

LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

JUNE, 15TH 2026 | NO. 37 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

FINDING ARMENIA AGAIN

MY SIX MONTHS WITH ARMENIAN VOLUNTEER CORPS

TOP COWORKING SPACES IN YEREVAN IN 2026

FIND OUT HOW THE COWORKING MAP IS CHANGING IN YEREVAN

THE STORY OF CEMI

HOW A STUDENT-RUN COFFEE SHOP CONNECTS AN ECOSYSTEM IN DILIJAN

VALLEX GARDEN BEYOND THE VIEW

A STORY OF PEOPLE, PLACE, AND FOOD

WHERE THE CHILDREN PLAY

HOW YEREVAN IS BUILDING FOR ITS YOUNGEST RESIDENTS

YEREVAN AND THE CASE FOR HYBRID SPACES

WHY COWORKING BELONGS WHERE PEOPLE ALREADY ARE

THE OLDEST WINE VESSEL IN THE WORLD

THE BOOK PULLING KARAS OUT OF THE GROUND AND ONTO THE PAGE

WHERE THE CHILDREN PLAY

HOW YEREVAN IS BUILDING FOR ITS YOUNGEST RESIDENTS



MATHEW ZEIN

EDITOR'S LETTER

Lana and I moved to Armenia nine years ago not knowing anyone, and today our 4-year old son knows the entire neighborhood. Armenia is a family-oriented, child-friendly country and Yerevan has it all for remote working parents; safety, quality education, affordable healthcare, entertainment, and a welcoming culture!

I started Life in Armenia back in 2022 to tell the world about it and to attract international digital nomads to the country, but little did I know my journey with the magazine would go this far.

Just a few days ago, Life in Armenia magazine received a nomination, on behalf of the EU Business News, in the 5th annual European Travel Awards. Yes, my monthly magazine about Armenia is once again recognized internationally.

In 2025, Life in Armenia magazine won the Travel & Tourism Awards in the UK as the Best Digital Nomad Guide in the World, and in 2026, we're aiming for our 2nd win.

Thankful to our readers and supporters who made this dream a reality

Mathew Zein



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**THE OLDEST WINE VESSEL IN THE WORLD
THE BOOK PULLING KARAS OUT OF THE GROUND
AND ONTO THE PAGE**

For 6,200 years, a clay vessel lay buried in the Armenian earth, older than the alphabet, holding secrets of the world's oldest winery. For millennia, the Armenian karas was stolen by kings and praised by historians, yet forgotten by time.

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FIND OUT HOW THE COWORKING MAP IS CHANGING
IN YEREVAN**

Yerevan's remote work scene has exploded, with Saryan Street alone hosting 17 workspace cafes. From free, unbothered seating at a startup campus to sleek, distraction-free Japanese design, discover the local, unsponsored guide to the spaces shaping Yerevan's tech community in 2026.

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Can a simple cup of espresso bridge the gap between Dilijan and Florence? At CEMI, students are serving up their "homework" to real customers, training for international careers without leaving home. Discover how this cozy coffee shop is anchoring Armenia's next big cultural ecosystem.

**VALLEX GARDEN BEYOND THE VIEW
A STORY OF PEOPLE, PLACE, AND FOOD**

Lori's dramatic cliffs will fill your camera roll, but the real story at Vallex Garden Resort is on the plate. Find out about this place, where the peace of the mountains meets an unforgettable kitchen crafting rich, mountain-spiced dishes you won't find anywhere else in the country.

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WHERE THE CHILDREN PLAY HOW YEREVAN IS BUILDING FOR ITS YOUNGEST RESIDENTS

Yerevan has always been warm to families, but its urban spaces are finally catching up. Discover how a new wave of public, international-standard playgrounds, inspired by river trout, traditional carpets, and scientific thought, are completely transforming the city center for its youngest residents.

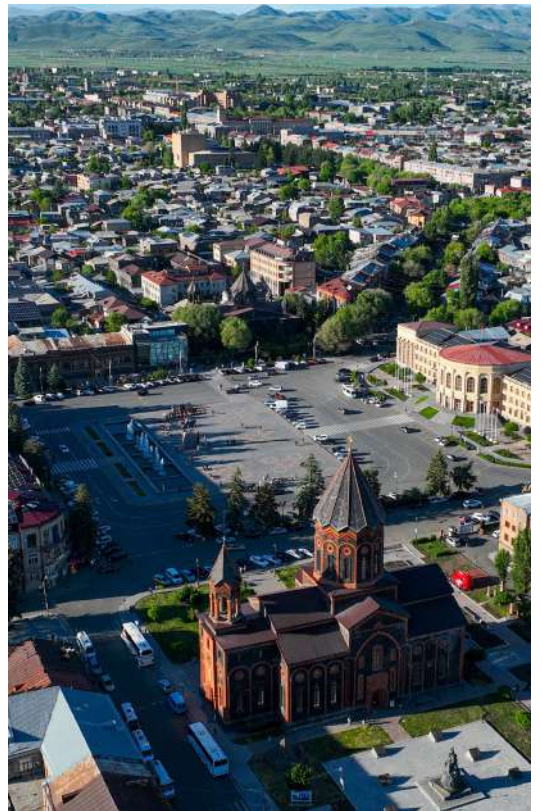
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YEREVAN AND THE CASE FOR HYBRID SPACES WHY COWORKING BELONGS WHERE PEOPLE ALREADY ARE

Are standalone office boxes a thing of the past? Globally, coworking is shifting into the places we already visit. Now, Yerevan is taking this concept to its absolute limit with Dalan Technopark; a massive, self-contained micro-city designed to blur the line between work and a well-lived life.

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ARMENIA JUST BUILT A TRAIL THE LENGTH OF THE COUNTRY AND IT'S THE PERFECT FIT FOR INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL NOMADS

Armenia just launched a 1,000-kilometer trail running the length of the country, designed entirely village-to-village. Now combine that with good 5G coverage across the country, you can hike by day and work from a local guesthouse by night.

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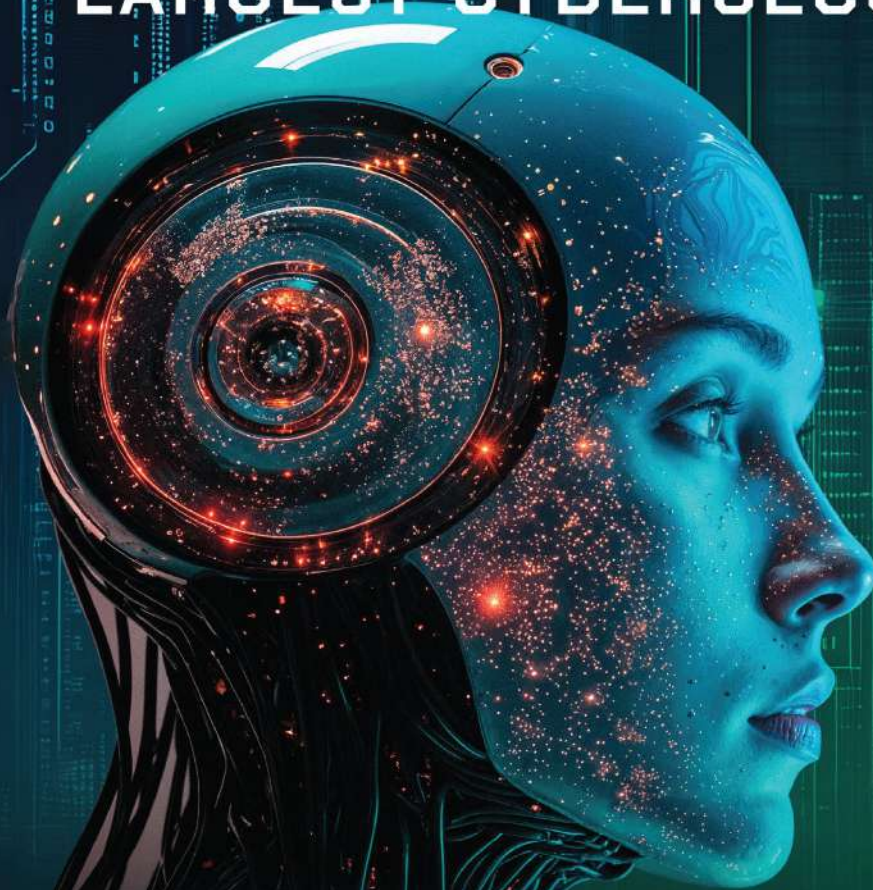
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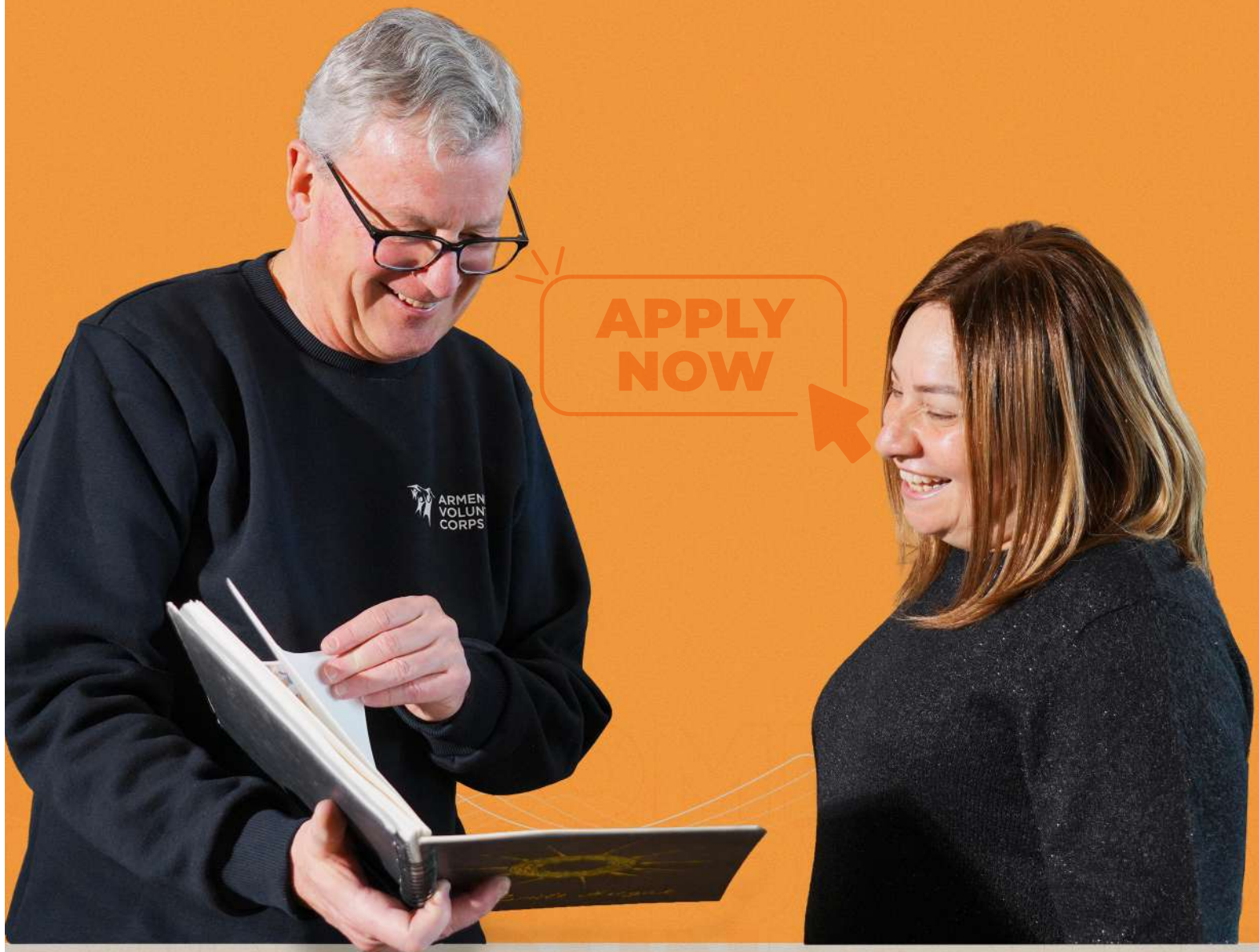
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THE OLDEST WINE VESSEL IN THE WORLD

THE BOOK PULLING KARAS OUT OF THE GROUND AND ONTO THE PAGE



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ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



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INTERVIEWING



THE OLDEST WINE VESSEL IN THE WORLD THE BOOK PULLING KARAS OUT OF THE GROUND AND ONTO THE PAGE

There is a clay vessel in this country that is older than most countries. **It is older than the alphabet some people in Yerevan still write with.** It is older than wine, in the form most of the world drinks it. It is called a karas. For thousands of years, Armenian families fermented and stored their wine in karas buried partially in the cool earth of their cellars. The vessels appear in archaeology, in poetry, in the hand-drawn maps of village winemakers. **What they have not, until recently, had, is a book of their own.**

It is a strange kind of silence, the silence around something so common it stopped being seen. People will write libraries about the things they fear losing and **almost nothing about the things they assume they cannot lose.** The karas fell into the second category. This book is, in a sense, the moment a culture turned around to look at what had been standing behind it the whole time.

In 2007, archaeologists working in the Areni-1 cave in southern Armenia uncovered something that rewrote a chapter of human history. A wine press.

Fermentation vats. Storage jars. Pottery sherds.

The site was about 6,200 years old, making it the earliest known winery in the world. The storage jars in that cave are the karases we'll talk about.

But here is the strange part. If you have lived in Armenia for years, you have almost certainly **walked past a karas without knowing what you were looking at.** You probably think it is a storage unit. That is exactly what I thought, too, until a few weeks ago.



How it all started

When Anoush Iskandaryan, CEO of SAROMM Grounds, first told me about the karas book they sponsored, I **wanted to understand why a clay pot deserved an entire scholarly book**. “You have to hear it from Miqayel,” she kept saying. So I did.

Miqayel Badalyan is a researcher in Urartian archaeology. For several years he directed the Erebuni Historical and Archaeological Museum-Reserve, working alongside institutions like the British Museum, the Hermitage, and UCLA on projects to bring Armenian heritage to a wider audience.

He shared that the book about karas began with a museum tour for two of his friends. Hripsime Harutyunyan of the Bnorrn NGO and Karen Mkhitarian, Founder of SAROMM Grounds. They asked Miqayel about what could be done to **give Armenian wine culture the attention it deserved**, and the answer became a book.

At this point, I had to interrupt Miqayel and ask why the karas? After all, Armenia is not short of symbols. **“It is ours in a way few things are”** was his answer and that was enough reason.

It is worth sitting with his words. Not “it is old,” not “it is beautiful,” not “it is ours” in the defensive sense a small nation sometimes reaches for. Ours in a way few things are, meaning **uncopied, uninterrupted, and unselfconscious**. A thing you did not have to argue for because no one had yet thought to take it.



Why a pot, and why this pot

Georgians have the kvevri, and they have done lots of work for it; they succeeded in having their kvevri winemaking tradition inscribed on the UNESCO list. **The karas is the Armenian counterpart, but it is not a copy of anything.** Its form was fixed in the Urartian period, at least the 9th century BC, with older prototypes reaching back before that and an **unbroken line forward into the present.** That continuity is the whole point.

The point is not that Georgia got there first with the paperwork. The point is that recognition is downstream of attention, and attention is a choice a country makes. Georgia chose. **The karas book is Armenia, beginning to choose,** and choosing in the right order, which, as Miqayel will insist later, matters more than speed.

There is even a first portrait of it. On the bronze relief of Balawat, commissioned by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser

III, the Assyrian army is shown carrying off a karas as war booty. Think about what that means. Nearly three thousand years ago, **the karas was valuable enough that an empire put it on a monument as a prize of conquest.** Centuries later, Herodotus mentioned a trade in karas between the Armenian highlands and Mesopotamia. The pot kept showing up in other people's records, because other people kept wanting it.



I found there is an irony here because the karas was first written down by the people who stole it. Its earliest “portrait” is propaganda carved by an enemy. **For three thousand years the vessel was documented by everyone except the people who made it.**



It's only one percent about wine

I tried to put a number on it during the interview. If the karas is so much more than a wine vessel, I asked, is it fair to say the book is one percent about making wine and ninety-nine percent about culture? Miqayel answered me. Wine is one of many things the karas has carried.

This is where the story stops being about pottery. **The karas was a symbol of fertility, associated with the female, with the womb.** In some burial rites, people were buried inside a karas, in the belief that the person would be reborn, the vessel standing in for the earth itself, which so many cultures imagine as the thing that creates and returns life. **A jar for wine, a jar for grain, a jar for a human being waiting to begin again.** The same shape, doing all of it.



Think about this for a moment. The same vessel that held the harvest also held the dead, and held them in the posture of someone waiting to be born. **To bury a person in a wine jar is to make an argument about time that nothing ends, it ferments.** That the earth does to a body what the cellar does to grapes; takes it in, keeps it in the dark, and gives back something transformed.

At Erebuni, during excavations, **two arrowheads were found at the bottom of two karases**; these arrowheads were carved from bone. Looking for parallels, researchers found echoes in Assyrian, Mesopotamian, and Hittite rituals,

including anti-witchcraft rites: an object placed for protection, for prosperity, for guarding the space. A pot, an arrowhead made of bone, and a piece of magic, all **waiting at the bottom of a jar for someone to ask the right question.**



The world's first label, in cuneiform

Here is the detail that reframes everything else. Pick up a bottle of water today and read the side. One liter. Half a liter. We take that for granted. Miqayel pointed out that the Urartians were doing the same thing, on karases, in the 9th century BC.

They recorded standardized volumes on the upper part of the vessels. One unit, the aqarqi, was roughly 250 liters. The terusi was around 25 liters. The arusi was 1-1.5 liters. These measures were written in Urartian cuneiform, and also marked with special hieroglyphic signs, **so the information could be read at a glance.**

“5 Akarki, 2 Terusi” was found on ancient Armenian karas. In the Kingdom of Urartu, 1 Akarki is 250 liters and 1 Terusi is 25 liters. So, this meant $(5 \times 250) + (2 \times 25) = 1,300$ liters.

What the book is actually trying to do

The book gathers leading scholars from Armenia and abroad, from Italy, Austria, France, Poland, Russia and beyond, across Urtology, linguistics, post-Urtian culture, and medieval Armenia. Miqayel worked on it with Arsen Bobokhyan, Director of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, with the project coordinated by SAROMM Grounds



None of the foreign scholars Miqayel invited said they were too busy. He calls them ambassadors of Armenian heritage, because a study Armenians do for themselves is one thing, and an international one is another. But the goal Miqayel keeps returning to is not the scholars. "It is the rest of us." Most Armenians, he says, do not know these aspects of the karas. The book is the first step, written to sit between science and the public, **usable by a teacher or a curious reader as easily as by an archaeologist.**

After it come public lectures, presentations, and a longer plan: reviving the lost craft of making the Urtian-type karas, for which Armenia currently has almost no living master, and then, Miqayel is one of Armenia's six experts to UNESCO, **applying to have the tradition recognized internationally.** It was clear he was careful about the order. The making has to come back first. **Then the recognition. The book is step one of a long road.**



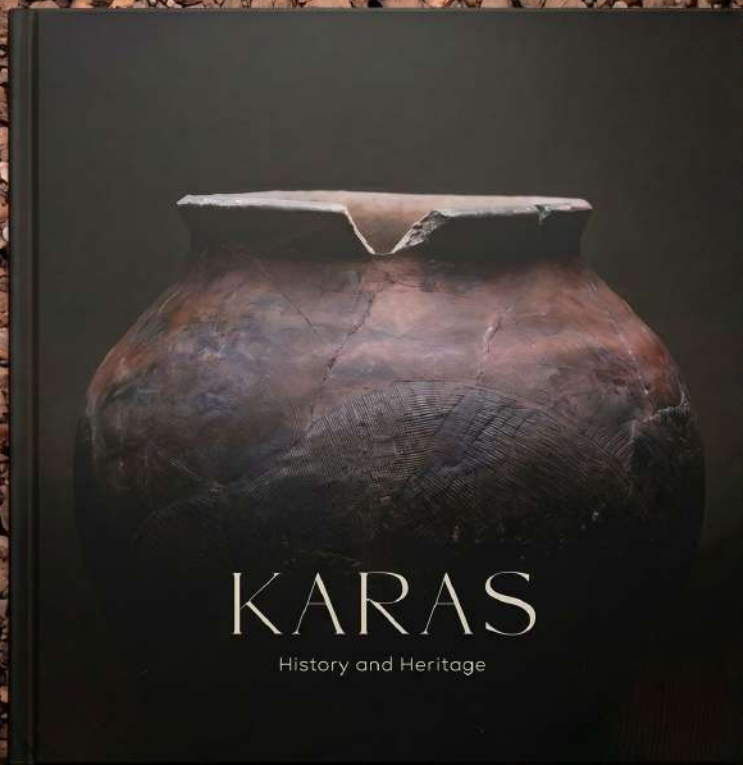
The argument underneath

There is an argument running under all of this, and Miqayel makes it without raising his voice. When you think of Switzerland, he says, you think of chocolate, cheese, a watch. Nations are remembered through a handful of features. **Armenia has more of them than it shows the world**, khachkars, dragon stones, the khaz musical notation almost no visitor has heard of. Not everyone comes for churches. **The more pieces of the mosaic you can show, the more people can find their way in.** The karas is one of those pieces.



The book does not change the pot. The pot has not needed changing for thousands of years. What the book changes is the people and their perception of this pot. After six thousand years of being the thing that remembers, **it is finally being remembered.**

Coming Soon in English



TOP COWORKING SPACES IN YEREVAN IN 2026

FIND OUT HOW THE COWORKING MAP IS CHANGING IN YEREVAN



**MARIAM
NAVASARDYAN**

Community Builder at Nomad Armenia



**ANITA
IVANYAN**

Community Builder at Nomad Armenia



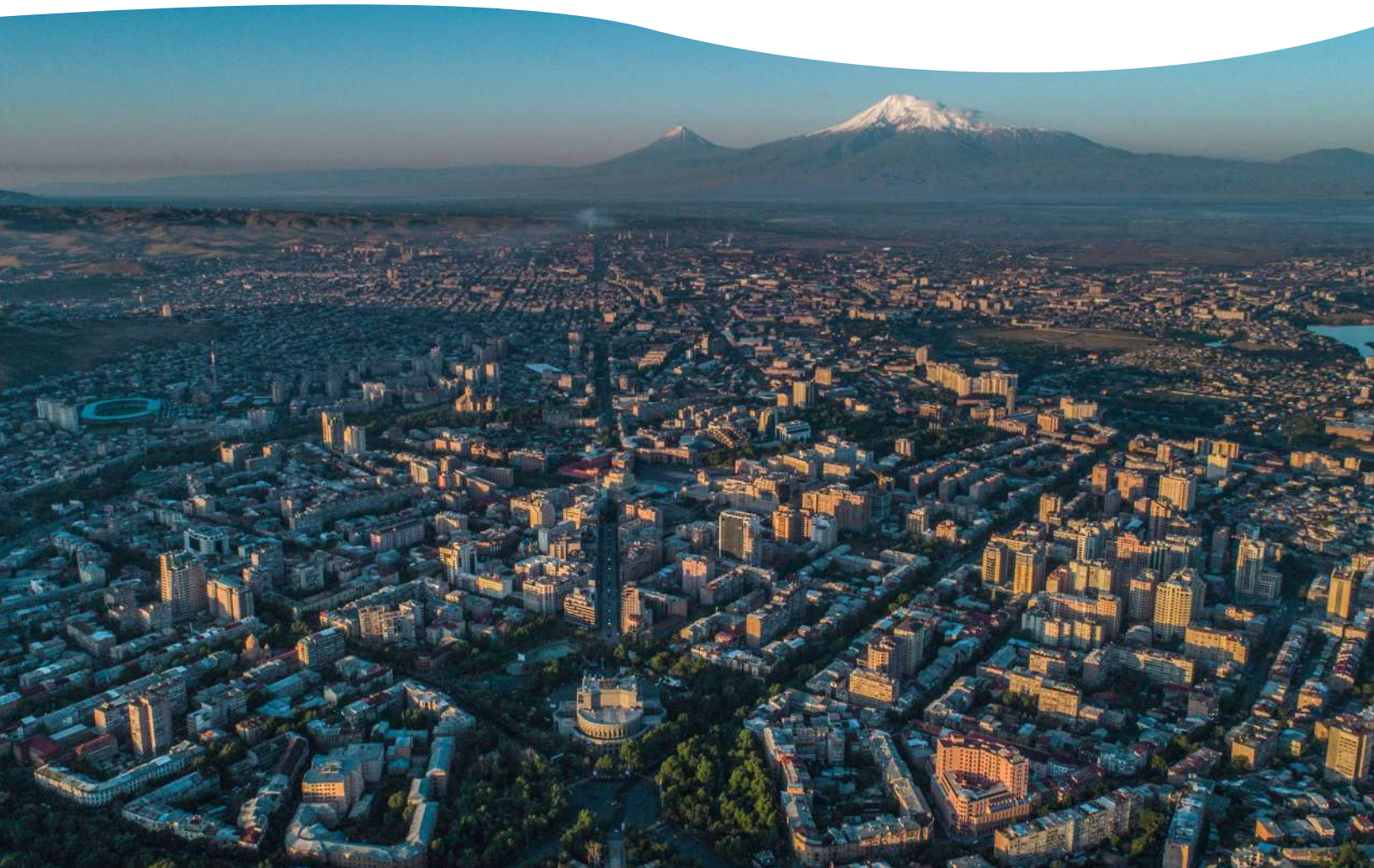
TOP COWORKING SPACES IN YEREVAN IN 2026 FIND OUT HOW THE COWORKING MAP IS CHANGING IN YEREVAN

Coworking is strange! It is one part desk, one part Wi-Fi, and three parts the people sitting around you. The exact same square meters can feel like an incubator in one place and a public library in another.

Yerevan's coworking map used to be small, but things have changed over the past few years. We've watched the local coworking scene mature fast, and it's fair to say it may have grown even faster than it should have, because at some point, it started to lose its way. Some remained faithful to their communities while others prioritized desk counts over human connection.

Who could've expected that Saryan Street alone would host 17 coworking spaces and remote-friendly cafes as we write this piece in 2026? And by the way, this increase happened in less than three years; before that, the concept barely existed here.

Therefore, below is a map, not a ranking, of Yerevan's coworking spaces worth knowing in 2026, along with what each one does best. At the very least, this is how we see them. Before you read further, keep in mind this is an editorial, not a sponsored piece.



Ground Zero Venture Cafe

Ground Zero holds a special place in our hearts, quite literally for our magazine's founder, Mathew, who even picked a nearby kindergarten for his son to keep his commute to Ground Zero under five minutes. In his words, Ground Zero is his "daily office" and almost everyone knows it.

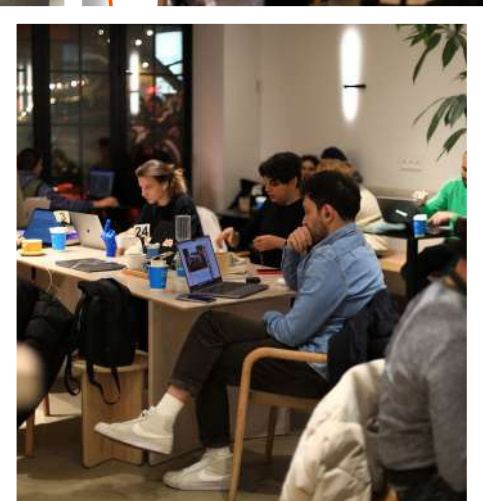
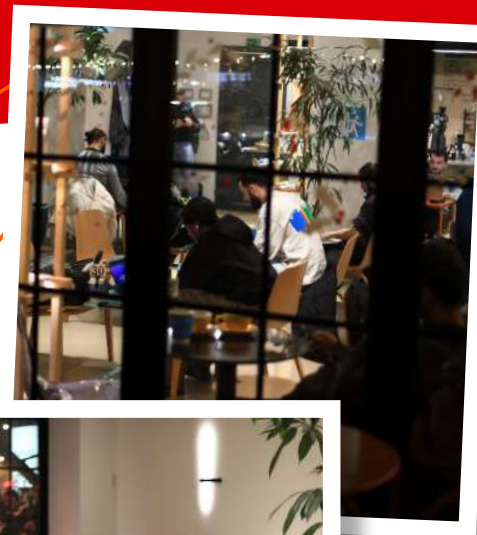


Located at 1 Saryan Street, with a small terrace that catches the afternoon light, Ground Zero is the region's first venture café. Technically, it's a specialty coffee shop, but in practice, it is one of the most consistent gathering points in Yerevan for local and international founders, investors, remote workers, and

even digital nomads. The founder, Karén Gyulbudaghyan, **was the first to bring this open-concept approach to Armenia**, starting a trend that many others later adopted. In his words, this was his vision from the beginning; after spending most of his life in San Francisco, he always wanted to

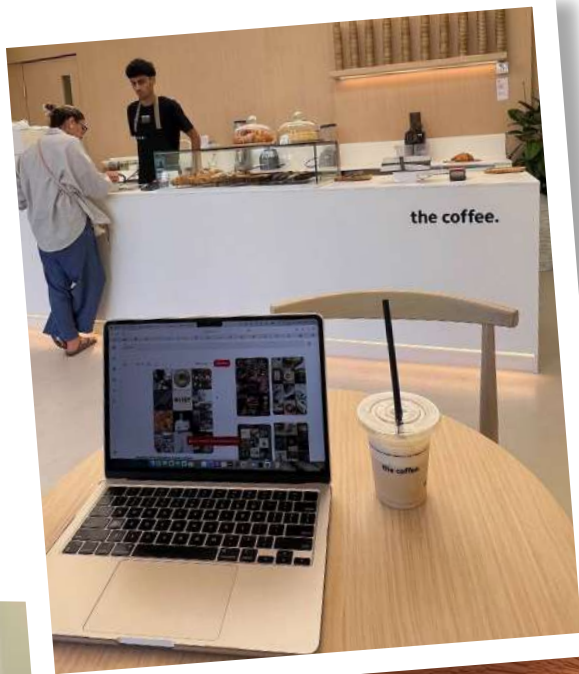
reshape Yerevan's coffee culture and **bridge it with Armenia's tech community**. It's worth saying that Ground Zero has hosted more startups and advisors from the UC Berkeley SkyDeck ecosystem than any other single venue outside of Berkeley itself.

There are no subscription fees or desk bookings here. It's more organic than organized. Show up, buy a coffee, and get to work. **Keep showing up, and the community finds you**. Recently, Ground Zero expanded into two more locations on 5 Zakyan Street and inside Engineering City.



The Coffee

The Coffee brings a different, hyper-focused energy to Yerevan's remote work map. Inspired by the sleek, minimalist Japanese aesthetics, this open coworking space takes away all the noise to focus on quality coffee and real functionality. It has become a hideout for tech professionals and who prefer a calm, quiet, and highly disciplined environment over a social scene.



The Coffee operates across three locations at 1 Tamanyan Street (Cascade), 80 Mashtots Avenue, and 6 Adonts Street. Over the past few months, we hosted our remote work meetups a couple of times at the Mashtots Avenue location, where our community thoroughly enjoyed having the entire, spacious second floor all to ourselves.

The concept here is exactly the same with no dedicated tables or phone booths; just an open layout with tables and seats. You grab your coffee and get straight to work.



Surf Coffee

Surf Coffee brings its signature, laid-back surf culture to Yerevan's remote work map. **Originally starting as a popular Russian lifestyle chain**, it operates locally across three locations at 1 Saryan Street, 98 Nalbandyan Street, and 1 Tamanyan Street. The indoor spaces here run a bit smaller and tighter compared to others in town, but it has its own distinct vibe; they've even scattered comfortable chaise lounges around their terrace on Tumanyan Street.

One thing we really love about Surf Coffee is what they added to their menu. Besides serving a quality lineup of international specialty brews and signature drinks, **they've also added traditional Armenian coffee**. To be honest, finding Armenian coffee in modern cafés around Yerevan has become pretty rare these days, so seeing it embraced like this is a really cool touch.

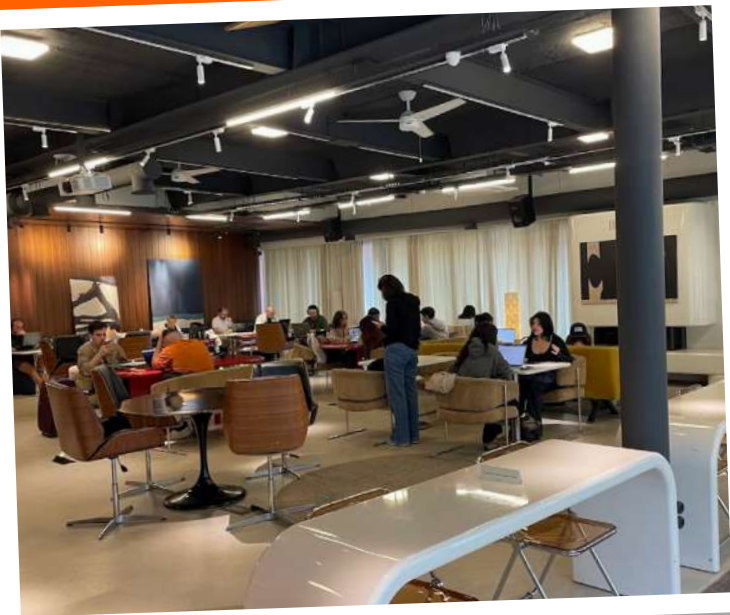
The approach here is the same as the other two: there are no subscriptions at Surf. You're welcome to stay as long as you have your coffee and a desire to get some work done.



A19

A19 Startup Campus brings a unique model to Yerevan's tech ecosystem. The modern, red-colored building located at 9 Isahakyan Street offers spacious areas for remote workers. On the right side

of the entrance, there is a large, open-area coworking space with a quiet atmosphere. **It is completely free to sit and work here**, and you are not even required to buy a coffee.



This is a dedicated community service offered by the A19 Startup Campus. We tested this out ourselves, spending hours working without ordering anything just to see if staff members would ask us to leave, but they remained entirely loyal to their commitment. Directly opposite this free area, you will find a restaurant featuring a large island table right in the middle that is open for coworking until 6:00 PM, alongside plenty of outdoor seating options.

The founders of A19 are currently renovating a new membership-based coworking space on a separate floor, which will offer a variety of premium features for the community. This expansion is set to include dedicated office spaces, private phone booths, and an excellent view of the park located right in Yerevan's city center. They're also considering adding a dedicated podcasting room at the basement since they have lots of unused spaces.



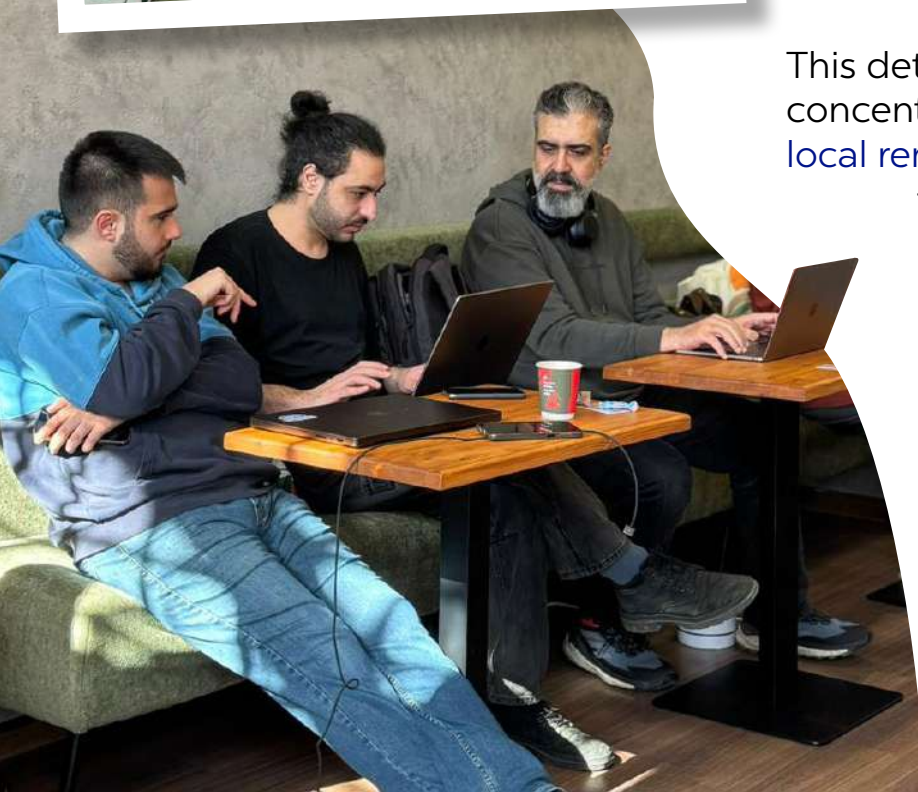
Jeffrey's Coworking



Jeffrey's Coworking is a new venue on 1 Buzand Street, but what makes it truly special is its founding story. Before the coworking space existed, there was already a coffee shop called Jeffrey's; a small, cozy corner offering home-baked cookies and coffee. At some point, the founder and his friend decided to expand Jeffrey's and take over the available space next door to create Jeffrey's Coworking.



Jeffrey's Coworking is an intimate, focused space equipped with a phone booth and complementary coffee and tea for remote workers. It operates on a subscription fee and offers hourly packages that are highly affordable and reasonably priced. We have already hosted one of our remote work community meetups in the original Jeffrey's coffee shop and another right inside the coworking area, and we enjoyed the distinct vibes of both environments.



This detail deserves a moment of concentration, because it's a shift in the local remote work ecosystem. This is likely the first case in Yerevan where a coffee shop decided that instead of trying to accommodate remote workers in a traditional café setting that already existed, they would invest more and dedicate an entirely separate space for them, complete with a different layout, tailored services, and a pricing structure.



Woods Center

Woods Center is located in Jrvezh, which is about a fifteen-to-twenty-minute drive from the city center, depending on traffic. The project grew out of the Renderforest founder's vision for a multifunctional ecosystem that combines coworking, education, recreation, and residential spaces.

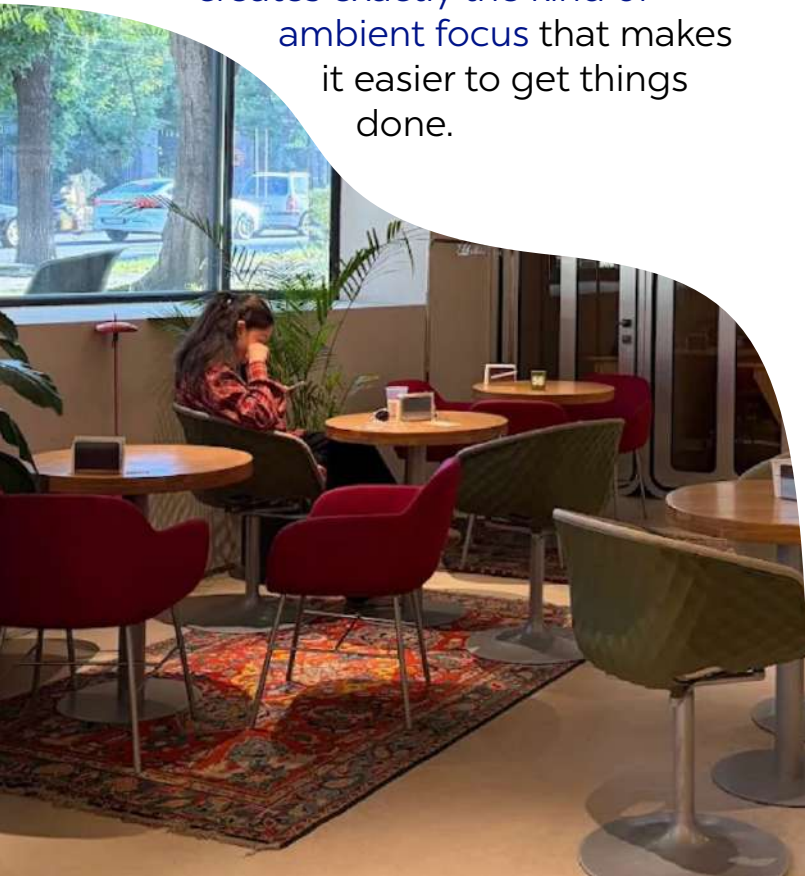
The modern building is equipped, offering dedicated desks, private offices, meeting rooms, lounges, gaming areas, a fully functioning gym, and a library stocked with books. They even provide a dedicated transport service for members. Given all of these amenities, Woods Center is **a comprehensive coworking hub that ticks every single box**. It is likely the only venue in Yerevan that offers such an exhaustive range of services under one roof, operating as a truly full-service coworking ecosystem.

Woods Center is the ideal choice for professionals who want to intentionally step away from the city center to focus on their work though the natural trade-off is the commute. However, the building sits right next to the residential community of Jrvezh, which **can offer a dedicated coliving area**. Introducing coliving options would solve the transportation dilemma, offering a live-and-work setup especially for digital nomads that maximizes the venue's potential.



The Academy

The Academy is on Baghramyan Avenue, right next to the National Academy of Sciences building, and that placement was intentional from the start. The logo is the Academy's iconic Soviet-era facade, and **the whole concept was built around its location**. The American University of Armenia is also nearby, and between the two institutions, the foot traffic writes itself. The crowd keeps the space active without making it loud, and **the general culture of the room creates exactly the kind of ambient focus** that makes it easier to get things done.



The design leans into the library aesthetic with warm tones and a considered layout. There are sofas for those who want to sit more comfortably, and the mix of seating makes it easy to stay for a long stretch without feeling like you need to move. For calls and focused work, The Academy has **two phone booths available free of charge**, a detail that many spaces in Yerevan still overlook.

The model is the same as most others on this list: arrive, order, work. There is no need to book anything beforehand or pay for the hours spent, you just need to order coffee or food.

Mango

Anyone who spent time on Saryan Street a few months back will remember this place as Hayk Coffee, a specialty roastery with a coworking edge. The roastery is gone now, and so is the name. Mango arrived as part of a growing local chain, took over the space, and kept the tables, the atmosphere, and the quiet understanding that some people will be here for a while. The chain also operates another location on Komitas Avenue 1, a more relaxed alternative for those who prefer to work away from the city center buzz.



There is a large communal table at the corner built for focused, heads-down work, alongside smaller tables for those who prefer to sit apart. No bookings, no hourly packages, no one checking how long it has been since your last order. The approach is familiar by now on Saryan Street.

What has shifted is the addition of a small relaxation area into one corner designed for the pauses between work. A place to read, have a conversation, or simply step back before the next stretch of work.

Impact Hub Yerevan

Impact Hub has been part of Yerevan's coworking map since 2014, which in local terms is a long time. Long enough to have watched the scene grow up around it, and long enough to have built something that does not need to reinvent itself every season. It sits at 80 Tigran Mets Avenue, not in the center, but right next to a metro station, so **the commute is simpler than the address might suggest**. Impact Hub operates on memberships and day passes, and the space reflects that. Proper desks, reliable internet, meeting rooms, and a level of quiet professionalism. For remote workers who need predictability in their working day, that structure is worth something.

The yard is one of the details that **sets it apart**. It is green, calm, and far enough from the street, so you can relax and rest in between work tasks. It is the kind of outdoor space that makes a long working day feel less long. The space also has resident dogs and cats, which is either beside the point or exactly the point, depending on who you are. A lot is going on in this building, including fellowships, accelerator tracks, events that attract NGOs, startups, and people building things with some intention behind them.



What we listed above are only a few of the available options. **The map is bigger than it has ever been**. The good

news is that for most kinds of work, there is now a space in Yerevan that actually fits.

THE STORY OF CEMI

HOW DOES A COFFEE SHOP CONNECT AN ECOSYSTEM IN DILIJAN?



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

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**EKATERINA
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THE STORY OF CEMI

HOW DOES A COFFEE SHOP CONNECT AN ECOSYSTEM IN DILIJAN?

I'm writing this on a Tuesday morning, sitting in CEMI with an espresso. CEMI is a cozy coffee shop in Dilijan, but honestly speaking, **calling it a coffee shop undersells what the place is actually doing.**

The young woman steaming milk is a hospitality student. So is the one taking orders at the till, and the one carrying plates to the corner table. **Customers order their coffee from someone who is still learning**, but two years from now, may be working in Florence, Dubai, Yerevan, or maybe in Dilijan. One thing that caught my attention over there was their funny slogan, "Come Taste My Homework."

Connecting Dilijan to Florence

For context, CEMI stands for Community Engagement Management Institution. In practice, it is an Italian bistro in the centre of Dilijan, run by students of Apicius Armenia **under the supervision of their Italian instructors.**

Apicius Armenia is the Armenian campus of the international hospitality school Apicius, which has operated in Florence since 1997 as part of Florence University of the Arts. The school opened its Dilijan campus in September 2025, with the support of the Green Rock Foundation.



The students engage in real-world business from almost day one. The two-year programme can include a year in Dilijan and a year in Florence. **Graduation certificates from Apicius are recognized in Italy and across Europe.** It's worth mentioning

that Apicius Armenia has set up a scholarship fund so that local students can attend regardless of financial situation. I was informed that 11 out of the 15 students in the first cohort will travel to Italy to complete their second year of study.



Using Espresso to measure Success

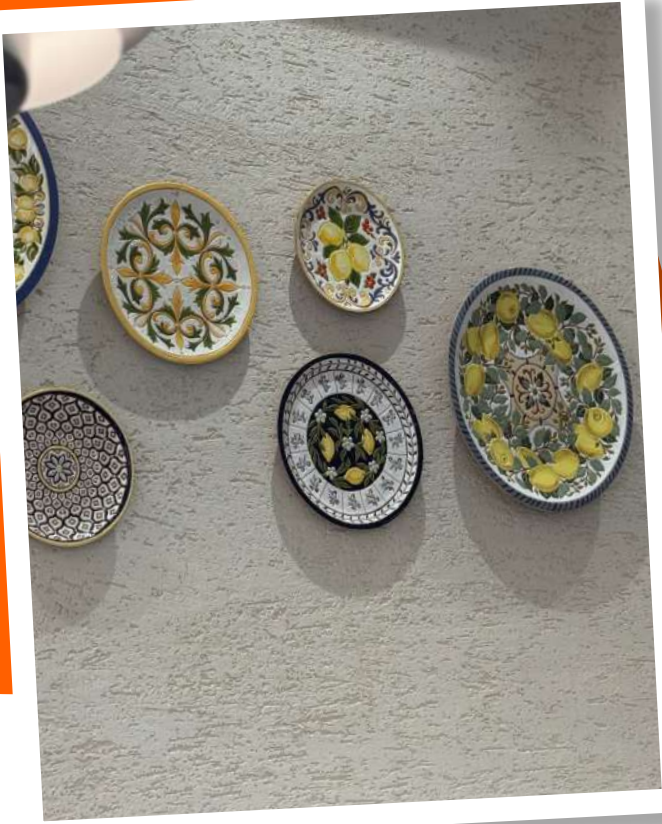
Hospitality school is, in theory, taught in classrooms. In practice, no amount of slides about espresso pressure, table service, or wine pairing can replace the moment a real customer walks in and orders something. **CEMI is the school's way of admitting that fact and building around it.**

Add to that, a coffee shop has a small surface area, a low-stakes price point, and a customer who is forgiving of an imperfect service in a way that, say, a wedding reception would not be. It is the right size of mistake to learn from.

It is also the right size of success to celebrate. A student who makes an espresso, like the one I got, at the right temperature has done something measurable on day one. During my short time there, I saw the Italian instructors in both the back of house and front of house, giving detailed instructions to students who were super excited about every single small thing we might sometimes miss.

Connecting The Dots

CEMI is one piece of a larger plan that the Green Rock Foundation has been working on patiently for years. The Foundation's idea, in its simplest form, is that **talented young people in Dilijan should not have to leave the town to build a future**. If you ask me, that is an ambitious goal in a country where, for a long time, the unspoken assumption has been that real opportunity lives elsewhere; in Yerevan, in Moscow, in Los Angeles, in Paris.



The Foundation is trying to change that assumption by building, all at once, **the parts of an ecosystem that usually take a generation to develop on their own**. A multifunctional cultural complex with hotels, a concert hall, and conference facilities. A coworking space designed to attract digital professionals from around the world. A green transportation initiative. And, the cherry on top, **an investment in education and food culture that is now visible to anyone** who walks into CEMI on a weekday afternoon.



The bet underneath all of this is that a town with the right ingredients, nature, hospitality, infrastructure, education, a critical mass of interesting people passing through, becomes a destination, not a place people leave from. CEMI is one of the most concrete expressions.

Building the Workforce for 2028

Green Rock Foundation recently joined the International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism, and is preparing the bid book to make Armenia a World Region of Gastronomy in 2028. If the bid succeeds, the recognition would direct international attention toward Armenian cuisine, hospitality, and tourism on a scale the country has not yet experienced.

CEMI, in that context, is a **training ground for the people who will be in the front rooms when that attention arrives**. Quietly, one cup at a time, the town is preparing for a future it has been waiting on for a long time



VALLEX GARDEN BEYOND THE VIEW

A STORY OF PEOPLE, PLACE, AND FOOD



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

VALLEX GARDEN BEYOND THE VIEW A STORY OF PEOPLE, PLACE, AND FOOD

Drive north out of Yerevan, climb through the green hills of Lori, and the road takes you down into a canyon you do not expect. The Debed River runs at the

bottom. Above it, on a shelf of land cut into the side of the mountain, sits a hotel called [Vallex Garden Resort](#), where industry, history, and hospitality have

ended up in the same building. There, in that resort, **a meal might tell you more about Armenia than three days in a museum.**

A region with a long industrial memory

Alaverdi has a deep industrial past, copper mining and processing have shaped this region for over two centuries, and the metallurgical works in the canyon were one of the larger industrial operations in Soviet Armenia.

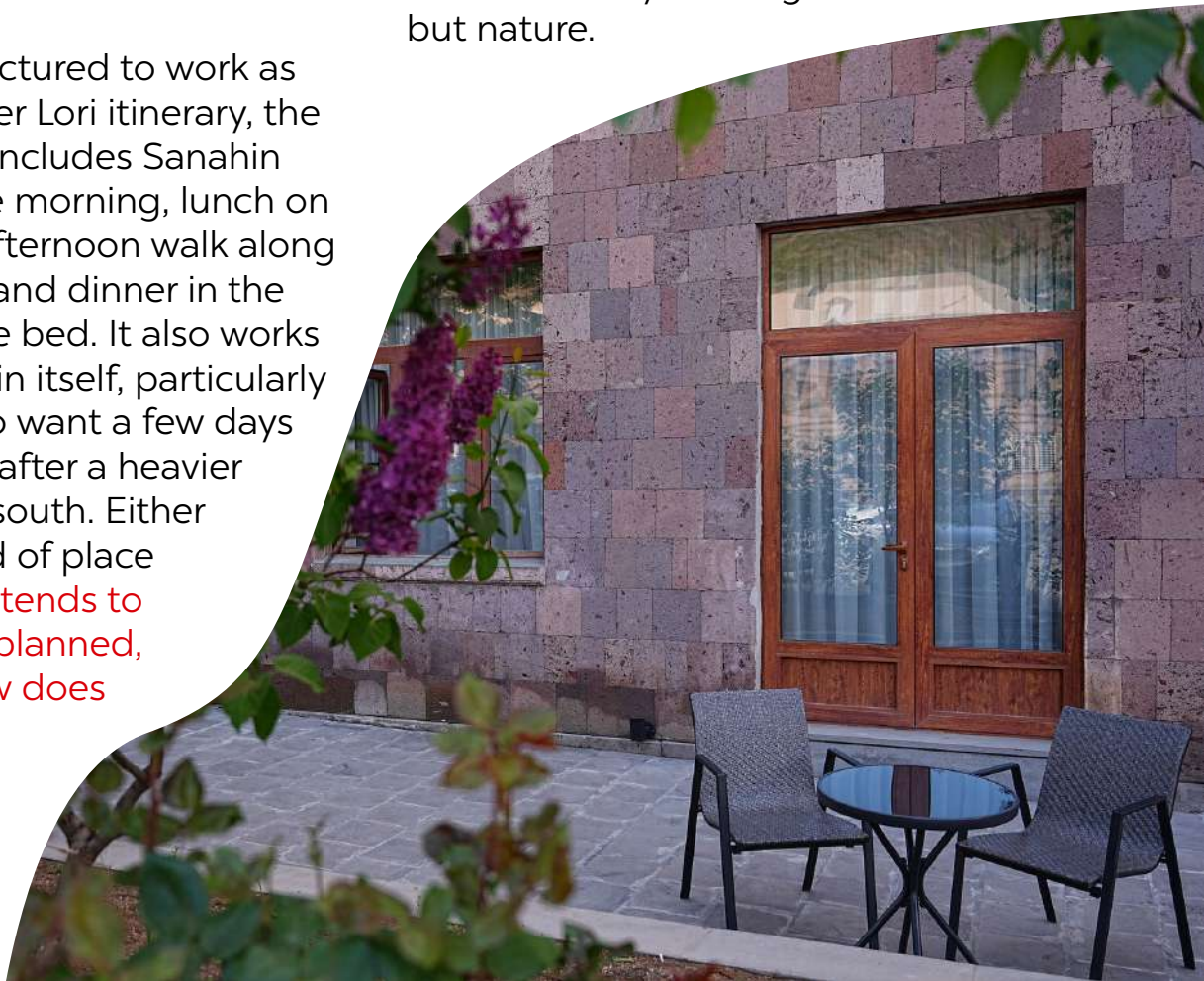
Vallex Group, the corporate ownership behind Vallex Garden Resort wanted to give the region a presence in the country's hospitality conversation as well as its industrial one. That distinction matters. A region known only for industry produces a single image. **A region with industry and hospitality and food produces a much richer one.**



What the hotel actually offers

Vallex Garden Resort sits in the Debed canyon, with rooms looking down the gorge and out toward the surrounding mountains. The architecture leans into the natural setting; local stone, terraces, long windows that frame the view. **What you might not expect is the quiet. Lori has its own acoustic identity, and the canyon amplifies it.** Even with a full hotel, the property feels softer than the same square metres in central Yerevan would. This is likely why I had the focus to finish my last book back in 2025; I stayed at Vallex Garden and worked in solitude, surrounded by nothing but nature.

The resort is structured to work as a stop on a longer Lori itinerary, the kind of trip that includes Sanahin Monastery in the morning, lunch on the terrace, an afternoon walk along the canyon rim, and dinner in the restaurant before bed. It also works as a destination in itself, particularly for travellers who want a few days of slow Armenia after a heavier itinerary further south. Either way, it is the kind of place where **breakfast tends to last longer than planned, because the view does its job.**



The kitchen, and where it comes from

Here is the part of the story that international visitors keep mentioning, often without knowing why. The kitchen at Vallex Garden has a connection to Artsakh cuisine through its chef. For readers who don't know, Artsakh has its own distinctive culinary tradition, shaped by its mountain geography, its herbs, its breads, and its slow-cooked meats.

Eating Artsakh food in Alaverdi is, in this sense, a quietly meaningful act. It is **the continued practice of a regional cuisine in a place that is hospitable to it**. Specific dishes that travel well from Artsakh include zhingyalov hats, the stuffed flatbread filled with seasonal greens and herbs, sometimes more than fifteen different greens in a single bread, and various slow-cooked lamb dishes, often with flavours and combinations that differ from their Yerevan equivalents. Whether or not the chef labels these dishes as "Artsakh" on the menu, their fingerprints are in the cooking.



I still remember my first meal there, right after I arrived from Yerevan. I was starving, as was the photographer who was accompanying me to film some videos in the city. Like most hotel restaurants, we expected average food, nothing too delicious, but nothing too bad, just something acceptable. **However, the moment the food arrived was unforgettable.** It was far beyond anything Jim and I had anticipated.

Why this matters for the foreign reader

The international traveller often comes to Armenia with three or four cuisines in mind: Caucasian grilled meats, lavash and cheese, dolma, and dessert. They leave knowing something deeper than that, but rarely with the language to describe what they have learned. A meal at Vallex Garden gives them part of that language. **This is Lori cuisine, with Artsakh accents.** This dish is from one mountain region, that herb is from another. It is a small atlas of where the people in this kitchen come from, and what they remember.



That is the kind of detail that gives a place real meaning to an outsider. The view in the canyon is beautiful, but you can see beautiful canyons in many countries. The food at Vallex Garden, served in this particular building, in this particular town, by people whose family stories carry their own geography, **that is something you cannot get anywhere else.** It is what “experiencing a country” actually means, beyond the photographs.




How to use this place

If you are making a Lori itinerary, Vallex Garden works best as a two-night stop. One night is not enough to settle. Three or more starts to feel like a vacation rather than a journey. Two nights gives you a full day to explore Sanahin and Haghpat without rushing, time on the terrace, an evening dinner that is not chased by an early checkout, and an unhurried breakfast on the second morning. Pair it with a guide who knows the mining history of the canyon, and you will leave with a much more **textured understanding of northern Armenia than the standard day-trip allows**. Reach out to the hotel's reception and ask them for an English-speaking guide. The staff they speak English fluently and helped me plan my trip around the hotel.

And do not skip the food. Ask what is the chef's own family recipe. **The best meals in Armenia are the ones that come with the story of who is cooking them and why.** Vallex Garden, almost among Armenian resorts, is built to deliver both. The view will be in your photographs. The story will be in your memory. And the food, if you pay attention, will be in both.

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WHERE THE CHILDREN PLAY

HOW YEREVAN IS BUILDING FOR ITS YOUNGEST RESIDENTS



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



INTERVIEWING

**VANANE
ARARKTSYAN**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE KERON
DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION

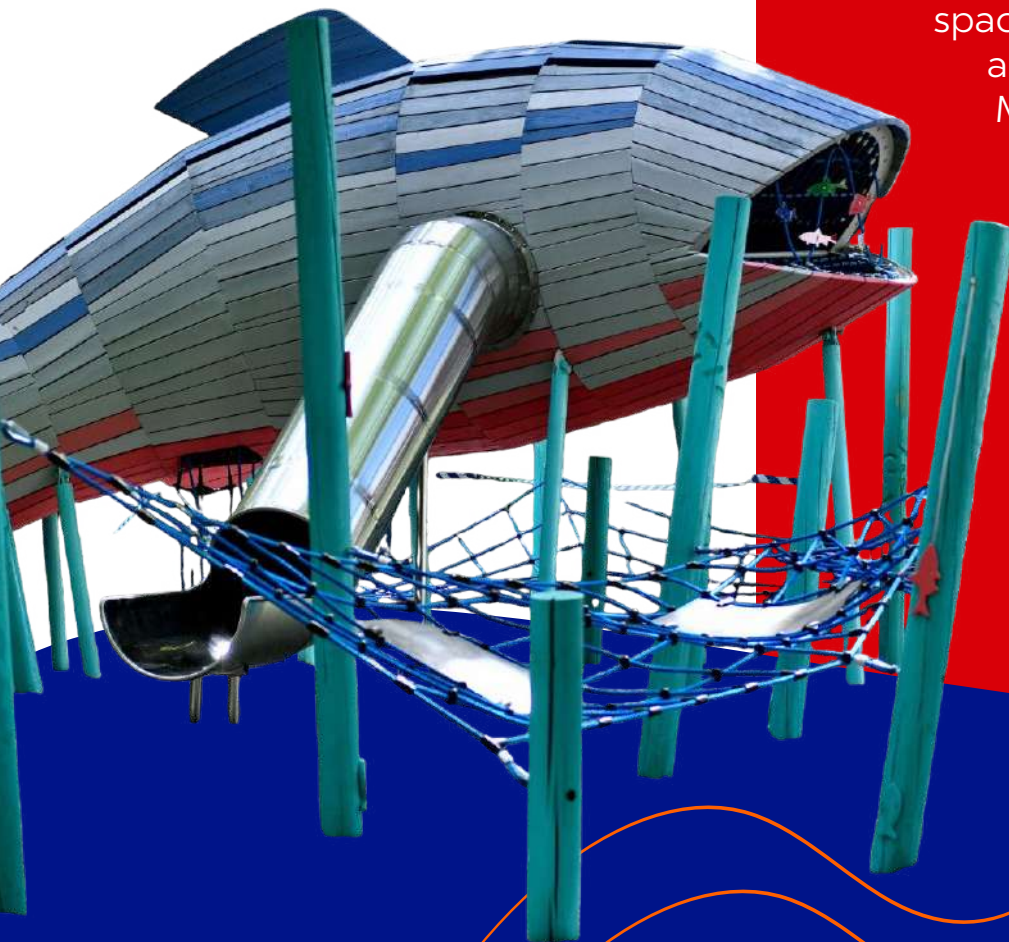
WHERE THE CHILDREN PLAY HOW YEREVAN IS BUILDING FOR ITS YOUNGEST RESIDENTS

One of the first things newcomer parents notice in Yerevan is the hour! Walk through Republic Square or down a quiet street near the Cascade at nine in the evening, and you'll still find children out, chasing each other around the fountains, sharing ice cream with their grandparents, half-asleep on a parent's shoulder at a café table.

That everyday welcome is hard to capture in a relocation checklist, but it's often the thing that makes families fall in love with Yerevan's city center. For those of us who work remotely and move their children from one country to the next, the question is always about how welcoming is the new destination for kids.

However, I must be precise here and mention that while the culture is warm, the physical spaces the city offers children are a different matter.

Many public playgrounds in downtown Yerevan are aging. While you can easily find large parks full of old trees with enough space for kids to run around, that is not enough for today's generation.



Perhaps that was sufficient back in the day when we were kids, but children today are more curious and look for something more innovative, given the amount of information they consume online. If you ask me, the Botanical Garden in Yerevan is a magnificent place, and my 4-year-old son enjoys it; but when it is his choice, he favors a modern-looking playground.

Recently, I noticed a few modern playgrounds opening in Yerevan with a similar theme. I looked into it to find out who was behind them, which led me to meeting Varsine Harutyunyan, the PR and Communications Manager at the Keron Foundation.

A new generation of playgrounds

The clearest sign of that change is a project led by the Keron Development Foundation, in partnership with the Kentron Administrative District and other partners - ROQ Capital Investment Company and Paper company. Last

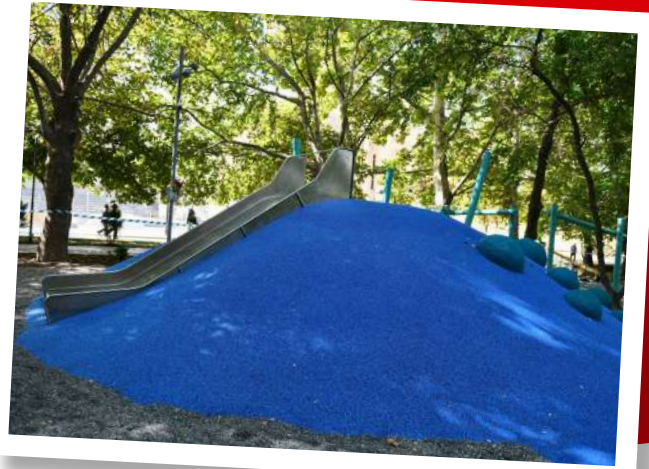
year, the two signed an agreement to build three new public playgrounds in central Yerevan; spaces built to international standards, designed entirely for public use, with no commercial corner tucked into them.

What's worth noticing is the thinking behind them. Each one was shaped around a theme drawn from Armenian life. Returning to my initial thought, I might have simply wanted trees and green grass, but kids today are looking for something else; therefore, the designers brought in parents and local residents through focus groups before a single structure went up. The result is play areas that feel like they belong to the place they sit in.



Karmrakhayt Playground

Secrets of the Hidden River. The first playground opened on September 21, 2025. Armenia's Independence Day, in the 6th section of the Circular Park, beside the Saint Gregory Lusavorich Cathedral. At 2,000 square meters, it's the largest of the three and is built for children from 0 to 12, whatever their physical abilities.



The theme is an imaginary water world of waves, fish, and islands. At its heart stands a giant Armenian river trout, the karmrakhayt, which, together with wave-shaped hanging nets, forms a 27-meter stretch where kids can climb, slide, and play side by side. There are climbing nets and tunnels for the adventurous, and sensory, natural-material play for the smallest. The build also took its environmental footprint seriously; over half the play structures are made of natural wood, and 40% of the materials are recycled, some of it collected from the oceans.

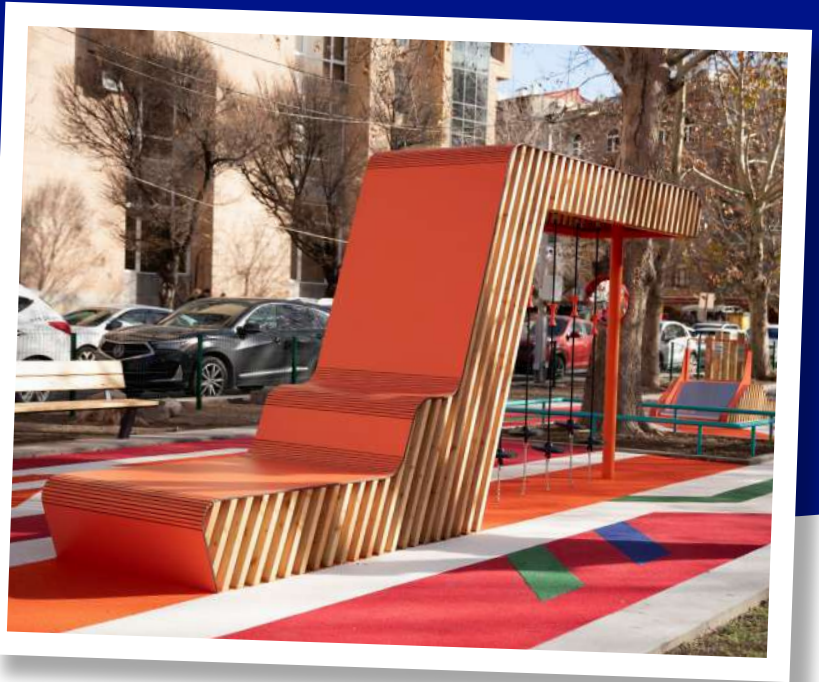
If you left Armenia back in the '90s, this might sound like a completely different country. But trust me, times have changed in Armenia and Yerevan, and initiatives like this are popping up everywhere. Stick around as I introduce you to the other two playgrounds!



Vishapagorg Playground

Memory of the Tree of Life. The second opened on December 14, 2025, in Khachkar Park, near Republic Square. It's smaller at 800 square meters and designed for younger children, ages 0 to 7. Its inspiration is the traditional Armenian carpet: the geometric patterns and colors you'd find woven into a rug here become play mounds, tunnels, and slides.

It's a lovely idea; children climbing through the same symbols their great-grandmothers once wove, without anyone needing to explain it to them. The space was created with the support of partner Armbrok Investment Company, on land that had previously been used for parking and was returned to the park.



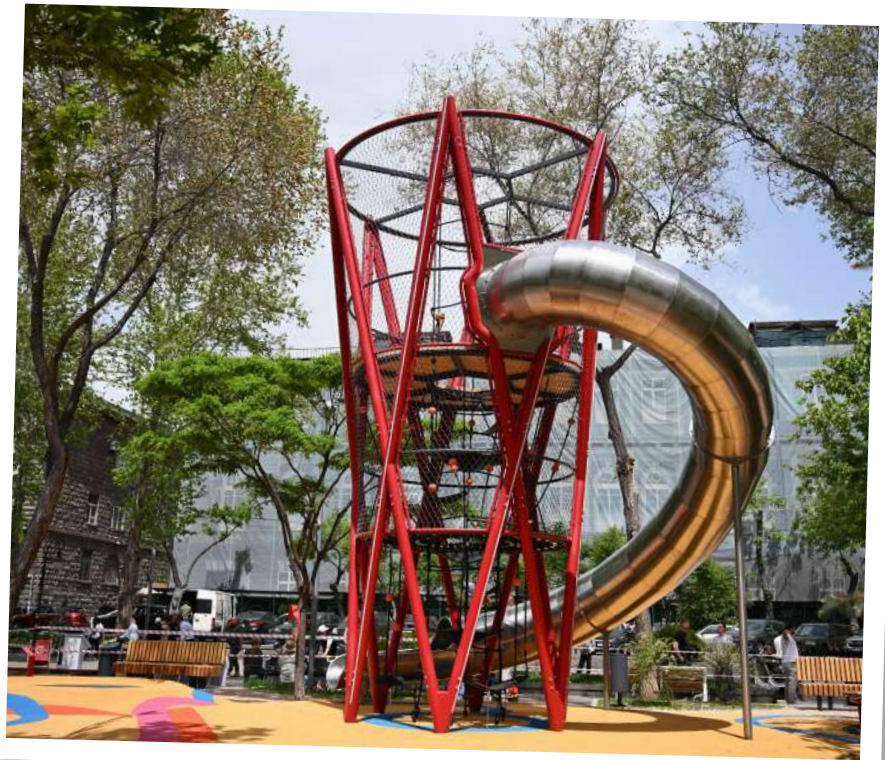
There's a thread running through both, and it's the part that matters most for families weighing a move here. The city isn't just adding swings. It's deciding that public space for children is worth building well; inclusive, free, and safe enough that you can sit on a bench and actually relax while your child disappears into a tunnel.





Armenian Inventors Playground

Located on Missak Manouchian Park, this is probably Yerevan's first vertical playground that invites children to climb three different height levels, culminating in the city's tallest slide at 7 meters. It's intended for children aged 7-12 and provides a multifunctional and physically engaging experience. The playground covers an area of approximately 700 square meters and stands out with its thematic design.





It is inspired by Armenian scientific thought and is created to allow children to explore the world of science through play. The centerpiece of the space is a 6-meter-high tower, around which the entire scenario is built, featuring interactive elements that introduce key concepts in physics, astronomy, and engineering. The playground consists of several thematic zones. The main tower area incorporates climbing nets, slides, and scientific panels, symbolizing discovery and innovation.

There is also a separate zone with a small interactive labyrinth to encourage exploration skills and logical thinking in children. The playground features inclusive elements, ensuring equal opportunities for all children.

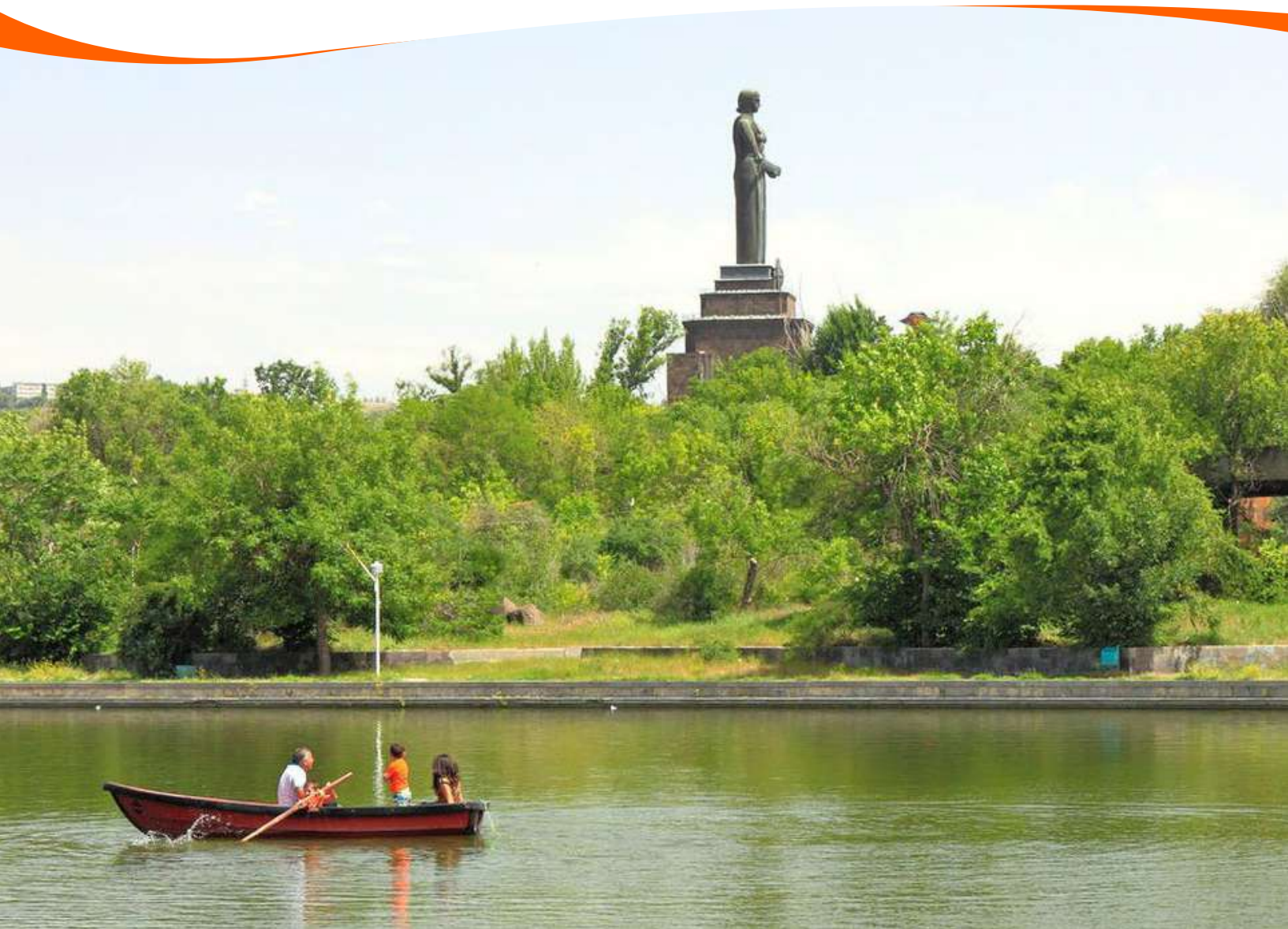
It combines play and education, supporting children's physical, social, and intellectual development, while also introducing them to the achievements of outstanding Armenian scientists.



The wider map for families

The new playgrounds are the headline, but they sit inside a city that already gives families a fair amount of room. A few places are worth knowing if you're settling in with kids, but keep in mind these are more "green open areas" than "modern playgrounds"

[Victory Park \(Haghtanak Park\)](#), on a hilltop in the Kanaker-Zeytun district, is the classic family afternoon out. It has an amusement area with a Ferris wheel and gentler rides for little ones, a small lake where you can take out a boat, cafés, and some of the best views of the city, with Mount Ararat behind it on a clear day. The towering Mother Armenia statue stands here too, so a trip doubles as a quiet history lesson.



Lovers' Park, on Marshal Baghramyan Avenue near the National Assembly, is calmer. Redesigned in the mid-2000s around the idea of an oriental garden, with streams, small waterfalls, and a lake, it's compact, beautifully kept, and built without steps, which makes it genuinely easy with a stroller.

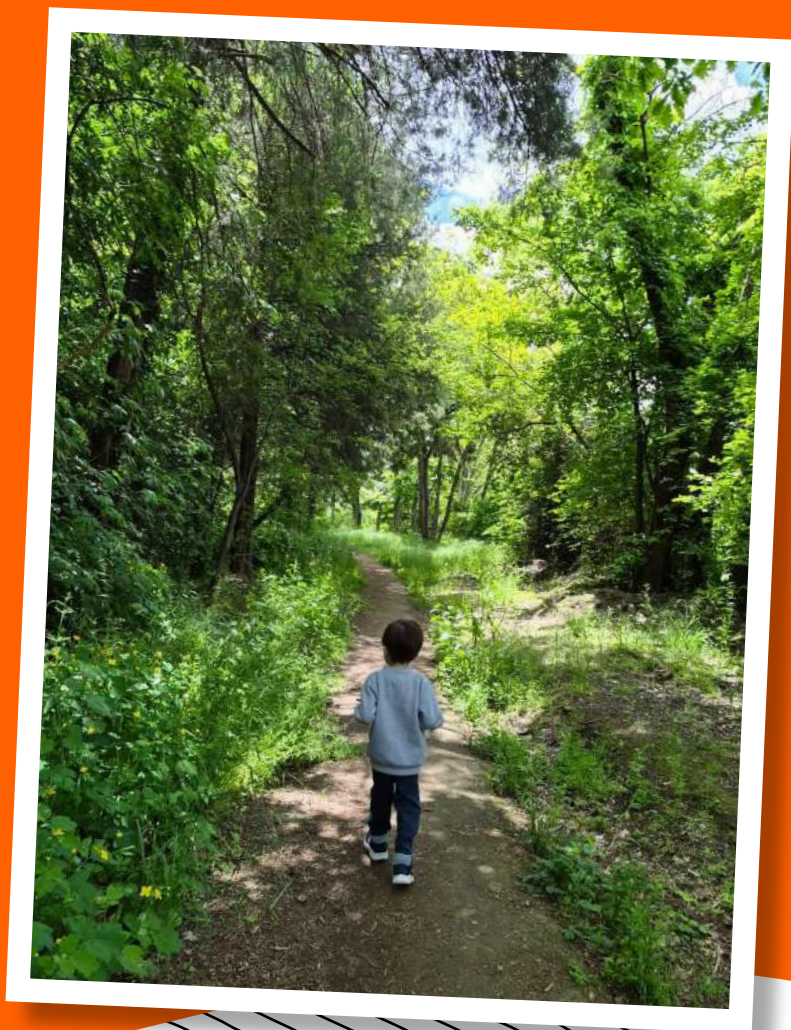


Children's Park (Kamaygi), near the City Hall between Zakyan and Beirut Streets, is one of the oldest, dating

back to the 1930s, and still keeps a handful of shaded paths for a slower kind of outing.



And then there's the **Yerevan Botanical Garden** in the Avan district, which I'd put near the top of any family list even though it rarely makes the tourist circuit. Founded in 1935 and run by the Armenian National Academy of Sciences, it spreads across roughly 80 hectares and holds a collection of more than 200 endemic, rare, and threatened plant species. For families it's something different from a playground: space to walk, room to be loud or quiet, and a gentle introduction to where the plants of this region actually come from. Go in spring or autumn, in the morning, and you'll have a lot of it to yourselves.



A city catching up to its own warmth

Yerevan was always a city that liked having children around. What's new is that it's starting to be built for them; deliberately, to a real

standard, and in public spaces that anyone can use for free. For a digital nomad family, that's a meaningful signal. Wifi and visas you can find in

a lot of places. A city that decides your kids deserve somewhere good to play is rarer, and it's worth paying attention to when one is being built in front of you.



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YEREVAN AND THE CASE FOR HYBRID SPACES

WHY COWORKING BELONGS WHERE PEOPLE ALREADY ARE



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

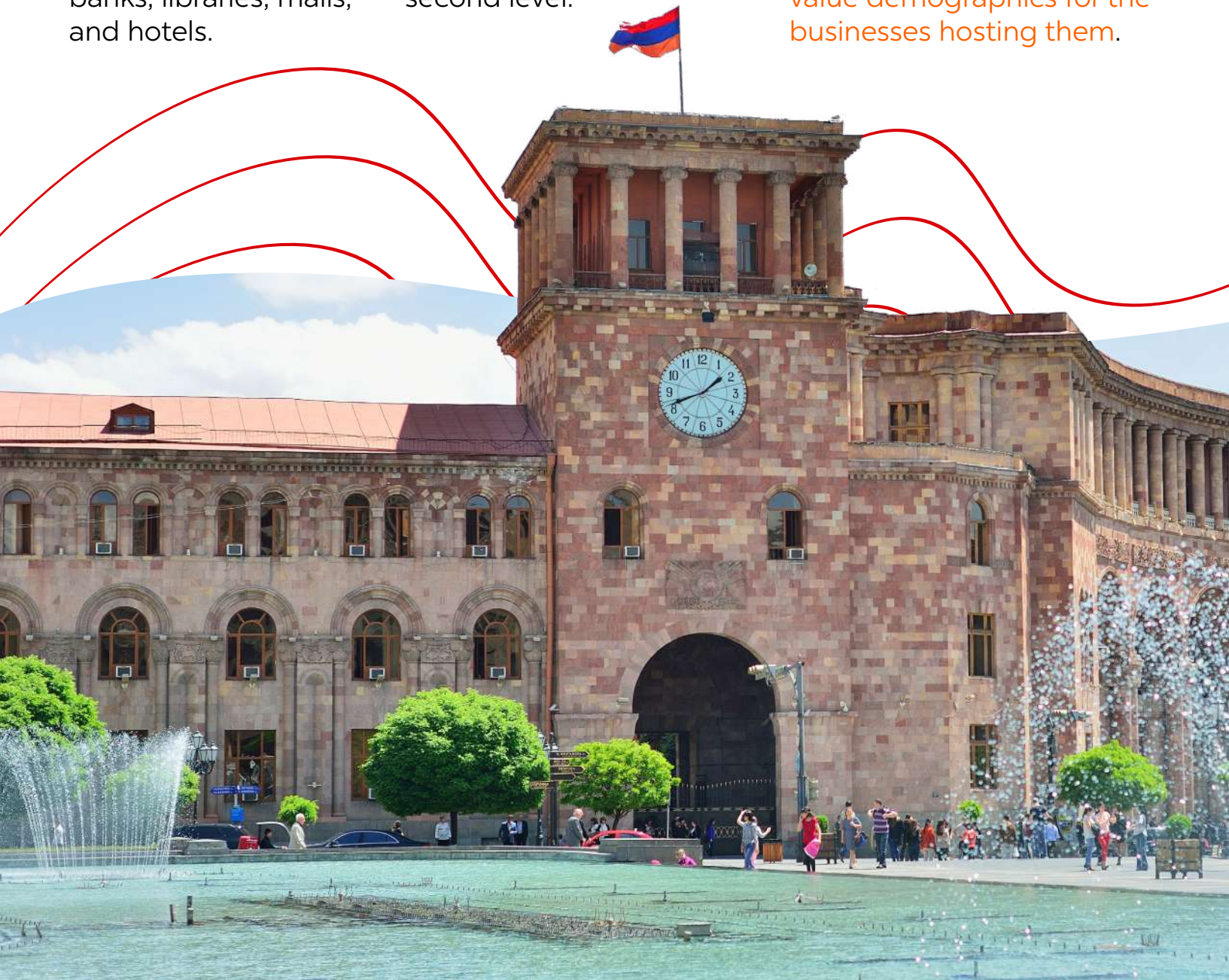


YEREVAN AND THE CASE FOR HYBRID SPACES WHY COWORKING BELONGS WHERE PEOPLE ALREADY ARE

Coworking is a volume business. If the space is full, it works; if not, rent becomes a liability. As a result, the global trend has been **shifting from standalone coworking offices to “tucked-in” spaces** located within banks, libraries, malls, and hotels.

Walk into a bookstore in Stockholm and you might find a working table, a power outlet, and three people on calls. Walk into a bank lobby in Singapore and you might find a coworking corner. Walk into a hotel in Lisbon and you might find a full coworking floor on the second level.

The future of coworking, in much of the world, is the space that already exists, opening a desk for the people who already pass through it. And guess what! There is a deeper layer here! Coworking spaces naturally attract remote workers and tech enthusiasts, both of whom represent **high-value demographics for the businesses hosting them.**



This global shift toward «utility-plus-work» is a strategic move for the host institution. By inviting the laptop-carrying crowd inside, **traditional businesses transform passive foot traffic into an active, loyal community.**

In Yerevan, we are beginning to see the first ripples of this wave, as local brands experiment with ways to blur the lines between their primary services and the needs of the modern professional.

Yerevan's First Ripples

Over the past couple of years, I've been eyeing **several businesses in the city attempting to adapt this same approach.** For example, ID Bank on North Avenue operated a coffee house called Espress it, which is basically a remote-work-friendly café.



Evocabank opened a small library with a built-in coworking space, making it accessible for free inside their Tumanyan Street branch. It's a new direction and a good start, though it isn't quite enough yet.

While these “tucked-in” corners in banks and cafes prove the concept works on a small scale, they are appetizers for a much more ambitious main course. To truly change Yerevan’s professional DNA,

the hybrid model needs to move beyond the lobby corner and into the very architecture of our business districts. Only then, the scale shifts from experimental to transformational.

Case Study: Dalan Technopark as a Micro-City

One of the projects I’m very optimistic about is Dalan Technopark because they’re taking this concept seriously. I’m bringing this up as a case study in this piece in the hope that it **becomes a model for other large-scale projects in Yerevan**, which have been growing in number recently.

For those who don’t know, Dalan Technopark is being built at 9/1 Tsitsernakaberd Street, about ten minutes from central Yerevan. It is the largest single technology and business complex ever attempted in Armenia. The complex is being **designed to international workplace standards**, LEED and BOMA Class A, which would make it the first multifunctional building in the region to comply with that combination of certifications.



Dalan Technopark is a business and commerce center on paper, but in reality, it functions as a self-contained micro-city.

As the founder puts it, “It’s the New Downtown of Yerevan.” By integrating a kindergarten, gym, pool, shopping area, soccer court, restaurants, and other amenities directly into the workspace, it blurs the line between professional and personal life. A tenant can transition from a morning meeting to a bank run, a workout, and an outdoor lunch, all without ever leaving the campus.

This is the hybrid model I was talking about earlier but taken to its logical conclusion. If a bank lobby with a coworking corner is a convenience, **a technopark with an entire lifestyle ecosystem is a philosophy.** It recognizes that the modern worker needs a lot more than just a desk; they need a life that doesn’t stop because they are at one.





The Ecosystem vs. The Desk

It is a real-world test of an idea that has been gaining ground globally that the productivity of a worker is not just about the desk they sit at, but **about the ecosystem around the desk**. A bank lobby with a coworking corner is good for the bank, it brings foot traffic and trust. A bookstore with working tables is good for the bookstore, it sells more coffee and more books.

The pattern keeps repeating. People work better in places that feel like part of a normal day, not isolated office boxes. Dalan Technopark flips the traditional model on its head. By centering essential amenities around the workspace, **it allows the office to coexist with your daily routine rather than being separate from it**. If the Dalan model spreads, if business centres in Yerevan and elsewhere stop seeing themselves as office buildings and **start seeing themselves as integrated environments**, a few things will change.

Tenants spend less time leaving the building for what they need. Building owners get more diversified revenue, less dependent on long office leases. Cities get denser, more walkable working districts instead of the deadened office blocks that empty out at six in the evening. And the line between “work” and “the rest of life” gets a little softer in the ways that matter and a little sharper in the ways that protect attention.

This is not a guarantee! Plenty of mixed-use buildings underperform. The hard part is the curation; what mix of tenants, **what kind of operations, what hours, what events.** Dalan Technopark will get this right or wrong over years, not months. But the ambition is correct. The case for hybrid spaces is not that they are trendy. It is that human beings are not modular. We do not switch cleanly between “office mode” and “life mode.” **We do better when the building lets the two coexist.**

Not every coworker wants this. Some people want the focus of a single-use building, the absence of a hotel lobby, the lack of a swimming pool downstairs. Some want a small space with twenty regulars they know by name, not a complex with three thousand workplaces. **Hybrid is not better. Hybrid is just different.** What Dalan Technopark represents is the option that has been missing from the Yerevan map, the very-large, very-integrated, multi-purpose business environment of the kind that exists in Tokyo, Dubai, and London but has not yet existed here.





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ARMENIA JUST BUILT A TRAIL THE LENGTH
OF THE COUNTRY

AND IT'S THE PERFECT FIT FOR INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL NOMADS



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF

ARMENIA JUST BUILT A TRAIL THE LENGTH OF THE COUNTRY AND IT'S THE PERFECT FIT FOR INTERNATIONAL DIGITAL NOMADS

For most of us, “work” fits inside a backpack. A laptop, a charger, a pair of headphones, a reliable signal; that’s the whole office. We’ve gotten very good at carrying our lives on our backs and setting them down somewhere new every few weeks until we find our home away from home (I became an ex-digital nomad back in 2018 when I arrived in Armenia)

So here’s a thought worth sitting with. Armenia has just opened a hiking trail that asks you to carry almost exactly that, a backpack, and **walk the entire length of the country with it**. Just you, your pack, and a route that hands you off from one village to the next, all the way from the northern border to the southern one.

It’s called the Armenian National Trail, and although I’m quite sure it was not intended for digital nomads, **it might be the most nomad-shaped thing the country has ever made**.



What it actually is

[HIKEArmenia](#) has unveiled a nearly 1,000-kilometer hiking route that runs north to south across the whole of Armenia. It begins in Akhtala in Lori Province, threads through Tavush, Gegharkunik, and Vayots Dzor, and finishes in Meghri, down in Syunik near the Iranian border. **Along the way it passes through 109 towns and villages** spread across those five regions, and through nearly every landscape the country has to offer.

The whole trail is expected to be finished by the end of 2030. But you don't have to wait until then. **As of this month, the first sections, in Lori and Tavush, are already live**, and there's a brand-new website to plan them on: armeniannationaltrail.org, in both English and Armenian, with maps, downloadable navigation data, route details, and trail-condition updates.

The project was developed by HIKEArmenia, the nonprofit that's been building and promoting hiking here since 2015, and funded by the H. Hovnanian Family Foundation. It's also backed by memorandums of understanding with Armenia's Tourism Committee and the Ministry of Environment.



Here's a detail you might have missed above but as a digital nomad you shouldn't, **the trail is designed village-to-village.** That's not a small thing. It means you don't carry a tent, a stove, or three days of food. You walk, you arrive in a community, you sleep in a local guesthouse, you eat what's cooked there, and the next morning you walk again. As HIKEArmenia's Executive Director Shahane Halajyan puts it, **hikers can cross the country "carrying only a backpack with daily basics."**



Hosts Arman and Aramays at Okon, Tavush, mushroom with homemade sour-cream in their hands

Read that again and notice how familiar it sounds. Light pack. Move every day or two. Belong briefly to each place, then move on. **Keep in mind that 5G covers almost the entire country** and we've previously tested the signal across the regions and reported it for our readers; therefore, you can enjoy the trail and work remotely. You can walk a single afternoon section, stay the night, and **decide in the morning whether you feel like more.**



You don't need the full thing to begin. The Lori and Tavush sections are open today, and Lori, where Akhtala and the trail's northern start sit, is an easy reach from Yerevan for a first taste. And by the way, last month, our remote work community in Yerevan took a full day hiking trip in Dilijan of the Tavush region and **they loved every single moment of it.**

Have you walked any of the early sections, or are you planning to? Write to us; we'd love to run a few reader stories from the trail in a future issue.



FINDING ARMENIA AGAIN

MY SIX MONTHS WITH ARMENIAN VOLUNTEER CORPS



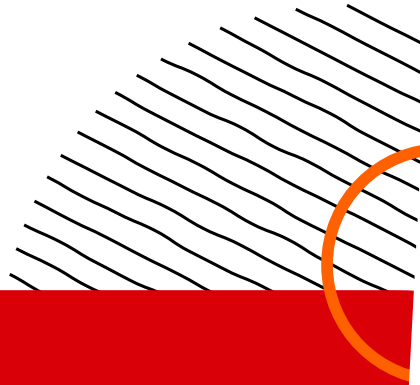
**DAYK
BALYOZYAN**

CONSULTANT AT HVS LONDON

There is a moment, somewhere between a late-night client call and the fluorescent hum of a London office, when you realise that you have misplaced something important. *For me, that something was Armenia.*

I had been living in London for eight years. Good years, professionally speaking; a career in hotel consulting, investment and asset management that had taken me across Europe and beyond. But somewhere along the way, the language I had grown up hearing at home had retreated to the back of my mind, and the sense of belonging had quietly slipped away. I was Armenian in name, on paper, in the occasional conversation with relatives. *But I had stopped feeling it.*

So in the spring of 2023, at the age of 35, I applied to the [Armenian Volunteer Corps](#).



Why Gyumri

[Birthright Armenia](#), the programme that brings diaspora Armenians back to reconnect with their roots, had always been on my radar, but at 35, I had aged out of the standard programme. AVC, its sister organisation, welcomed volunteers of all ages. I signed up for three months. I stayed for six.

I chose Gyumri over Yerevan deliberately. Everyone goes to Yerevan. I wanted something more local, more authentic. Gyumri, Armenia's second city, had always been a blank page for me; I heard its name, but never went. That felt right.

What I found was a city of extraordinary character. Compact and walkable, its streets lined with the black and red tuff stone that gives it a colour unlike anywhere else in the world, Gyumri carries its history, earthquake, Soviet collapse, rebirth, with a quiet, sardonic dignity. **The locals have a reputation in Armenia for sharp wit and dark humour**, earned by decades of hardship. They also have a generosity that took me by surprise every single day.



The volunteer group in Gyumri is smaller and closer-knit than in the capital. We all lived within walking distance of

each other, gathered for music quizzes or Ponchik Monchiks, and looked out for one another in the way that only people

living slightly outside their comfort zone can. It was, from the first week, exactly what I had been looking for.

The Work

My placement was in Gyumri's hospitality sector. I helped open a rooftop café. I taught English to local university students. And perhaps most unexpectedly, I developed a course in hospitality management at a newly opened academy, drawing on my past work experience in ways I had never imagined. Every Friday was community service: cleaning up forests or repainting classrooms in rural schools. I also took Armenian language classes, four hours a week, relearning the Eastern Armenian, having grown up with the Western dialect.





And then there were the things I had never expected to find time for. A stone carving workshop with the remarkable Narine Poladian, where over several weeks I carved four small khachkars ,cross-stones, by hand. Armenian folk dance classes that left my legs aching and my heart oddly full. Cooking lessons. History lectures. [A hike to the summit of Mount Aragats, close to 4,000 metres, where Armenia seemed to stretch out below us in the summer light.](#)

A Family and a Wedding

I spent my first two months with a host family. They fed me too much, worried about me constantly, and [slowly became people I could not imagine having never known.](#) They came to my wedding. That sentence still makes me smile.

I met my wife in Gyumri. She was the programme manager of the Birthright office, organised, warm, and quietly formidable. Getting to know each other required some creativity.



Gyumri is a small city. Between fellow volunteers and relatives around every corner, a simple coffee together risked becoming the talk of the week. So we hiked instead, a lot. **The trails**

outside Gyumri gave us space to talk properly, away from curious eyes. It worked. We got married in October 2025. Some things are worth the six-month detour.

September 2023

In August, I played basketball with fellow volunteers at the Pan-Armenian Games, a week of sport and diaspora reunion that brought thousands of Armenians from around the world to Yerevan.

In September, the world changed. The fall of Nagorno-Karabakh and the displacement of its Armenian population landed on Gyumri and Yerevan like a wave. Through World Central Kitchen, our volunteer group helped prepare and distribute food boxes for Artsakh refugees, trying to be useful in the face of something that felt too large to absorb.

There is something clarifying about being present for a community in a moment of real pain. It reminded me, sharply and permanently, why I had come.



What I Found

I came to Armenia looking for something I had lost. **I left with more than I had arrived with:** a language reawakened, a craft learned, a country known rather than claimed, friendships that will last a lifetime, a wife, and **a second family who will text me on my birthday in Armenian every year for the rest of my life.**

If you are diaspora Armenian, reading this from a city far from Yerevan, and you have been telling yourself for years that you will go back one day, I would simply say: go. Not on holiday. Go and stay. Work. Learn the language badly, then less badly. Eat too much manti. Hike Mount Aragats, hike something that scares you. Let people be kind to you.

You will not regret a single day of it.



TECH EVENTS



with

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TECH BLOGGER

JULY 2

“How modern AI agents and Salesforce transform customer experience” workshop



JULY 9

Demo day of Plug and Play acceleration program



JULY 13

PostgreSQL and future



**JULY
17-19**

E-logifest



**JULY
24-25**

PyData Conference



**JULY 26
AUG 1**

Sevan Startup and AgriTech Summit



Press Release



Germany takes centre stage in power-packed conference agenda at GITEX AI EUROPE 2026

Federal minister, DeepL and OpenAI leadership, and Germany's quantum frontrunners spearhead multinational speaker programme at Messe Berlin

BERLIN, Germany, 23 June 2026: Germany is spearheading a power-packed speaker delegation at **GITEX AI EUROPE 2026**, as government, big tech and scale-up leaders, quantum frontrunners and investors take centre-stage when Europe's most global tech and startup event opens next week in Berlin.

German leaders comprise 60 percent of the event's 150-plus expert speakers, drawn from a line-up spanning 33 countries across Europe, North America, Asia and Africa. That's in addition to a powerhouse exhibition, featuring 950-plus enterprises and startups and 600-plus investors from more than 80 nations to accelerate investment across a European tech market forecast to surpass [€1.5 trillion in 2026](#)

GITEX AI EUROPE takes place from 30 June-1 July 2026, with the conference programme running across three stages and five themes: DeepTech & Critical Supply Chains, on securing Europe's industrial backbone; Compute & AI Stack, on the route from foundation models to enterprise deployment; Secure Infra & Cyber Power, on AI-era defence and quantum resilience; Capital & Scale-Up Engine, on

Europe's new funding playbook; and Policy to Production, on turning EU AI Act regulation into competitive advantage.

Thirteen German speakers anchor the headline sessions, mapping onto the five-theme structure: from policy and infrastructure questions opening the show, through enterprise deployment and quantum resilience, to the capital deciding what gets built next.

DeepTech & Critical Supply Chains and Policy to Production

Dr. Karsten Wildberger, Federal Minister for Digital Transformation and Government Modernisation, opens with a Main Stage fireside, 'The Gigawatt Guarantee: Engineering Europe's Industrial AI Supremacy,' at 11.00-11.30am, on the industrial capacity question underpinning the DeepTech & Critical Supply Chains theme. Klaus Müller, President of the Bundesnetzagentur and leading German implementation of the EU AI Act, follows with a 10.00-10.30am Intelligence Stage panel on 1 July, 'Who Controls Computing When AI Outgrows Europe's Grids and Networks?' with a direct read on the Policy to Production theme.

Enterprise and AI leadership: Compute & AI Stack

Prof. Dr. Robert Mayr, CEO and Chairman of the Board at DATEV

eG, speaks on the Main Stage on 30 June from 12:30-12:50pm in 'Transformation in Practice: How Technology Creates Real Value Through Application,' arguing AI can sharpen efficiency and decision-making for SMEs under cost and structural pressure, provided regulation doesn't choke off innovation.

Mayr said: "Europe has excellent prerequisites, with highly qualified professionals and a large common economic area. The crucial point is that we don't stifle innovation in Europe through overregulation."

Dr. Jarek Kutylowski, CEO of DeepL, used by more than 200,000 clients, and one of Europe's biggest AI unicorns, follows with a Main Stage fireside, 'Europe's AI Advantage: Building Intelligence Infrastructure That Competes Globally,' at 1.10-1.30pm on 30 June.

Niklas Harzheim, GTM lead for OpenAI in the DACH region, Tomáš Vocetka, CTO of travel platform Omio, and Daniel Khachab, Co-founder and CEO of Choco then sit on a 3.20-4.00pm panel the same day, 'Language Models as Europe's New Economic Infrastructure,' on how foundation models move from pilot to enterprise-wide deployment, delving into Compute & AI Stack theme's central question.

Harzheim said: "Working with digital-native companies in Germany and across Europe, I am thrilled to see AI moving from experimentation into the core of how businesses build products, serve customers and operate. The opportunity now is to turn those strengths into deployment at scale, and pilot projects into real business impact."

Vocetka, addressing Europe's regulatory and operational fragmentation, said: "Europe has a long history of building businesses in complex environments... AI is well suited to those environments. In its own way, Europe's fragmentation is now its competitive advantage in the AI era."

Rickard Damm, SVP, Consumer AI – Product Marketing at Deutsche Telekom, joins a 2.30–3.00pm Main Stage panel on 30 June, 'AI at the Network Layer,' exploring how Europe's leading network operators are embedding AI at infrastructure level.

**Quantum and cybersecurity:
Secure Infra & Cyber Power**

Three German quantum leaders converge on sovereign infrastructure, the throughline of the Secure Infra & Cyber Power theme. Dr. Markus Pflitsch, CEO of the \$3.25 billion Nasdaq-bound Terra Quantum, and a former CERN physicist, opens with a 10.20–10.40am fireside on day two (1 July), 'Which Quantum Infrastructure Should Europe Truly Own.' Dr. Katrin Kobe, CEO of Bosch Quantum Sensing, developing Europe's flagship diamond-based quantum sensor platform, and Dr. Alexander Glätzle, CEO of planq, a Max Planck Institute spinout building Germany's first commercial neutral-atom quantum computers, then join a 2.25–3.05pm panel on 1 July, 'Quantum Is the Bet European Leaders Should Not Delay,' arguing quantum-resilient infrastructure can't wait for the technology to mature.

Capital: Capital & Scale-Up Engine

Stefan B. Wintels, CEO of KfW, Germany's largest development bank, managing a €1 billion growth fund, opens this theme with an 11.20–11.40am fireside on 1 July, 'Germany's Capital Engine as a

World Example,' positioning German state-backed financing as a template for the continent. Florian Heinemann of Project A, Europe's largest operational VC with €1.2 billion AUM and 130+ portfolio companies, follows with a 3.35–4.10pm panel the same day, 'Can Europe Lead in Deeptech Research and Still Win at Series B?', confronting the growth-stage funding gap the Capital & Scale-Up Engine theme is built to address.

Together, the thirteen sessions trace a single arc: from the regulatory and infrastructure foundations of European AI, through enterprise deployment, to the capital deciding what gets built next.

GITEX AI EUROPE is organised by inD, the joint venture between Dubai World Trade Centre and Informa, and the global organiser of GITEX, the world's largest tech and AI event network. The annual two-day event is supported by the Berlin Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises and Berlin Partner for Business and Technology.

More information is available at www.gitexeurope.com





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