make our ancestral weavers proud.

This rug's value lies not just in its craftsmanship or stunning visual impact, but in its unbroken lineage. It is one of the last physical ties to Armenia's oldest spiritual tradition, a dragon's echo that refused to be silenced. It is a spiritual art form nearly erased by history, now reborn. This rug doesn't just depict dragons; it is a dragon itself, a mythical power guarding the sacred tree of life that is Armenian culture itself.

Also you can visit the website www.davitmirzoyan.com





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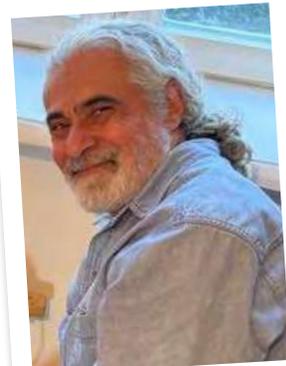
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JAN 2026



CREDITS AND SPECIAL THANKS



ARMENIA
The Hidden
Track



SPECIAL THANKS TO THE TOURISM COMMITTEE AT THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA FOR BEING COLLABORATIVE AND PROVIDING THE DIGITAL MEDIA (PHOTOS AND VIDEOS) TO USE IN THE MAGAZINE

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LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

JAN, 10TH 2026 | NO. 34 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

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