Discovering VAYOTS DZOR

8 TREKS FOR ECOTOURISTS

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However much fruit a tree bears, it humbles its head that much more. [Armenian proverb]

Armenia is a country with an ancient and complex history, a rich and vital culture, an amazing and breathtaking landscape, and, above all, wise, humble and hospitable people. No travel to Armenia would be complete without having discovered the soul and hidden part of Vayots Dzor: The old “Sun Valley” (Arev a Dzor) of the country.

This guide presents 8 treks that will allow visitors and tourists to remain fascinated by the unique abundance of medieval monasteries and fortresses, the spectacular valleys, rivers and waterfalls and the exceptional biodiversity of flora and fauna that characterise the central part of Vayots Dzor.

By hiking, horseback riding or jeep tours, these treks helps avoiding the crowds of mass tourism, letting experience a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere in a spirit of full respect and harmony with the surrounding nature and the local population.

It is advisable to walk these treks together with local guides.

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USEFUL CONTACTS
TREK 1.

This route is one of top destinations of the region, attracting both local and foreign tourists all year long. In the area, the Yeghegis gorge stands out for its unique landscape and the high density of its historical monuments. The route runs through the ground road, which has very large and sometimes rocky slopes. Overnight accommodation can be organized in Shatin or Artabuynk settlement. Frequently tourists camp on the bank of the river.
The first part of the route runs through the orchards and farms of a mountain settlement where it is possible to see rural households and colorful attractions. Half way to Artabuynk-Horbateg, we turn to the right and see the Artabuynk mountain river and enjoy its sounds. The route then runs along the Artabuynk-Horbategh highway, through the orchards, in the opposite direction of the river. Before crossing the river, we encounter a spring with very cold water. We cross the newly built river bridge and start climbing the mountain up to the medieval Tsakhats Kar monastery complex (X-XI centuries). At the very beginning of the ascent, a high rocky cliff is worth noticing. On this part of the road, there are many fruit bushes where the locals feed their animals and in autumn, they gather the fruits.

In the distance, one can see Meghraqar (Honey stone) mountain where the busy bees produce wild honey in the stone hollow. Going up, the view changes very quickly so the hikers can stop from time to time to admire the astounding landscapes. The first stop is on the left side of the road, near the spring, under the giant willows. Here we find many types of berries and an incredibly rich flora, in particular several types of hawthorns, barberries, and rosehips. From here we can also enjoy a good view of Artabuynk settlement in a narrow gorge and Horbategh settlement on the mountain, looking like a green oasis.

Then we continue the road to Tsakhats Kar monastery which is on the southern slope of Smbatasar [3356 m] reaching 2100 m of altitude. On the roadside, tourist stop to the water fountain: the fresh, cold water coming from “Sevaghbyur” is a blessing for any traveler in the summer heat. From here we can clearly see both the Tsakhats Kar monastery and the inaccessible Smbataberd fortress.
At this point, no tourist can resist to capture the panorama with his camera. The landscapes are very rich and unique at these heights. Tourists frequently meet local farmers and livestock shepherds and are always pleasantly impressed by the proverbial qualities of Armenian farmers—diligence, philanthropy and hospitality.

As soon as we get to monastic site of Tsakhats Kar, we visit the ruins of first structures of the complex: St. Karapet, St. Nshan churches. Next complex is 200 m away from the first one. The yard of the monastic complex offers a sensorial picnic at 2100 m above sea level in company of the local pilgrims.

We move to the majestic medieval fortress Smbataberd (X century), reaching an altitude of 1950 m. From Tsakhats Kar to Smbataberd the path offers a gorgeous scenery of Yeghegis gorge and Teksar mountain chain which open up to the visitors. We encounter various attractive plants in the changing landscapes. Singing birds always accompany us in the bushes. Being carried away by the beautiful panorama of our highland, we barely realize we have already reached the huge fortress built in the X century. Along the way we point out at the tracks of the old water line through which the water was brought to the guards of the fortress.

After getting acquainted with the citadel and capturing the magnificent panoramas of the surrounding area with the camera, we begin to ascend towards the ancient Yeghegis residence.
Possible stops
When ascending, three stops and photo stops are planned. One of them is near a cold water spring.

Specific dangers
When travelling by jeep the road is safe. When walking, hikers must watch out for snakes and other animals.

Water information
Although the area is rich in natural springs, the hikers are nevertheless advised to have drinking water with them because of the heat.

FURTHER INFORMATION
The attractive sights of the route are:
• The Tsakhats Kar (X-XI centuries) monastery complex with St. Karapet, St. Nshan and St. Hovhannes churches, only two of which are reconstructed.
• The Smbatabert fortress (V-X centuries), the largest fortress in Armenia with an area of 6.5 hectares.
• The ruins of the medieval Yeghegis city, the prince’s residence with the Zorats temple (XIV century), St. Karapet, St. Astvatsatsin churches and large number of cross stones.

FLORA: Hawthorns, thymes, barberries, honey herbs.

FAUNA: Birds, wild goats, wolves, bears, boars.

SMBATABERT
The medieval majestic fortress Smbataberd is at 1950 m of altitude. The citadel has 3 entrances of which the main entrance is the most accessible. The fortress of an area of about 6.5 hectares is built on the high cliffs and only at the northern side of a giant castle, which our ancestors used wisely. There are about 123 houses in the area of the citadel, which are controlled by the citadel of an absolute height of 1970 m. The «Entrance of the Prince» at the east side is noteworthy. There are high towers built on the right and left sides. The underground tunnel of this fortress, established to connect it with the outside world, has not yet been found.
TSAKHATS KAR

The site is formed by two complexes of structures. The Eastern complex is composed by St. Karapet, St. Nshan churches and cross stones scattered everywhere. They offer a very unique beauty of ornaments. This complex is a remarkable witness of the great talent and diligence of the medieval Armenian masonry specialists. It is distinguished by the boldest architectural solutions that we do not see in the rich Armenian Church building. The western complex, which is about 200 m away from the first one, is today completely ruined and is waiting for restoration. The scale of this complex recalls its ancient power. There are also preserved oil extraction and mill stones, artificial clay tiles employed in ancient times to make manuscripts.
Trek 1.

This route is one of the top destinations of the region, attracting both local and foreign tourists all year long. In the area, the Yeghegis gorge stands out for its unique landscape and the high density of its historical monuments. The route runs through the ground road, which has very large and sometimes rocky slopes. Overnight accommodation can be organized in Shatin or Artabuynk settlement and, if desired, in Yeghegnadzor. Frequently tourists camp on the bank of the river.

Trek 2.

This route is probably one of the most accessible and most sought-after routes in Vayots Dzor. The path can be traveled entirely by foot, by car or alternately by foot on one way and by car on the way back to the starting point. The majestic waterfall along the path makes it unique and magical, while the beautiful singing of the birds accompanies each step. The river’s waters are plentiful only in spring.
The excursion begins at the vicinity of St. Hakob church of Vernashen settlement. Here we can also find the Museum of History managed by the Gladzor Medieval University and operational since 1984. On the same year, UNESCO supported the celebration of the 1700th anniversary of the University. If desired, tourists can visit the museum at the end of the tour. In fact, many exhibits which cover the history of the university are constantly on display.

The route starts along the northern river valley of Vernashen settlement, passing through the endless orchards. The locals call this neighbourhood ”Verin Dzor”, meaning “Upper Gorge”. Moving towards the river, we pass along a small reservoir built on Gladzor branch of Arpa River in order to collect and distribute irrigation water. The ascent starts here, precisely at 1520 m of altitude.

The path leads to a narrow gorge called ”Link of Prosh”, where we can admire numerous waterfalls from the high rocks. The first stop is planned at the source of the river, sheltered under a large walnut tree. The locals call this source ”Bouz Khana”. Afterwards, we pass along the high rocks and continue to the left going up the affluent Spitakavor of the Gladzor river. We then arrive to the river valley which has become a summer residence for locals. Tourists can finally get in touch with them and appreciate their proverbial hospitality. Moreover, from here, we can admire the fortress of Vayots Dzor-Proshaberd.

Continuing the path along the gorge, we reach 1900 m of altitude. From here we are about 1.7 km far from St. Astvatsatsin monastery of Spitakavor, which is on the southern slope of the Teksar Mountain. Locals call this monastery ”Gyulvank-Tsaghkevank” [“monastery of
flowers”), an impressive architectural monument which stands out in the magic natural environment. From here, a steep rise awaits the tourists wanting to reach Spitakavor. The monastery is located at the absolute height of 2100 m, in the vicinity of a giant walnut tree, under which there is a cold-water spring. This is one of the favourite places for local pilgrimages. In fact, since the sacred relics of Garegin Nzhdeh have been buried under the southern wall of the monastery, it has become a place of great importance. It is a perfect location to organize an unforgettable picnic in the large pavilion under the walnut tree.

We then return along the main way. This is the summer residence for local shepherds and beekeepers. In these landscapes, more than a hundred species of plants grow on each km² area. That is why Vayots Dzor honey has such a unique taste and flavour. When the weather is clear, from here we can also admire the Biblical Ararat and the whole Vayots Dzor.

After one last glance at Spitakavor and Proshaberd and fixing the unique scene we return to Vernashen by car or on foot.
Possible stops
There are 4 places on the route for stops and taking pictures.

Dangers
Travelling by jeep is safe, while, if walking, tourists must watch out for snakes or other dangerous animals.

Water information
There are natural springs along the route. The locals drink spring water. But it is recommended, nevertheless, to bring your own water bottle, especially in hot summers.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Attractive sights (monuments to see):
- Spitakavor Church (XIII-XIV centuries).
- Proshaberd fortress (X-XIV centuries).
- Waterfalls.
- Canyon.

FLORA: Wild pear, walnut trees, hawthorn, heracleum.

FAUNA: Birds, wolves, bears, hedgehogs.

ENTERTAINMENT: In Gladzor, wine and fruit-vodka tasting room.

THE GREAT ODYSSEY OF NZHDEH

This great political and military celebrity dedicated his whole life to his nation and motherland. Due to his struggle, the historical Syunik was not conquered.
But he was persecuted and was forced to exile.
Forty years after his death, his remains were moved and buried in the yard of Spitakavor church which is now a pilgrimage for Armenians all over the world. Every year, on June 17th, thousands of people visit his holy tomb.

MEDIEVAL ESTATE OF THE PAHLAVOUNIES

The Pahlavounies are the most significant family in the history of Armenia: its members being well-known state, military, scientific, educational figures. During the reign of Bagratunies, the estates of the Armenian Sparapet Vahram Pahlavouny are now protected forests of Her-Her and the river basin. In particular, the role of Grigor Martiros Pahlavouny was significant in the Armenian history. He was a significant philosopher, a public figure and an organizer of educational activities. He was also the founder of the high education institutions of Syunik-Vayots Dzor and an initiator of the construction of several churches.
Trek 3.

This route takes us back to the very origins of civilization allowing to admire a field of pictograms of 8-6 thousand years ago. The sources of the two largest rivers of the region, Arpa and Yeghegis, are found in these mountains. The rich flora and fauna encountered along the path changes constantly because the route crosses different landscapes, from the steppe at 1700 - 2000 m height to the mountain-meadow landscape of Hermon. Overnight stay can be arranged in guesthouses located in the mountain settlements of the Yeghegis gorge.
The route departs from the settlement of Hermon to the mountainous Goghtanik settlement. The path first goes upstream along the Yeghegis river and then crosses the mountain pass leading to Karmrashen settlement on the Teqsar mountain chain. Goghtanik is the last remaining rural settlement in this area at an altitude of 1850 meters. Here many local people stay in their summerhouses and are engaged in animal breeding and bee-keeping activities. Tourists can organize an overnight stay in these settlements. From the Northern slopes of Teqsar, the only open area of the Arpa-Sevan underground tunnel is visible. It is a hydro energy miracle construction in the Yegegis Gorge. Here the tourists get to know about this unique great project in the world with great interest, allowing the Arpa river to flow from the Kechut reservoir to the pearly Sevan through a 48.3 km-long underground tunnel.

The road later leads to the petroglyphs field. Along the way, we can stop to take photos and capture magnificent landscapes of the Yeghegis gorge and of Mount Ararat. It is also likely to encounter local people working, herds of cows and sheep, sharp-eyed eagles, shepherd dogs, to name a few. It is not encouraged for this reason to go too far from the jeep during these stops. It is at this height that the mountainous rivers find their source. Millions of years ago, the ancestors engraved many illustrations on giant stones. Nowadays, they attract many curious people from different countries of the world. About 1.5 km from the petroglyphs field, there is a giant burial site where about 200 tombs are shaped with the form of ancient kromeleks and menhirs (pillar).
Possible stops
Three stops are planned for photos. However, some extra stops are sometimes inevitable due to wild animals or eagles along the route.

Water information
There are just a few natural springs along the route. Therefore, it is highly recommended to bring your own water bottles, especially in hot summers.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Attractive sights:
- The open part of Arpa-Sevan tunnel in the distance.
- Old burial site.
- Petroglyph’s field.
- Spitakavor Church (XIII-XIV centuries).

Flora: Wild berries—rosehips, hawthorn and rowans.

Fauna: Birds, eagles.

Entertainment: Groups can enjoy homemade meals and taste local agricultural products.
TREK 4.

Goghtanik is a highland settlement in the Yeghegis gorge. It is truly a delightful spot to organize the best entertainment during the hot summer. The territory is rich of many unique plants growing at an altitude of 1850 m, which are used abundantly by the local population in their traditional cuisine, but also as natural remedies, body care and, naturally, for their exquisite tea. Various settlements of the Vayots Dzor town are scattered in the surroundings, each hiding a rich history.
The winding route surmounts the mountain pass, crosses the Karmrashen plateau, then passing through the mountainous Karmrashen settlement. The path takes us also across the cross stone field of historical Guteny settlement and, allows the view of the Vayots mountain volcanic cone.

Once reached the mountain pass at 2400 m height, the route starts descending to the large plateau of Karmrashen, where we meet many friendly and hospitable beekeepers and mountain dwellers. In these landscapes, we can find more than 100 species of plants per each km². This allows for unique and exclusive honey being produced in the region. We continue our way to the Karmrashen mountainous settlement where the locals are mostly engaged in animal breeding. The settlement was founded during the Soviet era and borders the historic settlement of Guteny, guarded by the Vayots Dzor mountain (2586 m) on the western side. Here we can walk around and admire many cross-stones forged by medieval masters. At the edge of the Karmrashen plateau, we can also see the settlement of Her-Her that appears between the orchards.

Moving along the river, we encounter a beautiful waterfall. It is one of the favorite places for locals and tourists. We continue our way to the top of the extinct volcano Mount Vayots by jeeps, on foot or on horseback. A nice relaxing break we needed next to the cold spring that locals call «Spring with sand». It’s before reaching the top.

The locals of Vayots Dzor call Mount Vayots with different names: Mount Gizh (“Fool Mountain”), Mount Tsak (“Mountain with a hole”), Dalik (“Fool”), Dali Tapa (“Fool mountain”). Its crater is 125 m deep. It is the deepest regular cylindrical crater in Armenia. It has almost 2 km of perimeter and about 600 m of diameter.
We can get acquainted with the surroundings, by car or to make it more interesting, we can go down to the bottom of the crater on foot. In this area, untouched by the human footprint, we can breathe a magical atmosphere: it was here that famous hermit Nu spent most of his life.

**GOGHTANIK WATERFALL**

Right on the edge of the settlement, one can admire the beautiful Goghtanik waterfall of the river Yeghegis, with its clean clear waters. Locals and tourists come here to relax and swim in the river.

**HERBAL PLANTS**

This route is rich in many useful edible plants. These plants are also the source of honey. There are six types of Helichrysum in the forest. This route is rich also in many herbs that are used for medical purposes like: secale, hypericum rumex.
**Possible stops**
There are some spots along the route for photo stops: near the spring, at the foot and top of Mount Vayots.

**Dangers**
Travelling by jeep is safe, while, if walking, tourists must watch out for snakes or other dangerous animals.

**Water information**
There are just a few natural springs along the route. Therefore, it is highly recommended to bring your own water bottle, especially in hot summers.

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**FURTHER INFORMATION**

Attractive sights:
- The cross stone field of historical Guteny settlement.
- The scenic top of the Mount Vayots.
- The crater of Mount Vayots.

**Flora**: Wild berries—rosehips, hawthorn and rowan.

**Fauna**: Birds, eagles.

**Entertainment**: Groups can enjoy homemade meals and taste local agricultural products.
TREK 5.

The route is recommended all year round, since, even during the winter season, ski lovers will find abundant snow and breathtaking landscapes. The beautiful valley of Arpa is located at the center of Vayots Dzor. From the top of Mount Vayots, one can admire the entire valley and, far away to the south, also Her-Her stream is visible, while to the West, Mount Ararat stands out with its fascinating snowy peaks.
Trek 5.
From Karmashen to St. Sion

The route gently runs along the mountain slopes passing through rich vegetation. In this area, locals cultivate wheat, barley, alfalfa and lentils. Going further, the path goes through endless grasslands and the Karmrashen settlement before reaching xerophilous landscapes of volcanic sand and slag. After climbing up the volcanic cone, we walk about 2 km on the edge of the crater and then descend to the bottom of the crater.

After admiring the wonderful Vayots Dzor view from the top, we climb down to the historical Her-Her settlement. To the east, the small Blue mountain chain, covered with juniper forests, now a protected natural area, provides us with an amazing view. Besides the rare plant species of the area, we can also find spectacular historical monuments, like the St. Sion basilica, crouched on top of the cliff above the small Her-Her River canyon, the Blue Fortress and St. Gevorg Church. Beyond the mountains, in the valley of Arpa there is the Gndevank monastery, dating back to X century.

Main difficulties
The road is bumpy and disrupted, encountering rough and uneven terrain, covered in volcanic sand and slag.
Mount Vayots is an extinct volcano. Its cone has a relative height of about 500 m from the surrounding plateau, a crater of 600 m in diameter and a depth of 125 m. Hikers can walk around the crater, which has almost 2 km circumference, while enjoying breathtaking landscapes of Vayots Dzor at 360°. In particular, when the weather is clear, one can enjoy the magnificent view of Mount Ararat to the west. The well-known mountain Husosar (also known as Muradsar 3214 m) can be seen from the North-Eastern side of the volcano. Below, one can admire the Her-Her river and its reservoir and, farther away, the Tandzik reservoir of the Arpa River.
Possible stops
There are four great spots along the route for photo stops: near the spring, at the foot of Mount Vayots, inside the crater and at St. Sion in Her-Her.

Dangers
If walking, tourists must watch out for snakes or other dangerous animals as well as for the bumpy and disrupted road.

Water information
There are two natural springs along the route. Nevertheless, it is recommended to bring your own water bottle, especially in hot summers.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Attractive sights:
- The volcanic crater of Mount Vayots.
- Medieval cross stones.
- St. Sion basilica.

Flora: Herbal plants (gephalaria, helichrysum, gentiana, hippomarathrum), mushrooms, cereals.

Fauna: Hares, foxes, rodents, lizards, snakes and birds.

Entertainment: Picnic area near the spring.
TREK 6.

This tour is mainly by jeep but there are some parts that are nevertheless also suitable for hiking. The rich flora and fauna of this route vary depending on the altitudes.
The route starts from the Gladzor settlements, where the History Museum of Gladzor Medieval University is located. Here, in 1984, the 1700th anniversary of Gladzor University was celebrated with great festivity. Continuing the route, we first encounter the XIII century St. Stepanos Monastery complex of Tanahat, then the St. Khach monastery of Aryaz, where, according to the legend, the sacred relic of Christ’s cross is preserved. For this reason, every year during autumn, thousands of pilgrims come to the “sacred cross”.

In the adjacent area of the monastery, we can meet with local farmers and experience unforgettable moments of Armenian hospitality. The monastery surroundings also host newly planted orchards which are a favorite destination for many tourists. In this area, in fact, one can also get acquainted with the secrets of Vayots Dzor beekeeping.

We then continue ascending the Mount Vayots Sar encountering livestock farms, beekeepers, locals gathering herbs and berries. Once reached the 2200 m high plateau, we continue the route on foot. Here the landscape rich in vegetation allows for spectacular views. Between spring and early summer, one can find many edible plants, tea plants and many types of mushrooms. Once at the top of Vayots Sar, we will enjoy an unforgettable picnic in the crater of the volcano, near the spring.

We continue our journey towards Karmrashen – Her-Her, encountering the spectacular cross-stone tomb known as Guteny, St. Sion and St. Gevorg churches, the Blue Fortress and the Guardian mountain.

After climbing down the top of the mountain the tour will continue by jeep and reach Karmrashen and Her-Her mountainous settlements.
Possible stops
Possible stops are at St. Khach church in Tanahat, at mountain dwellers, next to the spring, at the foot and top of Mount Vayots, inside its crater and in the Her-Her settlement.

Dangers
No specific dangers.

Water information
There are natural springs on the route. Nevertheless, it is recommended to bring your own water bottle, especially in hot summers.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Attractive sights:
• St. Stepanos monastery in Tanahat (XIII century).
• St. Khach monastery in Arkyaz (XII century).
• St. Sion in Her-Her (X-XIII centuries).
• Mount Vayots crater.

Flora: Hawthorn, hyme, rosehip, falcaria, phleum, tragopogon.

Fauna: Hares, foxes, rodents, lizards, snakes, birds.

Entertainment: In Gladzor it is possible to visit an underground cellar which serves as wine and fruit-vodka tasting room. Groups can also order traditional family supper and taste local agricultural products.

GLADZOR UNIVERSITY

Hermon is a small settlement in the vicinity of Yeghegis and Arates rivers at 1720 m height surrounded by giant walnut trees and bearing the medieval name of Hermonavank. The locals call this place also “Gyunayvanq” because it is located on the high slopes of the Yeghegis canyon at the base of a high cliff. At that time, there was a school founded by students of Gladzor University, where many manuscripts were written. Only the outer walls of a half-ruined church have been preserved. Not far from Hermonavank, a miracle waterfall flows from the rocks. It is visible all year round. According to the inscriptions, the renowned medieval Gladzor University operated in these inaccessible heights.
TREK 7.

This route is relatively short and entertaining. We can see many historical monuments and a spectacular nature including the Arates waterfall, the caves and the ruins of Arates monastic complex.
Starting from Hermon we reach the Arates monastic complex. The road passes along the river and the sound of the waterfalls constantly accompanies the hike. One of the waterfalls falls into the deep canyon at a height of 6 metres. If desired, tourists can descend to the waterfall, deviating to the right from the route.

Arates is a settlement with great tourism potential, offering impressive caves, the Arates tributary, with its deep gorges, many orchards, rich fauna and the Arates Forest. In recent years, it also hosts many events, such as «School in Nature», involving school-age children from nearby settlements and from the capital Yerevan. On the way back from the monastic complex, the view of the high peaks of the Teqsar Ridge and the slopes reaching the Eucalyptus Gorge create unforgettable natural landscapes.

The route continues the way to the Goghtanik waterfall, located near the settlement of Hermon, about 4 km far from the settlement of Yeghegis. The waterfall is extremely inviting for a swim, especially during hot summers, while the surrounding nature is fascinating, with steep cliffs, basalt pillars and volcanic rocks. This place has not surprisingly become a favorite resort for many tourists visiting Vayots Dzor.

Along the road, it is also possible to fish in the clean waters of the Yeghegis River. Here, many beekeepers bring their beehives during summer, in order to produce the unique high-quality Vayots Dzor honey. The route ends in the Goghtanik mountain settlement, which is 1850 m above sea level and guarantees a cool and pleasant overnight stay.
ARATES MONASTERY

The site, which is half-ruined but still shows a beautiful architecture, is comprised of three churches adjacent to each other, built during the X and XV centuries. Siranes, the talented teacher of the great Momik, has contributed greatly to the construction of this complex. Arates Monastery was known since the Middle Ages as a great school, producing many manuscripts. It is said that, in the Middle Ages, the complex was the summer residence of the metropolitans of Syunik.
Possible stops
The route allows countless photo stops, given the beauty of its surrounding nature.

Dangers
No specific dangers.

Water information
There are many natural springs on the route. Nevertheless, it is recommended to bring your own water bottles, especially in hot summers.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Attractive sights:
- Arates waterfall.
- Arates monastic complex (X-XIII centuries).
- The caves of Arates.
- The basalt columns.
- The Goghtanik waterfall.

Flora: Walnut, wild pear, white mushrooms, lilies, tussilago, garduus, echinops.

Fauna: Birds, butterflies, lizards, bears.

Entertainment: Fishing activities, traditional family supper and local agricultural products tasting.
TREK 8.

This route, which starts and returns to Shatin, is the most attractive and accessible. On the trail one can frequently find bears' footprints. Here, locals love to recall remarkable stories about bears and other wildlife encounters.
In case of accommodation in Hostun, in the district of Shatin, the route can start from the ruins of the historic Vostink church. This ancient three-dimensional basilica church is located in the Vostink settlement. Despite the ruined roof and the cracked walls, the architecture clearly shows the great talent of the medieval masters.

In the neighborhood, there are other remains of ancient settlements. Hostoun monastery is located on a mountain slope of a deep gorge, which is visible only when ascending the mountain. Crossing the orchards, fields, the route leads to a platform on the edge of the Yeghegis River, allowing the observation of Bezoar goats. From here, we can also enjoy a very good view of the opposite slopes of Mount Aytsasar. It is also a good point to spot other wild animals.

The route continues and soon after the ascent to Shativank Monastery begins. In the first part, the road is not easily accessible and is very steep. Along the trail, we can admire wonderful scenarios and spot many berries, hawthorn, wild pear, barberry, giant walnut trees, oil-nut trees, wild plum trees and other edible plants.

After 3.5 km, we encounter the Shativank ruins. Proceeding along the route, the fortress of Smbataberd (X century) can be seen in the distance. Finally, the road reaches the settlement.
Shativank was built in the X century under the rule of Syunyats’ Lady Sofia, serving as an important educational center. The ruins of the water mill and other ancient findings are still the evidence of Shativank’s old prosperity. In the surroundings, there is a spring, near which locals often organize pilgrimages and sacred dinners. Each year, the solemn ceremony called ”The Monastery Day” is devotedly celebrated by the Shatin people every first weekend of November.
Possible stops
It is possible to rest in the gorge, under the walnut trees. The tourists can taste walnut, hawthorn, rosehip, barberry, wild pear.

Water information
It is definitely necessary for the hikers to have their own water bottle. But there is abundant spring water near the monastery all year long.

FURTHER INFORMATION
Attractive sights:
• The ruins of the Historic Vostink.
• The Hostoun Monastery (X-XIV centuries).
• Bezoar Goat Observation Point.
• Basalt columns.
• Shativank Monastery (X century).
• The ruins of an ancient mill.
• Modern Shatin settlement graves.

Flora: Walnut, wild pear, many species of hawthorn, rosehip, oil-nut and many types of plants.

Fauna: Bezoar goats, foxes, reptiles, birds.

Entertainment: Bezoar Goat Observation Point is a good place for entertainment.
Legend

- **Curch**
- **Ruins**
- **Fortress**
- **Springs**
- **Bird watching**
- **Hiking**
- **Horse**
- **Jeep**
- **Fauna**
- **Flora**
- **Entertainment**

**USEFUL CONTACTS**

**ECOTOURISM INFORMATION CENTER «AREVADZOR»**

Address: 8/02 Narekatsy street, c. Yeghegnadzor, Vayots Dzor Region.

By contacting the Regional Tourism Centre it is possible to get information on:

- Local guides
- B&Bs along the 8 treks
- Hotels and other accommodation
- Places to taste local food and beverages
- Flora and fauna
- Sports and cultural activities available in the area

**Tel: +374-0281-20-603**
E-Mail: arevadzor@mail.ru
Website: www.arevadzor.pic.am

**RESCUE SERVICE: 911, 112**

**It is advisable to walk these treks together with local guides.**
“The European Union is made up of 28 Member States who have decided to gradually link together their know-how, resources and destinies. Together, during a period of enlargement of 50 years, they have built a zone of stability, democracy and sustainable development whilst maintaining cultural diversity, tolerance and individual freedoms.

The European Union is committed to sharing its achievements and its values with countries and peoples beyond its borders”.

The European Commission is the EU’s executive body.

www.arevadzor.eu