

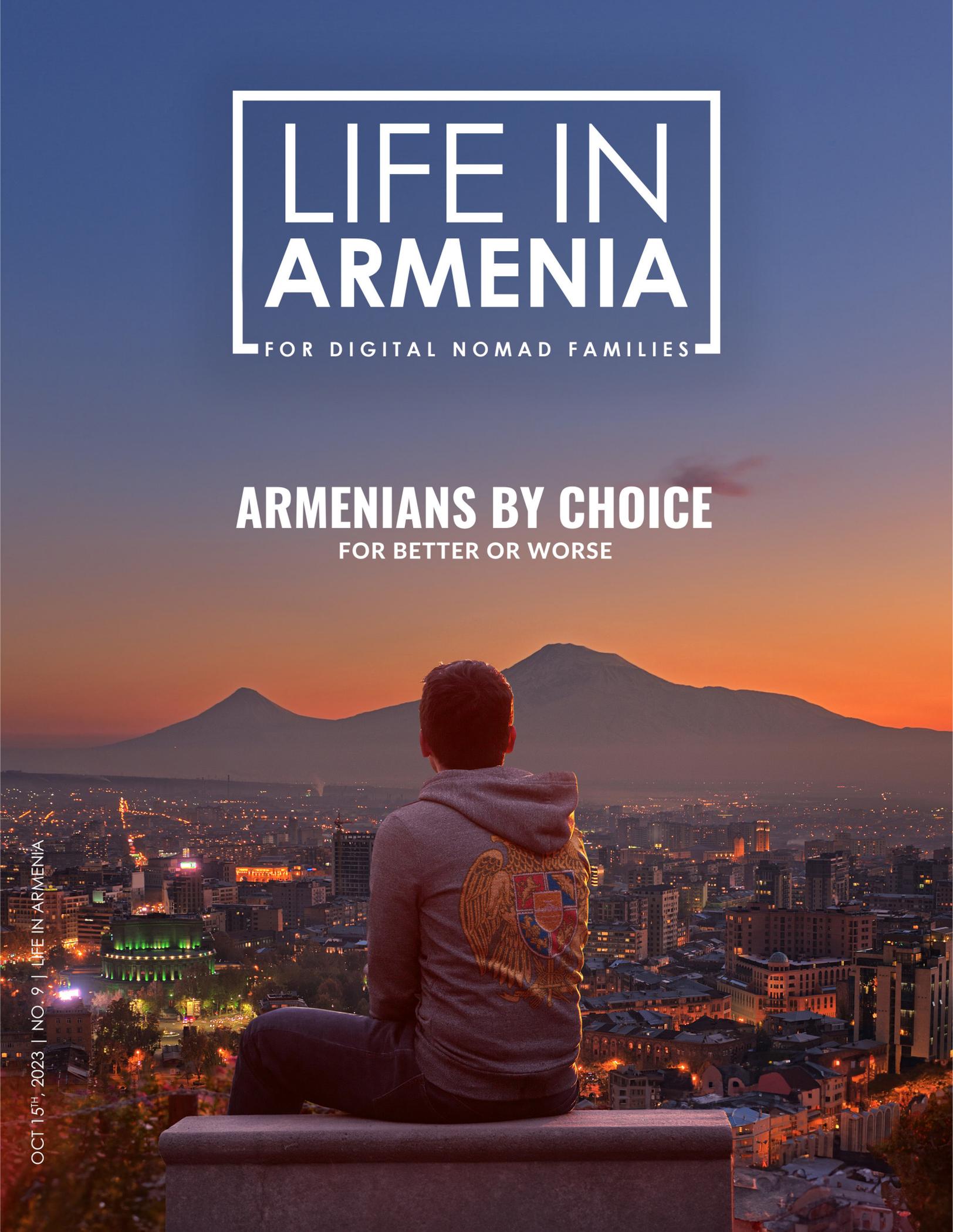
LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

ARMENIANS BY CHOICE

FOR BETTER OR WORSE

OCT 15TH, 2023 | NO. 9 | LIFE IN ARMENIA



MATHEW ZEIN

EDITOR'S LETTER

Armenians by choice is what expats in this country refer to themselves when they fall in love with it. Despite traveling to other countries, I've never heard of a similar connection, never heard of "Spanish by choice" or "Australians by choice," but "Armenians by choice" has always meant something to me and many other foreigners I've met here.

Maybe that's what it is; that's how it feels to live in Armenia, to feel connected to everything happening around you, whether good or bad. I've experienced some of my happiest and saddest moments here, but I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Due to the recent events, and out of respect to Armenia and Armenians, I decided to put the October edition of the magazine on hold and replace it with a single letter about the connection this country builds with visitors, making them "Armenians by Choice, For Better or Worse."



ARMENIANS BY CHOICE FOR BETTER OR WORSE

Some countries make foreigners feel welcome, while others make them feel at home. Although both are desirable, the latter is far superior to the former. I have traveled a lot throughout my life, visiting many cities and making friends all over the world. However, it was only in Yerevan that I **felt a deep connection** to the country itself and didn't want to leave.

I'm writing this article from Dubai, one of the most luxurious and fascinating cities in the world. But even here, I can't wait to get back to Armenia. I can't wait to walk the streets of Yerevan, or breathe in the fresh mountain air in Ijevan. I **can't wait to be back** in the place where I feel truly at home.

My brother Steve, who's with me in Dubai, thinks I'm crazy. But I keep telling him he must visit Armenia to understand what

I'm talking about. It's a country that gets under your skin and stays with you **long after you leave**.

Despite its challenges, Armenia has a way of weaving its magic on visitors. It's hard to put into words, but it's a feeling of deep connection to the land, the people, and the culture. The word "connect" is perhaps the most appropriate in this context.

How has this connection with Armenia formed over the years? What makes it so strong that expats living in this country don't want to leave no matter what happens? How can a small country occupy such a big part of one's heart despite **not having any Armenian roots**? I have three points to talk about briefly, and I hope they'll be enough to answer the questions above and convey the message I have.

The Armenian Water

My grandfather, who recently passed away, often spoke of something that never felt truer than after I arrived in Armenia. He would say, "We feel connected to the land that gives us sweet water." Since our bodies are made up mostly of water, when we drink sweet water somewhere over a period of time, **we feel connected to the land** where it came from.

Water can absorb and store energy from its surroundings, including the energy of the land itself. When we drink water, we also take in some of this energy take in the essence of the land where it came from, creating **a deep sense of connection** to the place, its people, and its culture.

Does that mean we'll feel connected to wherever we go once we drink water? No, not necessarily. Not every country has the same water, and in many countries, people have to buy bottled drinking water. Armenia, in particular, has **incredibly fresh water** coming from its mountains that's even safe to drink from the tap.

Nowadays, when I think of my grandfather's words, I believe it's totally true! Maybe drinking Armenian water over the past years has connected me to this land and made me feel like it's my "home away from home."

Becoming a “yan”

While chatting with a German friend who also moved to Armenia a few years ago, we discussed social media networking and adding people on different platforms. He mentioned that whenever he sees someone from Armenia with a last name ending in “yan” or “ian,” he accepts the connection request immediately because he feels like “it’s one of us.”

At that moment, we both looked at each other and laughed out loud at his phrase “One of us.” Us whom? We’re both not Armenians, have no Armenian roots, and our last names don’t end in “yan” or “ian.” But his statement encapsulates the connection I’m trying to describe. In Armenia, **foreigners feel like they belong** and quickly become part of the country and its community.

Armenians contribute to this warm feeling of belonging in the country. They have been nothing but welcoming during my seven years here. When I first decided to stay, I heard a few things like, “You have to be careful with Armenians not to be scammed” and “You can’t trust Armenians.” Unfortunately, some of these things were told to me by some Armenians themselves.

However, over the past years, I have never been scammed. On the contrary, I have been welcomed and have made many friends here. Furthermore, I have done lots of business with many Armenian companies and the level of professionalism was **similar to that in the States or Europe**.

.Whenever I travel to Armenia, my local Armenian friend always insists on picking me up and dropping me off at the airport. Although I’ve told him many times not to bother, he says it’s become a tradition between the two of us. We don’t work together or pay each other, and he has no gain from doing this except for being a great person and a true friend. I know that taxis from the airport to the city center are only \$10-\$15, but I actually enjoy seeing him at the airport. It’s become a tradition I cherish. This year, he invited me to his wedding, and it felt amazing to be there with his family. For him, I was a guest; for me, it meant so much more than that.

So, in one way or another, **Armenians contributed to building** this connection with foreigners living in Armenia. Their warmth, hospitality, and generosity are just a few of the qualities that make Armenia such a special place for its expats.

The Armenian Spirit

It is difficult to define the Armenian spirit, but it is something that all Armenians share. It is a spirit of **resilience, perseverance, and hope**. It is a spirit that has helped Armenians to overcome centuries of hardship. The Armenian spirit is evident in the country's rich culture and history. It is evident in how Armenians live their lives, even in the face of adversity.

The Armenian spirit is a testament to the human spirit. **It is an unbreakable spirit** that shows that there is always hope, even in the darkest times. It is a spirit that inspires us all to be better people.

This spirit of resilience and hope also impacts non-Armenians living in the country. When something bad happens in Armenia, many foreigners choose to stay and help, unlike in many other countries where foreigners are the first to flee.

In Armenia, foreigners join volunteering groups, stand side by side with Armenians through difficult times, and do whatever they can to help. They also use social media platforms to post about what's happening in Armenia to inform their friends and families outside the country.

They do this for two reasons: first, because humanity says so, and second, because they feel connected to Armenia, **no less than Armenians** themselves.

If you are reading this and thinking about visiting Armenia but still hesitant, I would ask you for one thing: simply **give Armenia 7 days of your life**, and it will catch you under its spell like it did with me. Who knows? Maybe your 7 days will become 7 years, just like what happened to me.

LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

OCT 15TH, 2023 | NO. 9 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

The information contained in this magazine is for general informational purposes only. Authors, contributors, and publishers make no representation or warranties of any kind, express or implied, about the completeness, accuracy, reliability, suitability, or availability concerning the magazine or the information, products, services, or related graphics contained in the magazine for any purpose. Any reliance you place on such information is strictly at your own risk. No part of this magazine may be commercially reproduced or used without the publisher's written consent.