

LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

DILIJAN

HOW WELCOMING IS THE SWITZERLAND OF THE CAUCASUS TO DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES?

ENTREPRENEURSHIP SPIRIT IN ARMENIA

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THE CATS OF YEREVAN

FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

ARMENIA'S PARADIGM SHIFT OF CONSCIOUSNESS SPARKS A CREATIVE BOOM



Mathew Zein

Editor's Letter

Seven years ago, I visited Armenia with my wife for tourism, but little did we know it would be a trip that would change our lives forever. Armenia had us under its spell, and before we knew it, we were fully captivated by its “imperfectly perfect” charm.

Fast forward a decade of life with my wife as digital nomads, and we were ready to start a family. As fate would have it, we found our forever home in Armenia, where we welcomed our first son in 2022.

In a world where the digital nomadic lifestyle is rapidly on the rise, Armenia offers a unique opportunity for remote workers. With this in mind, I started “Life in Armenia,” hoping I can inspire others to consider Armenia as their next and maybe final destination in their digital nomad journey.

If we can spread the word about how attractive Armenia is for digital nomads and remote workers, we can attract thousands of enthusiastic professionals from all over the world, and that alone is a national income like no other, and countries have already started competing over it.



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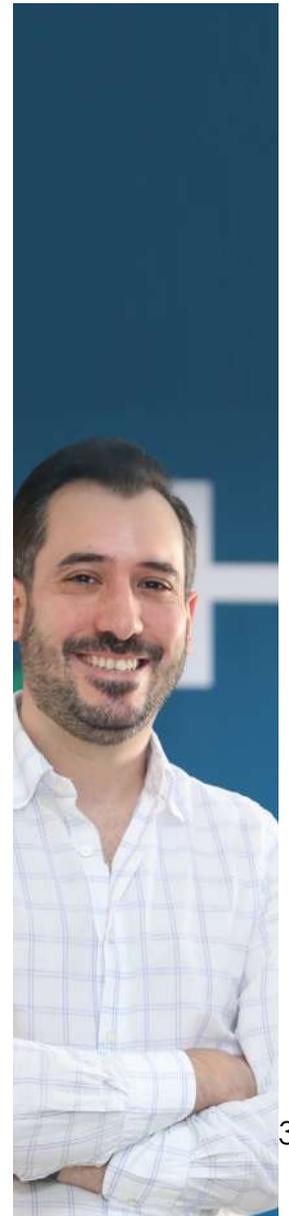
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TOP MYTHS ABOUT
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TOP MYTHS ABOUT ARMENIANS DEBUNKED

ARMENIANS ONLY WELCOME WHITE CHRISTIANS

Armenia is a veritable melting pot of culture and hospitality, where everyone who visits is assured of a warm welcome and a secure stay. From delicious cuisine to stunning scenery, there's no shortage of things to be said about this unique nation.

Sadly, a false narrative has emerged regarding Armenia, one that suggests Armenians are only hospitable to white Christians—a narrative that could not be further from the truth. So how did it happen that we fell victim to such unfair accusations? Pardon my pathetic language, but let's say it is an absolute lie. We could end here, but I will give you the full proof of my words.

According to 2011 demographic data, the ethnic composition of the territory of modern-day Armenia is comprised of 98.1% Armenians. The reason for this dissonance went deep into history when Armenians had to struggle for their ethnicity and religion to keep their independence.

Yazidis form 1.2% of the population and are the largest ethnic minority living in the west of Armenia, with their culture, religion, and sanctuary. Additionally, 0.7% are Russians, Assyrians, Kurds, Ukrainians, and others. These numbers show only those with residency in Armenia, not including expats.



Talking about religious groups, there are Roman Catholics, Armenian Uniate (Mekhitarist) Catholics, Orthodox Christians, evangelical Christians, Jews, Shia Muslims, Sunni Muslims, and pagans who are adherents of a pre-Christian faith.

Originating in the 19th century in Persia, the Baha'i faith is the world's newest religion, with devoted followers in Armenia and among Armenians. Every religious group has found its place in the community, living peacefully in civilized, modern Armenia.

Another ethnic minority living in Armenia with their own culture and religion is the Molokans. They are Russian serfs who broke away from the Russian Orthodox Church in the 19th century and found shelter in Armenia.

Today they live in almost every city in Armenia, but their villages are in the Lori region, Fioletovo, and Lermontovo. By the way, they have the most picturesque villages now attracting tourists.

From other ethnic minorities, there are about 6000 Assyrians in Armenia, mostly living in the villages. There are mixed Assyro-Armenian marriages, but **they still maintain their ethnic identity and language.**

None of these minorities has ever suffered from the persecution of Armenia or Armenians.

What About Non-Residents and Expats?

Let's not forget about our Indian brothers and sisters who, for decades, have been **coming to Armenia for education and even settling here with their families.** Just check out the numbers. In 2016, 4.226 Indian citizens visited Armenia. In 2018, the number was already 28.659.

Students from India study here for five years and manage to learn the language so well that they have no further difficulties integrating into Armenian life. Many relocated Indians open authentic Indian and fast food restaurants and massage salons, attracted by the relatively higher income in Armenia.

By the way, the student community in Armenia is the most diverse, welcoming everyone with favorable admission processes and lower costs. **We have students from the Middle East, including Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and African countries.** Our national football team is a shining example of diversity - a testament to the facts! We have players from **Nigeria, Columbia, Argentina, and Sweden.**



And let's not forget tourism as a premium indicator of how welcoming Armenia and Armenians are to foreigners worldwide. According to the [Tourism Committee](#), last year, Armenia had 1,665,658 tourists.

By establishing visa-free entry for UAE nationals, **Armenia also drove a great number of tourists from the United Arab Emirates to choose Armenia as a fairly affordable travel destination with beautiful nature, good food, and modern European capital.** The same reason attracts tourists from Europe looking for new off-the-beaten tracks.

While many expats prefer settling down in Yerevan, **others have chosen other cities and rural areas nationwide.** The most popular destinations were Gyumri, Dilijan, and Vanadzor, chosen for the clean air, safety, and unique laid-back vibes characteristic of small towns.

And who said Armenia welcomes only white Christians? **We have and respect minorities; we welcome expats and offer favorable conditions for their comfortable stay.** Thanks to its fast-track citizenship and accommodating business environment, **we are immensely proud to see Armenia become a home for many.**

Ladies and gentlemen, another myth is wholly debunked.

DILIJAN

HOW WELCOMING IS THE SWITZERLAND OF THE CAUCASUS TO DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES?



MATHEW
ZEIN

EDITOR IN CHIEF

DILIJAN

HOW WELCOMING IS THE SWITZERLAND OF THE CAUCASUS TO DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES?

As a digital nomad and a parent, I have realized that finding a location that provides both a productive environment for remote work and a welcoming atmosphere for my family can be a challenge. With this in mind, I embarked **on a mission to discover the best destinations in Armenia** that would meet these criteria.

This month, I visited Dilijan for a few days to find the answer to a single question I had in mind: **How welcoming are the people of Dilijan to foreigners?** This article won't cover Dilijan's cityscape, as there's plenty of similar content online.

Dilijan, a city with natural beauty and cultural richness, is nestled in the verdant forests of northern Armenia in Tavush Province. It's approximately 100 kilometers from Yerevan, making it a perfect escape from bustling urban life. During my trip to Dilijan, **the roads were in good condition, and police patrols were present along the way**, which was reassuring, particularly during the rainy weather by the time I was traveling. The journey took around 1 hour and 45 minutes, and the drive was quiet and relaxing.

Citizens of 80 Countries in a Small City

Dilijan has become a melting pot of cultures, ethnicities, and religions. Henrik Sahakyan, the social media manager of UWC Dilijan International School, extended an invitation to explore this diverse community in the school.

By the time I'm writing this article, **UWC Dilijan hosts 220 international students from 80 countries**, all living together in harmony within Dilijan's embrace. Besides visiting the city regularly in their free time, **the students have organized fundraising events for local causes and participated in various social activities.** Additionally, numerous international academic staff calls Dilijan home, adding to its vibrant mix of cultures.



“ It would be unlikely for a small city to host such diversity without acceptance being part of its people’s nature”

Mathew Zein



I asked my host Henrik about his decision to move from Yerevan to Dilijan. He made a compelling point about the city, explaining that he sought a haven away from the bustling city center. Dilijan provided him ample time to explore his interests and hobbies, which he hadn’t had the opportunity to do while living in Yerevan. This resonated with me, as I’m sure it would with many others seeking a peaceful retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life.



No One Knows Dilijan Better than “Dilijantsis”

I had the opportunity to meet Ofelya Hakobyan in Dilijan, the director of Network State Panarmenian Foundation and a student at Brusov State University in Yerevan.

As we chatted for hours, I asked Ofelya what sets Dilijan apart from other digital nomad destinations worldwide. Her answer was immediate and heartfelt. She spoke of the three factors that make Dilijan a standout location: **Culture, Conservativeness, and Mountains**. I asked her to explain in more detail.

Ofelya was eager to show me around the city and share the rich cultural heritage of Dilijan. There was something to marvel at everywhere we turned - statues, old architecture, and winding roads that told a story of a bygone era. Dilijan was steeped in history and alive with a vibrant culture that seeped into every corner of the city.

Later she spoke about the conservative lifestyle in Dilijan. It was refreshing to see **a place where family is at the center of everything** and children are raised to appreciate and respect their parents. Her family, a typical Dilijan family, lives in a single house with her grandparents. A way of life many Western societies miss, and many digital nomads want for their children's upbringing.

And then there were the mountains. Dilijan is surrounded by towering peaks that are perfect for hiking and meditation. A brief retreat to the mountains is all it takes for anyone seeking to unwind from the stress of daily work and rid themselves of negative energy. **In Dilijan, the mountains are not just a backdrop but a way of life.**



From One Home to Another: A Journey from Germany to Dilijan

I was lucky to meet Ricardo Bergmann, a German digital nomad, who first visited Armenia in 2015 as a volunteer in Dilijan and later found himself tied to the city's imperfectly perfect charm and decided to relocate to Dilijan, calling it home.

Ricardo's story is one of love and adventure. Just as Dilijan captured his heart, a woman from Yerevan did the same later, and they fell in love, got married, and settled in Dilijan together. They found a cozy residential house and moved in with their two adorable dogs.

Although Dilijan was peaceful and calm, **it wasn't without challenges, especially for a German man living in a rural Armenian city.** However, Ricardo believed in making a difference, even in small ways.

He is passionate about animal rights and often spreads awareness in his community. Despite some locals not caring about animals, he remains committed to the cause and always tries to impact wherever possible.



Ricardo also had to adjust to the slower pace of life in Dilijan. In Germany, he was used to a fast-paced lifestyle where everything ran like clockwork. **In Dilijan, things move much slower, which takes some time to get used to.** However, according to him, once you find the right person for the right job, things can go very quickly.

Despite the challenges, Ricardo persevered, and his efforts paid off. He slowly but surely became more comfortable with the language, culture, and lifestyle. With time, he built lasting relationships with many locals and immersed himself in the community. **Dilijan had become his home away from home.**

To keep himself connected to the city, Ricardo visits Yerevan once a week on Tuesdays. He meets with his employer before returning to the tranquil beauty of Dilijan, where he continues to renovate his house and live a peaceful life with his wife and furry friends.





Coffee Shop-Hopping in Dilijan

I spent a full day exploring Dilijan's coffee shops and coworking spaces, chatting with foreigners along the way, most of whom were Russian digital nomads. It was fascinating to hear their perspectives on the city as newcomers. Despite the challenges of adapting to a more rural lifestyle, everyone I spoke with shared a deep appreciation for the city's stunning natural surroundings and welcoming atmosphere.

One particular highlight of my coffee shop-hopping adventure was stumbling upon a cultural Russian movie night. Although I don't understand the language, I couldn't resist the opportunity to **observe how foreigners made themselves at home in a new and unfamiliar setting.** It was a reminder of the power of community and how it can bridge cultural differences.

I also had the chance to observe that some of the digital nomads I met in Dilijan had unconventional appearances, with modern hair colors such as purple, pink and blue, piercings, and tattoos. However, **what caught my attention the most was that they felt comfortable being themselves.**

This is a rare sight in some cultures where people with non-traditional looks might face discrimination or be physically attacked. Seeing such diversity being embraced in Dilijan was a refreshing change.

While I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Dilijan, it would be unfair to portray it as a utopia where happiness is infinite. Like any other place on Earth, Dilijan presents unique challenges that vary from person to person. Those who choose to make the move need to adapt to the lifestyle and find ways to benefit from the positive aspects while also coping with the negatives or, even better, just like Ricardo does, try to improve things around creating a better place for generations to come.

“

Armenian women are not afraid to challenge the status quo and break down barriers, but they do so with a grace and elegance that is uniquely feminine. They can assert themselves without compromising their values or sense of self, leading with strength and conviction while remaining true to their nurturing and compassionate nature. ”

Mathew Zein

Photo credits to Sergey Akopyan and his project Budemotkrovenny

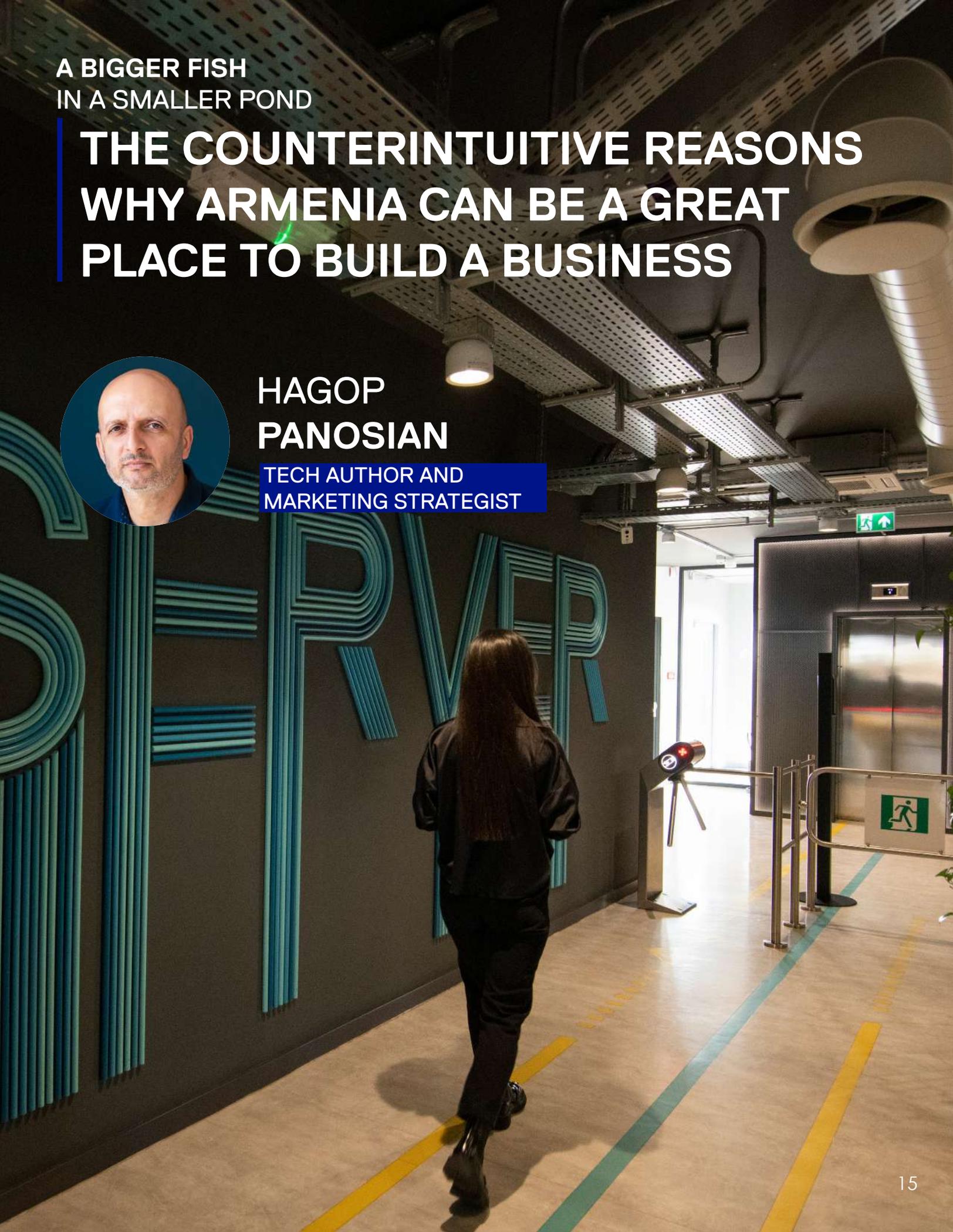
A BIGGER FISH
IN A SMALLER POND

THE COUNTERINTUITIVE REASONS WHY ARMENIA CAN BE A GREAT PLACE TO BUILD A BUSINESS



HAGOP
PANOSIAN

TECH AUTHOR AND
MARKETING STRATEGIST



A BIGGER FISH IN A SMALLER POND THE COUNTERINTUITIVE REASONS WHY ARMENIA CAN BE A GREAT PLACE TO BUILD A BUSINESS

Ambitious entrepreneurs just starting out on the road to turning their ideas into successful businesses tend to focus on “where the action is”, the familiar **business hubs where they expect to get access to capital and other facilitations.**

That’s predictable and expected, but the counterintuitive detail is that “where the action really is” may not always be obvious. And it’s not necessarily where the largest number of people congregates or the places that get the most media attention.

In my experience, the answer to the question of “**what’s the shortest path to success for entrepreneurs?**” lies much more, as a friend of mine once put it, in “being a bigger fish in a smaller pond” than being “a tiny fish in a huge pond.”

For me, Armenia exemplifies how much easier it can be to build a successful enterprise, especially in the software-as-a-service space and its global markets.



Why Armenia?

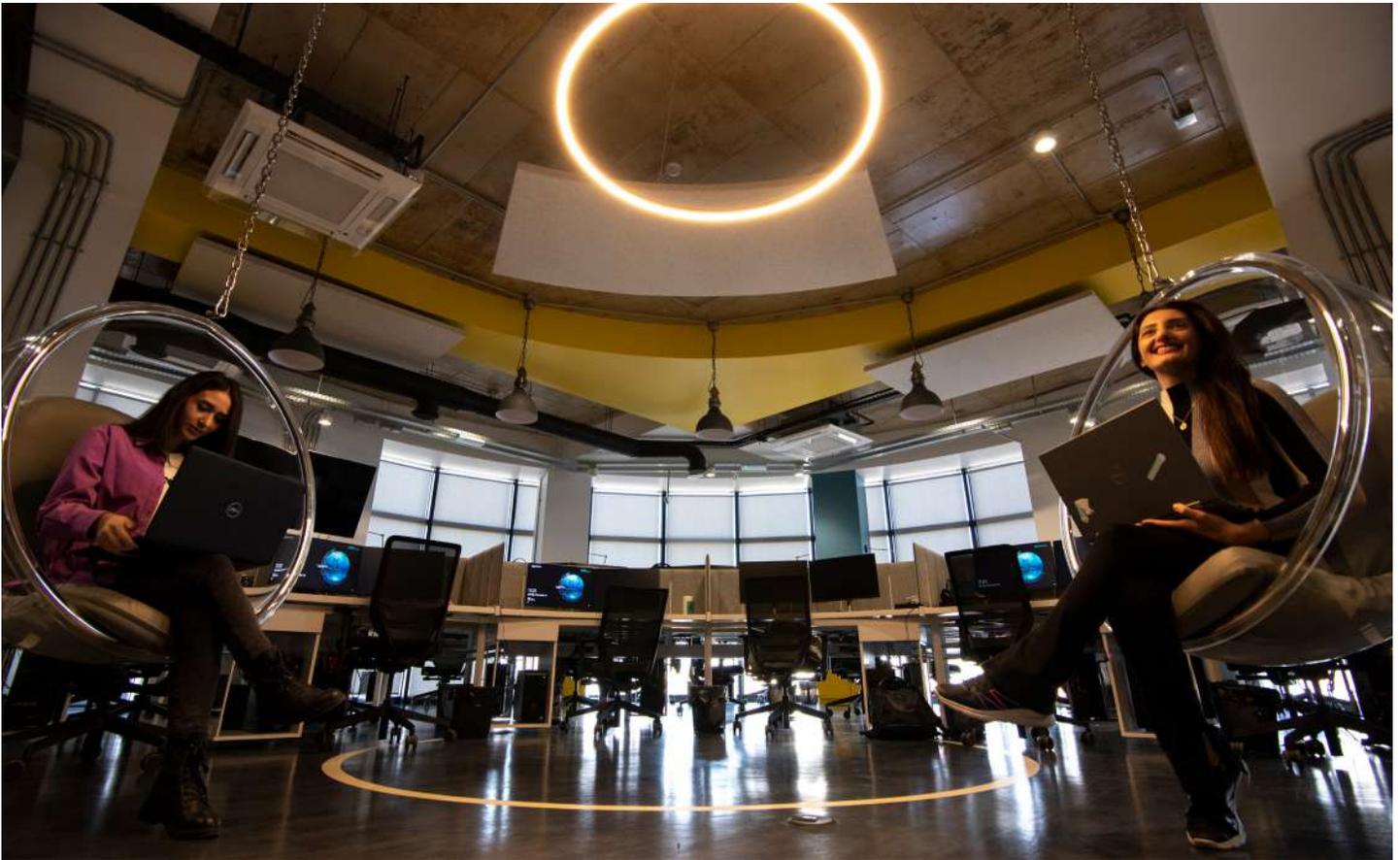
Many tech hubs around the world cater to ambitious entrepreneurs with great ideas who need funding and support. Some are more successful and favorable than others.

Due to its location, Armenia may seem like a relative backwater, but nothing could be further from the truth. The country has a very lively tech scene, but what truly sets it apart are two things:

- 1** A huge and highly engaged Diaspora community providing support and financing for entrepreneurs and their startups. **Many Armenian entrepreneurs and investors worldwide are ready to invest their money and experience in local startups.**
- 2** A highly intelligent workforce, especially in IT, with a hunger to break through barriers and win the startup game. Armenians are naturally highly resilient, out-of-the-box thinkers who always “find a way to make it work,” whatever the challenge.

From tech outsourcing companies to unicorns, Armenian companies are extending their innovative spirit and solutions across the globe. And with a tech sector (and a country in general) that is very open to non-Armenians - **many digital nomads and founders from**

Russia, the United States, EU countries, and beyond are now calling Armenia home - this a country that lays a red carpet to anyone who wants to be part of the burgeoning local tech community.



Why it Makes Sense to Launch a (Tech) Startup in Armenia?

Armenia is all about untapped potential, with an economy bursting with an ambition to grow and an equally ambitious workforce. The success of companies like Picsart has shown what is possible, and many startups are taking up the challenge.

And if you have the ambition to start a global tech company, Armenia is a great place to launch it, with **access to support and capital and far less competition than you're likely to find elsewhere.**

There are many parts to a successful business - a scalable, sustainable solution and effective leadership is two of the most important. The third is access - **access to a community, and access to capital and support.**

Access is precisely what makes Armenia a great place to launch a business. And if you're a digital nomad new to Armenia, here's your quick guide to the local tech community.

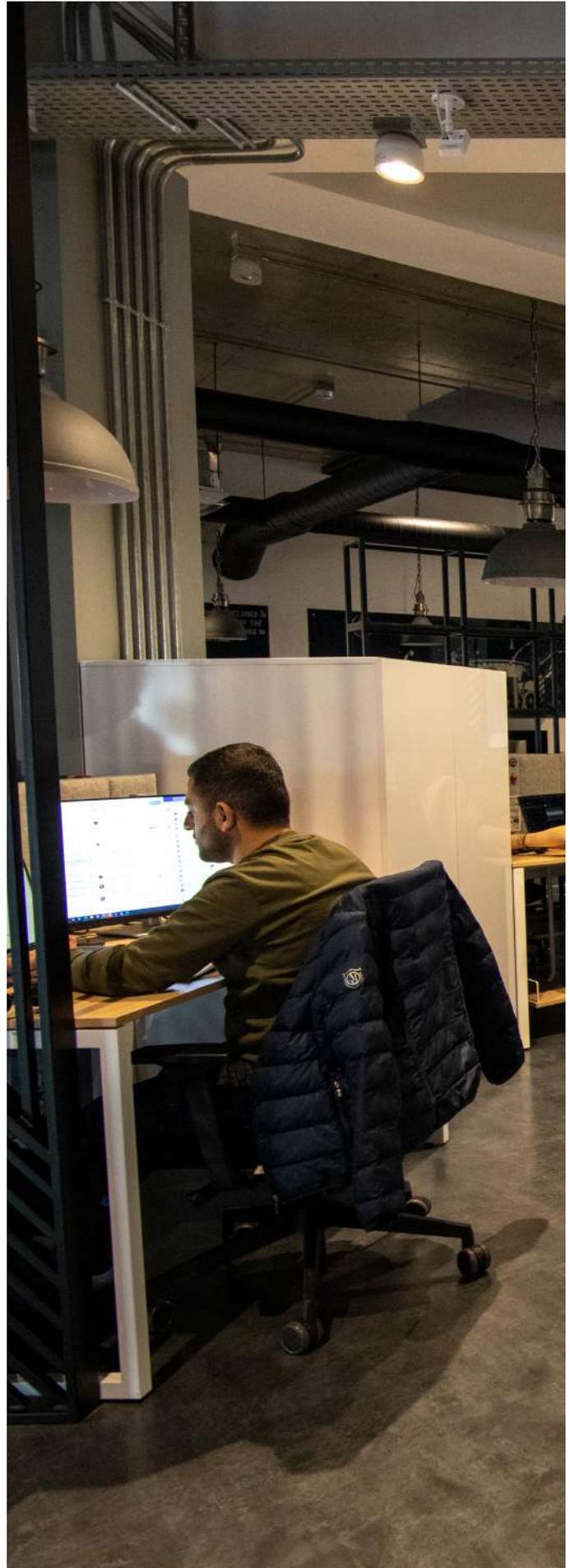
Take Your Place in The Armenian Tech Community

From my own experience, in Armenia, it's super-easy to connect to the kind of people who are likely to be beyond reach in many other places around the world. **Access to the right people can make or break any startup;** even a great idea won't get far without the right people to drive it. And that is precisely what makes this country special.

Everyone is open and willing to listen. The most important thing is to have something worth talking about and ideas worth sharing. If you do, you will be amazed at **how easy it is to get access to investors, VCs, advisors, potential co-founders, and future members of your team.**

Who in Armenia Can Help You Turn a Great Idea Into a Great Company?

One excellent example of how Armenia's tech sector is turning founders with great ideas into a global phenomenon is the Seaside Startup Summit, which originally began as the Sevan Startup Summit. Described as the **"first non-formal startup event in the region and the first startup tent camp in the world,"** Seaside Startup Summit has extended its exciting event format to the United Arab Emirates and India.





Seaside Startup Summit is also associated with Triple S Ventures, a pre-seed & seed-stage focused fund investing in tech startups.

ImpactAIM is “the first impact venture accelerator in Armenia designed to leverage the unique global network and expertise of UNDP to scale up the impact of ventures targeting United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)”.

Hero House is a co-working space and tech hub that hosts an AI incubator and Entrepreneurial Assistants’ School, as well as SmartGate VC and the Armenia Startup Academy.

SmartGate VC, whose backers include Tim Draper, invests in healthcare, biotech, SaaS, security, and infrastructure startups, with a portfolio that includes successful startups like Krisp, SuperAnnotate, ModelFront, Podcastle, and BiosimAI.

Karén Gyulbudaghyan represents the Berkeley SkyDeck accelerator in Armenia. He also runs the Ground Zero cafe on Saryan Street, where he organizes meetings with startup founders.

Another international startup accelerator active in the Armenian ecosystem is the Yerevan branch of the Founder Institute, which describes itself as “the world’s premier idea-stage accelerator and startup launch program, helping aspiring founders across the globe build enduring technology companies.”

One organization that’s behind many tech industry projects in Armenia is the Enterprise Incubator Foundation, EIF, originally “established in 2002 within the framework of the World Bank’s “Enterprise Incubator” project”.



Another “epic” incubator is the Entrepreneurship & Product Innovation Center (EPIC), the on-campus startup incubator at the American University of Armenia that “provides AUA students and the public with necessary resources to help start new enterprises.”

The Angel Investor Club of Armenia (AICA) also invests in high-potential startups and organizes numerous events

Neruzh is a tech startup program established by the Armenian Government to encourage and support the repatriation of entrepreneurs and their startups in the Armenian Diaspora.

StartDoon is a French-Armenian startup accelerator active in Armenia, with investments in companies like LuckyCarrot, an employee engagement, and a P2P recognition platform.

The FAST Foundation “amplifies and empowers scientific advancement and technological innovation in Armenia and beyond.” FAST offers fellowship programs, travel grants, and programs designed for “top-notch scientists in STEM-related fields to build long-term research projects in Armenia.”

BANA (Business Angels Network of Armenia) “invests in Armenian startups with high-growth potential,” focusing on startups with initial traction or an MVP.

Founded in 2014, HIVE Ventures invests in early-stage startups led by Armenian entrepreneurs anywhere in the world. [Its portfolio includes top Armenian or Armenian-founded startups](#) like Krisp, ServiceTitan, IntellinAir, Embry Tech, and CodeSignal.

BigStory VC is a venture capital fund established by startup founders leading successful companies - Krisp CEO and co-founder Davit Baghdasaryan, Krisp co-founder Artavazd Minasyan, and Podcastle CEO and co-founder Artavazd Yeritsyan.

Looking for Events to attend?

Armenia's calendar for 2023 is full of tech events, conferences, and summits. From the Digitec Expo and Summit in March, the HeyGrowth Conference in April, and the Yerevan Tech Forum 2K23 in May, to the Femlnino 2023 conference in July, which will bring together 2k+ attendees and 40+ speakers and special guests from 20+ countries, there are plenty of opportunities for you to build your network.

Startup Grind Yerevan “hosts monthly startup events to teach, inspire, and connect entrepreneurs.” [There are many more tech talks and get-togethers happening all the time.](#)

[Have kids? Bring them into the world of entrepreneurship today!](#) Startup Schoolin Yerevan will teach them how to “transform their ideas into sustainable business”.



My Own Experience

Is Armenia truly a great place to turn great ideas into sustainable businesses? Yes.

How do I know this? From [my own experience](#).

Last year I took the opportunity to [present an idea of mine at an Open Mic event on blockchain and web3 technologies](#) organized by ISTC, the Innovative Solutions and Technologies Center at Yerevan State University. The ISTC is a startup hub created as a joint initiative between the Armenian Government, USAID, the Enterprise Incubator Foundation, IBM, and Yerevan State University.

Upon a friend's recommendation, I reached out with a copy of my presentation, and I was good to go. The presentation led to a new connection, the connection led to another presentation, and [now I'm gearing up to found a web3 startup with support from a European partner](#) that is investing in web3 projects in Armenia. I can't reveal more right now because we're in stealth mode.

ARMENIA'S
CAT-TASTIC ASPECTS

THE CATS OF YEREVAN



STEFAN
PAPP

AUSTRIAN
DIGITAL NOMAD



ARMENIA'S CAT-TASTIC ASPECTS

THE CATS OF YEREVAN

Does it matter to Repats how animals are treated in a foreign country? In my home country Austria, most citizens adore their animals. Some of my compatriots value their pets even more than other humans: **Pets are part of the family, and sometimes a cat or a dog can be the replacement for a partner or friend.** It is fair to say that this is not just an Austrian phenomenon; also, members from other countries are crazy about their pets.

Mahatma Gandhi once said that the greatness of a nation and its moral progress could be judged by how **its animals are treated.** So, from that viewpoint, we might also go beyond the question of animal care but also assess how developed the Armenian nation is.

There is a saying that everyone is quirky in some way. In my case, it might be an obsession with cats. For me, it is partly really difficult not to approach a cat when they are around. When I walk around my neighborhood, I usually get acquainted with the street cats; I give them a name and feed them whenever I can. If I am at a specific spot in town, I often remember which cat I met there, but I might have forgotten which humans were around me at that time.

For an animal lover, Armenia can be a challenge at some point. We cannot hide that street dogs and cats are roaming in the streets of Yerevan. While in warmer times, it might be possible to consider street animals as free, and it is probable to think that they have a better life than house cats who can never leave their apartments, but such a view changes in the winter. **It is hard to ignore the fact that animals might be freezing at night** when it is freezing.

What makes many animal lovers really angry is if someone says: Why do you care? They are just dogs and cats; unfortunately, some Armenians say that! However, there are many good moments **when you see how much Armenians follow the ideals of a great nation.** I live in a large Condominium. Next to our building are many smaller shacks inhabited by poorer people; **they offer many retreats where cats can hide.**

One street cat, Zara, got her kittens in one of these shacks, and she lived with her kittens under the roof. However, the roof of that shack had holes, and the cats would have gotten cold in winter.

A friend who lives in an apartment in our Condominium paid to improve the roof so that the cats have it warm.

In the beginning, I was not so sure if we were just a few "cat-crazy people"



in one building, but then I realized how many of the house community, including the security guards, got fond of the street cats that moved into our neighborhood. They are fed and treated well.

I often take walks in the neighborhood. There, I often also encounter cats who seem fed well and have shiny and soft fur. They might be street cats, but someone cares for them, and they are not too afraid of humans. Many of them appear to be happy, and they purr when I approach them.

But Armenia does not come without its challenges. Some individuals do not care. If people keep smoking next to their kids and treat their surroundings poorly, they will not care about the well-being of cats and dogs.

In my very personal view, I believe it is partly a problem of the old generation. Many have experiences with a certain stubbornness with the older generation, so their focus is on those who come next. I see organizations, mostly NGOs and Foundations, who help to foster a new generation: A generation that is more empathic, that shows care about the world, and that will not simply ignore their environment. This new generation also understands to treat animals well.





“ Confidence is one of the defining traits of Armenian women. From a young age, they are taught to know their worth and to pursue their dreams with determination and fearlessness. They are proud of who they are and where they come from, giving them a sense of purpose and direction that is hard to shake. ”

Mathew Zein

ENTREPRENEURSHIP
SPIRIT IN ARMENIA

HOW DID ARMEN A. AVAKIAN SURPASS 1\$ MILLION IN ANNUAL REVENUE IN 4 YEARS?



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EDITOR IN CHIEF



ENTREPRENEURSHIP SPIRIT IN ARMENIA

HOW DID ARMEN A. AVAKIAN SURPASS 1\$ MILLION IN ANNUAL REVENUE IN 4 YEARS?

The entrepreneurial atmosphere of a country plays a crucial role in attracting digital nomad families to relocate. Remote workers often aspire to either establish their own startup or become a part of a budding one. Hence, I decided to interview successful entrepreneurs who started their journey in Armenia and achieved global success. Their stories prove that **Armenia has everything go-getters need to succeed.**

Introducing Armen A. Avakian, Co-founder of Hexact

Armen A. Avakian, an American Armenian, is the co-founder and Chief Development Officer of Hexact. This awe-inspiring company develops AI-driven tools to empower businesses, and in **just under four years**, they've already launched five innovative products, collecting over 100,000 users! But that's not all; **Hexact has gone above and beyond by surpassing a remarkable \$1 million in annual revenue.** And if you thought that was impressive, hold on to your seats because Armen took Hexact to the [public offering in the United States](#) earlier this month.



Now that you're familiar with our esteemed entrepreneur let's put aside the grandiose words and impressive achievements and delve deeper into his story. As I interviewed him, he introduced me to the **fundamental factors of startup success and failure.**

The Hands-On Founders

The first milestone is simply getting started, which often requires individual effort. Therefore, having co-founders who can collaborate effectively is essential for success in a startup. In the first 4-5 months, **the founders need to be actively involved and handle all aspects of the business themselves.** As processes are developed, additional personnel can be gradually hired to assist with specific tasks.

“ In the early days of Hexact, our CEO handled customer support himself for the first six months, responding to messages and texts.”

Armen A. Avakian 27

This approach made sense as the CEO understood the customers' needs better, and it enabled him to determine the user requirements before developing customer support scripts. By handling customer support personally, **he gained a clear understanding of the involved processes**, which aided in selecting the right individuals for the task.

See a Need, Fill a Need

The Hexact founders came from diverse backgrounds, with senior expertise in various industries and business spheres. **They identified a significant challenge faced by small and medium companies globally.** Larger organizations allocate around 30% of their budget to developing AI tools that rely on data to enhance performance. Unfortunately, smaller companies lack sufficient financial resources to do the same, resulting in an imbalance in the business world.

“ How can we make businesses more efficient? How can we take these complex AI tools worldwide and make them more universally accessible for small and medium enterprises that need them to compete in the marketplace? ”

Armen A. Avakian

Therefore, Hexact was founded to provide AI-based sidekicks to small and medium - sized businesses, enabling them to access the tools of the market titans. Additionally, the objective was to offer these tools in an affordable, user-friendly manner that required no coding skills or technical expertise. It's not just about finding a solution to a problem but about **how to introduce this solution to the target audience.**

Avoid Normality in Startups

Launching five products within four years is not normal in the startup world. Normalcy and predictability are not conducive to success in the startup realm, where innovation and experimentation are essential. Startups thrive on disruptive thinking, taking risks, and constantly trying new approaches.





““ When we started in 2019, we had no idea where we would end up, and we pivoted multiple times. If you’re doing normal things, you’ll probably fail. The reality is that startups should grind, pivot, grind, pivot, grind, adapt, overcome, adapt, overcome, fail, fail, fail, then succeed.”

Armen A. Avakian

The Mistake of Overpromising

Businesses can effectively build trust and maintain user engagement by avoiding over-promising and providing clients and users with tangible evidence of solution development, such as consistently releasing new features. This approach emphasizes the importance of showcasing progress throughout the development process to establish a sense of accountability and transparency with users.

““ Identify failure as just another roadblock, so you go through it and learn from it. There are cases when we promised the world and delivered the moon, which didn’t work, even if the moon added value.”

Armen A. Avakian

Managing the expectations of clients and consumers is crucial in any industry. **Overpromising and underdelivering can lead to a loss of trust and credibility.** One effective strategy to mitigate this risk is regularly launching updates to the product or service, demonstrating the company’s commitment to improving and evolving.

In the IT sphere, launching beta versions and collecting feedback from beta users can also be helpful in managing expectations and fine-tuning the product before its official release.

The Secret Sauce to Success

When hiring people, looking for individuals with the skills, knowledge, and experience your team needs is important. But it's not just about having the right qualifications on paper. You also want to find people **who can potentially add value to your team in a more holistic sense.**



One early adopter user bought our product and sent us a 3-4 page email about all the improvements we can make. Of course, we contacted him and ended up bringing him on board as a co-founder. He is now our CMO”

Armen A. Avakian

When it comes to Hexact, the fact that **every single employee owns a percentage of the company** is a unique approach to employee compensation and motivation. This means that each person has a stake in the success of the company and, therefore, is incentivized to work hard and contribute to the company's growth.

Additionally, offering employees ownership can effectively attract and retain top talent. It demonstrates that the company values its employees and is willing to reward them for their hard work and dedication.

Key Takeaways

- 1** The founders should be hands-on and involved in the company's day-to-day operations, especially in the first 4-5 months.
- 2** Startups should aim to fill a need or solve a problem in the market. Otherwise, they don't have a chance to grow fast.
- 3** It is important to avoid normality and embrace innovation to stand out from competitors.
- 4** Success results from a series of grinding, pivoting, overcoming, and failures.
- 5** Startups should avoid overpromising and underdelivering to maintain credibility and build customer trust.
- 6** The team is critical to a startup's success from day one.

FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

ARMENIA'S PARADIGM SHIFT OF CONSCIOUSNESS SPARKS A CREATIVE BOOM



**RAZMIK
SARGSYAN**

COMMUNICATION ARCHITECT &
TRANSFORMATIONAL COACH



FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING

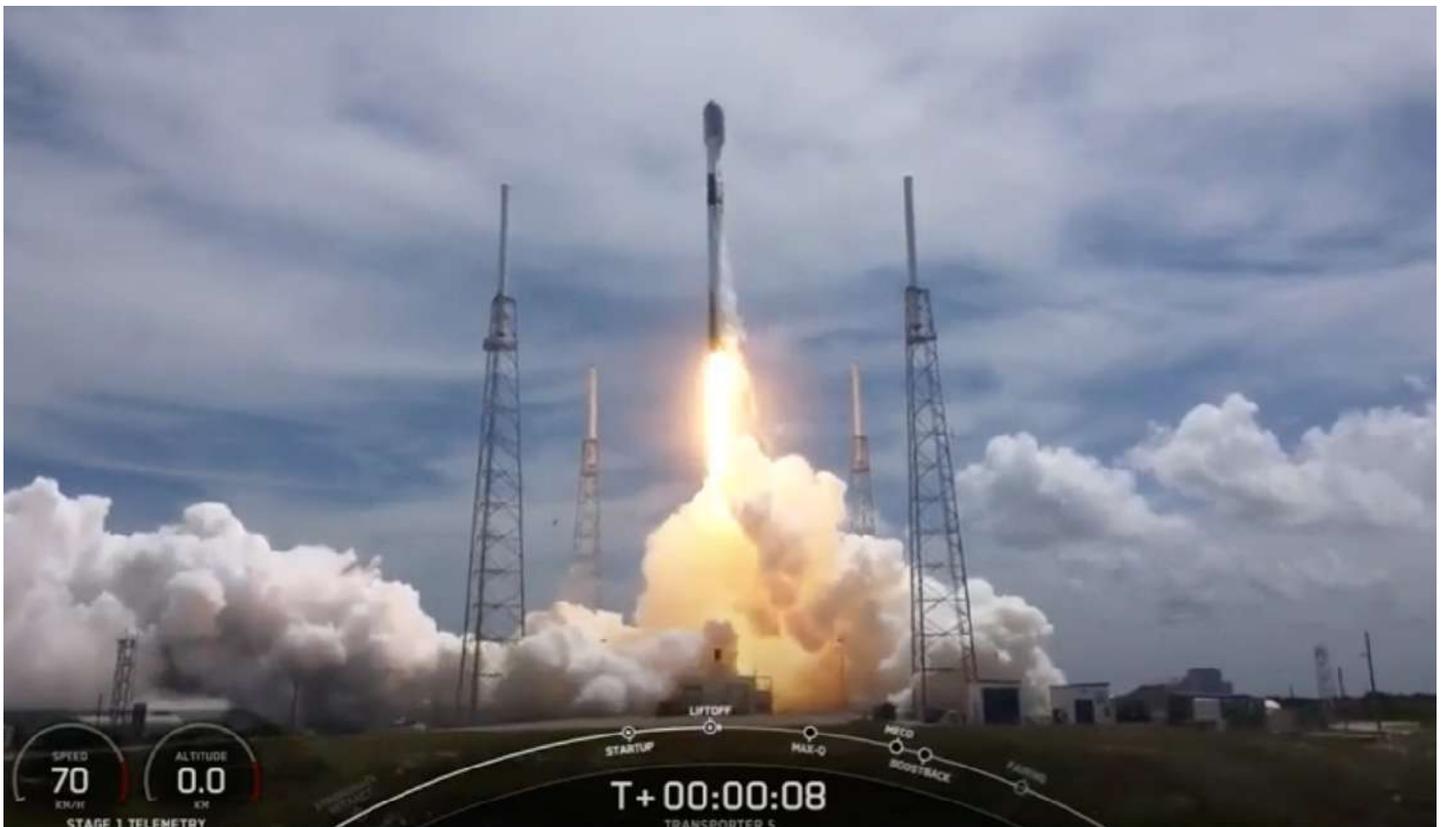
ARMENIA'S PARADIGM SHIFT OF CONSCIOUSNESS SPARKS A CREATIVE BOOM

Navigating uncertainty

The world we inhabit is undeniably unstable and continues to change at an unprecedented pace, a reality that is particularly apparent to savvy entrepreneurs. Many of us pursue a digital nomad lifestyle to free ourselves from external constraints and tap into our innate creativity. However, this decision raises an important question: **where to base ourselves and what kind of communities should we seek out to foster our growth and success?**

It may be tempting to seek out a location with minimal political and economic instability, but whether we like it or not, **change is inevitable and growingly more unpredictable.** Attempting to analyze and weigh all the variables can quickly become overwhelming and even futile, as new factors emerge that may not have been previously considered.

For example, did you have COVID on your mind before it happened? How about its implications on your day-to-day life? The point is - instability is inevitable, which calls for **a completely different paradigm of thinking, one that considers resilience, adaptability and receptivity.** This is one of the untold advantages of Armenia.



The launch of Armenia's first satellite into orbit from SpaceX spacecraft (2022)

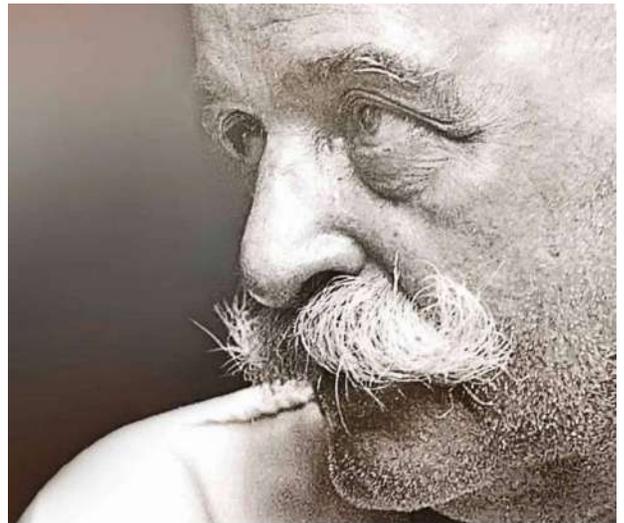
Armenia's experience of transmuting crisis

In the last 45 years only, Armenia has endured a tumultuous shift from socialism to capitalism, a devastating earthquake, a democratic awakening, armed conflicts and pandemics (even at the same time). You name it, we have seen it. **Despite these challenges, Armenia has become an island of democracy boasting a surprisingly high rate of economic growth** and a rich cultural heritage that draws visitors from around the world. Armenia's economic activity increased by 10.5 % in January 2023 compared to January 2022. So how can we explain this remarkable resilience in the face of adversity?

One theory is that human consciousness tends to remain asleep when things are comfortable and predictable. However, when you experience numerous crises in a short period of time, it becomes apparent that using the old mindset to solve problems is doomed to fail. This is the very definition of insanity that Albert Einstein warned about: "Doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." **Armenia's history and current reality have forced its people to become a wild card in the deck**, catalyzing a radical transformation of consciousness.

“ The highest state of human being is not happiness, but rather a state of being able to maintain a calmness and presence of mind even in the midst of great adversity.”

George Gurjieff
Armenian philosopher,
mystic and spiritual teacher



Transcendental Meditation and evolution of consciousness

Let me give you an example. In 1988, the Spitak earthquake devastated Armenia, claiming the lives of an estimated 25,000 to 50,000 people, while 130,000 were injured. The aftermath was marked by overwhelming trauma and despair. Children who witnessed buildings crumble were afraid to return to school, and the emotional wounds of the disaster lingered long after the physical damage had been repaired.

In response to this crisis, Armenia turned to a paradigm-shifting solution: meditation. One particularly effective tool was Transcendental Meditation (TM), a scientifically-backed technique popularized by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. In the years following the disaster, around 30,000 Armenians learned and practiced TM, which brought about an array of benefits that, turns out, go beyond relief from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Transcendental Meditation (TM) has become globally popular and more than 600 peer-reviewed academic studies demonstrate its ability to increase productivity, performance, creativity and brainwave coherence both individually and collectively. Its benefits have been recognized by many, including billionaire Ray Dalio, who has served as co-chief investment officer of the world's largest hedge fund, Bridgewater Associates. Dalio has attributed his meditation practice as the single most important factor for his success and the most valuable gift he could offer.

Other celebrities endorsing TM include Paul McCartney, David Lynch, Ellen DeGeneres, Cameron Diaz, Oprah, Russel Brand, Katy Perry, Jennifer Lopez, Jerry Seinfeld and Howard Stern, to name a few.



Armenians practicing
Transcendental Meditation (1989)

For Armenia, a devastating crisis prompted this mental technique to be “imported”, but since it is proven to accomplish more than stress relief, it became exponentially more helpful to those who learned and practiced it over the years. More than that, local teachers have been trained which allowed continued access to this technique.

Meditation is a highly personal and intimate experience, and the relationship you develop with it will determine what you gain from it. However, the general benefits of TM are well-documented.

I began practicing TM in 2014 and immediately noticed its impact on my ability to learn and focus. It helped me **access a greater sense of inner stillness, which prevented the busyness of life from becoming overwhelming**. I was able to achieve major scholarships, study at 4 universities, work in 3 different countries and transition to a fulfilling career as a consultant and coach.

Cooperating with the inevitable

TM is just one example of the many modalities that have gained popularity in Armenia, including cutting-edge coaching, multiple forms of therapy and yoga. In essence, the country's struggle with instability has resulted in a more resilient society, **leading to economic, political, and social progress as a side effect.**

The aftermath of Armenia's transformation has attracted a multitude of entrepreneurs from various parts of the world, including the former USSR area and Europe. This has led to the establishment and development of hundreds of successful ventures in the country.

One such example is the recent exodus of Russian digital nomads who have flocked to Armenia. It is estimated that since 2022 over 80,000 Russians have moved to Armenia to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.

Let's face it, we are living in a time of unprecedented change and turbulence. The transformation will inevitably not only continue, but also happen at an exponentially growing rate. Therefore, **those who align themselves with these changes and cultivate resilience will be the ones who succeed in the future.** As the modern-day mystic Anthony de Mello once said, "Enlightenment is absolute cooperation with the inevitable." Although I believe that Armenia still has a very long way to go in terms of "aligning with the inevitable", its history and current political reality accelerate this process.

In conclusion, **Armenia has no choice but to keep on generating a new vision** – one that embraces coexistence and co-creation over domination and exploitation. If this is a vision you share, you will find partners here waiting to work with you.





“Armenian women are natural-born leaders with an innate sense of responsibility and a deep commitment to positively impacting the world. They are driven by a desire to create a better future for themselves and their communities, and they channel their energy and talents into meaningful work that benefits them.”

Mathew Zein

WHAT LIFE AWAITS CHILDREN TRAVELLING WITH THEIR DIGITAL NOMAD PARENTS?



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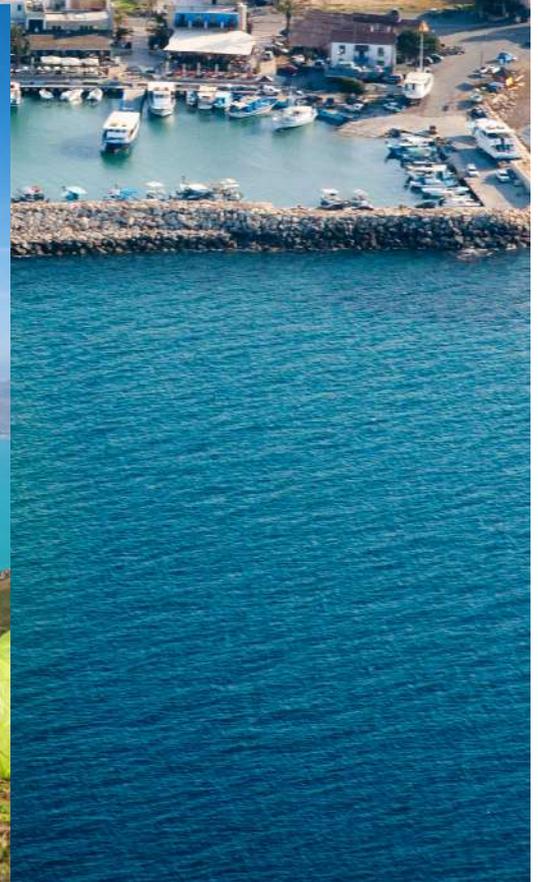


ARMENIA VS. CYPRUS

WHAT LIFE AWAITS CHILDREN TRAVELLING WITH THEIR DIGITAL NOMAD PARENTS?

Traveling with digital nomad parents can be an enriching experience for children, providing them with a unique opportunity to explore different cultures and ways of life. Two increasingly popular countries among digital nomad families are Armenia and Cyprus.

These two destinations offer contrasting experiences, from the ancient history and stunning landscapes of Armenia to the sunny beaches and modern amenities in Cyprus. However, traveling with children also requires careful planning and consideration of their needs, such as education, socialization, and safety.



Armenia

The Upbringing and Family Values

Armenia is a country with strong family values and traditions that play a significant role in the upbringing of children. Exposure to these values can be a unique and enriching experience for children traveling with their digital nomad families. Family is considered the foundation of Armenian society, and respect for elders, hospitality, and religious beliefs are highly valued.

Parents in Armenia often emphasize traits such as diligence, thrift, and religious faith. While this style may not suit all families, some may appreciate the emphasis on structure and discipline in their children's upbringing. On the other hand, the concept of individual freedom and nurturing is also valued in Armenian society, and parents may encourage traits such as independence, responsibility, and persistence.

Digital nomad parents should be mindful of these cultural values and beliefs when traveling to Armenia with their children to ensure they can make the most of their experience while respecting local customs and traditions.



Love Life and Dating

There is a reasonable level of freedom in the love lives of Armenian youths. Parents provide their children some independence and autonomy in this area, but they maintain a constant, vigilant, and careful eye on what their children are doing.

In Armenian society, it is common for individuals to **date intending to find a long-term partner and start a family**. While this may differ from the dating norms in other countries, children traveling with their digital nomad families to Armenia can learn about the importance of family and commitment in relationships. However, **parents must have open and honest conversations with their children about these cultural differences and their impact on their personal choices**.



International Education

Families can choose from various international schools offering an international curriculum or a blend of Armenian and Western education. Some schools may focus on language immersion programs or promote intercultural understanding and global citizenship. Additionally, several preschools and kindergartens offer language immersion programs and a multicultural environment for younger children.

These educational opportunities in Armenia can allow children to develop new skills, learn about different cultures, and build relationships with peers worldwide. Digital nomad parents can research and select a school that aligns with their children's academic goals, interests, and needs. However, **it's important to know that such private schools have considerably high tuition fees**.

Cultural Influence

Armenia is a country with a rich history, culture, and traditions that can have a significant impact on children traveling with their digital nomad families. Being exposed to a different culture can be a unique and valuable learning experience for children and can broaden their perspective on the world.

For instance, children in Armenia may be exposed to different languages, customs, and food, which can challenge their assumptions and help them develop empathy and tolerance. Armenian culture also strongly emphasizes family, hospitality, and community, which can be reflected in daily life. Children may witness family gatherings, traditional celebrations, and religious practices that can teach them about the importance of social connections and cultural heritage.

Furthermore, Armenian history and architecture can be seen through ancient monasteries, fortresses, and museums, which can spark their interest in art, history, and geography. Overall, the cultural influence of Armenia can provide children with a unique and memorable experience that can shape their worldview and personal growth.





Sport Activities

The country's diverse geography, including mountains, valleys, and lakes, provides outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing, and camping opportunities. Ski resorts such as Tsaghkadzor and Jermuk offer skiing and snowboarding lessons for children, as well as other winter activities like ice skating and sledding.

During the warmer months, children can engage in outdoor activities like swimming, biking, and horseback riding. Additionally, several sports clubs and gyms offer team sports like soccer, basketball, and volleyball, which can help children develop their physical and social skills. Chess is also a popular sport in Armenia, and several chess schools and clubs offer lessons and tournaments for children.

Children can also learn traditional Armenian sports, such as wrestling and archery, which can expose them to the country's cultural heritage. Overall, the various sports activities in Armenia can help children develop their physical abilities, social skills, and cultural awareness.

Acceptance in Local Communities

"A guest is a gift from God," an old Armenian proverb goes. Being accepted by the local community can be essential for digital nomad families traveling to Armenia. Armenia is known for its warm hospitality and friendly people, which can help digital nomad families feel welcome and at ease.

However, it's important to note that Armenians are also proud of their culture and traditions, and respecting them can help build positive relationships with the locals. Learning basic Armenian phrases, customs, and etiquette can help bridge the cultural gap and show respect for the local community. Additionally, participating in local events and volunteering can provide opportunities for digital nomad families to connect with the locals and give back to the community.

Overall, being accepted by the local community can help digital nomad families create a sense of belonging and build meaningful connections during their stay in Armenia.

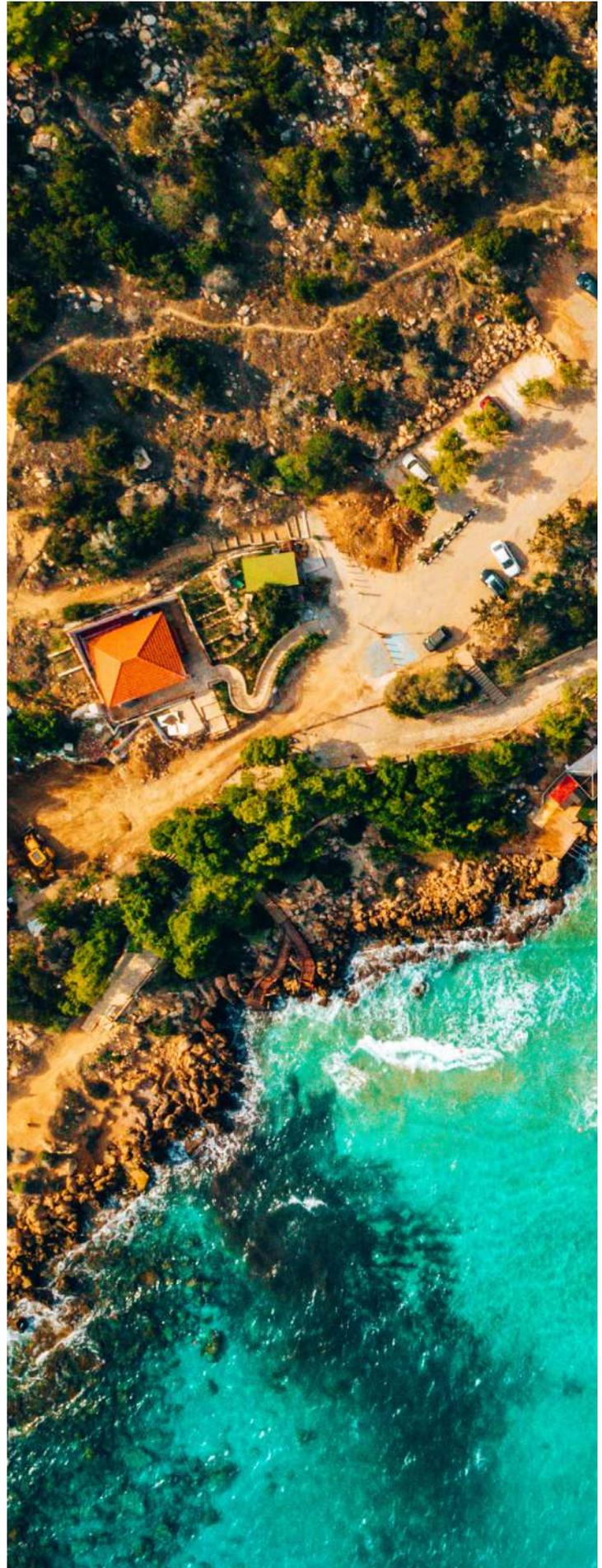
Cyprus

The Upbringing and Family Values

The backbone of Cypriot society is deeply rooted in the concept of family and its cherished principles. The family holds a central and fundamental position in this small island nation. Cypriots often consider their extended family members as immediate family, and they tend to live in close proximity to each other. Cypriot children live with their families for an extended period, even into early adulthood.

The customs and family values deeply embedded in Cypriot society have been passed down from generation to generation, contributing significantly to their way of life. However, despite the adherence to traditional beliefs, the people of Cyprus are also willing to embrace change and adapt. In the past, Cyprus, like many other countries, has been male-dominated. Nevertheless, society is gradually transforming, and opportunities for greater gender equality are emerging.

Traveling with digital nomad parents to Cyprus can be a unique and enriching experience for kids. Children can gain valuable insights into Cypriot cultures, such as the emphasis on family and tradition, which may differ from their upbringing. They can also witness the efforts towards gender equality in Cyprus, which can be an excellent opportunity for them to learn about different social issues.

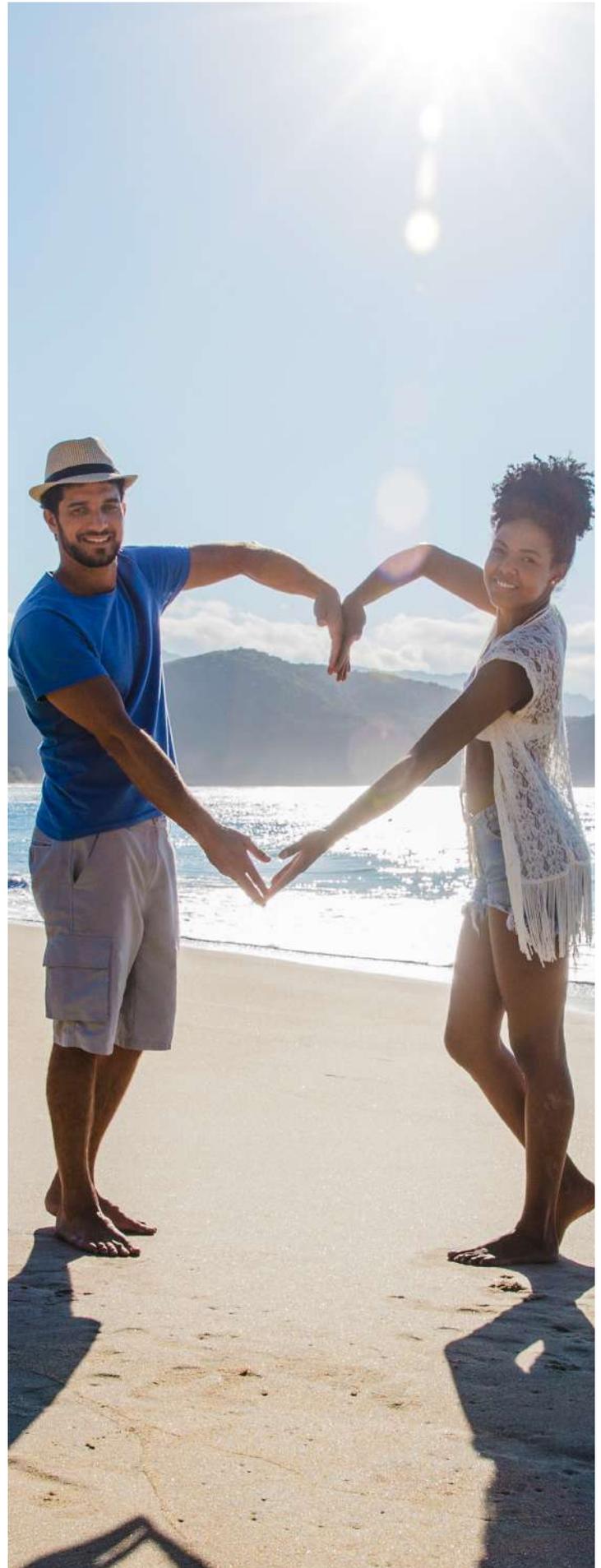


Love Life and Dating

In Cyprus, young people have a fair amount of freedom in their romantic lives, similar to Western societies. Parents typically do not impose strict rules on their children's choices and instead give them space to make their own decisions while keeping their safety and well-being in mind. As they grow up, **parents aim to create a friendly atmosphere of trust and openness that allows their children to share their thoughts and concerns freely.**

However, Cypriot families may still hold some expectations for their children's choice of partner. Many **prefer their offspring to marry someone from the same region with the same beliefs and language.** Additionally, some young people may feel pressured to marry before they turn 30.

While the parents may have a more liberal mindset towards their children's romantic choices, they may still have to navigate traditional family expectations during their travels.



International Education

Cyprus boasts a thriving tourism industry and a growing number of foreign residents who have made the island their home. **International schools have been established catering to this diverse community**, offering a comprehensive education to students from various backgrounds.

The International School of Paphos is a favored choice for foreign families due to its comprehensive curriculum, extracurricular activities, and sports programs. The school prepares students for success without needing additional certifications, and the American University of Beirut has a new campus in Paphos, providing high-quality education to young learners.

These educational opportunities are especially valuable for digital nomad families as they **provide a smooth transition for their children to integrate into new environments**. These schools offer an array of activities that enrich students' knowledge and help them discover and nurture their talents, interests, and hobbies.



Cultural Influence

Cyprus is a melting pot of cultures, influenced by various countries throughout its rich history. Despite a painful past, the Cypriot people have developed unique beliefs and traditions that children can learn about. However, **the island is a welcoming home to many other cultures worldwide**. It is a multicultural hub facilitating easy communication with people from different countries, such as Russia, China, and the Philippines.

Children in Cyprus can be immersed in different customs, languages, traditions, and values. The massive influx of Russian people who both travel and reside in Cyprus, as well as those from China and other Asian countries, contribute to this diverse atmosphere. **This exposure can significantly impact children traveling with their digital nomad families**, as they can witness various perspectives, lifestyles, and ways of thinking.

Sport Activities

Cyprus is an island that offers many outdoor activities and water sports, and football is the most popular sport among males, as is common in many other countries. With its warm climate and unique geography, Cyprus provides ample opportunities for activities such as paragliding, climbing, sailing, and scuba diving. The snowcapped Troodos Mountains offer skiing options for winter sports enthusiasts even in the winter.

For children traveling with their digital nomad families, **the variety of outdoor activities available in Cyprus can be a dream come true**, providing them unforgettable experiences and opportunities to develop new skills and hobbies.



Acceptance in Local Communities

Cyprus's unique blend of traditions and beliefs shapes its people's open-mindedness and acceptance. The island has been influenced by various cultures throughout its long history, including the British, Maronites, Romans, and more, resulting in a welcoming and diverse community eager to learn about others' beliefs and traditions.

While English and Russian are widely spoken, **showing an interest in the local language and culture can be an advantage**, as Cypriots take pride in their heritage. Overall, Cyprus's welcoming and friendly atmosphere can make it easy for digital nomad families to connect with locals and create long-lasting friendships, providing a sense of belonging while living a life of travel.

EXPERT ADVICE

GETTING A VISA TO ENTER ARMENIA AS A DIGITAL NOMAD



**NERSES
ISAJANYAN**

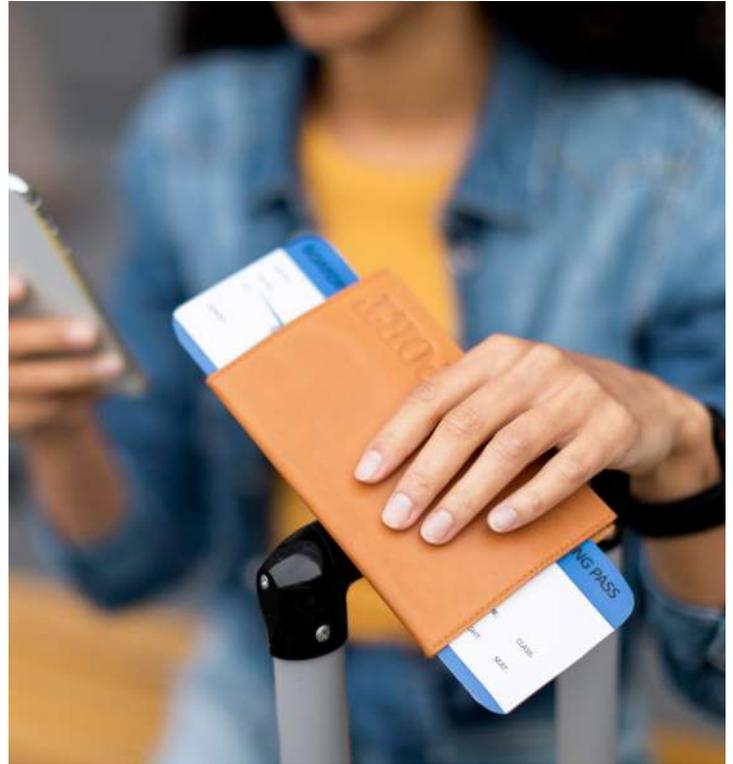
**MANAGING ATTORNEY
CO-FOUNDER OF VARDANYAN & PARTNERS**

EXPERT ADVICE

GETTING A VISA TO ENTER ARMENIA AS A DIGITAL NOMAD

With its vibrant culture, breathtaking scenery, and affordable cost of living, it's no wonder that increasingly digital nomads are choosing to make Armenia their home base. However, despite the country's growing popularity, **obtaining a visa can still be challenging for some.**

As a lawyer with years of experience in immigration law and an LL.M. degree from Georgetown University, I totally understand the concerns of international digital nomads; therefore, I will walk you through the eligibility criteria and the required documents for **obtaining a visa to enter Armenia as a digital nomad whether you're a freelancer, an entrepreneur, or an employee seeking to work remotely.**



Residence Permit for Digital Nomads

Armenia has a business-friendly environment and is welcoming to foreign entrepreneurs and investors. Armenia grants residence permits to foreigners **engaged in lawful business activities in Armenia**, including digital nomads, freelancers, remote workers, and online business owners.

Do I need a work permit to work remotely from Armenia?

You do not need a work permit or a work visa to freelance or work remotely from Armenia. It is sufficient to have a regular visa, or if you are from a visa-exempt country, you may simply travel to Armenia and start working from here. In any case, if you plan to stay for longer periods, a residence permit will probably be required.



What are the benefits of getting a residence permit in Armenia?

- A residence permit allows you to enter/exit Armenia without visas, stay in Armenia for a long term, work, study, do business or engage in any other activity on an equal basis with citizens of Armenia
- You are not required to spend a certain number of days in Armenia to apply for or to maintain your residence permit
- Your extended family (spouse, minor and adult children, parents, siblings) may also qualify for residence permits
- Residence permits can be extended indefinitely
- Remote applications are possible

How can I get a residence permit in Armenia as a digital nomad?

Several steps must be followed to obtain a residence permit as a digital nomad in Armenia. These steps include:

Registering with the tax office: Digital nomads must register with the tax office and obtain a tax identification number (TIN) to be eligible for a residence permit.

Submitting a residence permit application: Digital nomads must submit a residence permit application to the Armenian Migration Service upon arrival in Armenia. The application must include supporting documents such as a medical certificate.

Paying the necessary fees: There are fees associated with the residence permit application process. Digital nomads must pay these fees to obtain a residence permit.

Waiting for approval: Once the application is submitted, digital nomads must wait for approval from the Armenian authorities. This process can take several weeks to several months, depending on the complexity of the application.

Collecting the residence permit: If the application is approved, digital nomads will be issued a residence permit for up to one year, which can be extended for up to five years. Furthermore, it's possible to apply straight for a 5-year permit.

Taxes & Accounting

Armenia has several tax requirements for businesses operating in the country, including digital nomads and remote workers. Businesses must file regular tax returns and pay turnover or value-added tax (VAT), income tax, and social security contributions. Failure to comply with these tax requirements can result in penalties and fines.

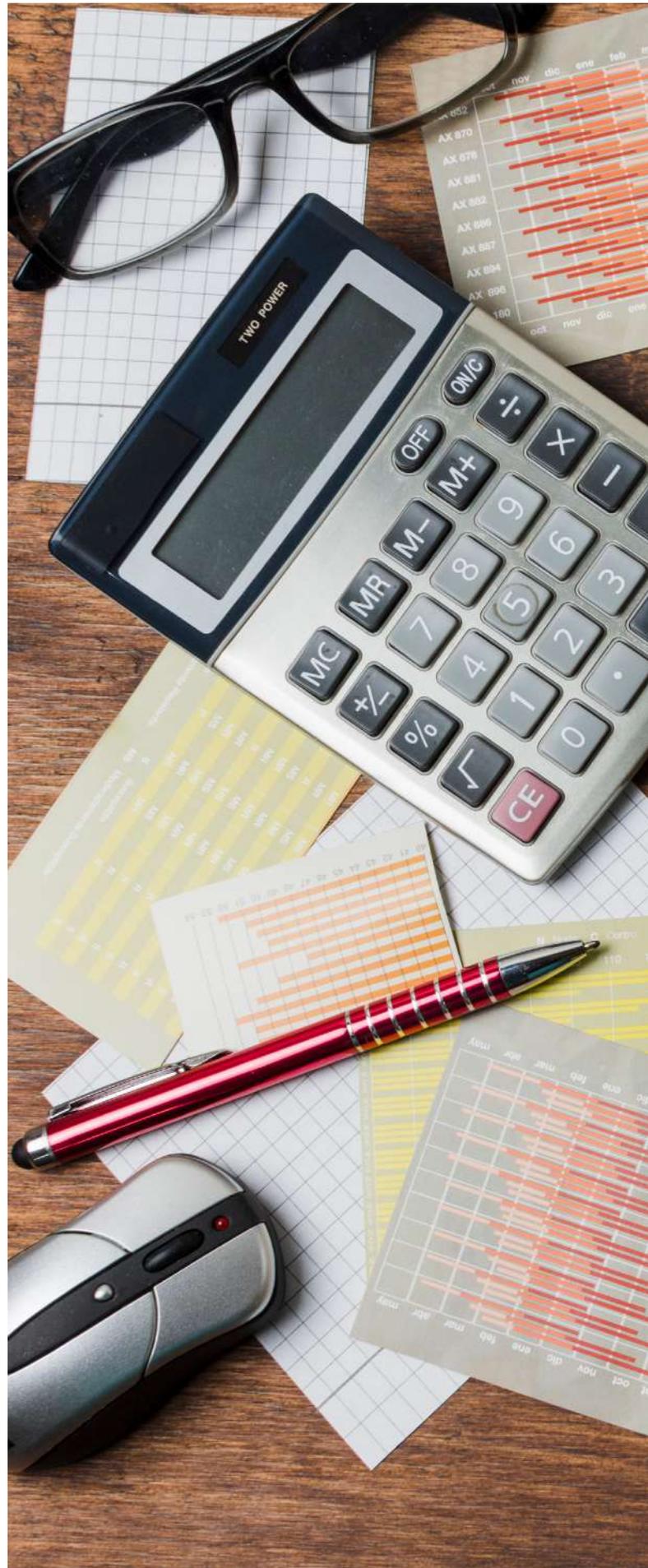
In order to qualify for a residence permit, you will need to get a local tax ID number to be registered as a private entrepreneur. For that, you only need your passport. The registration will take up to 2-3 business days, and it may take as little as one day if you are physically present in Armenia.

If your annual sales (income) do not exceed AMD 24 million (about USD 62,000), you may be treated as a “microbusiness” and be exempted from taxes. Certain services (e.g., consulting, marketing, engineering, accounting, etc.) cannot take advantage of the “microbusiness” status.

If the microbusiness status is unavailable, you will probably be taxed at 5% of your income (sales), provided that your annual sales do not exceed AMD 115 million (about USD 299,000). Private entrepreneurs who pay turnover tax (5%) pay the following as well:

- AMD 5,000 (around USD 13) per month as income tax
- AMD 5,000 (around USD 12) per month as social payments
- AMD 18,000 to 120,000 (around USD 44 to 312) per year as a military tax

You will likely need to use the services of a local accountant to do the filings for you. Fees charged by accountants vary a lot and normally depend on the volume of the work to be done, e.g., the number and complexity of the transactions, the number of employees, etc.



IT start-up certificate

Based on Article 18 of the Law on Government Assistance to the Information Technologies Sector, newly registered IT businesses can apply for an IT start-up certificate, temporarily exempting them from corporate income tax until Dec. 31, 2023. Currently, the deadline for applications is Nov. 1, 2023



Residence Permit Application

You may apply for a residence permit after your “private entrepreneurship” is registered. **It’s recommended to wait until sufficient evidence shows that your business is active** (e.g., invoices, agreements, proof of income, taxes paid, etc.)

You are not required to have local clients or show that your income is received from Armenian sources. When you become a tax resident in the Republic of Armenia by physically spending more than 183 days in a year in Armenia, **you must report your foreign income to the Armenian tax authorities and pay taxes on it.** However, even in this case, many types of income are still not taxed (for example, capital gains on the sale of securities or real estate, pension, and insurance payments, etc.)

Residence permit applications are typically processed within 45-50 calendar days, and the residence card is printed and issued in about two weeks. Hence the whole process is likely to take 60-65 days.

Based on Articles 15 and 16 of the Law on Foreigners in the Republic of Armenia, Business owners are generally eligible for either a 5-year (permanent) or a 1-year (temporary) residence permit.

It is necessary to book an appointment online with the Immigration Office in advance. The waiting periods may vary from a few days to a few weeks. Three weeks after submitting the application, an interview is normally held with a national security officer who will try to establish whether the business is genuine and operational. Remote applications are also possible, in which case you will need to send us your original passport and a medical check certificate.



In conclusion, obtaining a visa to enter Armenia as a digital nomad is achievable for those looking to live and work in this beautiful and welcoming country. **While the process may seem daunting, following the necessary steps and meeting the requirements can lead to a successful outcome.** Armenia has recognized the growing trend of digital nomadism. It has taken steps to attract remote workers and freelancers to the country by granting residence permits to those engaged in lawful business activities.

“

Armenian women possess a remarkable blend of strength and compassion. They are fiercely independent and self-reliant but also deeply empathetic and caring. This unique combination of traits allows them to be successful leaders, capable of making tough decisions and taking bold action. ”

Mathew Zein

Photo credits to Sergey Akopyan and his project Budemotkrovenny



LOST
IN TRANSLATION!

SURVIVING IN ARMENIA WITHOUT SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE



MARY
MOORADIAN

COMMUNICATIONS
SPECIALIST



LOST IN TRANSLATION! SURVIVING IN ARMENIA WITHOUT SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE

My life has been a journey through Armenia! From the day I was born to attending school and eventually graduating from university, this beautiful country has been my constant companion. Growing up and living in Armenia, did I encounter much diversity among my classmates or colleagues? No. But **did I come across foreigners from all walks of life in different Armenian cities? Yes.**

Due to the significant recent influx of Russian citizens in Armenia, many people assume that Armenians have become accustomed to diversity and are no longer surprised to see non-Armenians walking the streets of Yerevan. However, **most people fail to realize that Armenia has a history of hosting various nationalities and minorities, despite being a mono-ethnic country.**

A total of ten provinces make up Armenia, with some being relatively progressive and others with rather conservative residents. Take Yerevan, the heart of Armenia: the city with the largest diversity of people as of 2023. **Just five minutes in the center of Yerevan is enough to notice a mixed crowd rushing about, scooting along the streets on bicycles, walking down the streets on foot, sitting in cafes and working with their laptops, or having lunch with their friends.**

Curious to find out if I was true or wrong about the diverse composition of Yerevan's population, **I decided to venture out while working on this article and see for myself.** As I explored the city, I was pleasantly surprised to encounter people from different nationalities, including Russians, Thai, and Lithuanians. Intrigued, I engaged with them to gain insights into their experiences in Armenia.





Most Russians stated they faced no significant issues since most Armenians understood Russian. They explained how they had relocated to Armenia with their families or alone and were working remotely, primarily in IT and marketing.

As I conversed with a Thai woman, she disclosed that she had initially come to Armenia for a holiday but was hired by a prestigious spa center as a masseuse. **Despite not speaking Armenian or Russian, she had seamlessly adapted to living in Armenia without difficulties.**

Lastly, the Lithuanians I met were working remotely from a workplace in downtown Yerevan and conducting their day-to-day operations in English. They also managed to establish a life in Armenia without learning the language.

Now, what about other cities in Armenia? The main difference between Yerevan and other cities in Armenia, besides the level of advancement, lies in the mindset difference by city. Yerevan has the most diverse population, which makes it the most welcoming. Why? Because most of the concentrated population is relatively open-minded and literate in languages like English, it automatically makes foreigners feel welcome.

However, **one can still easily travel around the country without speaking the language.** One fact is that Armenians love to talk, even though they might not know your language. Regardless of their inability to speak fluent English with a foreigner, Armenians will unapologetically mix English and Armenian words and **even try explaining with signs and a great deal of hand gestures if needed.** This is nothing new for Armenians.

In terms of surviving in Armenian cities, it is relatively easy to carry out daily activities for non-native speakers:

- Most cafes in Armenia have English menus and at least one waiter who speaks English.
- Most museums and other sights you will visit will have visual aids, English-speaking guides, tour booklets, and information boards in English.
- As for getting a ride around town, you can simply download a taxi app, enter your “where from” and “where to,” and there you go. The driver will use GPS to take you to your destination without a word being spoken to explain the destination.
- In grocery stores, shelf tags are in Armenian and English.
- A number of delivery apps offer English as an app language and deliver goods to your doorstep.

Even though in 2023, Armenia was ranked as the most welcoming country in Europe by the Passport Index, patience and flexibility are key. It may take longer to get things done, and misunderstandings may occur. However, [with a positive attitude and a willingness to adapt, you can still have a great experience in Armenia.](#)

Welcome to my country, and hopefully, it will become yours too.



THE NOMAD'S
CLASSROOM

EDUCATION FOR DIGITAL NOMAD KIDS IN ARMENIA



STEFAN
PAPP

AUSTRIAN
DIGITAL NOMAD



THE NOMAD'S CLASSROOM

EDUCATION FOR DIGITAL NOMAD KIDS IN ARMENIA

Armenia is landlocked and lacks natural resources. Therefore, Hayastan - as we often call Armenia - has to excel elsewhere: Many see **science as the country's most significant opportunity to catch up to the Western world.**

When I came to Armenia, Armenians - native Armenians and “Armenians by choice” - raved over the “Silicon Valley of the East.” Everyone praised the rich Armenian scientific heritage. Armenophiles introduce you to famous inventors, artists, and scientists from the past who were Armenian. Some toasts with Ararat cognacs might add “an interesting flavor” to the discussions. During later and more developed discussions, even celebrities like Mozart and Napoleon “must have been influenced by Armenians.”

According to many Armenians, without Armenia, the Soviet Union would not have never had a lead in the space race. Yes, it was Yuri Gagarin who was first in space. Armenians might even jokingly observe that only one “a” is missing to make his name Armenian.



Schools - Maybe the Biggest Worry of an Expat with Kids

I moved with my family in 2017; the kids were three and nine then. I knew that I could work remotely for my clients in Armenia, but at the same time, I knew that this would not work out for my kids. **Armenian schools were the big unknown back then,** and, of course, I was worried that my kids could lose with our move.

In this article, I want to show that this was not the case and help other parents to find their way. Everything I say is my opinion and reflects how my wife and I found our way for the kids. **I encourage everyone to talk with more people as other people might have different school priorities.**

In an ideal world, education planning starts from the cradle. While parents nurture their babies, they explore possible kindergartens and elementary schools for their offspring. Who would want their kids to end up in the wrong place because you were too late to reserve a good one? Changing countries with kids can be stressful if you have to find schools. I learned that first when we moved

with our daughter from the USA to Austria. While other parents had taken care of the perfect spot at school a long time before us, we were latecomers. There was a chance I could only get what was left unless I paid a lot for a private school to avoid a lousy one. Thanks to the local magistrates, finding a good school in Austria worked out. Four years later, we decided to move to Armenia. We still needed to learn what we would face there.



Merits and Challenges of an Education System

In the '90s, I found my school experience horrible. **A person can perceive the world in two ways: With growth or a fixed mindset.** In a growth mindset, a person wants to empower others and teach kids that life is a journey in which you can constantly learn and grow. In a fixed mindset, teachers emphasize that kids follow orders, respect authority, and obey. If there were one thing I could change magically in the world by snipping fingers, **I would exchange all teachers who prevent kids' growth with those who empower them.**

The next generation of Armenians has a tremendous opportunity if they follow a forward-looking approach. Many people living in Armenia see the potential of the country to become another Singapore or Switzerland. **Armenia can become a center of science, trade, and diplomacy.** It might still be a long way, but the first step to the country's well-being is empowering the future generation to change Armenia's direction. Therefore **education has a massive priority in Armenia's society.**



Both mentioned thought patterns - growth and fixed mindset - will most likely exist in every country. So my priority was to find schools for my kids where it is more likely that teachers follow a growth pattern and where they get empowered. When moving to Armenia, you will hear about at least three organizations that bring new incentives to the Armenian education system: AYB, TUMO, and COAF. I describe these three organizations the way I perceive them. But, of course, some may perceive them differently, and **I encourage everyone to visit them to witness their great work** because words can often not describe the value they bring.

Ayb school is a private school focused on building the next generation of the Armenian school system. While visiting the campus, you observe the huge difference to traditional Armenian schools, often housed in soviet style old buildings. Ayb tries to employ various alternative teaching methods. **As my daughter visits this school, my perception is that this school focuses much on teaching kids values and critical thinking.** Their goal is to educate kids to be able to attend international universities, and their teaching aims for a strong performance of their students.



Tumo is not a traditional school but an institution that provides extra curricula. Kids visit Tumo after school, and **they can learn about Robotics, Filmmaking, Music, and many more things.** Tumo is the most international approach of the three examples. Tumo also exists in cities outside Armenia, such as Berlin or Paris.

COAF is focussing on rural communities. Unlike Ayb, their approach is more inclusive as they need to integrate kids from all villages close to one of their smart centers. Their activities include many social integration activities as well. For me, **COAF is the backbone of social and cultural development in Armenia's countryside.**

While visiting these organizations, I met a lot of passionate individuals who work there and dedicate an immense effort to empowering Armenia's children. It is prevalent in Armenia to use the word hero for people who did extraordinary things. Therefore, **my most prominent heroes are these teachers with a growth mindset,** and Armenia cannot thank them enough for their contribution.

So Where to Enroll The Kids?

I was talking much about fixed and growth mindsets. While ambitious individuals can work in every type of school, chances are high to face more limitations in public schools, including lousy equipment. For Europeans, who are used to not paying for education as schools are commonly free, it might be a mind-shift change to enroll in private schools, but remember that you most likely pay fewer taxes. So just change your mindset: **In Europe, you give money to the state to pay for schools, and in Armenia, you provide your cash to schools directly.**

The next question might be language. Most schools teach their subjects in Armenian. The offer of English as a teaching language is limited. Some schools may offer multiple education languages, meaning teachers teach some subjects in English and others in Armenian.

It is unclear if schools keep their promise. **I had the experience that a teacher who was supposed to teach in English could not speak in English to me.** Generally, it is an alarming sign if a STEM teacher cannot speak English. Nowadays, you can watch masters in their fields, such as Richard Feynman, teach complex topics on YouTube, and scientific journals publish most scientific literature only in English.

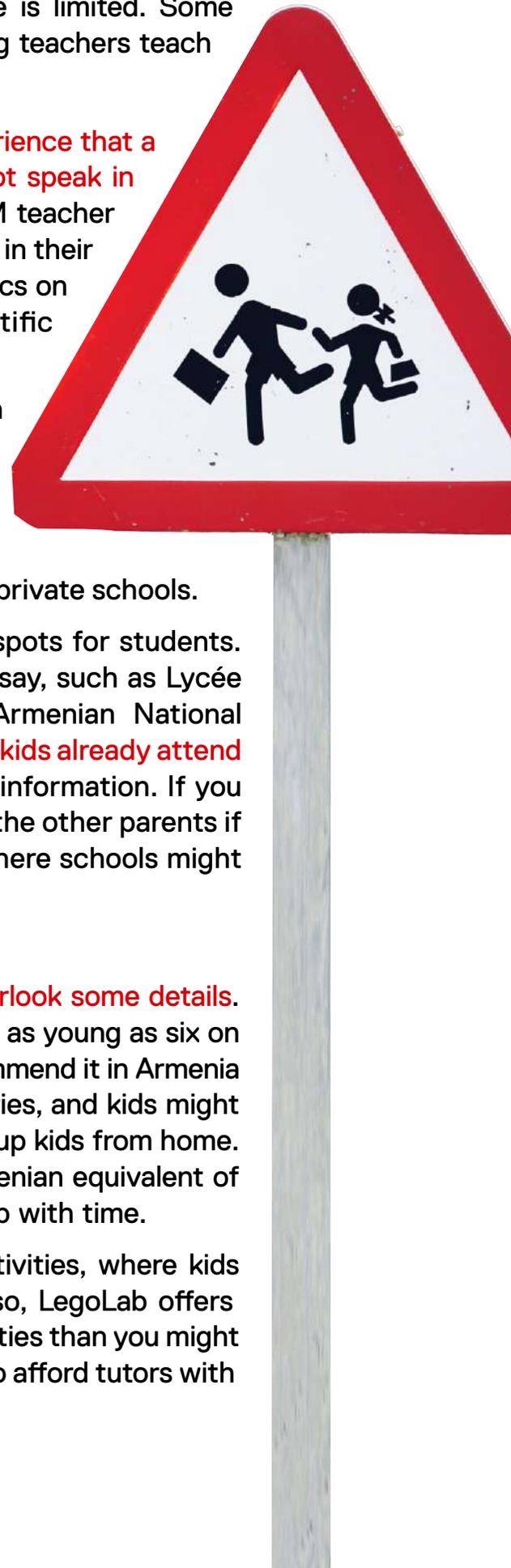
Some schools want their teachers to teach in Armenian as they see language as a part of the country's identity. There are Russian and English schools. The Cambridge school in Yerevan may offer English-only classes. These schools partly aim for the offspring of international diplomats, so they are often more expensive than other private schools.

Be aware that your favorite school might have limited spots for students. I only know many private schools in Armenia from hearsay, such as Lycée Français Anatole France or the Anania Shirakatsy Armenian National Lyceum. Therefore, **reaching out to other parents whose kids already attend school is essential.** They also might share some insider information. If you have the same priority for a growth mindset as I do, ask the other parents if they feel their kids are getting empowered, like everywhere schools might be pretty different in that field.

The Extras

When you move from a Western country, you might overlook some details. School transport might be one of them. You can put kids as young as six on public transportation in cities like Vienna, but I don't recommend it in Armenia as public transport is less organized than in other countries, and kids might get lost. Instead, check if the school offers a bus to pick up kids from home. It is also possible to send the kids with Yandex, the Armenian equivalent of Uber, which is less expensive, but costs still might add up with time.

Be also aware of the many offers of extracurricular activities, where kids learn to explore what they want to be, like Cityzen. Also, LegoLab offers enjoyable activities. There are more small organized activities than you might think, and of course, you might be more likely to be able to afford tutors with a degree to support your kid in specific fields of interest.



What About Universities?

In University rankings, Armenian Universities are far off. Some ranking methodologies do not even rank them within the top 1000. In detail, the [QS EECA University Ranking 2022](#) ranks **The Russian Armenia University as the best Armenian representative at rank 128 in Emerging Europe and Central Asia.**

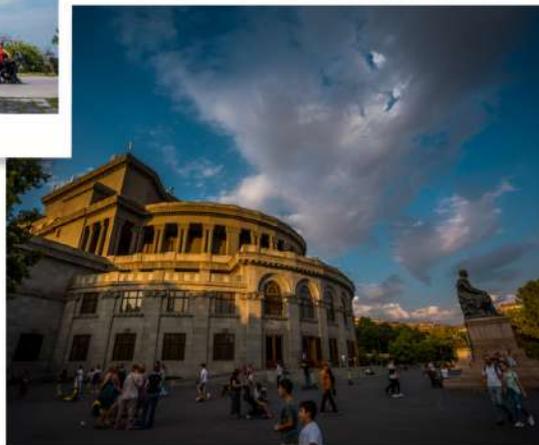
Does it still make sense to send your son or daughter to Armenia to study in Armenia? In the [Wall Street Journal](#), an article claims that it might be better for US kids to study in Europe than in the US and start a career without debt. Especially for US American ex-pats, it is, therefore, tempting to send their kids to study in Armenia. Many parents from the USA also hope their kids are less confronted with drugs and crime in Armenia.

Having taught at Universities in Armenia, I believe a student's overall experience depends significantly on what they make out of it. I met some super enthusiastic student groups, and outstanding lecturers, who might miss the “golden pillars” in their career history of their peers in the US but who would be able to bring a similar teaching performance.

Moving to Armenia may bring a challenge for your kid's education as well as opportunities. **As a parent, success depends on how much you do your own homework:** If you just put your kid in the next best school, you might end up frustrated. However, invest time and energy in finding the best schools. In that case, you might end up in a better situation than if you were in your country of origin. **My most extensive advice is to connect to other parents and learn how their kids experience school.**



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