

LIFE IN ARMENIA

FOR DIGITAL NOMAD FAMILIES

OCT. 1ST 2025 | NO. 31 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

FINDING JOY IN ALAVERDI

THE PERFECT DIGITAL NOMAD PIT STOP BETWEEN GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

FROM SNOW TO SUNLIGHT

MY JOURNEY AS A DIGITAL NOMAD LAWYER BACK TO ARMENIA

CASE STUDY

THE RISE OF THE '5G VILLAGES' IN RURAL ARMENIA

THE ANATOMY OF BUSINESS HUBS

BUILDING BUSINESS DISTRICTS AND CLASS A INFRASTRUCTURE IN ARMENIA

A SWISS PERSPECTIVE ON ARMENIA

A GATEWAY FOR DIGITAL NOMADS, ENTREPRENEURS, AND GLOBAL CITIZENS

ARMENIA'S CROSSROADS

HOW GLOBAL LOGISTICS EXPERTS SEE THE COUNTRY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE

NO PASSPORT NEEDED

HOW TO BECOME 75% ARMENIAN OVER TIME?

FROM MOLDOVA TO LAKE SEVAN

THE STORY OF GEMSAROUND AT THE SEASIDE STARTUP SUMMIT



MATHEW ZEIN

EDITOR'S LETTER

There are 40 million digital nomads worldwide, yet probably only a few of them know about Armenia. Every time I meet a new nomad abroad and share that I'm living in Armenia, I get tens of questions about this country. It's simply because no platform or publication has ever featured Armenia as a remote work destination before.

But the tide is turning. A few weeks ago, The Nomad Magazine, the world's first printed magazine for remote workers and digital nomads, which is distributed to thousands worldwide, visited Armenia and agreed to feature the country in a full article.

I can't describe how happy I feel to see international media outlets featuring Armenia as a remote work and digital nomad destination. It took me three years and almost 400 published articles to spark this interest, but it's finally happening, and this is just the beginning. The best is yet to come!

Mathew Zein



CONTENTS

OCT, 1ST 2025 | NO. 31 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

FINDING JOY IN ALAVERDI THE PERFECT DIGITAL NOMAD PIT STOP BETWEEN GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

Need a break from the big city but still need reliable Wi-Fi? Discover Alaverdi, the unexpected digital nomad retreat between Yerevan and Tbilisi, offering a perfect work rhythm, strong 5G, and immersion in the stunning medieval history of UNESCO sites.

FROM SNOW TO SUNLIGHT MY JOURNEY AS A DIGITAL NOMAD LAWYER BACK TO ARMENIA

This lawyer traded a Canadian corporate skyscraper for the freedom of a digital nomad life in Yerevan. Discover the turning point, the question that led him to design a fully remote law practice. Read how he prioritized family, health, and his homeland over billable hours, proving that true wealth is freedom with enough money.

CASE STUDY THE RISE OF THE '5G VILLAGES' IN RURAL ARMENIA

How can rural Armenia become a magnet for remote workers? Telecom provider Ucom deployed 5G in the regions before the capital. Learn from global examples like Bansko, Bulgaria, and Järva, Estonia, on how world-class connectivity is decentralizing Armenia and reviving local economies.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT THE RISE OF FOREIGNER-LED COMMUNITIES IN ARMENIA

Armenia is transforming from a perceived monocultural society into a vibrant, cosmopolitan hub for remote workers and entrepreneurs. Discover the rise of foreigner-led communities that are blending with locals and building vital support systems and actively driving change.

THE ANATOMY OF BUSINESS HUBS BUILDING BUSINESS DISTRICTS AND CLASS A INFRASTRUCTURE IN ARMENIA

What transforms a single building into a business district? Discover how a major new project is laying the groundwork for Armenia's first international-standard business district. Learn why Class A, BOMA, and LEED compliance are important for attracting global tenants and transforming Armenia into a regional business engine.

P 10

P 18

P 26

P 33

P 37



CONTENTS

OCT, 1ST 2025 | NO. 31 | LIFE IN ARMENIA

A SWISS PERSPECTIVE ON ARMENIA A GATEWAY FOR DIGITAL NOMADS, ENTREPRENEURS, AND GLOBAL CITIZENS

Armenia is emerging as a hub for digital nomads and global entrepreneurs. Discover the fast track to launching a business; zero minimum capital, no office requirement, and registration in just one day. Read about the appeal of low taxes and flexible residency options that make this crossroads nation a compelling choice from a Swiss perspective.

ARMENIA'S CROSSROADS HOW GLOBAL LOGISTICS EXPERTS SEE THE COUNTRY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE

How can a geographically constrained country beat the odds? This article reveals how the German GLZ is leading a drive to digitalize and reform trade routes through the EasTnT Project. Discover the core policy challenges, from closed borders to limited digitization, and how mutual recognition of trusted traders (AEO) could unlock regional growth.

NO PASSPORT NEEDED HOW TO BECOME 75% ARMENIAN OVER TIME?

Forget the travel documents, your true bond with Armenia flows from its famously safe, delicious, and icy-cold tap water. Learn why this water, naturally filtered through ancient volcanic rock, carries a unique mineral signature. Read how time and a glass of pristine mountain water are all you need to become a living, walking synthesis of Armenian soil.

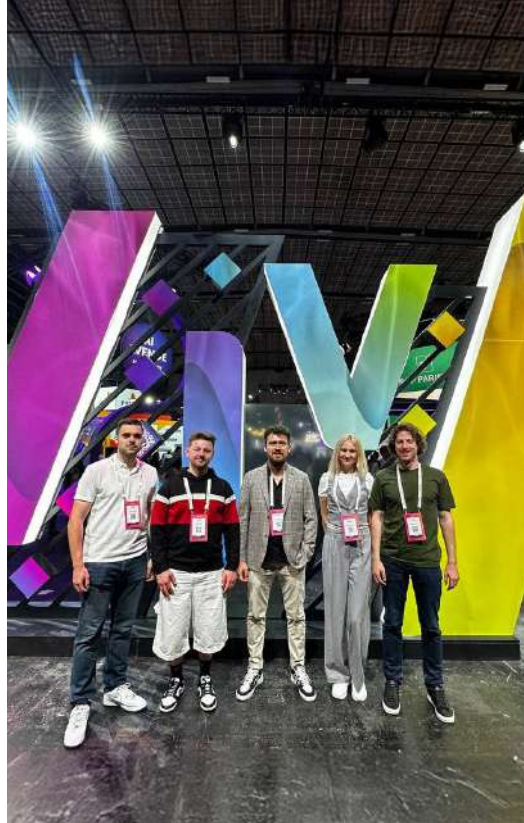
FROM MOLDOVA TO LAKE SEVAN THE STORY OF GEMSAROUND AT THE SEASIDE STARTUP SUMMIT

Leaving the office for a shared tent by Lake Sevan, this Moldovan founder had doubts about the Seaside Startup Summit. Read how trading comfort for camping transformed their startup's vision. Learn what it takes to survive the tough questions, shrink a pitch by 70%, and why this experience taught them the crucial lesson of dreaming bigger.

AND THEN, THERE IS ARMENIA WHAT'S REALLY IN THE BOTTLE?

When you buy Armenian wine, you choose the producer, not the region. While names like Zorah and Van Ardi promise quality, the label doesn't reveal the terroir. Discover why establishing a system of appellations, rules tying wine to its unique place, is essential for protecting Armenia's ancient grapes and guiding the curious consumer.

P 46



P 51



P 59

P 66



P 72

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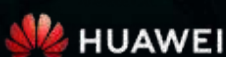
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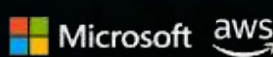
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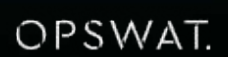
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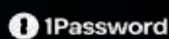
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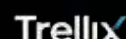
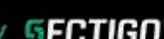
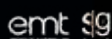
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FINDING JOY IN ALAVERDI

THE PERFECT DIGITAL NOMAD PIT STOP BETWEEN GEORGIA AND ARMENIA



**MATHEW
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EDITOR IN CHIEF



FINDING YOUR FLOW IN ALAVERDI THE PERFECT DIGITAL NOMAD PIT STOP BETWEEN GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

Somewhere along that route between Tbilisi and Yerevan, tucked into the Debed River gorge where Armenia's Lori Province meets the Georgian border, sits Alaverdi. It's often said that **the best discoveries happen between destinations**, and this city is one of them.

A former copper mining town that accidentally became a compelling place to pause, do some remote work, and reset. I say "accidentally" because **Alaverdi isn't trying to be anything it's not**; there are no coworking spaces with clever names or flat whites served in exposed brick cafes.

For working remotely, the rhythm is right. Mornings are quiet. The Internet is reliable enough in guesthouses and small hotels and **the 5G signal is strong**. The town has a functional simplicity that eliminates decision fatigue; you're not going to spend an hour scrolling through restaurant options because there aren't that many. You work, you eat, you explore, and then you realize you've accomplished more than you did in a month of supposed productivity in other destinations.

The practical case for Alaverdi is simple. It sits almost exactly halfway

between Yerevan and Tbilisi, about two hours from either capital. If you're doing the border run that many digital nomads in the South Caucasus know well, ninety days in Georgia, then over to Armenia, then back again, **Alaverdi is the natural place to break up the drive**.

The Debed River cuts through dramatic terrain, with monastery complexes perched on cliffsides and mountains rising on all sides. It's the kind of place where **industrial history and medieval spirituality exist in the same frame**, which somehow makes sense when you're here.



The Monastery Circuit

The real magic of spending a few days in Alaverdi is access to what might be the **highest concentration of medieval Armenian architecture anywhere**. Within a 30-kilometer radius, you can visit some of Armenia's most significant monastic complexes, each with its own character and none overrun with tour buses.



Sanahin Monastery

Start with Sanahin and Haghpat, the twin monastery complexes that face each other across the Debed gorge. **Both are UNESCO World Heritage sites**. Sanahin, built starting in the 930s during the reign of King Ashot III Bagratuni, was one of medieval Armenia's most important educational centers. The complex includes a library and scriptorium where manuscripts were copied; basically, it was doing important knowledge work centuries before anyone invented the term "digital nomad."

There's a folk etymology that claims "Sanahin" means "this one is older than that one," supposedly a reference to one-upmanship with nearby Haghpat. Whether or not that's true, Haghpat more than holds its own. Founded in 976 AD, it sits on a high plateau with mountains on two sides and gorges on the others. The main church, Surb Nshan (Holy Sign), anchors a complex that became a major center for manuscript writing and miniature painting.



Haghpat Monastery

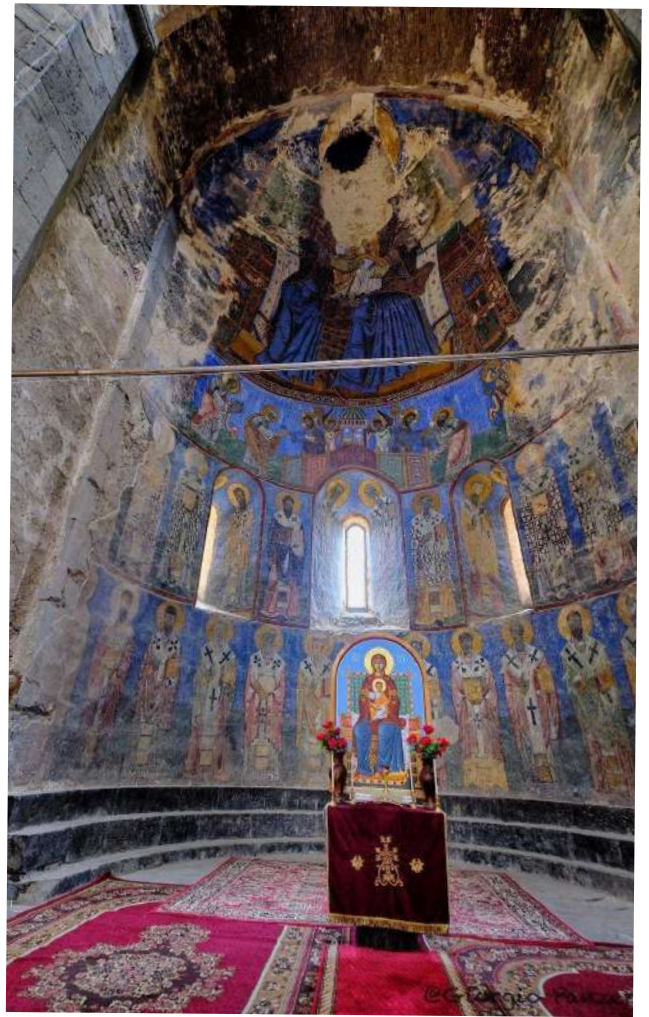
The beauty of staying in Alaverdi is that you can visit these monasteries at different times of day, **catching different light**. Early morning at Haghpat, when mist still hangs in the gorge, feels completely different from late afternoon when the stone glows amber in the sun.

Beyond the Famous Two

Once you've seen Sanahin and Haghpat, you realize you're just getting started. Akhtala Monastery, built from distinctive bluish basalt in the 10th century, **combines Armenian, Georgian, and Byzantine architectural elements**. It served as both a religious and cultural center under the Zakarian family in the 13th century. The frescoes here are remarkable; some of the best-preserved examples of medieval Armenian ecclesiastical art.

Then there's Kobayr, perched on a steep hillside overlooking the Debed River gorge. Founded in 1171, it later came under Armenian-Georgian patronage, which explains why some inscriptions and frescoes are in Georgian. The Byzantine-style frescoes are **among the finest surviving examples in Armenia**, and the location itself is worth the visit.

Akhtala Monastery



Akhtala Monastery

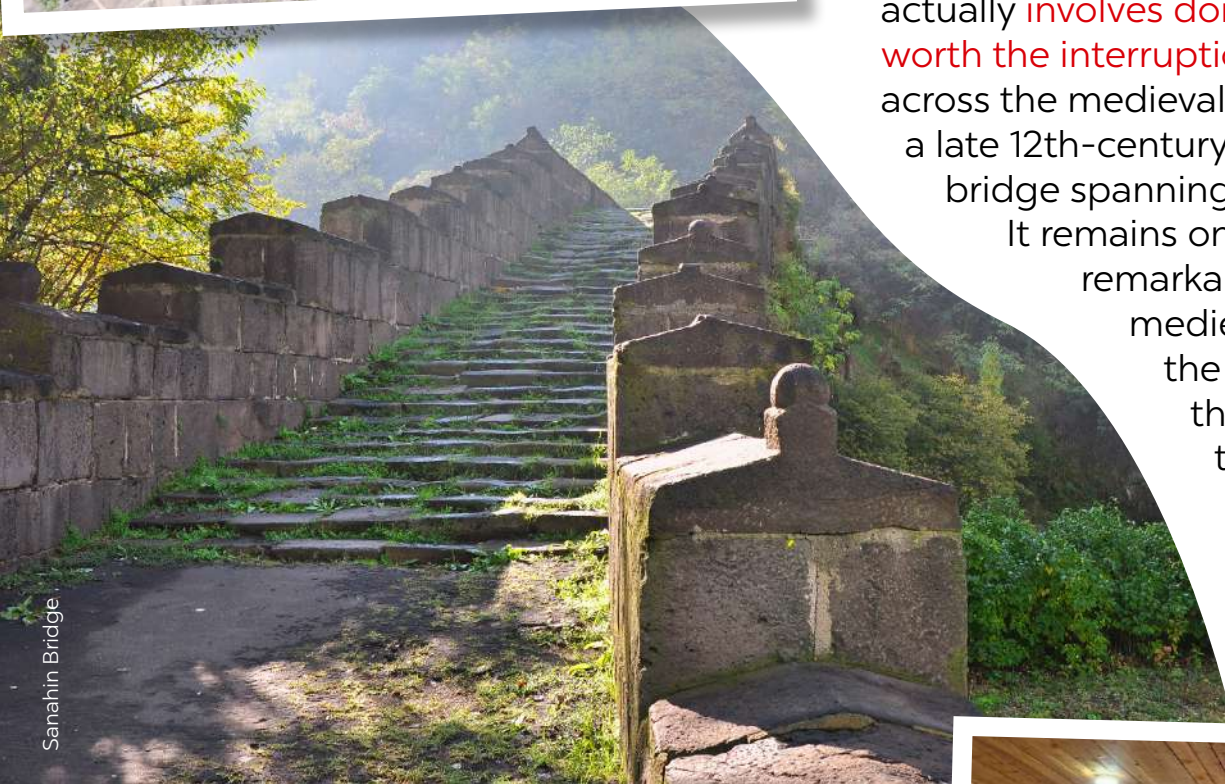


For something more off beaten path, Horomayr Monastery offers one of the most striking examples of cliffside monasticism you'll find anywhere. The complex has two main sections: a lower part partially carved into the cliffside with rock-cut chapels and khachkars, and an upper section with small churches overlooking the valley. The 12th-13th century complex, supported by the Zakarian family, required serious commitment to build and maintain. Standing there, you're confronted with the question of **what drives people to create beauty and meaning in the most improbable places.**



Working Breaks That Actually Refresh

The thing about being in Alaverdi is that taking a break from your screen actually **involves doing something worth the interruption.** You can walk across the medieval Sanahin Bridge, a late 12th-century stone arch bridge spanning the Debed River. It remains one of the most remarkable bridges from medieval Armenia. It's the kind of structure that makes you think about engineering and what we build to last.



Or you might drive to Dsegh village to visit the Hovhannes Tumanyan House-Museum. Tumanyan, one of Armenia's most beloved poets and writers, was born there in 1869. The museum preserves his personal belongings, manuscripts, and the original furnishings of a 19th-century Armenian village house.

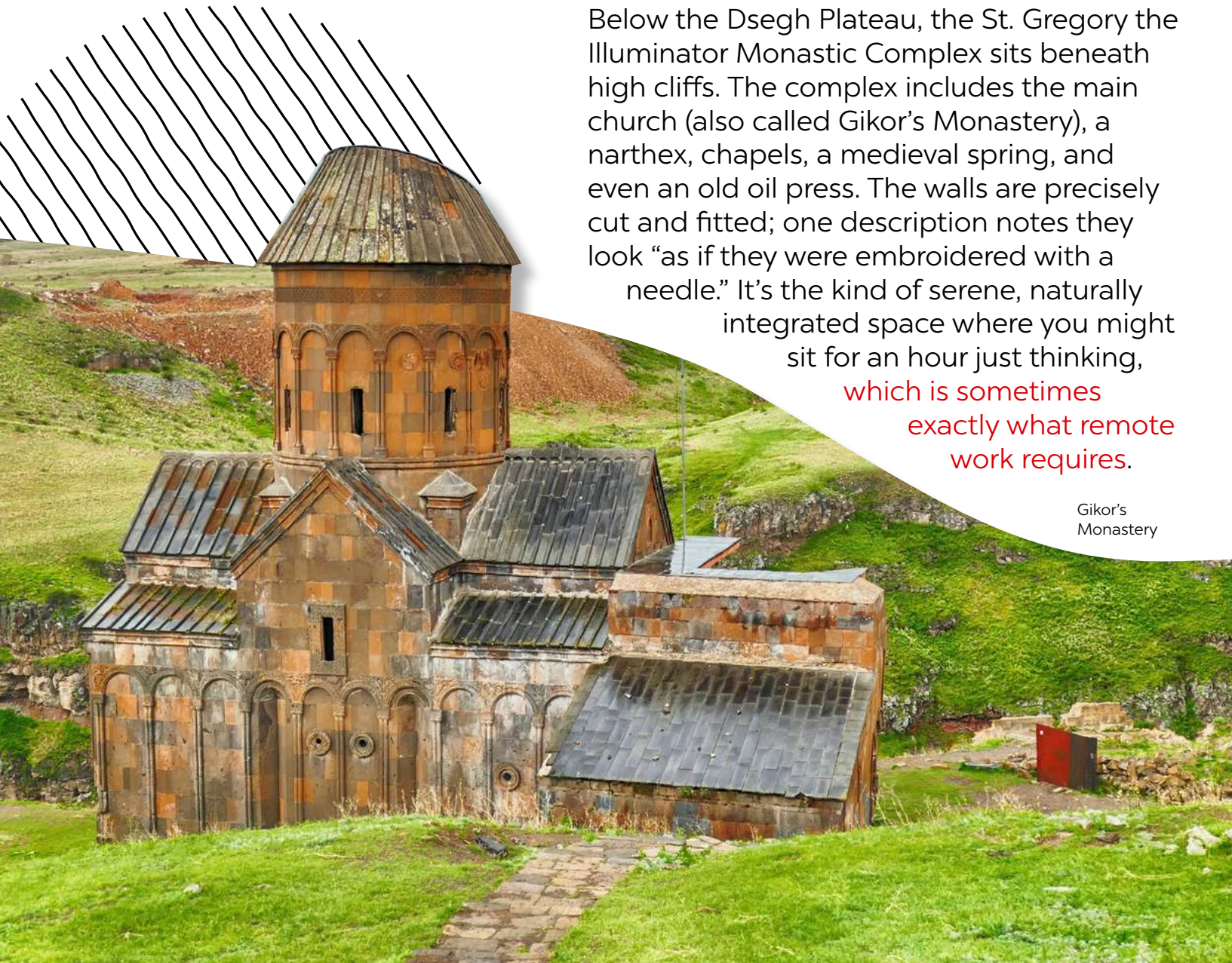


Hovhannes Tumanyan
House-Museum



Below the Dsegh Plateau, the St. Gregory the Illuminator Monastic Complex sits beneath high cliffs. The complex includes the main church (also called Gikor's Monastery), a narthex, chapels, a medieval spring, and even an old oil press. The walls are precisely cut and fitted; one description notes they look "as if they were embroidered with a needle." It's the kind of serene, naturally integrated space where you might sit for an hour just thinking, which is sometimes exactly what remote work requires.

Gikor's
Monastery



The Slightly Weird Stuff

Every region has its uniqueness, and Lori doesn't disappoint. In Ardvi village, there's a natural monument called the Snake's Navel; a massive stone snake emerging from rock, with cold fresh water flowing from its middle. It's been **on Armenia's list of state natural monuments since 2008**. Is it worth a visit? Absolutely.

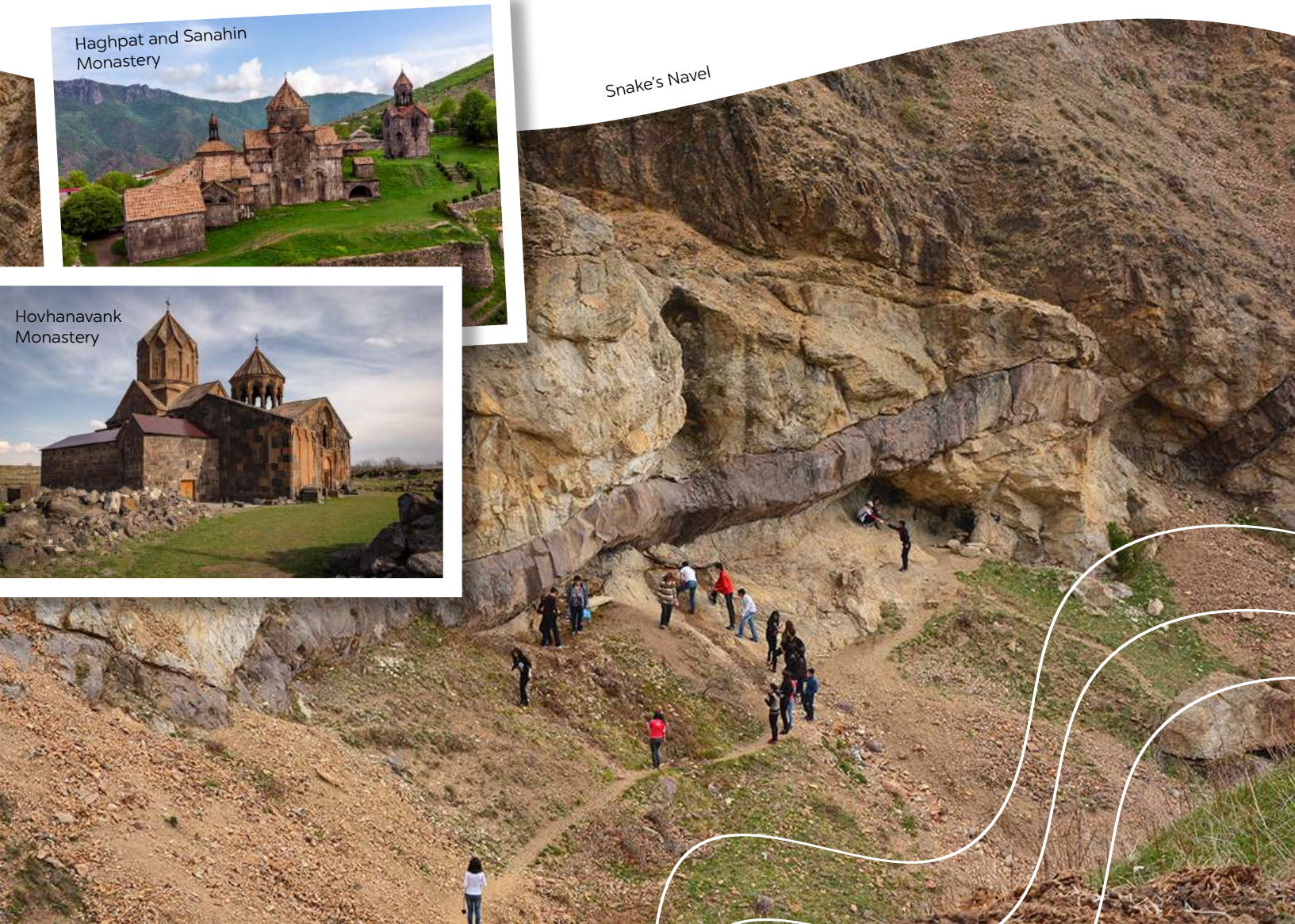
Ardvi also hosts the Hovhanavank Monastery, dedicated to St. John the Baptist and dating back to the 8th century. The complex includes two main churches and a sacred spring called Jrvanes. But it's probably best known for appearing in Sergei Parajanov's "The Color of Pomegranates," one of the most visually stunning films ever made.

Koshaberd Fortress sits north of Alaverdi atop the nearly inaccessible Koshakar Cliff, where it served as a medieval refuge during invasions. Kayan Fortress, built in the 13th century by Prince Vache Vachutyan, sits between Haghpat and Sanahin, protecting the monastic centers.

Haghpat and Sanahin Monastery

Snake's Navel

Hovhanavank Monastery



Making It Work

Alaverdi won't be for everyone. If you need daily variety in dining options or evening entertainment, you'll get restless. But if you're someone who's realized that the digital nomad lifestyle works best **when you're actually somewhere rather than just anywhere with wifi**, Alaverdi offers something valuable.



Debed Canyon, Town Alaverdi, Armenia

When I'm in Alaverdi, I stay at the [Vallex Garden Hotel](#). It provides exactly what you need for a working stay: reliable internet, comfortable rooms, and a location that makes sense for exploring the area. The hotel is less than a 5 minute walk from Sanahin Bridge. The **staff understands that some guests are here to actually get work done**, not just pass through on a tour bus. It's become my default base in the city, the kind of place where they remember you on the second visit and you can settle into a productive routine without having to figure everything out from scratch each time.

You'll work with better focus. You'll take breaks that actually refresh rather than just scroll. And when you finally pack up to continue toward Georgia or head back toward Yerevan, you'll probably already be planning your next stop in Alaverdi, this time for longer. The perfect pit stop, it turns out, isn't about convenience. It's about finding a place where **pausing the journey becomes the point of it.**



Vallex Garden Hotel

FROM SNOW TO SUNLIGHT

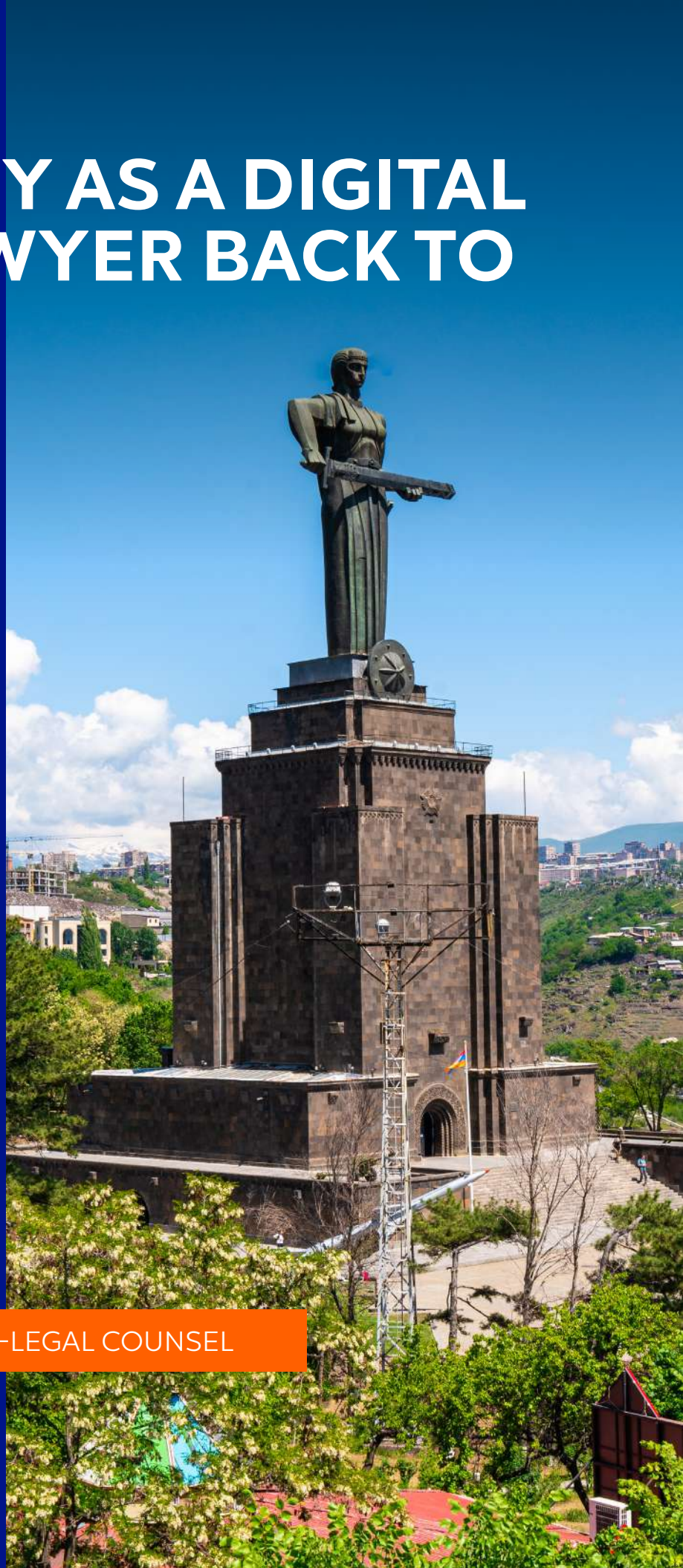
MY JOURNEY AS A DIGITAL NOMAD LAWYER BACK TO ARMENIA



in

**ARI
MIKE**

FOUNDER OF E-LEGAL COUNSEL



FROM SNOW TO SUNLIGHT MY JOURNEY AS A DIGITAL NOMAD LAWYER BACK TO ARMENIA

I walked away from everything: [Prestige](#), [Money](#), and [Security](#).

For something rarer and far more valuable: [Freedom](#).

I once thought success meant wearing a suit every day, sitting in a skyscraper, and grinding long hours under bright lights. I thought it meant driving fancy cars and having a corner office. And for a while, I lived that life. [I was a corporate lawyer in Canada](#), billing countless hours, and trying to convince myself that the stress, the cold winters, and the endless grind were all worth it.

But deep down, [I knew I wasn't free](#). [I was chained to my desk](#). And I hated every single moment of it. I had always been a traveler. Long before law, long before titles, long before “success”.

The turning point of my career wasn't dramatic. It was quiet. It was a question I couldn't shake off: [What if life wasn't meant to be endured, but designed?](#) That single question opened a door I didn't know existed: a life of countless cities, the freedom to work from anywhere in the world, to travel alongside my wife and son, and to [return to my homeland: Armenia](#).

As I write this from a cozy café in Yerevan, our 9-month-old, Luca Monte, is fast asleep in his stroller, probably dreaming of the hot beaches in South Florida, where he dipped his toes in the ocean at just three months old.



Leaving the Office Life Behind

Law teaches you a lot of things. But it doesn't teach you freedom. I had the degrees, the clients, the track record. On paper, I was doing well. But inside, I was depressed. I'd catch myself looking out of my window in Montreal, wondering how many more winters I'd spend buried under snow, chasing hours that didn't feel like mine.

The pandemic cracked things open for me. Suddenly, the same contracts that I was drafting from the office, I was drafting from my kitchen.

If I could do that from home, why not from Florida? **Why not from Yerevan? Why not from anywhere?**

So, I took the leap. I left the traditional path, joined a digital-first law firm, and eventually launched my own practice: E-Legal Counsel. I built it to be fully remote, by design. Calls, contracts, negotiations, board work, you name it. If it could be done in an office, **I made sure it could be done from anywhere in the world**. That's when my life changed!

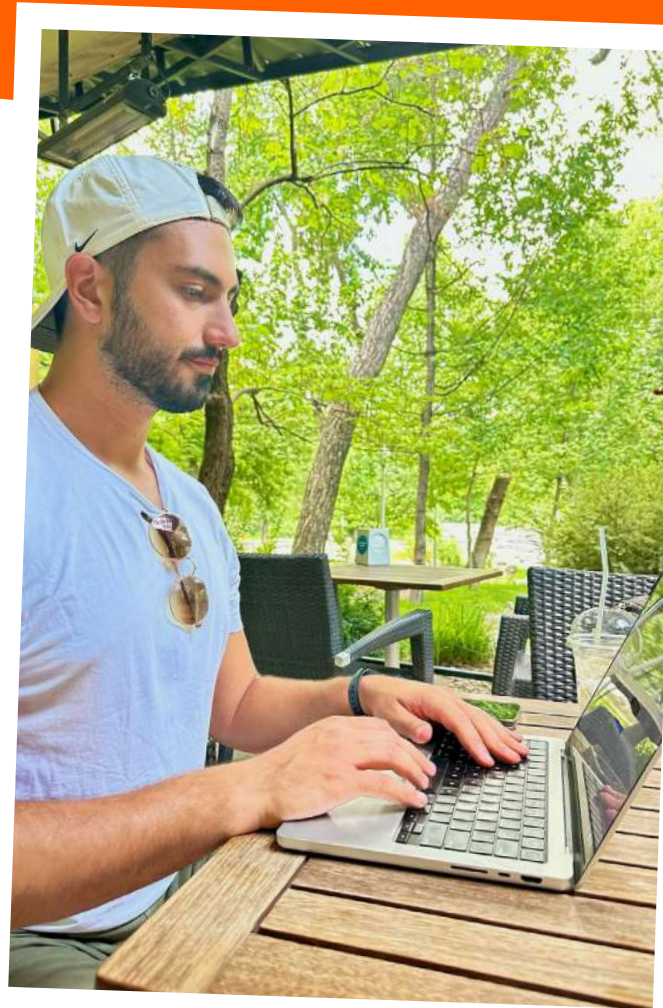
Freedom Over Money

Most lawyers I know chase one thing: Billable hours.

I chose something else: Freedom.

For me, freedom doesn't mean being lazy and not doing anything. It means having the time, health, and the choice to do what matters most: Taking a client call from a café in Barcelona, playing tennis under the Floridian palm trees, hiking the Cascade in Yerevan with my 20-pound son strapped to my back, traveling the world with my wife, and building memories that no paycheck can buy.

Money matters, of course. But money without freedom is a prison. Freedom with enough money, that's real wealth.





Traveling With Family: From Two Backpacks to Strollers

My wife and I have always been travelers. Before our son was born, we toured the world together, training in various gyms and learning from every new city and every conversation with strangers.

Now, with a baby, the luggage is heavier and the planning is trickier, but [the meaning is deeper](#).

Watching my son grow up traveling the world reminds me why I chose this life in the first place. We don't travel to escape life. [We travel to live it more fully](#). And through all our journeys, one place keeps pulling us back stronger: our motherland.

Armenia: Homeland and Hub

I wasn't born in Armenia, but **Armenia has always lived in me**. Like many in the diaspora, I grew up hearing stories, feeling pride, and carrying the identity even while living oceans away. The first time I visited the homeland, I was 14 years old. I came back almost every summer after that, until the fire inside me became impossible to ignore. But when I

finally spent real time in Yerevan (living here, not just visiting), I realized something: Armenia isn't just my past. It's my future.

For digital nomads, Armenia has everything: affordable living, vibrant energy, a rising tech and startup scene, endless nature, and a café culture that embraces

you instantly. For families, Armenia is rare. Children aren't just tolerated here; they're celebrated.

Every walk down the street with my son is a reminder that family is sacred. And for me, Armenia is grounding. The mountains, the water, the churches, the fruit trees: they remind me where I come from, and why I'm here.

Health as a Lifestyle, Not a Hobby

One thing I've learned over the years: I am a better lawyer, husband, and father when I'm in shape. Physically, mentally, and spiritually. I train daily: basketball, tennis, swimming, lifting, and sauna. Not just for the looks, but for mental clarity. Movement sharpens the mind. And discipline in the gym creates discipline in business.

I journal every day. I meditate. I pray. I speak to God as I plan my agenda. Faith is my compass. Every good thing in my life: my wife, my son, my work, my freedom, I see as gifts from God. My job is to stay aligned, to remain grateful, and to keep building. And when I write in my journal, I'm not just recording life. I'm manifesting it. *Every page is a blueprint for tomorrow.*



Coaching, Mentoring, and Building Community

The more I built my own practice, the more I realized I should be helping others do the same.

Բարձրացիր, Բարձրացուր.

So I began mentoring other lawyers, showing them that you don't need a skyscraper office or a big firm name to succeed. You can build your empire, live free, and still serve clients at the highest level. For me, it's no longer just about clients and contracts. It's about teaching others, my peers, at home and abroad, that freedom is possible if you're willing to take risks.

A man with a beard and short dark hair is walking on a brick path. He is wearing a white t-shirt, black shorts, and black sneakers. He has a black bag slung across his chest. A young child is sitting on his shoulders, wearing a blue and grey shirt and white socks. The background is filled with lush green trees and foliage.

My mission goes beyond the law. I want to open a community hub in Yerevan, a space where diasporan Armenians and locals can connect, share ideas, grab coffee, and build something together.

Designing Life, Not Enduring It

Looking back, I see now: I never really wanted the corner office. I wanted freedom. I wanted to keep traveling more than 2 weeks a year. I wanted to raise my son in the sunlight. And I wanted to live in my homeland. **And Armenia gave me just that.**

No place is perfect. And Armenia has many challenges. But here's the truth: happiness isn't about where you live, it's about how you live. When you design life intentionally, when you choose gratitude, health, and faith first, the rest falls into place.

So this is my message:
To Armenians abroad who feel the homeland calling: **come see what's possible.**

To professionals stuck in an office tower: know that freedom is closer than you think.

Because success isn't about working harder in someone else's system.

It's about building your own. With clarity, discipline, and God's guidance. Amen.



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CASE STUDY

THE RISE OF THE '5G VILLAGES' IN RURAL ARMENIA



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



CASE STUDY THE RISE OF THE '5G VILLAGES' IN RURAL ARMENIA

Earlier this year, a US-Armenian foundation asked for my advice on how to breathe life back into one of Armenia's abandoned rural towns; they were ready to invest and wanted to make it attractive for foreigners to consider relocating! My recommendation was clear: first, **build a foundation of a professional local community working remotely**, and then, and only then, can you expect to attract international interest.

This is not limited to Armenia; it's a global phenomenon! Small towns that were losing young people are suddenly **attracting tech workers from major cities worldwide**. Places that relied on farming for centuries are becoming hubs for remote work and digital innovation; this means **Armenian rural areas could become destinations**, not just waiting rooms for the move to Yerevan.

Such a decentralized approach would be impossible without reliable 5G connectivity, which isn't simply an upgrade from 4G. With latency as low as 1 millisecond and download speeds up to 100 times faster than 4G, **5G enables real-time collaboration that was impossible before**.



Luckily for Armenia, 2025 has been the year of nationwide 5G rollout. While technology typically starts in major cities before it makes its way to smaller towns and villages, [Ucom](#), a major telecom and internet service provider, started from the edges and worked inward. By connecting border regions first, Armenia is building infrastructure that serves both economic and security interests.



Ralph Yirikian

General Director
at Ucom

We felt responsible to lead the 5G rollout in Armenia, and out of that same responsibility, we had to ensure the Armenian regions are covered, even before the capital is. Whenever I'm asked why the regions first, I answer them, 'Why not!' After all, Armenia is ten regions and the capital, and our job is to provide an equal service to everyone."



Traditional internet infrastructure required expensive fiber optic cables to reach every building, making rural connectivity economically challenging. 5G's wireless nature means a single tower can serve an entire area with enterprise-grade connectivity. This dramatically reduces the cost and complexity of bringing world-class internet to remote locations, making the "5G village" concept financially viable for telecom companies.

The New Reality of Villages

Remote work villages represent a completely different way of thinking about rural economics. Once reliable connectivity is established, remote work communities start forming, and it **initiates a domino effect of community-wide change**.

The housing market changes in interesting ways. Property values go up as demand increases, but unlike urban gentrification, rural areas often have empty or underused buildings that can **accommodate newcomers without pushing out existing residents**. This creates opportunities for renovation and construction that employ local workers while improving housing quality overall.

New businesses emerge naturally to serve the remote work crowd; cafes with reliable internet and quiet corners, co-working and co-living spaces, specialty stores with foods that appeal to diverse tastes, fitness centers, and childcare for families; these places often become **community hubs where newcomers and long-time residents** actually get to know each other.



Paul Vatistas

UK, Director at Haig Barrett Partners and Nomad Armenia

To have widespread 5G beyond just Yerevan will make Armenia much more attractive to remote workers, as **good connectivity at all times is a must.**

The economic multiplier effect is stronger in rural settings because there's **less competition and more opportunity for new ideas.**

The next 5-10 years could see dramatic changes in Armenia. rural areas with solid 5G connectivity might experience population growth for the first time in decades.

Young families who would otherwise feel forced to move to Yerevan **could find opportunities that let them stay in or return to their communities.**

The global examples prove this transformation is not only possible but already happening in communities that **invested strategically in connectivity and community development.**

Bansko, Bulgaria

Bansko is a little Bulgarian town that started as a ski resort and was dead half the year. Now it's become the year-round capital for remote work in Bulgaria. The transformation happened when reliable high-speed internet **allowed digital professionals to stay beyond the ski season.**

The changes rippled through everything. Schools had to adapt to serve international families. Healthcare expanded to meet different expectations. The real estate market went crazy as demand shifted from vacation homes to permanent residences set up for remote work. New businesses popped up everywhere!

Bansko shows Armenian mountain communities what's possible. Places that currently depend on seasonal tourism could build year-round economies if they had the connectivity to support remote workers.



Pelé Philipp Alexander Weber

Co-owner of Nomad Bansko Fest

“For Bansko and the Nomad Fest, 5G is a real game changer. Reliable high-speed internet in a rural mountain town enables digital nomads to work seamlessly, stream, and connect globally – while still enjoying the beauty of nature. It bridges the gap between remote work and rural living.”



Järva, Estonia

Järva County figured out that remote workers **aren't trying to recreate city life in the countryside**. They're looking for authentic community experiences that cities can't provide. As internet infrastructure improved to urban standards, residents suddenly had access to international job markets without leaving their villages. The connection between better connectivity and more diverse employment was direct and immediate.

The smart thing about Järva's approach was **keeping village identity intact while adding modern conveniences**. Traditional festivals continued, local food systems thrived, and community structures remained strong. This created a mix that attracted both **locals wanting to stay and newcomers looking for real community connections**.

This model fits Armenia perfectly. rural areas here have maintained strong cultural traditions that could become major assets in attracting remote workers **who want more than just a nice place to work from their laptop**.



Decentralizing Armenia

The biggest potential impact is **reversing Armenia's demographic concentration in Yerevan**. The capital currently dominates everything to a degree that creates both opportunities and problems.

Rural areas could even become international connection points in ways that **strengthen national security and economic independence**. Distributed digital infrastructure is more resilient than centralized systems, and communities with global economic connections through remote work create multiple pathways for international engagement.



Ricardo Bergmann

German Business Analyst in Fintech, living in Dilijan

We are a global company, and my team is spread across EU countries (Germany, France, Italy, Romania, etc.), Armenia, and India, and we communicate daily. There is no issue connecting with them from Dilijan.”



Take Dilijan City as an example, which has all the potential of Bansko in Bulgaria and could replicate the Bansko experience in a few years. The biggest advantage is the small core of remote workers who made Dilijan their home a while ago. And now, with the recent 5G coverage in Dilijan, **the professional community is building up and growing**.



The 5G village concept is about reimagining what rural life can offer. For Armenia, this could mean the difference **between continued rural decline and a distributed development model**.

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

THE RISE OF FOREIGNER- LED COMMUNITIES IN ARMENIA



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

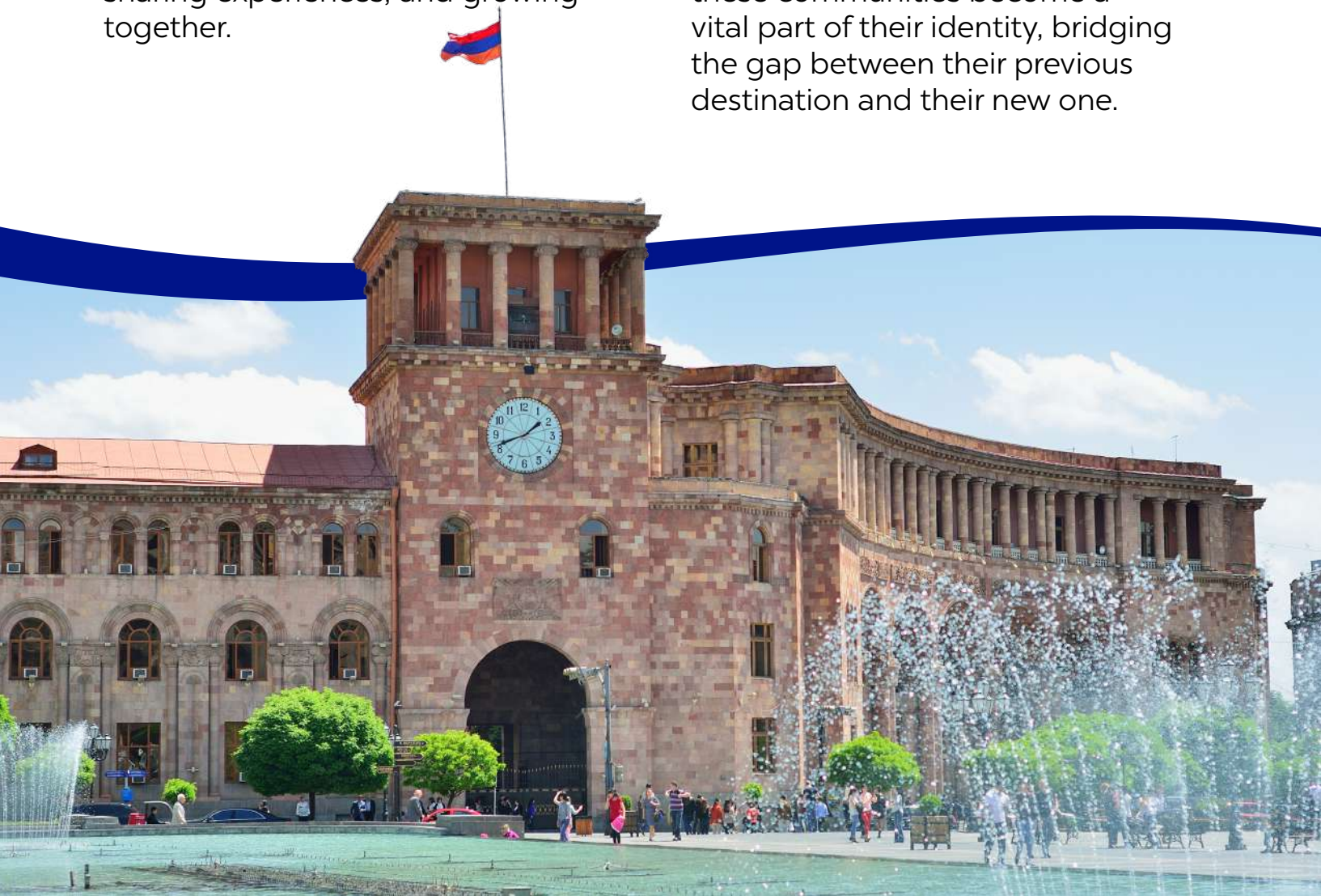
EDITOR IN CHIEF



ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT THE RISE OF FOREIGNER-LED COMMUNITIES IN ARMENIA

Finding a community is a top priority for remote workers and digital nomads in a new country. It's a fundamental human need to **connect with others who understand their journey** and unique background. This is why coworking spaces and coliving areas have exploded in popularity worldwide; they **provide the infrastructure for these connections to form**. At its core, the nomadic lifestyle isn't just about travel; it's about building an international network, sharing experiences, and growing together.

Psychological research shows that belonging to a community is a need for our well-being. For remote workers in a new country, this need is even stronger. The stress of dealing with social isolation can be overwhelming. **A community provides a sense of stability and belonging**, offering a buffer against these challenges. It helps reduce feelings of loneliness and anxiety by creating a support system where **shared experiences and struggles are normalized**. For foreigners, especially those working remotely, these communities become a vital part of their identity, bridging the gap between their previous destination and their new one.



For many, **Armenia** has been seen as a **monocultural society**.

The perception is that it's a country exclusively for Armenians, with little room for other cultures. While this might have been true in the past, **it no longer reflects the reality of modern Armenia**. Today, a walk through downtown Yerevan reveals a

vibrant, multilingual combination of nations and cultures.

These aren't just tourists passing through; they are long-term residents, remote workers, entrepreneurs, and artists who have **chosen to make Armenia their home**. This shift is turning Yerevan into a more cosmopolitan city, taking slow but steady

steps in the right direction. Recently, this has also started happening in other Armenian cities outside the capital.

Recently, a number of **impressive foreign-led communities** have emerged on the Armenian scene. These initiatives are not just for expatriates but are mixed communities that bring together foreigners and locals.

Take, for example, the Yerevan Chapter of The Founders Running Club, which brings together a mix of Armenian and international founders in downtown Yerevan for a weekly run and breakfast every Sunday at 8.30 am. It's a perfect example of a community built around a shared passion, where **professional networking happens organically**.





Ground Zero Specialty Coffee, founded by an American Armenian, was envisioned **not just as a café but as a venture café**, a hub for creators and entrepreneurs. It has become a key meeting point for foreigners and locals united by a drive to innovate and achieve.

The Green Green community, started by Russian residents, started by organizing city-wide cleanup events and ended up with over **6500 volunteers helping solve environmental issues in Armenia**. This initiative shows how foreigners are not just settling in, but are actively contributing to the well-being of their new home, together with locals.



These are just three **examples of the many communities now active in Armenia**.

Communities are often seen as places for networking and social events, but **their impact can go much deeper**. Many of these groups, particularly those led by foreigners and mixed with locals, are **evolving into a form of active citizenship**. Instead of just settling in, their members are driven by a shared purpose to create change.

This desire for a positive impact is what transforms a simple gathering into a force for good. People come together under a community's umbrella to **collectively tackle challenges and contribute to their new home**. This can range from environmental initiatives to entrepreneurial ventures that benefit the local economy. It's an evolution from being a passive resident to an engaged participant in the community's well-being.

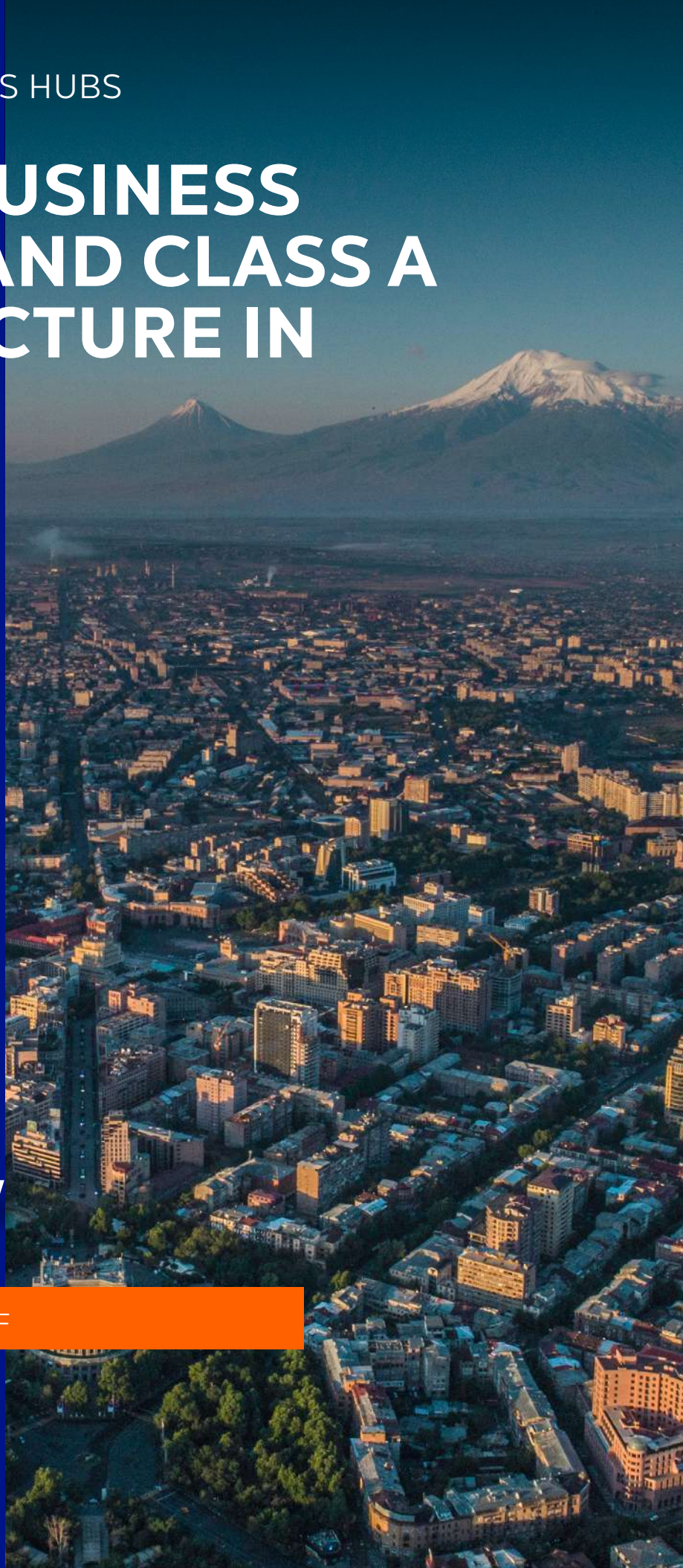
THE ANATOMY OF BUSINESS HUBS

BUILDING BUSINESS DISTRICTS AND CLASS A INFRASTRUCTURE IN ARMENIA



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



THE ANATOMY OF BUSINESS HUBS BUILDING BUSINESS DISTRICTS AND CLASS A INFRASTRUCTURE IN ARMENIA

One business center is real estate. Two business centers set a trend. [Three business centers form a district, and districts accelerate economies.](#)

The chain reaction follows physics: anchor tenants attract competitors, competitors attract services, services attract talent, talent attracts investment, investment attracts infrastructure, and so on and so forth.

A business district doesn't begin as a district. It begins as a gamble, [one exceptional building in an unexpected location.](#) But when that building succeeds, something happens. The cluster effect takes hold.

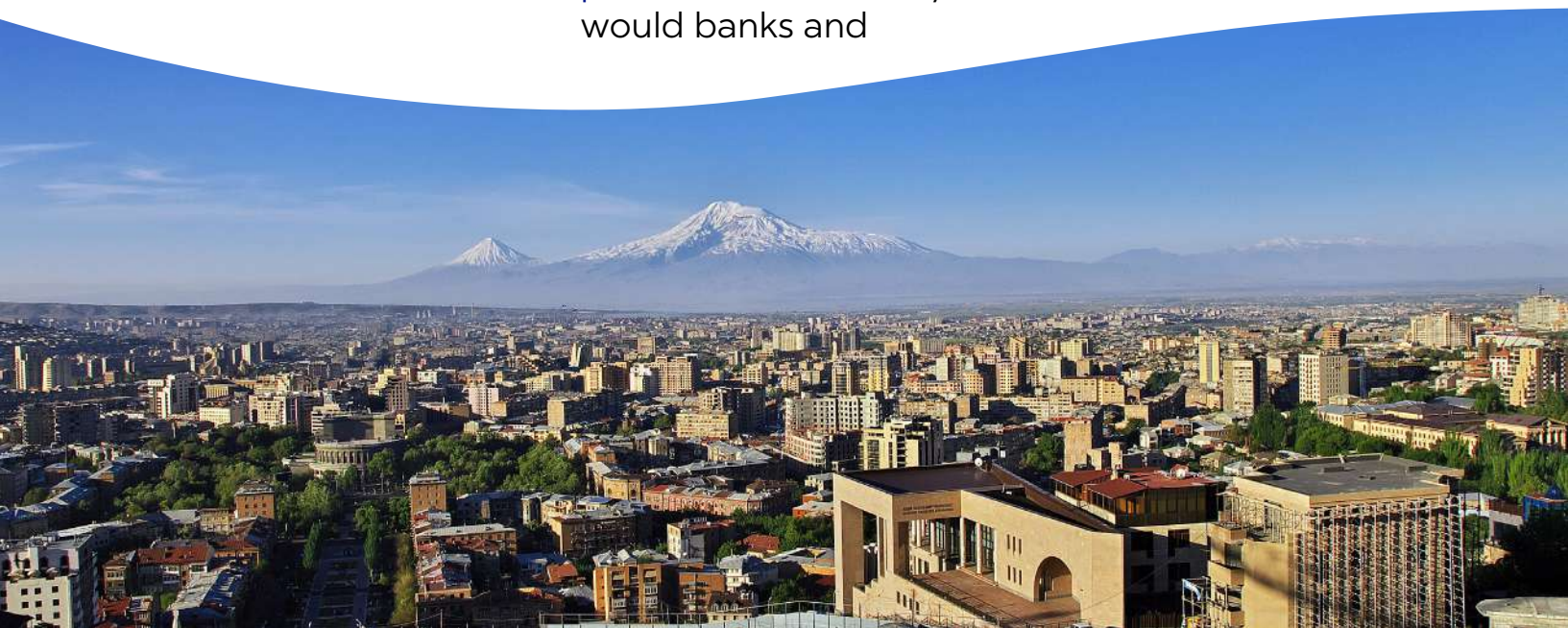
When Dubai announced plans to build a financial district on an empty desert in 2004, the World Bank questioned [why global banks would relocate to a jurisdiction that didn't exist yet.](#)

Twenty years later, that jurisdiction houses 46,078 employees.

In the 1980s, London's Canary Wharf was derelict dockland, an absurd location for a financial district. The development began with One Canada Square, completed in 1991, then Britain's tallest building. [Critics predicted failure.](#) Why would banks and

financial institutions leave the historic City of London for abandoned docks? Yet the gamble paid off. Today, Canary Wharf hosts over 120,000 employees and houses the European headquarters of global financial institutions.

When Canary Wharf emerged, it sparked infrastructure investment; new underground stations, roads, and public spaces. It created demand for housing, restaurants, and services. Property values in surrounding areas increased. [Local government tax revenues grew.](#) Universities developed programs to supply the district with talent.

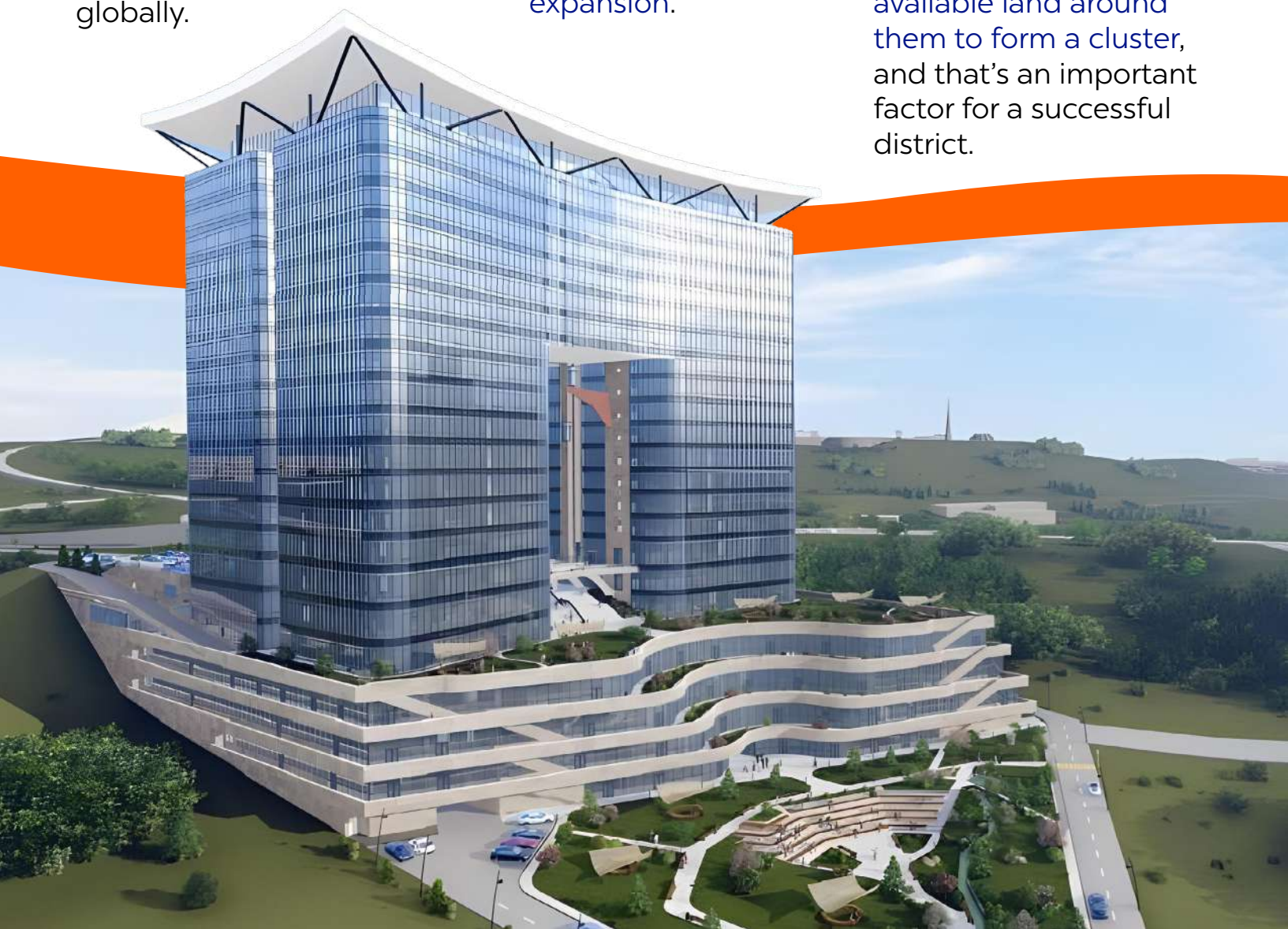


Geography Isn't the Problem, Geometry Is

The anatomy of successful business hubs reveals a pattern: they begin with bold vision, **establish credibility through international standards**, attract anchor tenants that create clustering effects, generate economic multipliers that extend far beyond their physical boundaries, and ultimately transform how cities and countries are perceived globally.

In Armenia, different projects have the potential to grow into business districts. Dalan Technopark and Engineering City stand out as prime candidates because of their considerable surrounding land and **potential for major infrastructure expansion**.

Engineering City is already underway with multiple facilities, while Dalan Technopark is raising the bar as the nation's first commercial building aiming for LEED certification and BOMA compliance. Although there is a growing number of business centers in the capital, **they don't have available land around them to form a cluster**, and that's an important factor for a successful district.



Armenia faces both challenges and opportunities. The country has established itself as a technology center, home to a growing number of tech companies and startups. But physical infrastructure hasn't kept pace with ambition. Geography isn't Armenia's problem, geometry is! Specifically, the **geometry of tens of thousands of square meters of standardized work space** that doesn't exist yet. Until now.

As Armenia positions itself as a regional technology and business hub, understanding how these districts emerge becomes a roadmap. **Business districts don't emerge spontaneously.** What transforms empty land into economic engines is planning, international standards, and a vision.

But what exactly makes a building meet international standards, and how does a single structure evolve into an entire district that reshapes an economy?

Understanding Global Office Language

BOMA, LEED, Class A, and others; these aren't just letters, they're **the secret handshake of international business**. When a CFO in San Francisco evaluates a regional hub in Yerevan, they aren't touring buildings. They're scanning for acronyms that translate to "your standards work here too."

BOMA, the Building Owners and Managers Association, provides standards for measuring, managing, and benchmarking office properties. BOMA standards dictate everything from how square footage is calculated to operational efficiency metrics. When a building adheres to BOMA standards, **tenants know precisely what they're getting, no ambiguity, no surprises.**



LEED, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, certifies buildings based on sustainability performance across categories including energy efficiency, water conservation, and indoor environmental quality. A LEED-certified building is healthier for occupants and more cost-efficient to operate.

In commercial real estate circles buildings are classified as “Class A,” “Class B,” or “Class C.” Unlike BOMA or LEED, “Class A” isn’t a certification you can apply for. Class A describes the most prestigious buildings in terms of aesthetics, age, quality of building infrastructure and systems, and location. A LEED-certified and BOMA-compliant building is a Class A one by default; however, Class A status does not imply LEED or BOMA compliance.



Stage 1 of the Business District is Almost Complete

Dalan Technopark, constructed according to BOMA Class A and LEED Gold Certificate standards, hence a Class A building, aims to **bring together the world's leading tech companies in Armenia** under one roof.

With office spaces exceeding 44,000 square meters, the facility aims to accommodate approximately 3000 employees. That's **3000 professionals working in an environment that meets international standards.**

When a major technology company sees that space exists for a 200-person regional team in a building that meets their global standards, **Armenia becomes a viable option rather than a theoretical possibility.**

When companies consider regional hubs for serving markets across the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Middle East, **they need confidence that infrastructure exists.** A business district provides that confidence. It says: serious business happens here. Perhaps most significantly, **it changes how a country is perceived internationally.**

Armenia stands at the beginning of this journey. With Dalan Technopark, it has laid a foundation that meets international standards; BOMA for operational excellence, LEED for sustainability, Class A for quality. The building exists. Now comes the harder part: **nurturing the ecosystem that transforms a building into a district,** and a district into an economic engine.



Armenia stands at an unusual point in this journey. Most countries build infrastructure first, then wait for talent to arrive. *Armenia has done it backwards*, and that might be its greatest advantage. The country already has 60,000+ tech professionals. That's the hardest resource to manufacture, the one that other countries spent billions attracting. *Armenia already has it*. International headquarters didn't wait for perfect infrastructure to set up operations here. They came *despite the conditions because the talent was undeniable*.

But when executives visiting from headquarters see facilities that match what they have in San Francisco, London, or Singapore, they postpone expansion until infrastructure levels

reach those of what is acceptable in global standards. When infrastructure finally matches capability, International companies will start seeing Armenia as a strategic hub, a long-term commitment. Simply put, *a country as a resource to extract from and a market to invest in*.

The foundation is already there. With Dalan Technopark meeting BOMA, LEED, and Class A standards, the physical infrastructure is beginning to catch up to the human capital. Now comes the multiplication effect: anchor tenants attracting competitors, competitors attracting services, services attracting investment, investment attracting more infrastructure.

The question isn't whether Armenia can build a business district. London, Paris, and Dubai prove that districts can emerge in unexpected locations when vision meets execution. The question is whether Armenia will support the ecosystem that allows one exceptional building to become a leader for broader transformation.





Where **Innovation**
Meets **Motion**



Welcome to Hartak.am, your trusted guide on Armenian public services

Armenia is developing a National Services Gateway called “Hartak”, a one-stop interaction point between citizens and public services. It's a trustworthy source of information ensuring that users find the right service when they need it, and know what to expect from the process.

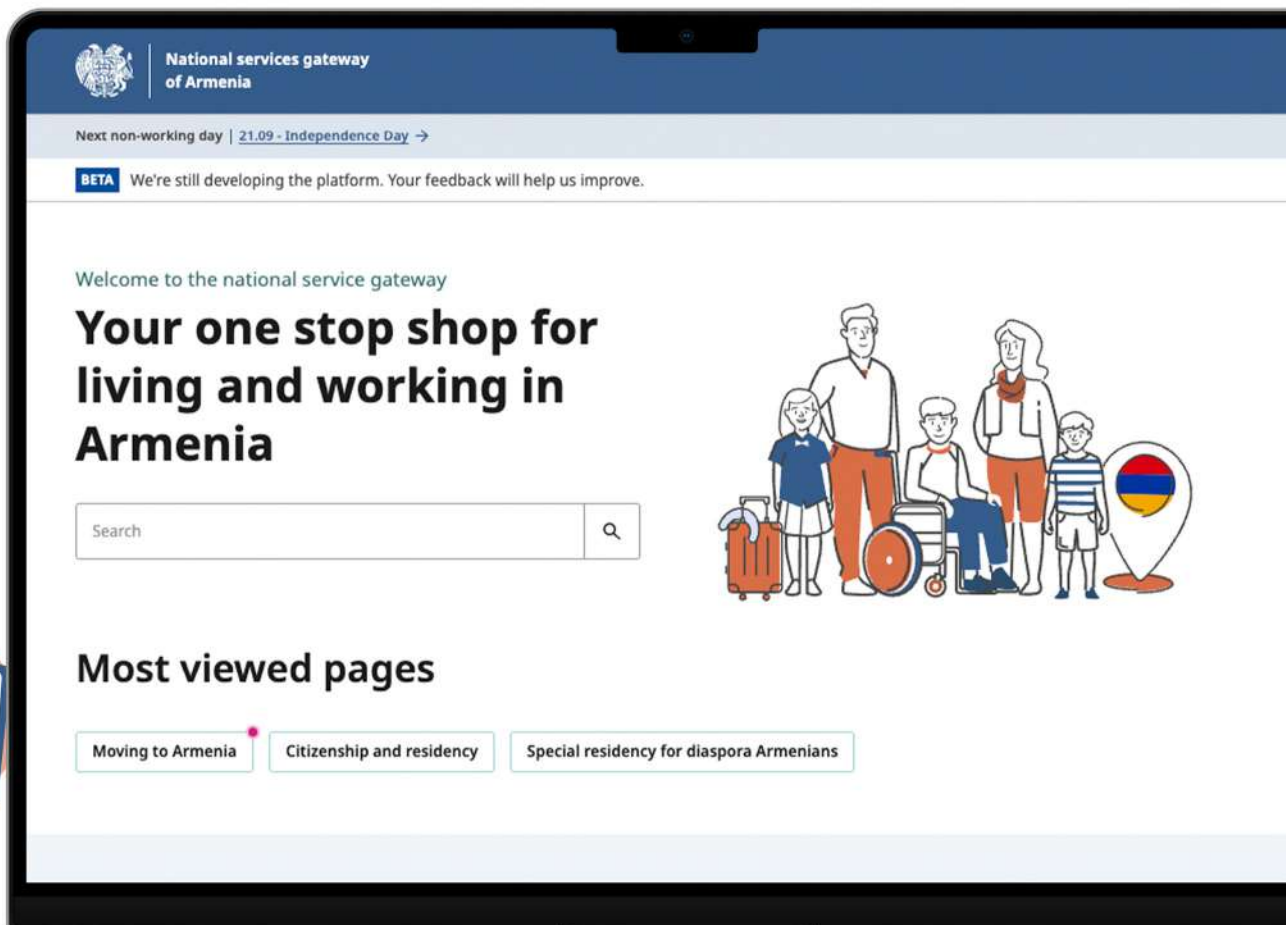
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A SWISS PERSPECTIVE ON ARMENIA

A GATEWAY FOR DIGITAL NOMADS, ENTREPRENEURS, AND GLOBAL CITIZENS



in

**CHRISTOPH
LOOSER**

FOUNDER OF NOMADTAX ARMENIA



A SWISS PERSPECTIVE ON ARMENIA A GATEWAY FOR DIGITAL NOMADS, ENTREPRENEURS, AND GLOBAL CITIZENS

Armenia is a warm, welcoming, and family-friendly country with a rich cultural heritage, fascinating history, and a **deep-rooted tradition in organic food production and winemaking**. The capital, Yerevan, is a vibrant hub of culture, cafés, co-working spaces, and restaurants. In contrast, Dilijan, often called the “Switzerland of the Caucasus”, offers lush green mountains, fresh air, and a **growing reputation as a digital nomad haven**. From the natural beauty of the Lori Forest National Park to the lively rhythm of city life, **Armenia blends tradition and modernity** in a way that remains largely undiscovered by much of the world.

Strategically located, Armenia provides easy access to both European Union countries and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) members, with minimal time zone differences, **making it an ideal location for international business**. Its steady developing economy, strong tech sector, affordable cost of living, and attractive investment opportunities, **particularly in real estate and high-interest banking**, make Armenia an emerging hub for entrepreneurs, investors, and remote workers alike.

Foreign and local citizens enjoy equal rights to register and operate businesses, with no restrictions on foreign direct investment (FDI) or profit repatriation. Other advantages include high-speed internet, affordable healthcare, and low living costs (average national salary: ~700 USD; minimum wage: 195 USD). Crypto remains largely unregulated (with new laws expected in 2026), offering flexibility for investors and private individuals.



Residency and Citizenship Options

Armenia offers flexible residency pathways, particularly attractive for expats and digital nomads.

Guests from many countries can stay up to six months, mostly without special visas or tax obligations. For longer stays, options include:



Workpermit – available under specific conditions



Temporary Residence Permit: valid for one year, extendable up to five years or more, and often leading to permanent residency or even dual citizenship.



Family Inclusion: residency can be extended to family members, emphasizing Armenia's family-friendly approach.



Notably, business owners do not need a separate work permit or office space to apply for residency. There are no minimum investment or income thresholds, though taxes must be paid locally, and employees or contractors must hold valid permits.

Registering a Company or as an Independent Entrepreneur

Armenia offers one of the fastest and simplest company registration processes in the region; businesses can be registered in just one day, either onsite or remotely. Advantages include:



No minimum foundation capital for LLCs.



No requirement for a resident or local director.



Remote entrepreneurs permitted.



No obligation to rent office space or hire local employees



Business registration options include:

Independent/ Private Entrepreneur (IE/ PE)
Limited Liability Company (LLC)
Joint-Stock Company (JSC)
Partnership.

Tax benefits:

- Micro-businesses based on special criteria: 0% tax below 60.000 USD revenue.
- Independent Entrepreneurs (IE/ PE): flat 10% turnover tax with exemptions (IT)
- LLCs: turnover tax 1.5%–10% for up to approx. 300.000 USD (IT startups as low as 1%, even as IE/ PE).
- Dividends: 5%.
- Rental income: 10%.
- No wealth, inheritance, or gift tax.

Armenia also offers and benefits from more than 50+ double taxation treaties.

Whereas the non-regulation by Common Reporting Standard (CRS) had been a benefit and strong argument for many coming to Armenia, this has changed recently. From January 2025, the CRS will apply to active financial accounts with inflows/ outflows exceeding 250.000 USD, based on reciprocity and with more than 120 countries.

By partnering with NomadTax Armenia, you gain a trusted local advisor who ensures compliance and helps maximize opportunities in Armenia's fast-growing economy.

Meet Us in Person

Discover Armenia's potential first-hand! Meet us at the Nomad Armenia & Digitec 2025 events, taking place from October 3rd to 13th in Yerevan and Dilijan. Learn how we can support your journey as a digital nomad, entrepreneur, or global citizen in Armenia.



**NOMADTAX
ARMENIA**



How NomadTax Armenia Can Help You?

NomadTax Armenia is a joint venture with locally established legal and accounting experts. Our multilingual team, speaking Armenian, English, German and Russian, specializes in supporting foreigners, global entrepreneurs, expats and digital nomads.

Our services include:

- Residency and social insurance applications.
- Company registration (IE/ PE, LLC, JSC, partnership).
- Remote or onsite registration.
- Support in business bank account opening and banking advisory.
- Accounting and payroll management.
- Tax advisory and optimization.
- Office and administrative support.

ARMENIA'S CROSSROADS

HOW GLOBAL LOGISTICS EXPERTS SEE THE COUNTRY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE



**CRISTINA
YEREMYAN**

CO-FOUNDER OF E-LOGI FEST25

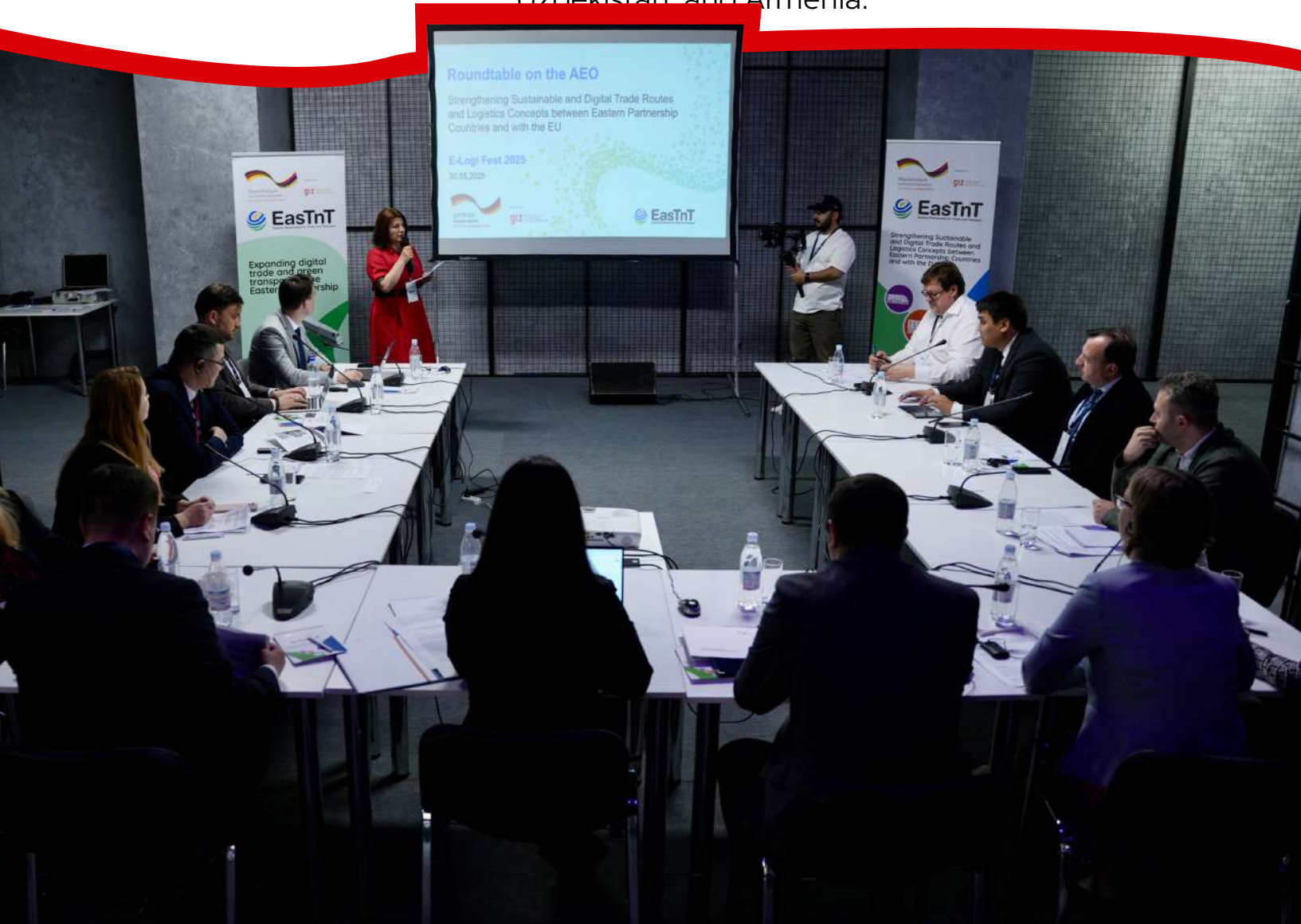


ARMENIA'S CROSSROADS HOW GLOBAL LOGISTICS EXPERTS SEE THE COUNTRY'S STRATEGIC FUTURE

Economic success for any landlocked nation relies on access to trade, but for one **situated in a geopolitically complex region**, the challenge is multiplied. High transit costs, unpredictable route stability, and dependence on just a few vital transportation corridors make building international logistical partnerships an economic need.

At the end of May 2025, Armenia hosted e-Logi Fest25, its first logistics expo and summit. A centerpiece of the event was a high-level roundtable organized by the GIZ, which brought together **customs authorities and logistics experts from eight countries**: Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan, and Armenia.

To find out how the **German involvement in rebuilding Armenia's trade identity through GIZ** isn't accidental, I talked to Tanya Torosyan, National Coordinator for Armenia of the EasTnT Project at GIZ Armenia.



What got the GIZ interested in the logistics sector in Armenia?

EasTnT is a regional project implemented by GIZ and commissioned by the German Government. It supports five EAP countries, including Armenia, in **making trade routes more digital, sustainable, and efficient**, while improving customs procedures and regional cooperation. In practice, EasTnT helps the five EAP countries **connect better to international markets, especially the EU**.



Through the EasTnT project, **we see logistics as a cornerstone of Armenia's economic future**. For a landlocked country, efficient and green logistics are vital to competitiveness, exports, and regional integration. By supporting digitalisation, transport and customs reform, and sustainable transport, EasTnT directly addresses Armenia's needs while **aligning with the German Government's and GIZ's values** of sustainability, partnership, climate responsibility, and capacity building.

Logistics is where Armenia's competitiveness, connectivity, and climate goals meet, and **the EasTnT project turns that into action.**





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cooperation

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENARBEIT

Implemented by

giz

Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

**What's the
biggest
challenge for
Armenia's
logistics sector
right now,
from a policy
perspective?**

Armenia faces difficulties in aligning its national transport and customs legislation with EU and international standards, particularly in digital trade facilitation and border management. The **regulatory framework is being updated, but implementation capacity remains limited**, and agencies often struggle with coordination across ministries.

Closed borders mean that **even well-designed policies cannot always be applied effectively**, since transit options are restricted. Difficulties with Schengen visas for Armenian drivers and logistics operators create a non-tariff barrier in trade with the EU. On top of this, the lack of digitalisation policies and clear roadmaps for adopting international standards and interoperable customs systems delays progress.

These policy gaps, combined with limited human capacity to enforce and implement them, **make logistics reform slower and more complex**. That's why ongoing government work on visa liberalisation with the EU and digitalisation strategies is so important.

What's one specific policy idea from the roundtable that you believe could really make things easier for logistics in Armenia?

At the end of May 2025, during the e-Logi Fest in Armenia, EasTnT hosted a high-level Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) roundtable with participation from eight countries, including Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Uzbekistan, and Armenia. It was the first event of its kind in Armenia, and **we believe e-Logi Fest will grow into a strong regional and international platform.**



At the roundtable, customs authorities expressed strong interest in advancing trade facilitation through mutual recognition agreements for AEOs, alongside digitalisation and improved infrastructure. These steps would reduce costs, accelerate border crossings, and strengthen trust between administrations. For Armenian businesses, this means **smoother trade and easier access to both regional and EU markets.**

Were there any specific laws or rules that everyone agreed should be changed or updated soon?

During the AEO roundtable and broader e-Logi Fest discussions, stakeholders highlighted several urgent priorities: customs modernisation, clearer criteria for trusted traders, risk-based controls, and fully digital procedures.

They also stressed the need to accelerate the use of digital trade documentation and ensure system interoperability. Finally, there was broad agreement that **closer alignment with international and EU standards is essential** to strengthen both competitiveness and sustainability.

How does GIZ actually help make this regional teamwork happen?

GIZ implements several regional programmes across the Eastern Partnership, and EasTnT is one of the initiatives, operating in five countries. The project creates the spaces and tools for real cooperation from high-level technical roundtables like the AEO forum, to hands-on workshops and study visits that **link authorities and businesses with regional peers and EU best practices.**

EasTnT ensures that solutions are co-created and owned by national partners. This inclusive approach builds trust, accelerates alignment with international standards, and helps reforms last beyond the project cycle. In short, **we co-create and build capacity so that regional solutions are practical, sustainable, and longstanding.**

The real story here is **a small country refusing to let geography be destiny**, using bureaucratic innovation as a form of economic diplomacy.



TECH EVENTS



with

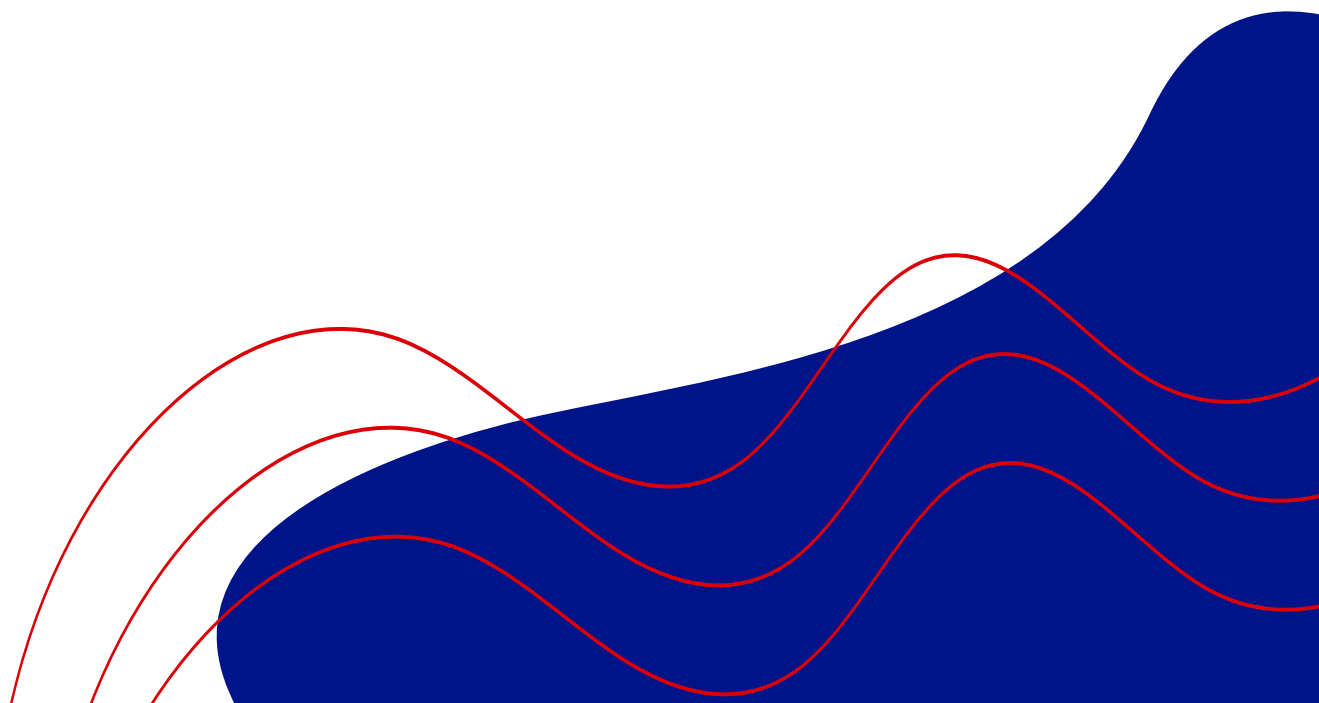
ARTAK N. G.



TECH BLOGGER

SEPT 30 1 OCT	Power Consulting Days: Module II	
SEP 30 5 OCT	Science week	
OCT 1	Technology behind LLM and GPT	
OCT 3-5	Engineering week	
OCT 4	Tech writers' meetup	
OCT 4	Remote work meetup by Digital nomads	
OCT 5	Armenian software testing cup	
OCT 5-10	Biotech CRISPR conference	
OCT 10-12	Digitec	

OCT 13-14	How to invest in innovative startups by Orion Worldwide Innovations and BDO	
OCT 14	Silicon mountains Tech summit	
OCT 16	Kick off Plug and Play accelerator program	
OCT 22	EU Horizon Europe Information event	
OCT 25	Game development conference	
OCT 25	Javascript Conference	



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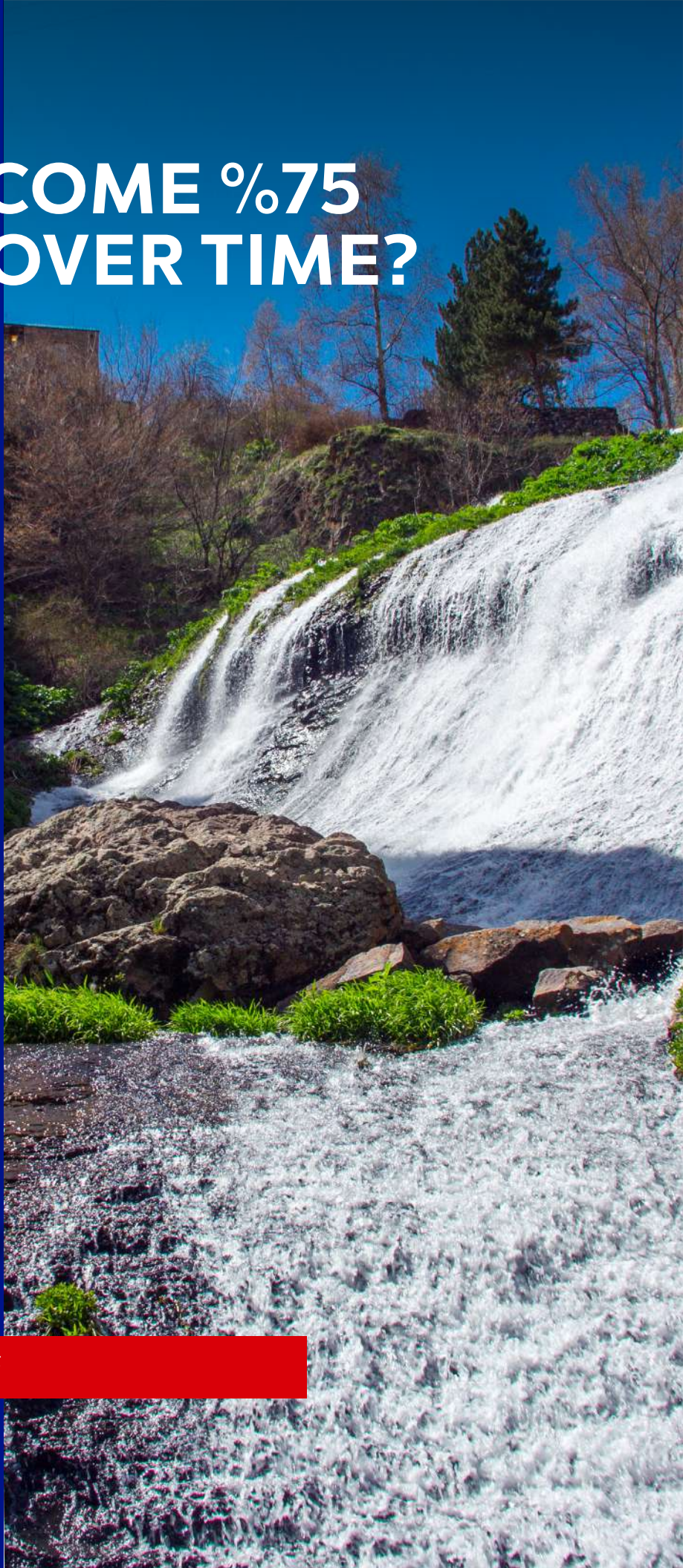
HOW TO BECOME %75 ARMENIAN OVER TIME?

in



**MATHEW
ZEIN**

EDITOR IN CHIEF



NO PASSPORT NEEDED

HOW TO BECOME %75 ARMENIAN OVER TIME?

Water in Armenia is a blessing that many people here take for granted, unaware that this isn't the case worldwide! I've been to charming countries where drinking water is available but tastes bitter, and other countries where you must buy bottled water because the tap water is totally unsafe. Meanwhile, [Armenia's tap water is famously safe to drink](#), delicious, and consistently cold as it flows directly from the mountains.

I'm going to go on a limb and tell you that one of the deepest, [most personal connections I have with Armenia comes from its water](#). My grandfather, who passed away two years ago, often spoke of something that never felt more accurate than after I'd lived in Armenia. He would say, "We feel connected to the land that gives us sweet water."

But does that really make sense? And if it does, is this a universal feeling, or [do different countries have different connections to their water](#)? I researched and drew on my personal experience, then visited a water factory in Armenia to have an educated background for my writing.

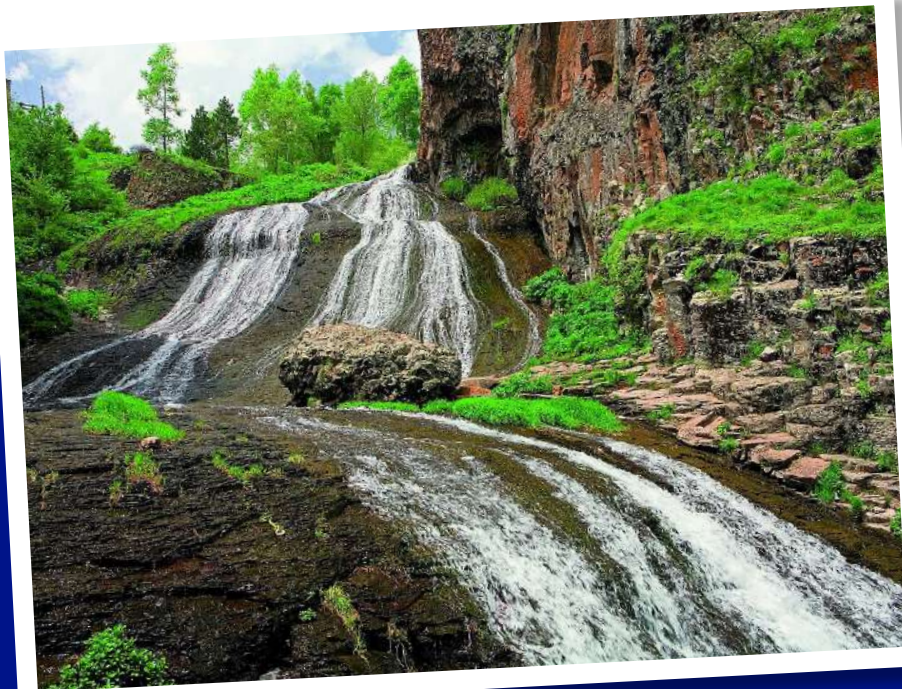


Let Armenia Sign Your Body

To start with, I'll put it simply. Our bodies are made of approximately 75% water. When we consistently drink water from a specific place, we are, in a very real sense, [incorporating that land into ourselves](#). We do become connected to the land through its water, not metaphorically, but molecularly. Every spring you drink from [writes its signature into your cellular structure](#). Thus, every glass of sweet Armenian water contributes to the slow, beautiful process of becoming part of this place.



Lake Arpi by Cissko -
Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0



Jermuk Waterfall By WOWARMENIA
Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY SA 3

If you live in Armenia and drink its pristine mountain water for just a few months, the majority of the water molecules in your body will have originated from [Armenian springs, rivers, and aquifers](#). You're literally rebuilding yourself with water that has traveled through ancient volcanic rock, picked up minerals from Armenia's geological foundations, and carried the chemical signature of this land.

The volcanic activity that shaped this region has [blessed its waters with a unique mineral profile](#). Calcium from limestone formations, magnesium from ancient sea beds, trace amounts of potassium, and naturally occurring electrolytes that [give Armenian water its distinctive “sweet” taste](#).

When these minerals enter your bloodstream, they become integrated into your bone matrix, regulate your nerve function, and help maintain the delicate pH balance in your cells. The hydrogen and oxygen atoms in water become part of the proteins folding in your muscles, the neurotransmitters firing in your brain, and the DNA repair

mechanisms working in your cells. You become, quite literally, a [walking synthesis of Armenian terroir](#); in one way or another, it's like a fine wine, but you're the vintage.

While mainstream science debates it, some researchers even propose that water has a form of molecular memory that [retains information about substances it has encountered](#). If this is true, then when you drink water here, you're participating in an ancient cycle that connects you to [everyone who has ever called this land home](#).

So how do you become 75% Armenian without a passport? Time and water.



A Glass of Opportunity

Last month, Zabel Hayruni, General Manager at [RARE Water](#) in Armenia, invited me to visit their water factory and learn about the source of their water. Naturally filtered through volcanic rock and untouched by modern processes, the [water flows directly without any treatment](#) from the springs of the Aknaler and Anapak Mountains to the bottle.

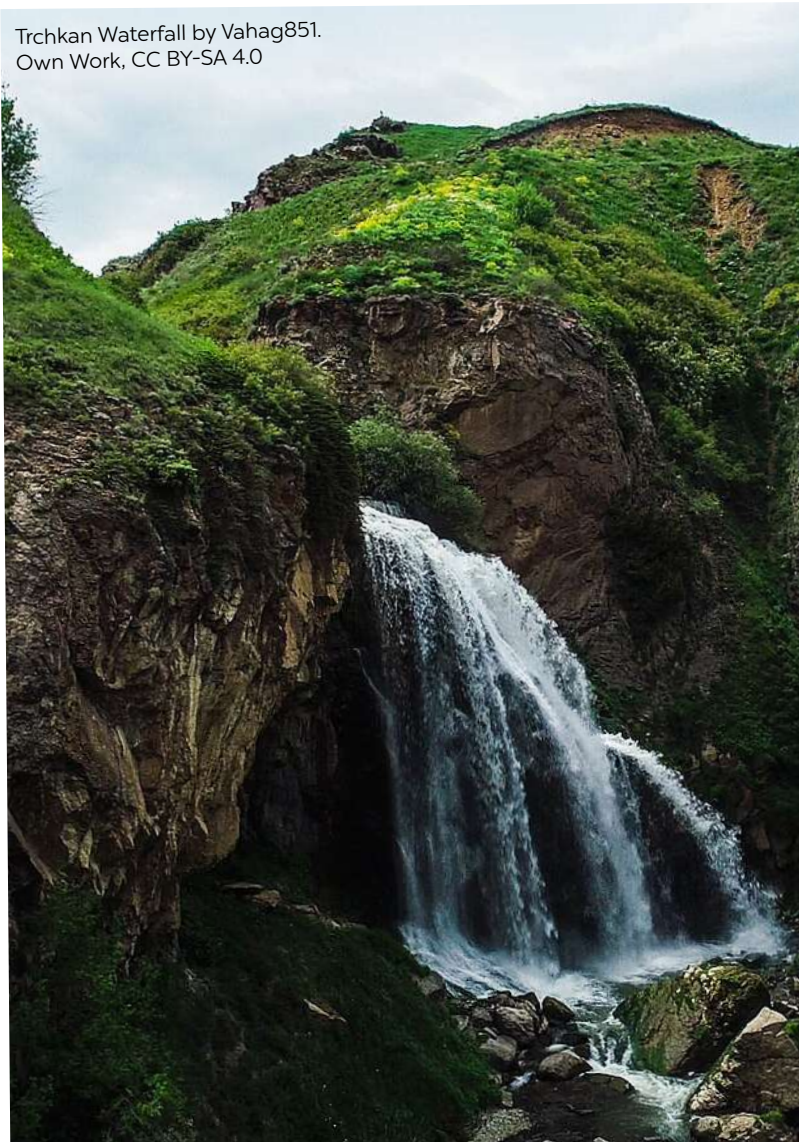


Lake Kari by MEDIACRAT, CC BY-SA 3.0



Lake Gosh by Vahag851 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0

Trchkan Waterfall by Vahag851.
Own Work, CC BY-SA 4.0



The founder of this factory, a man with no Armenian roots, first came to the country for a different business. He ended up with a water factory instead, **influenced by the incredible water he tasted in Armenia.** He brought in German and Swiss experts to locate the perfect site, imported the entire production line from Germany, and launched a project that now exports Armenian water all over the world.

According to the Swiss experts who analyzed Armenian water, its mineral composition is among the best in the world. A key factor in its quality is that it's aged for hundreds of years underground. **It turns out that water, much like wine, only gets better with age.**



This isn't a pitch for a water business. I'm telling you this story because it perfectly captures the truth about Armenian water, the untapped potential, and the opportunities you can find here. It's all about why you should give this country a chance.

Once you're here, just remember: after a few months in Armenia, **you'll love the water so much you'll be 75% Armenian.**



Lake Aghveran



City of Smile Charitable Foundation



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FROM MOLDOVA TO LAKE SEVAN

THE STORY OF GEMSAROUND AT THE SEASIDE STARTUP SUMMIT



**VECTOR
NICOARA**

FOUNDER OF GEMSAROUND

FROM MOLDOVA TO LAKE SEVAN

THE STORY OF GEM SAROUND AT THE SEASIDE STARTUP SUMMIT



I first heard about the [Seaside Startup Summit](#) from local reps who put out an open call for Moldovan startups. [StartupMoldova](#) and [EU4Innovation](#) were promoting it here, and they ended up helping us get to Armenia as well.

We've been trying to build our global presence, and we already have some spots around Armenia, so this felt like a perfect chance to apply. Maybe get some exposure, feedback, and possibly find our way into the Armenian market. I watched their promo video and thought this looks good. All these founders together, mentors with actual Silicon Valley experience; **you don't get that kind of feedback every day.**

But honestly? I had my doubts at first. I like the outdoors and all, but I'd only slept in a tent once before, for one night. Sharing a tent with strangers for days? That sounded rough. Plus, I'd be the only one from GemsAround going, which meant leaving my team behind for a whole week.

Getting There

Those doubts started disappearing pretty quickly once things got rolling. I came with other founders as part of the Moldovan delegation. Didn't know any of them before, but we clicked fast and kept helping each other out the whole time. It wasn't just about pushing our individual startups anymore. We were showing that Moldova has real talent and ideas that matter outside our borders.



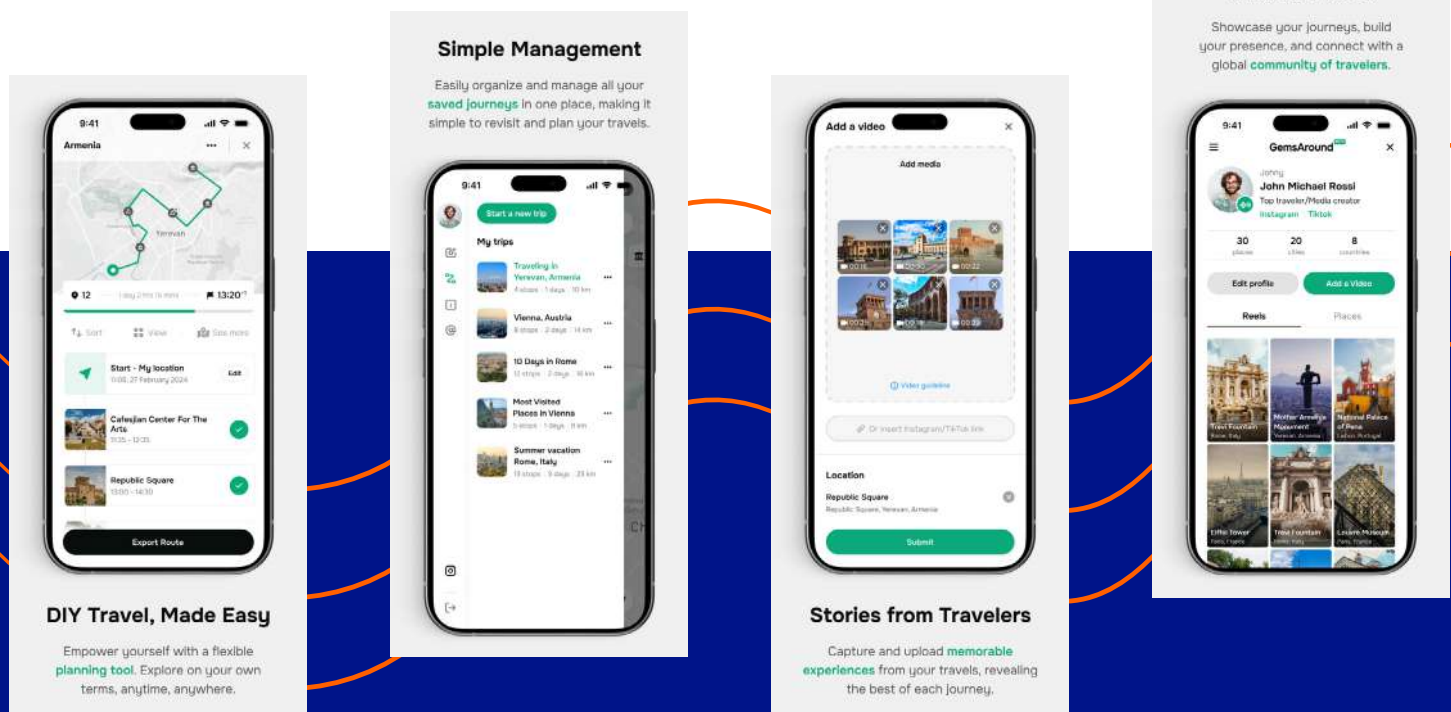
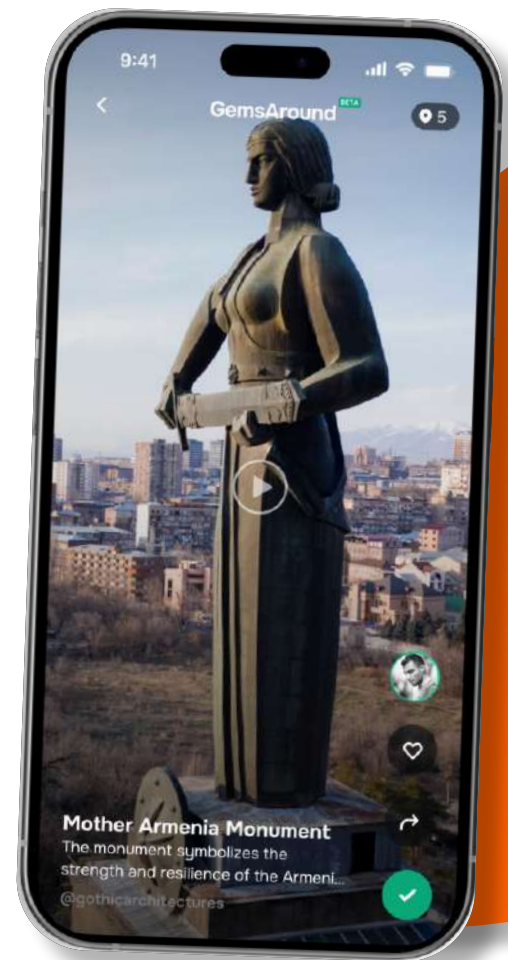
I was there for [GemsAround](#); we help travelers and locals find amazing spots through user videos, then **create personalized trips with just a few swipes**. I wanted to get that vision in front of other founders, mentors, and investors. Being in that environment can push you to bigger things. And having investment talks while **everyone's in shorts and flip-flops by Lake Sevan is different** than anything I've experienced before.

Tent Life and Tough Questions

This whole thing is as much about toughing it out as it is about pitching. **They push you way out of your comfort zone**, and that's where you actually learn stuff.

My initial worry, "We have to share this tent for days, let's see how that will go", transformed completely within just a few days. Suddenly, I found myself thinking, "Oh no, only a few more days left before we return to office life." The mountains, the collaborative energy, and **the constant buzz of innovation had become addictive**.

The workshops and one-on-ones were great. Some of them made me **question everything I thought I knew about what we're building**. But that forced me to adapt and get better. Our pitch ended up about 70% shorter but way clearer and more direct. I learned how investors actually think, how they size up startups, and how to look at our own work through their eyes.





Think Bigger

One of the biggest things I learned was to dream bigger and act bolder. Coming from Moldova, it's easy to think small or be too careful about everything. I remember Stephen Torres, our main mentor, giving this example: "If you're in Silicon Valley and say you want to be president, people take you seriously and cheer you on."

In our post-Soviet world, we set the bar way too low. This whole experience **made me realize we need to think way bigger**. Still working on that.

More Than Business

It wasn't all about business, though. The mountains, the lake, all these passionate people around you. **I met founders from all over the region**, had those late-night talks under the stars, and built connections that went way beyond the summit. Some might turn into partnerships, others into friendships; both are valuable. A few mentors even **hooked us up with potential partners**, and we're still talking to them, which is awesome.



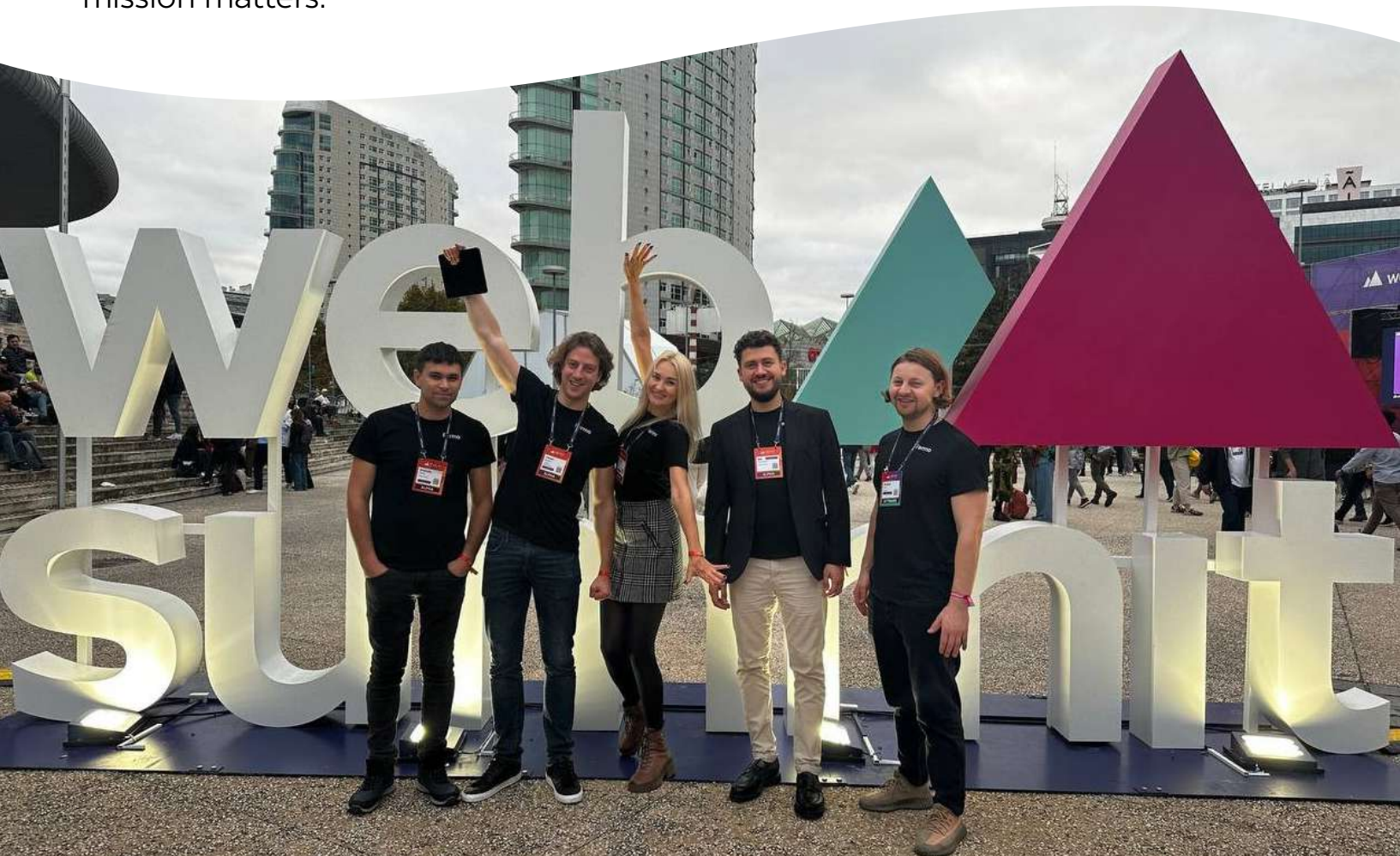
Not everything was perfect; the internet was not that good all the time, some logistics got messed up, scheduling problems. But that actually **fits perfectly with startup reality**. It's

about dealing with problems, getting uncomfortable, working with what you've got. Even though it wasn't planned, it felt right because the founder's journey is never smooth.

Would I Do It Again?

The summit reminded me that GemsAround isn't just building a travel platform; we're creating a bridge between travelers and extraordinary experiences. And sometimes, you need to step away from your desk and into a tent by Lake Sevan to remember why that mission matters.

To anyone thinking about the Seaside Startup Summit, just do it. Don't be scared to get uncomfortable and grow in ways you didn't expect. It's not just about your pitch. **You're joining a community that actually believes in ideas**, people, and taking big swings.



AND THEN, THERE IS ARMENIA

WHAT'S REALLY IN THE BOTTLE?



**DIANA
KHANDILYAN**

FOUNDER OF GLASS NOMAD



AND THEN, THERE IS ARMENIA WHAT'S REALLY IN THE BOTTLE?

Do you know what's inside a bottle of Bordeaux? No, I don't mean wine. I mean, which grapes, grown where, and how? Because in Bordeaux, those details aren't just preferences; they're rules. 1st growth, 2nd growth; **rules backed by laws, maps, and entire centuries of tradition.** Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Cabernet Franc, maybe a touch of Malbec or Petit Verdot, grown on very specific soils, right bank or left, harvested under specific conditions, and aged a certain way. That's an appellation.

Now contrast that with a "California Red Blend." Could be Zinfandel. Could be Syrah. Could be Pinot Noir, for all you know. Might come from Napa, Sonoma, or a vineyard near Costco. It's not bad; sometimes it's delicious. But it's not regulated the same way. It's built on brand, not place.

So, **as Armenia's wine scene grows, which path are we walking?** Are we headed toward clear identity and protection or tasty chaos that is easy to adulterate?





The Rules of the Land

So, what exactly is an appellation? In simple terms, it's a system that ties a wine to a specific place and sets some rules about what you're allowed to do there. What grapes can be grown? How can the wine be made? Sometimes, even how it's aged, what the vineyard looks like, or when you're allowed to harvest.

But it didn't start as some romantic idea of terroir or winemaker philosophy. Appellations were created to stop fraud. In early 20th-century France, people were selling cheap wines as "Champagne," or blending wine from

Algeria and calling it "Bordeaux." Wine was big business, and without regulation, **anyone could slap a famous name on the bottle and cash in.** It was like calling apricot vodka tuti oghi, confusing at best, dishonest at worst.

So, the French drew lines. Legal ones. They mapped out regions, decided what counted as authentic, and protected it with the force of law. Suddenly, a name on a label meant something **not just in marketing, but in courts.** Other countries followed suit. Italy created its DOCs, Spain its DOs, and the U.S. came up with AVAs

(American Viticultural Areas), which are looser but still based on geography.

At its heart, an appellation isn't just about control. It's about pride. It says: This is who we are. This is where we're from. And this is what we do best. In theory, the wine from a specific appellation will be recognizable. And if you, as a winemaker, want to do "whatever you want," you still can, but you can't put the appellation name on your label. Because appellation means something, and frequently, that something is worth more money.

And Then There's Armenia...

Now, let's come home. Armenia has been making wine **longer than France, Italy, or California even knew what a grape was.** We've got clay amphorae, ancient vines, six-thousand-year-old wine cellars buried in caves and later in monasteries. And yet no appellation system. No formal rules. Not for grapes. Not for production. Not for labeling. No grape rules. No production standards. No labeling requirements. Nothing!

You could pick Voskehat from Vayots Dzor, ferment it with wild yeast in a Karas, age it in local oak, and pour it next to a stainless-steel blend of Kangun and Chardonnay from Ararat, and both could be called "Armenian White Wine." That's it. No further questions asked.

It's part of the charm, maybe. We're still rediscovering what grows best where. We're experimenting. We're playful. But as more and more people enter the wine scene, from serious winemakers to weekend hobbyists with labels and PR budgets, it's starting to get, how do I put it, confusing.

You walk into a store, see a bottle labeled "Areni," and think you know what you're getting. But do you? Is it 100% Areni Noir from Aghavnadzor? A field blend from the border? High elevation serious and cerebral wine, or lower elevation plush and welcoming? Something mass-produced and dyed to look fancy? Or did the winemaker actually care?

Right now, **Armenian wine is being written in bold, creative strokes.** But there are no chapters. No structure. No glossary. That might work for poetry. For wine? It might be time to get organized.



Reputation Over Region

Today, if you buy a bottle of Armenian wine, chances are you're not choosing based on where it was grown. You're choosing based on who made it.

You trust Zorah? Great. You know Van Ardi always delivers? Perfect. Karas, Keush, Zulal, and ArmAs, each have built a name for themselves through quality, consistency, or clever storytelling. And let's be honest: that's how many of us buy wine. **Not by the soil, but by the label.**

But here's the thing: in most wine-producing countries, **the place matters as much as the producer.** Sometimes even more.

When you buy a Chablis, you expect a lean, mineral Chardonnay grown on Kimmeridgian limestone. When you reach for a Barolo, you're expecting Nebbiolo from specific hillside communes. That's the power of an appellation. It's a promise from the land, not just the brand.



In Armenia, we're not there yet. But we already feel the difference, even if it's not on the label.

There are hints of it, though. You can taste it in the high-altitude Voskehat grown in the basalt-rich soils of Aragatsohn — clean, floral, sometimes with a whisper of wild herbs and white mulberry.

Now take Areni, for example, the grape that's become the unofficial ambassador of Armenian reds. An Areni from Vayots Dzor, say, from Zulal, will give you something bright, elegant, and high-altitude in every sense. Grown on volcanic soils, kissed by hot days and cold nights, it often bursts with sour cherry, pomegranate, and that beautiful mountain air acidity.

Now try Van Ardi's Areni, grown in Ashtarak, a region with a different elevation, aspect, and soil structure altogether. Here, Areni comes off a bit fleshier, more spicy, more body, maybe a little darker-fruited and earthier. Still Areni. Still Armenian. Still delicious. But it tells a different story.

And yet, to the average consumer, they're both just... Areni. No mention of the region. No hint of the elevation. No indication of what makes them unique.



A Map for the Future

Now, why should an average wine lover need a PhD in winemaking or geology to pick out a bottle they like? They shouldn't. It should be right there on the label.

When the only clues are the producer and the grape, all the pressure lands on brand recognition. That might work if you know your winemakers, or if you're just lucky. But if you're trying to explore, to learn what you like, you're basically blindfolded in the tasting room.

Yes, there's controversy in the "Old World" about appellation systems; some are overly rigid, slow to adapt, and can feel restrictive in the face of dynamic agriculture, shifting climate, and evolving tastes.



Take Etna, for example. Their DOC system defines altitude limits for growing grapes. But Etna is an active volcano. Over the last decade, it's grown by more than 30 meters. Imagine cultivating your vines at the upper limit, being within the DOC, and then, suddenly, you're not, because the volcano grew.

Armenia doesn't need that kind of bureaucracy.

What we do need is protection, for our wines and for our winemakers, against fraud, confusion, and misrepresentation. And we need to help the curious drinker explore what's in the bottle with a little more confidence.

We need an appellation system that doesn't kill creativity. That doesn't limit blending, experimentation, or the wild spirit of discovery we see in so many Armenian producers. But we do need structure, a meaningful guidepost that connects place to taste. **So Armenian terroir can start speaking for itself.**

Because today, we're building a wine culture without a map. And that's still working, for now. We're small, passionate, and in the golden moment where a handful of producers can shape how a grape is perceived.

But what happens when there are hundreds?





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