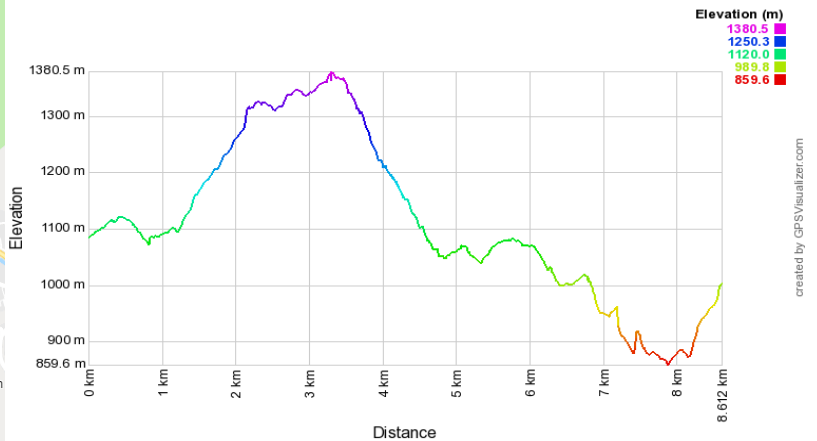
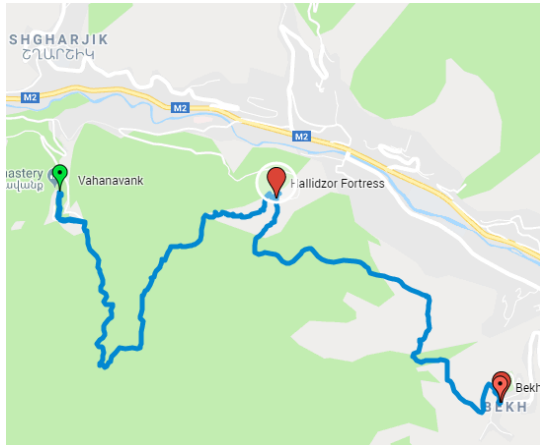


Section Six Vahanavank - Bekh Villiage

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.



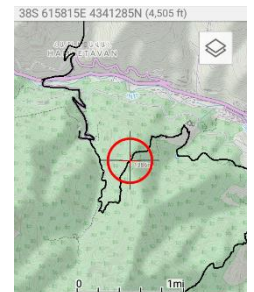
The trail begins at the Vahanavank Monastery, located 5km south-west from outskirts of Kapan, at the foot of the Tigranasar Mountain. The monastic complex dates back to the 10th century – its namesake being Prince Vahan Nakhashinogh. It later became the religious center for the kings of Syunik and the 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.

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.