

Hiking Trail: Tatev to Khustup

“From Father in Heaven to Mother Nature”

www.arkarmenia.com

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General Description

This new trail encourages visitors to Armenia to look beyond the popular tourist destinations and explore its relatively unknown and untouched treasures. The trail starts from the famous monastery of Tatev, travels through magical forests and open fields, diverse animal and plant habitats, ancient villages and important historical sites, before finishing at the sacred Mount Khustup. Hence the motto of the trail: *From Father in Heaven to Mother Nature*.

Total Distance 80.3 km **Total Time** 6-8 days **Difficulty** Low-Medium



Ethos of the Trail

This trail is designed to turn the Syunik region of Southern Armenia into a new hub for ethical ecotourism. It will open a gateway for people to explore the unique natural beauty of the south, placing an emphasis on a reconnection with nature and a holistic lifestyle. Hikers are encouraged to forage for food and engage with recently established ecoprojects on the trail, such as innovative permaculture sites.

The ecological NGO that has overseen completion of the trail, ARK Armenia, hopes that it will create a belt of sustainable, environmentally-friendly economy in the region, that is an alternative to the mining industry, which has been detrimental to the Armenian landscape. In doing so, it will generate new jobs in local communities in an effort to curb the rapid mass migration in Armenia from villages to cities.

Ten Steps to Identity

The trail comprises of 10 main segments, which we call the '10 Steps to Identity':

1 – Tatev Monastery to Tadzaver

2 – Tadzaver to Antardashat

3 – Antardashat to Arajadzor

4 – Arajadzor to Shxarshik

5 – Shxarshik to Vahanavank

6 – Vahanavank to Bekh

7 – Bekh to Bekh Napat

8 – Bekh Napat to Vachagan

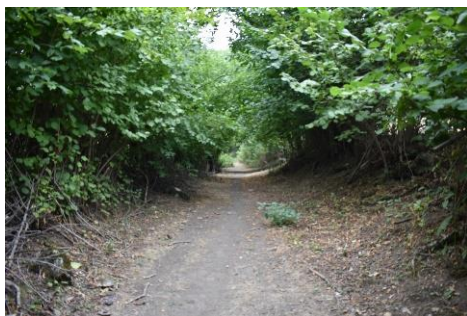
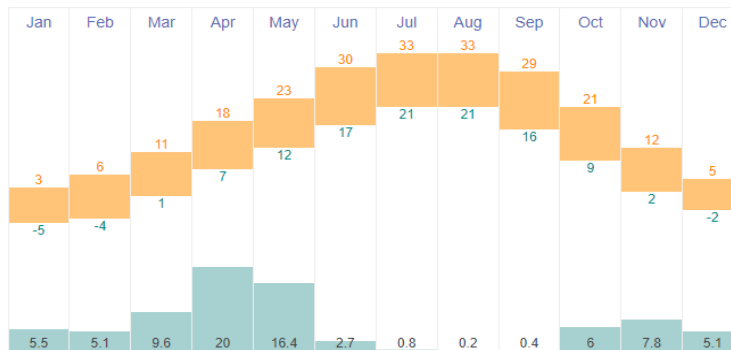
9 – Vachagan to Baghaburj

10 – Baghaburj to Khrustup

Description of the Route

The general difficulty of the trail is relatively easy, opening it up to visitors of all types. For the more adventurous trekkers, it is possible to complete two or more of the above sections in one day (see the individual section guides for information on distances and walking times). Many sections of the path have long periods of climbing uphill, however the incline is gradual and forgiving. Only the final segment, Mount Khustup, presents a moderate challenge in terms of fitness, although there are no sections of serious climbing.

The trail is accessible for most of the year, but it is recommended to come between March and November. Note that snow can remain on the peak of Khustup until the middle of May. In spring and autumn, the weather can be quite changeable and unpredictable so keep an eye on weather forecasts.



The terrain is varied throughout the trail, but mainly consists of leafy pathways under a canopy of lush forest. There are some sections that are exposed to the sun and therefore suitable headwear is recommended.

Parts of the path become muddy following rainfall and walkers are required to hop across stepping stones to traverse some minor streams. However, the footing is very secure throughout.



There are several sections where the trail narrows and it is necessary to walk through thorny vegetation. Many walkers will prefer full-length pants/trousers to avoid cuts, but shorts are still appropriate if you do not mind some minor scratches and having your legs tickled.

The trail is well signposted and marked throughout. A detailed map (.gpx file) is downloadable from the Ark Armenia website. It is recommended that you download the guidebooks for each individual section, which provide detailed descriptions of the path and terrain, as well as information about historical sites and camping/accommodation.

The trail has been blazed by white and red paint markings, and all meaningful turns or crossroads are accompanied by metal signposts, which also display the distance to the final location of the segment. For clarification, some areas also have painted X crosses so as to not stray off the trail.



On the trail you will come across many local people, who, as is the case throughout Armenia, are extremely friendly and happy to assist you, potential language barrier permitting. It is also common to be gifted seasonal fruit from their gardens or even invited into their house for a drink, so it is always worth saying ‘barev’ (hello) to anyone you encounter.

There are regular water points on the trail, as indicated in the individual sections guides, however do not be afraid to ask local people to fill your flasks from the taps in their houses – they will happily oblige in most instances.



Accommodation & Food

There are several places along the trail that are able to accommodate hikers, from individuals to large groups. Ark Armenia operates two newly-established camps – in Tandzaver and Baghaburj – which have microcabins and space for tents. Both locations have hot showers, toilets, fresh water, electricity from solar panels and a fireplace where it is possible to make a bonfire or cook. The Baghaburj site also functions as a permaculture garden. Ark also has a volunteer base in Arajadzor, where they are able to host groups of tourists (6+).

A recommended guest house has recently opened in Antarashat that has space for up to fifteen guests. The same host is able to offer other services, including catering.

At the time of writing, there are currently no shops in the villages on the route. Before the trail becomes more developed, Ark Armenia has made arrangements with local villagers who will sell essential items from their homes. For larger groups, Ark can arrange to deliver food and drink from Kapan. It is also possible to walk into Kapan from the Baghaburj site.

Wild camping is legal in Armenia and there is plenty of space on the trail for this. The best spots are indicated below.

Flora and Fauna

You will encounter great biodiversity while on the trail. In the forest it is not unusual to come across red deer, which inhabit the whole Caucasus Mountain region. For the lepidopterists among you, butterfly life is diverse and abundant. You will see birds of prey circling overhead, including the eastern imperial eagle. While on the trail keep a watchful eye out for the ‘gurza’ snake – a small black-grey viper that is poisonous, but will swiftly slither into the nearest bush when it detects approaching footsteps. Brown bears do inhabit higher forested regions, but very rarely encroach on the human population. Apart from that, you are likely to encounter herds of cows blocking the trail. The animals are extremely docile, do not be afraid to pass by them.

Edible Forest



Brambles/blackberries are the most abundant fruit on the trail in August and September. They are a fairly good source of iron, vitamin C and antioxidants, and are generally eaten fresh, in preserves, or in baked goods.



They are often accompanied by elderberry bushes. These berries can be eaten raw but are usually cooked in a variety of sweet or savory dishes. They are used to make jams, jellies and syrups and are grown commercially for the juice market. The fruit is also used locally in the preparation of vodka and traditional medicines.



Similarly abundant is the hip fruit, also known as rose hip or dog rose. It is used in the region to make tea, especially during sickness because of its vitamin C content. However, it can cause bowel difficulties if eaten in large quantities.



Another fruit that you will see throughout the trail is the cornel (Cornelian Cherry), or dogwood. Like the abovementioned plants, this small, red fruit ripens in August and September. It is good for making jams and preserves. Again, it is used locally in the vodka making process.



Although more of a rarity, it is possible to come across mint on the trail. Take clippings of the leaves to be used in brewing tea or food flavourings.



In more wet pastures – namely on approach to Mount Khustup – you will see hogweed or cow parsnip plant, which is indigenous to the region. Be careful around this plant because it contains a toxic sap that can cause severe skin irritation or even burns when exposed to UV light. This plant can be eaten raw if the skin is removed (not advisable for non-exerts) and is also used as preserve.



Hazelnuts appear from late August, and walnut can be gathered from September to November.



In July and August can find a lot of plums along the trail. Wild apples and pears are also abundant, ripening late summer. Peaches are at their sweetest after the first frost in November or December.

Wild garlic is also available between April and June.



A wide range of local herbs sprout between March and May, which are used to make local bread 'zhengalov hatz'.

Additional Trails

There are currently five additional routes, which connect to the main trail, that are recommended as day hikes (see the Ark Armenia website for more information):

11 – Shxarshik to Baghaberd

12 – Bardzravan to Tandzaver

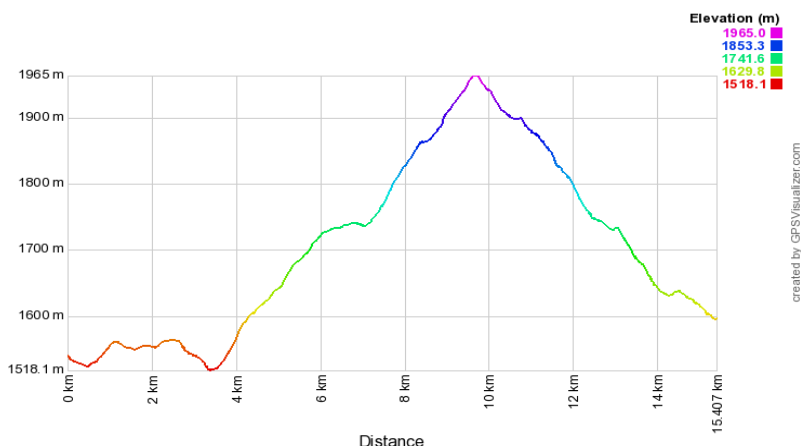
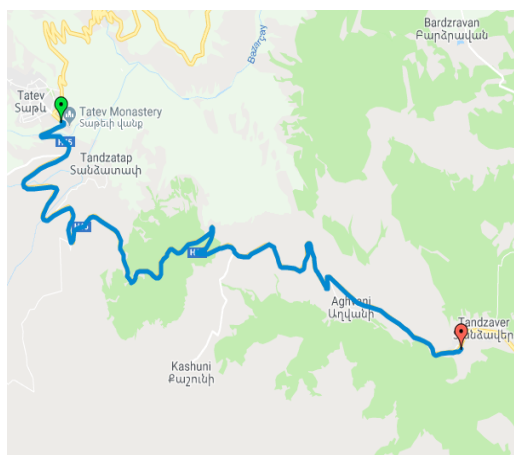
13 – Tandzaver to Verin Khotanan

14 – Verin Khotanan to Taurus

15 – Verin Khotanan to Shrvenants

Section One Tatev Monastery - Tandzaver

Distance 15 km **Time** 4-5 hours **Difficulty** Easy



General Description The trail embarks from the steps of the Tatev Monastery – the most visited tourist site in Southern Armenia – and finishes at the picturesque village of Tandzaver. It follows the road, connecting several quaint villages on route, and takes in breathtaking views of the monastic complex and, after a short climb, incredible vistas of the valley below. After passing the main viewpoints, there is very limited traffic on the road, with most other cars accessing the south of Armenia on the road via Goris to the east.

This section of the trail is also suitable as a cycling path, and a company renting bikes and quadbikes is due to open soon in Tatev and Tandzaver.



Tatev Monastery is a 9th century historical monument, one of the oldest and most famous monastic complexes in Armenia. During medieval times Tatev Monastery was a vital scholastic, enlightenment and spiritual center and played a singular role in the country's history. Restoration of the monastery, re-establishing its educational legacy and reviving monastic life at Tatev is one of the main goals of Tatev Revival Program, a part of which is the 5.7km Wings of Tatev aerial tramway that connects to Halidzor village.



When looking at the main entrance to the monastery, take the paved road immediately to the right which will loop around the mountainside overlooking Tatev.



Approximately 10 minutes into the walk you will come to the spot from where the iconic photos of the Tatev monastery are taken.



After this viewpoint there is quite a short decline, as the road slopes down and round the corner of the hill. Don't take the road to Tanzatap, which goes to the left, carry on up the road to the right, as marked by signs.



The path continues to wind up the mountain, not particularly steep but considerable in distance. At the highest point of the trail (just over 1900 meters) a beautiful landscape opens up to the left. A fresh water sources can be found 300 meters on the left slightly after the electricity poles, as marked by this screenshot:



Then a general descent begins into the village of Aghvani, a rural community with a population of about 70 people. Note the typical Armenian cemetery on the adjacent hillside to your right. You will also notice that the landscape starts to become more green.



From this point the path continues to slope down until you reach Tandzaver, the first village in the Kapan region with a population of 120. The village has a functioning church, Surb Hripsime, dating to 1705 by an inscription on its wall. Nearby, adjacent to a house in the village, are the remnants of another church whose date and name are unknown.



Ark Armenia runs a newly-established camp in Tandzaver with five wooden huts which sleep two people each (4,000/person/night) and there are seven places for tents (3000/p/night). It has a hot shower, toilet, running water, electricity from solar panels and there is a fireplace (where can make bonfire of cook).

See <https://www.facebook.com/tandzaverecocamp>

The camp can be booked via email on the website arkarmenia.com or ask for local woman Kashuni, who will open the camp for you on arrival. You can also seek out Mika or Paloma, a Spanish couple living in the village who are able to help with any translation problems and link hikers to local services.

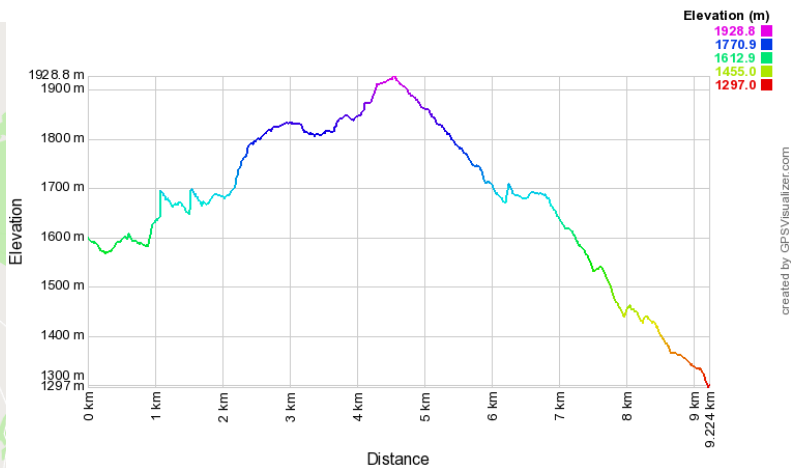
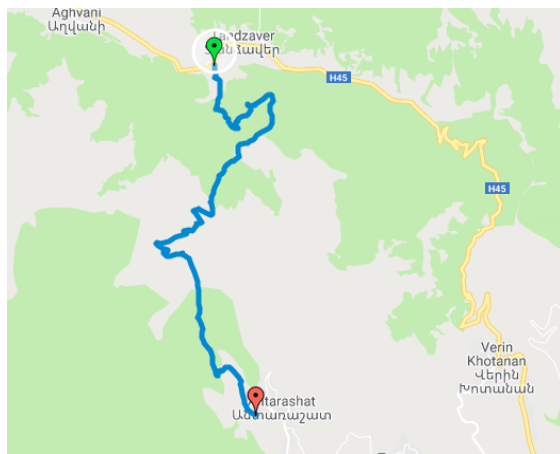
Additional Hikes

We also recommend taking an extra 2 hours to walk around the new 'Legends trail' – a new loop that begins and finishes in Tandzaver. It includes landart from international artists



Section Two Tandzaver - Antarashat

Distance 9.2 km **Time** 3 hours **Difficulty** Easy



General Description This segment of the trail links the villages of Tandzaver and Antarashat. It is one of the easiest sections because it has a moderate climb through the shade of the forest before a steady downhill walk into the final destination.



The trail starts from the main intersection in the village. There is a stream of fresh drinking water in the village so be sure to fill up first.



After a short descent you pass over a small stream, followed by an apple orchard on your right. Once you have advanced another short distance you turn right into the forest and follow the painted signs.



In this part of the trail you will find some land-art sculptures, which guide you through the forest.

There is also abundant growth of mushrooms, some of which are edible.



Upon exiting the forest, you reach a stretch of open fields, some used as farm land. Here the path loops around up the hill to the right before descending into the valley on the opposite side of the gorge.

Following this you reenter the forest for another 30 minutes before reaching Antarashat. The name of the village translates literally as 'big forest'. West from Antarashat in the valley of the river, there is a large wild forest with animals, including bears, wolves, wild cats and boars.



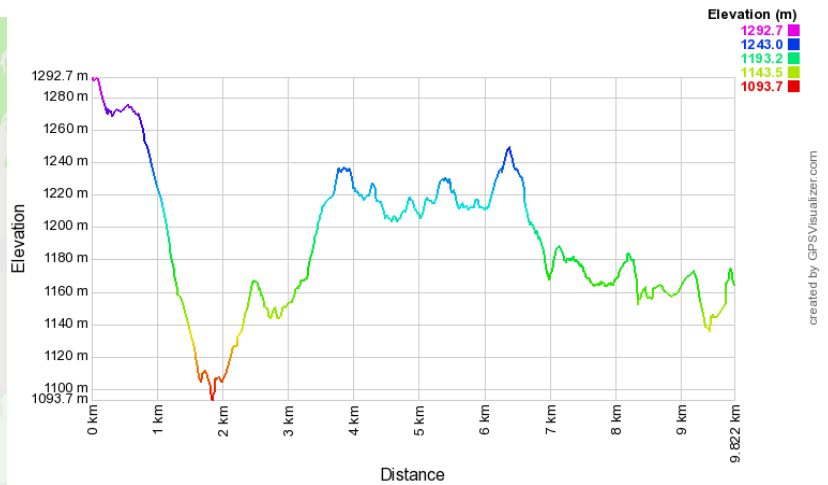
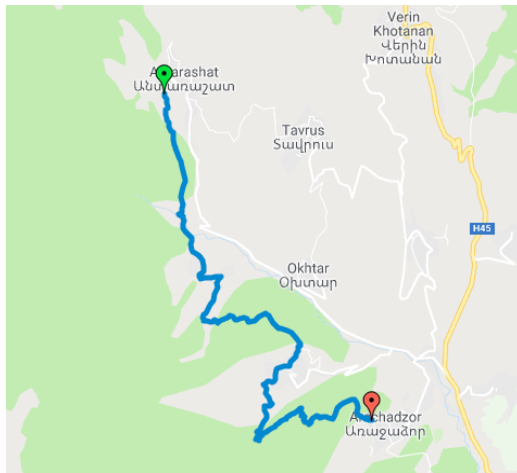
Next to the signpost signifying the end of the trail is a guesthouse run by Roman Harutyunyan. There is room to accommodate up to 15 people. It costs 10 Euro/person/night. Dinner and breakfast are also served for 7 and 3 euros respectively. Space for tent will be 5 euros.

It is necessary to contact at least one day in advance. Roman can be contacted by phone (098009150)

He is also able to give a tour through the village and nearby forests.

Section Three Antarashat - Arajadzor

Distance 9 km **Time** 3 hours **Difficulty** Easy



General Description In terms of elevation this section of the trail yo-yos up and down, but is a pleasant walk. It begins in cultivated fields just outside of Antarashat, reenters the forest several times before finishing in Arajadzor.



The trail begins where the previous left off: 50 meters up the hill from the outskirts of Antarashat. You turn left down the farmers field and head due south, keeping the village on your left.



As the village begins to fade away into the distance, the path becomes relatively overgrown. It splits several times so keep an eye of for the painted trail markings.



After twenty minutes you pass a dilapidated, abandoned building on your left. Here you turn left onto a main path (not right past the hut pictured above). From this point you will begin to hear the sounds of the river.



The river itself is slightly more difficult to traverse compared to other sections of the trail. It is best crossed by stepping stones on the left. Five meters after the river there is a source for mineral water on the left hand side.



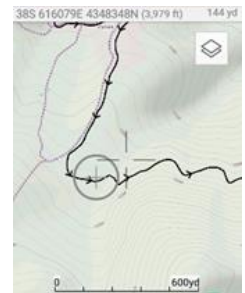
After another thirty minutes in forest you reach another fork in the road. Continue in the same compass direction, careful not to double back on yourself.



Once you reach the village of Vanek with a population of 71, you want to take the path leading to the right, as indicated by a sign. The main path loops round to the right, based some large houses, owned by the Kapan elite. Shortly after exiting the village you reach a wide open field. There are several paths leading in different directions – you want to take the path opposite where you entered the field and from here the trail continues in the forest



As indicated on the map to the right, there is a shaded place suitable for lunch with two large and one small benches. It is also possible to camp here. Space could be found for maximum 10 tents and a central campfire.



After another 20 minutes you come out of the forest again and see a view of the surrounding mountains. Next on the trail is the village of Dzorastan – one of the few villages in the valley that has active farmers. We hope to establish relationship with them to supply accommodation and organic food to trekkers in the near future.



After the village there is a spot to take on clean water in a small gated section on the right-hand side of the path. The stream can be very slow during summer.





Then go down the hill past some beehives on your left and a great view of the surrounding peaks. Heading down the right, you will see an unfinished structure. At the bottom go over a small stream, as marked by the signs.



Be careful not to lose the trail after reentering the forest because this section is very overgrown. Coming out of the forest you can see Dzorastan to your left. Look out for snakes on this part of the path. Also look out for an additional water source on your right, which is also a suitable place to rest.



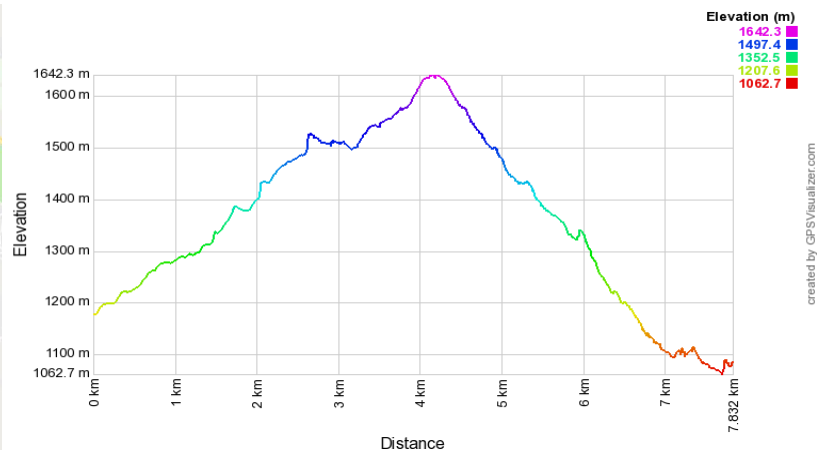
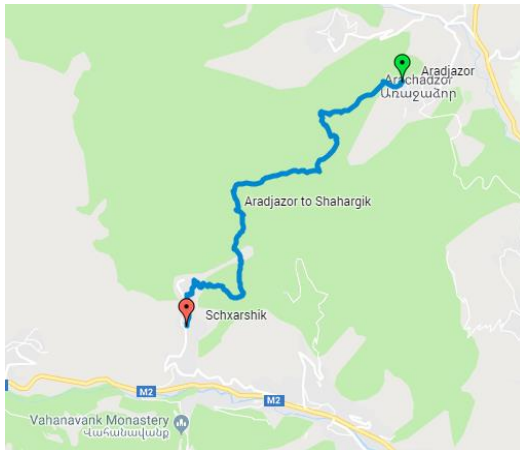
After this hike in the forest for another kilometer you reach a dirt road, which is used by off-road cars. After 1km you will see the newly-established terraces of permaculture garden of ARK on your right. Feel free to enter and explore. The trail continues on the left side of the first permaculture terrace into forest and after 300m and you come to the first houses of the Arajadzor village.



Ark operates a volunteering base in the village. Groups of 6+ are welcome to stay but need to inform of their arrival in advance. It is a house with several beds, kitchen, and all amenities. Alternatively, 300meters along the next segment is a good place to use as a camping site. 200m down from the first house of Arajadzor, can find a source of water near the old cemetery. In the house nearest water source, you can ask for Artur and Ella, and buy from them dairy products (milk, eggs and yoghurt).

Section Four Arajadzor - Shgharshik

Distance 7.8 km **Time** 3 hours **Difficulty** Easy



General Description This is one of the easiest, yet most varied, sections on the trail *From Father in Heaven to Mother Nature*. It can be completed in under three hours and the second half consists largely of a downhill walk into the village of Shgharshik. It is particularly suitable for landscape photography, offering some of the best views of the surrounding villages and mountains.



The walk begins from the sign at the bottom of the rocky outcrop, on the western edge of Arajadzor. There are no fresh water sources during summer on this segment of the trail so it is recommended that you fill up your bottles in Arajadzor village or the Ark Dacha camp.



After a short climb, the path circles up, revealing idyllic views of Arajadzor behind you, sitting in between the surrounding hills. The path then leads into the forest.



Keep a watchful eye out for the signs in this section – several are painted on low-lying rocks and can be covered by vegetation. Follow the path up a slight incline, which lasts for about 1 hour. The trees arch over the path offering welcome shade from the mid-day sun.



After a long, mid steep climb you come to a break in the forest with views of Khustup mountain, the main peak being on the far left. After 2.6km, reach this plateau, after which you will walk slightly more than a kilometer. Be sure that you will take proper route: there are three signs (left, straight, straight). From here the decent begins to Shgharshik village.



After 10 minutes in the forest, the path becomes a little bit wild and overgrown. When reaching a fork in the road, carry on straight. Do not double back on yourself.



There are many ancient trees in this section which are bent at right angles and creak in the wind. They also support large spiders' webs. This gives it a magical and ethereal feel.



Upon exiting the forest, you get your first view of the Vahanvank monastic complex on the opposite side of the valley at the base of the Tigranasar Mountain. On your left you will see the outskirts of the city of Kapan.



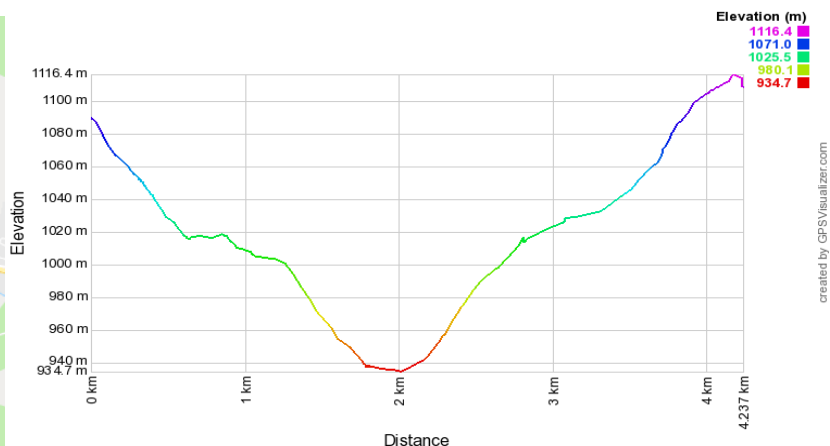
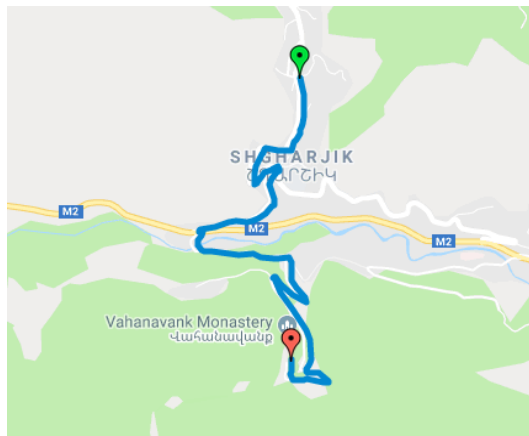
A long stony path fenced off on both sides leads into the village of Shxarshik. Here you are only 10 min drive to center of Kapan city.

Acknowledgements

This segment was first scouted by ARK volunteers with the financial support of Azi Melkonyan

Section Five Shxarshik - Vahanavank

Distance 4.2 km **Time** 1 hour **Difficulty** Low



General Description This short junction is a necessary connection between the trails on the left and right banks of the river Voghchi. The trail leads from the village of Shxarshik, across the valley, to the Vahanavank monastery on the opposite side. For more long-distance hikers, this section can be completed in combination with ones before and after.



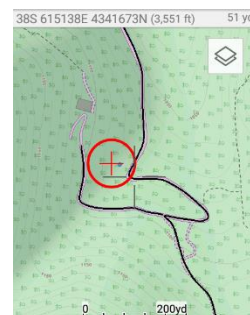
It begins on a gravel path for cars, as indicated by the sign. When you reach the main road at the bottom of the valley, turn left, walk for 30 meters before turning right on the paved road leading up to Vahanavank.



It is mostly free from traffic and takes about 25 minutes.



On the turn just before u reach the monastery there is a fresh water source hidden in the trees, as shown on the map. 300m before the monastery is a big space on left where people have picnics. It is also possible to camp here, but can get busy during summer weekends.





There is also a shop nearby that sells refreshments. Open at irregular hours.

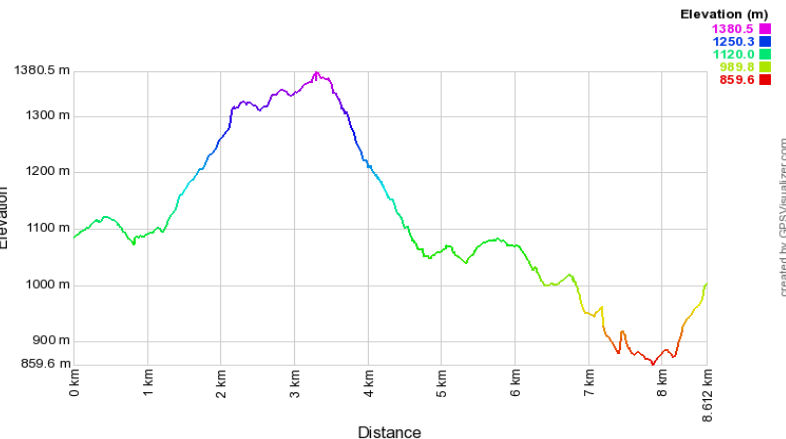
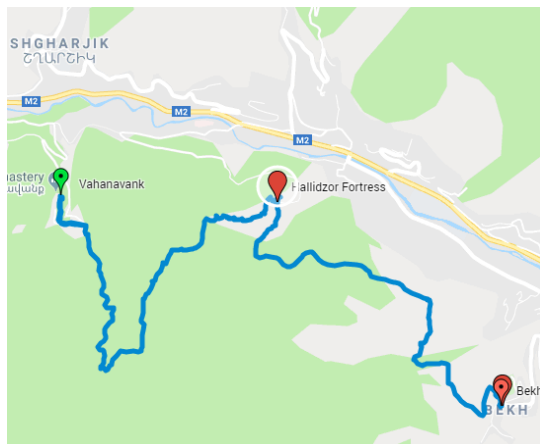


You then reach the monastic complex Vanavank, about which you can find more information at the start of the following section.

Coming closer to the monastery, you will see signs going left, which marks the start of the next section, number 6, of the trail. The monastery itself 200m up the road.

Section Six Vahanavank - Bekh Villiage

Distance 8.6 km **Time** 3 hours **Difficulty** Easy



General Description The trail mostly consists of leafy pathways under a canopy of lush forest. Some sections become slightly muddy following rainfall and the walker is required to hop across stepping stones to traverse some minor streams. Despite this, the footing is, for the most, part very secure. This initial part of the trek is largely ascending, however the incline is gradual and forgiving.



The trail begins at the Vahanavank Monastery, located 5km south-west from outskirts of Kapan, at the foot of the Tigranasar Mountain. The monastic complex dates back to the 10th century – its namesake being Prince Vahan Nakhashinogh. It later became the religious center for the kings of Syunik and the floor is paved with the gravestones of former princes of the region. Vahanavank represents the most accessible and well-maintained monastery in the Kapan region. A taxi from Kapan costs 1,000-1,500 Dram.

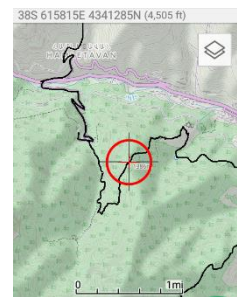


The walk itself begins near the parking area below the monastery complex. A sign providing general information for the trail is located here.

After descending 200 meters down the paved road, turn right along a path leading into the forest, as indicated by a sign pointing in this direction.



Approximately 20 minutes into the walk, you reach a clearing in the forest. This is the most suitable place for camping on the route. There is room for 20+ tents and open spaces to create a camp fire. It is also recommended for yoga and other recreational activities. Upon leaving the camp, the trail continues in the same direction, veering slightly to the right.





After another five minutes, the forest opens up, revealing a breathtaking view of Kapan and the surrounding hills. The trail then loops round the side of the mountain to reach the Halidzor Fortress.



The Halidzor Fortress was built in the 17th century, originally serving as a nunnery. It is perhaps best known, however, as the principal headquarters by the Armenian military hero David Bek while defending against the Ottoman Empire in the early 18th century. Bek turned the ancient monastery into an unassailable fortress and it became a symbol of his many great victories.

It is possible to climb onto the roof of the fortress for better views, but be careful not to step on sections with roof tiles, which appear unsafe.



A stone's throw down the hill from the fortress is another historic stone building, adjacent to which is an ideal place for lunch. It is well shaded and provides fantastic views of the valley below. This location is also recommended for camping, although it is exposed to the elements.

In May and June there may be many snakes in this part of the trail, so trekkers should remain vigilant.



Upon leaving the fortress, be careful not to lose the trail, which continues to loop round the mountain to the right, rather than descending down. Here you will see a group of ancient stones, carved into cubes, which have yet to be identified by archeologists.

After some minutes, a beautiful vista opens up and you can see the village of Bekh in a dip on the opposite hillside. Again, follow the path around the mountain to the right.



Shortly before reaching Bekh there is a place on the trail to take on water, as well as a bench suitable for having a well-deserved rest.

There are several paths leading up into the village. Our trail offers the most gradual ascent: looping round to the left past the football field.



Finally, you reach Bekh, a small, quaint village, known as home of David Bek – many of his relatives, sharing his surname Parsadianian, still live in the village.

In the central square is located a fresh water source and an Armenian church, which has an old piano if you fancy tinkering the ivories.

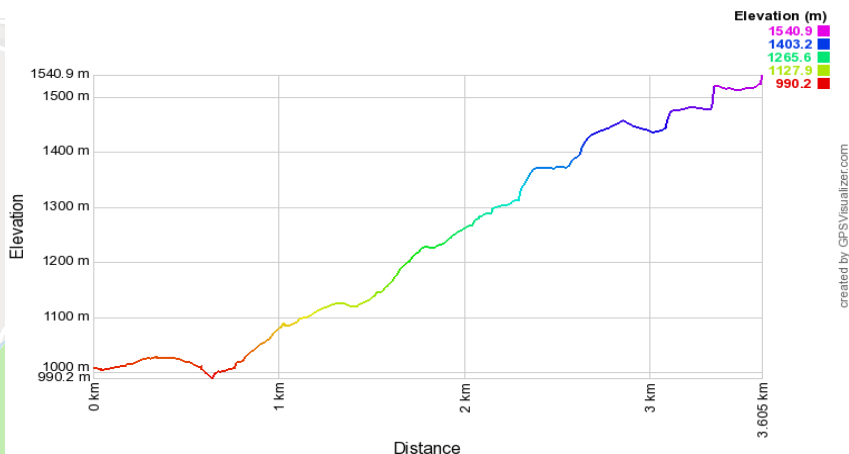
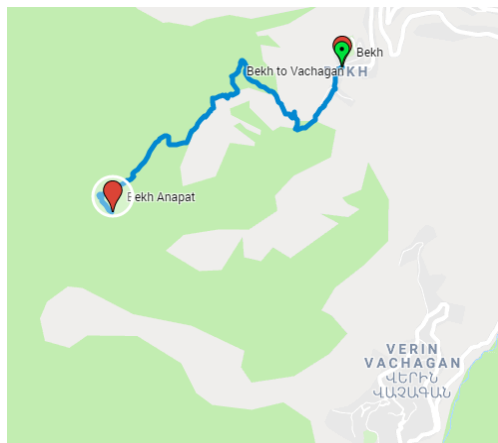
Khachkar info

Currently there is no formal accommodation in Bekh village, however the abovementioned football field is suitable for camping.

Otherwise it is possible to call for a taxi to Kapan costing 1,000.

Section Seven Bekh Villiage - Bekh Anapat Monastery

Distance 3.6 km **Time** 2 hours **Difficulty** Medium



General Description This section of the trail takes the hiker on a pilgrimage to the legendary, yet still relatively unknown, Bekh Napat (hermitage). This 10th century monastery is located in the depths of the forest above Bekh [village](#), located west from the center of Kapan. This hidden monastery, only accessible on foot or horseback, allows you to escape from everyday distractions and retreat to ease your mind in this breathtaking valley. Take your time and meditate or just stop by to see this historical masterpiece. It has been marked as medium difficulty because of the long ascent up the hill to the monastery, lasting at least 2.5 hours. Fortunately, the trail is almost entirely in the forest so you are shaded from the heat of the sun during the summer months.



The trail embarks from the village of Bekh, near the central square where the church is located. Look out for signposts on walls and electricity pilons which show you the way out of the village.



Approximately 5/10 minutes after departing the village you will see a stature on your left of a kamancha, a famous Armenian stringed instrument. Its body has a ball shape (is spherical). In Persian, the word means 'a little bow'. Musicians play the instrument on their knees (vertically). Then the player turns Kamancha to meet the bow rather than guiding the bow itself across the strings.



About 15 minutes into the walk (after the brook – you will rejoin this later just before the hermitage), but before you start the ascent, you will come to a rocky outcrop, on which is placed a khachkar with stone steps leading up to it. The path goes to the right as you look up the hill.



As the path goes left up the hill – winds up the hill through the forest (parallel to the brook – not in sight but same direction), follow the signs affixed to trees that are placed at regular intervals.



About 1.5 hours into the hike, and 100m before the monastery, there is a small pipe for fresh water. Again the flow is quite weak during summer to you may need to be patient to fill your bottles.



Congratulations, you have arrived at the Bekh Napat monastery, which dates back over 1000 years, however there are stones that date back to the first century and even ones that pre-date the Christian era. The Organization Terre et Culture (<http://www.terreetculture.org>) is working for four weeks each summer on this site to restore and preserve the cultural heritage of the site.

Have a look around the impressive archeological site, have a break or even lunch. Be careful while exploring the ruins as stones can still fall down.



It is worth also going into the second door on the right. This leads you to the dining room, where the monks stored food. Further down the hill is a stone hermitage that accommodated the monks, who lived a very ascetic lifestyle.

It is possible to set up camp at the old monastery and there is an established fireplace for cooking. Near this monastery there is forest that is natural and untouched by human activities.

Acknowledgements

This segment was first scouted by ARK volunteers with the financial support of Maribel Alvarador

Section Eight

Bekh Napat - Vachagan Village

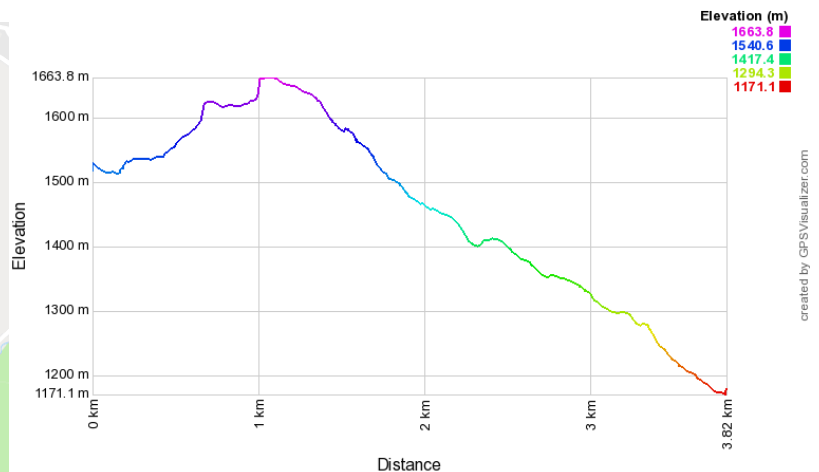
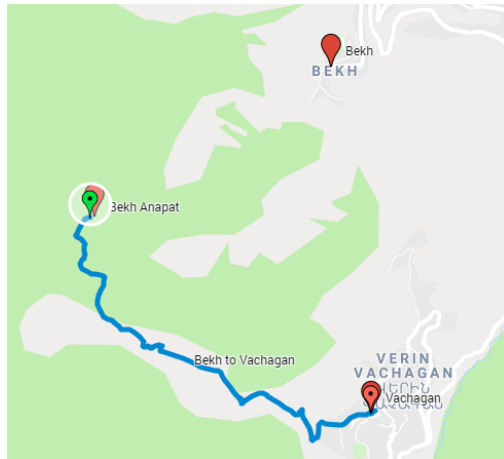
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Distance 3.8 km **Time** 3 hours **Difficulty** Easy



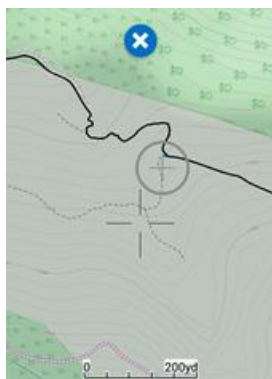
General Description This section of the trail leads up from the Bekh Napat monastery and then leads into the village of Vachagan, located approximately 5 km south of Kapan on the altitude of about 1200 meters. As with the previous segment, the first (ascent) is almost entirely located in the forest.



From the monastery, the forested path follows the mountain around to the right. There is a climb of about 1 hour. Along the path you can get glimpses through the trees of Vachagan below in the valley to your left.



About 15 minutes up the hill after the monastery there are a number of fallen tree blocking the path. It is possible to squeeze under or navigate around up the hill.



The gradual descent down the mountain is well signposted. After passing a large field on your left with three structures covered in tarpaulin, be sure to turn left and not stray onto other paths that go straight on, as shown in the screenshot.



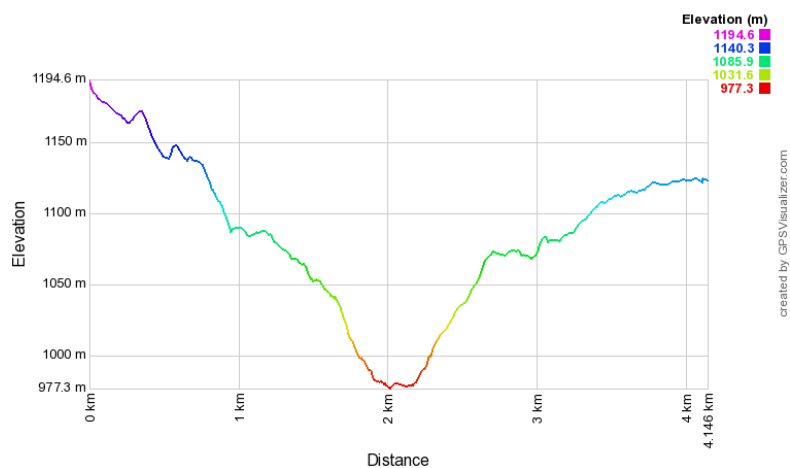
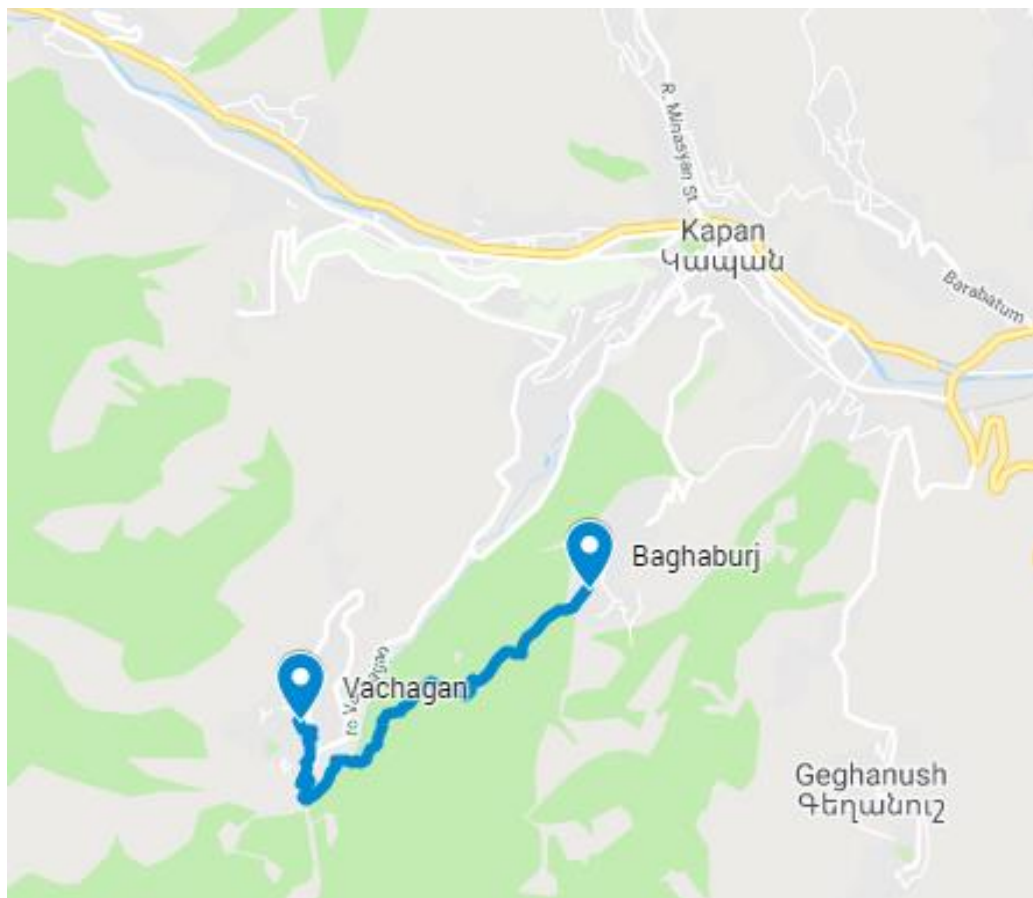
After another 30 minutes you arrive at a dirt road that leads you into the village of Vachagan – you should go left.
On your right you will see a beautiful high cliff, and Khustup in the distance.



Here you can visit the Surb Astvatsatsin Church.
There is currently nowhere to stay, but you can take a taxi to Kapan for 1000 dram.
There is a small shop in the village offering supplies.
A water source can be found on path leading out of town.

Section Nine Vachagan Village - Baghaburj Village

Distance 4.1 km **Time** 2.5 hours **Difficulty** Easy



General Description This segment connects the village of Vachagan to Baghaburj – the start of the trail to Khustup. Unlike previous sections, only part of the trail is in the forest and there is some hiking on roads. No – first KM and half outside for forest then enter. After Vachagan river reenter forest.

The first km is inside of the village, first south,



Coming out of the central church, take the path out to the right, looping around the village and in the same approximate direction where the previous segment left off, but lower down the hill. First in direction of mount Khustup



Towards the edge of the village there is a spot for fresh water on the right-hand side.



When coming through the village, keep a careful watch of the direction of signs. For example, in this picture, the trail take and acute turn to the right.



From this point you will be able to see your destination on the left, on the opposite side of the valley – a radio tower on this hill shows the location of Bahgaborj. To get there the path first descends in the valley, before going back uphill to the left.



When you reach the paved road, turn left and follow the red and white markings on the pipelines. This section is quite exposed to the sun so be prepared to sweat!

After 15m hike on paved road, you take a right according to the sign. In the gorge follow the sign that will bring you to an old bridge where you cross the river. Go left following the signs.



Shortly after reentering the forest at the bottom of the valley there is a shaded area that is suitable for a break. It has a bench and a water source.





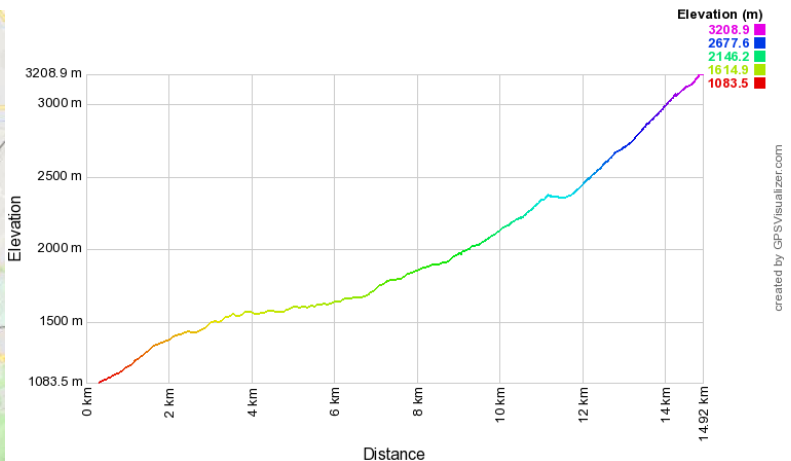
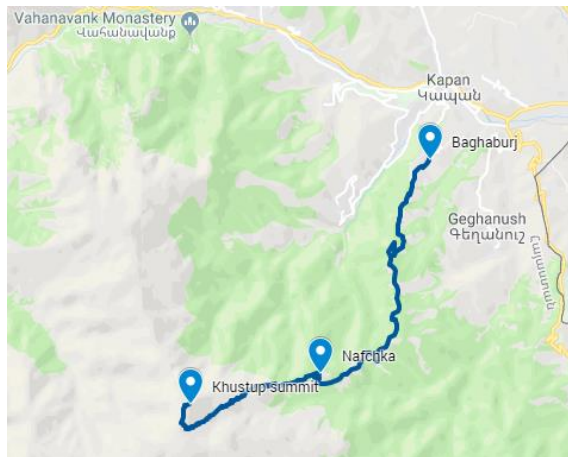
After a final 15-minute hike, this section of the trail finished in the village of Baghaburj. You will notice the sign pointing to the up to left up the hill which signifies the start of the final leg of the journey to Khustup.



Located about 20 minutes down the hill from this intersection, you will find the Kapan Camp, ARK's first ecocamp, constructed in the spring of 2015. The ecocamp sits atop a hill and offers wonderful views of Kapan and the surrounding valley! It offers a proper bathroom, with faucet and toilet, shower, kitchen area with dishes & camping stove, permaculture gardens, four mini cabins and space for 10 tents. It is a 20-minute walk (1.5 km) from the heart of Kapan, but is still far enough removed to feel surrounded by nature. This is next to Kapan's epic war monument.

Section Ten Bahgaborj Village - Khustup Mountain

Distance 15 km **Time** 6 hours **Difficulty** Medium-Hard



General Description The final leg of the trail from Baghaburj, goes via the village of Storot (also known as Nafcha), before reaching the ending of the trail mount Khustup. It is possible to do this in one day, but we recommend taking two, staying overnight in Nafcha basecamp. Mount Khustup is the most beautiful summit of the Kapan region at 3,206 meters. Since ancient times the mountain has been a place of prayers and pilgrimage. The origin of [Vachagan River](#) is located at the northern edge of mount Khustup. Its difficulty has been marked as 'medium-hard' because it is necessary to carry food and equipment if planning to camp, and there is a final section of the mountain where you need to climb up a small rock face.



The journey begins from the upper part of Baghaburj with a climb on a dusty gravel road, keeping Kapan behind you.



After about an hour you can see airport that is being reconstructed from Soviet times. Can see to the right a view of mount Pela (meaning big ear in Armenian). The first water source is about 2km from the village on the left-hand side.



About an hour into the hike there is another water source on the right.



After another hour, you pass the house of local farmer Ando. He does not formally run as a guesthouse, but is happy to offer guests shelter for the night. They just live there six months a year in summer.



After three hours you reach the shepherd's settlement of Navcha at 2000 meters, which has only seven families living there in during the summer.



There is a place for camping at the top. Exposed so you will need an appropriate sleeping bag. A recommended place for gathering firewood is alongside the path leading into the village. There is a fresh water tap close to the nearest house. This family are happy for you to leave your equipment in their yard while hiking up to the summit.



From base camp you begin the climb up the mountain to the right.



About 20 mins into the hike the grass is very overgrown so keep an eye out for trail markings.



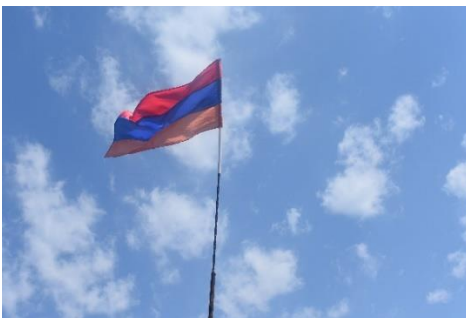
The mountain is covered with alpine meadows and on the north eastern slopes it is covered with forests. It is made of volcanic stones and sedimentary rock. The slopes are fragmented and there are caves and cliffs. Hundreds of streams and rivers flow from melted snow on the mountain, from which originates the Vachagan river. There is a fresh water tap about halfway up the climb on the right.



The path remains grassy to the top as rocks start to poke out. The path zig-zags up the hill to a dip on the left, before making a direct route to the main summit on the right.



On route to the top, there are a couple of sections where it is necessary to climb up an easy rock face.



Congratulations. You have reached the summit of 3,200 meters. It is said that you can see five 'countries' from the top: Armenia, Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan and Karabakh.

We hope you have enjoyed the trail. See the Ark Armenia website for additional hiking options in the region.

Acknowledgements

This segment was first scouted by ARK volunteers with the financial support of Tatiana Kuznetsova