

## **Gyumri: New and old in one city**

Do you know which city in Armenia is the most colorful, attractive, friendly hospitable and with special sense of humor ?

If not, so we are going to get acquainted with it. We are going to Shirak marz, to the second biggest city in Armenia, Gyumri.

Gyumri is situated in the northwestern part of Armenia in the central Shirak Highland, 126 km from Yerevan. Gyumri is the regional center and has history dating back at least five thousand years.

Throughout centuries, Kumayri-Gyumri was known as the "city of crafts and arts", being famous for its schools, theaters and gusans(national bards).

After arrival in Gyumri we will have a tour in Kumayri historic district, the old part of Gyumri with its unique architecture. It has more than a thousand buildings dating back to the 18th and 19th centuries. The historic district of Kumayri occupies the central and western part of current Gyumri. The next point of our tour is Sev Berd or the Black Fortress, an abandoned Russian imperial fortress in Gyumri built between 1834 and 1847, located 8km east of the closed border with Turkey. It was erected in response to the Russian -Turkish War of 1828–1829. Currently, it is a national cultural heritage monument of Armenia, used as an art and cultural centre. During our visit to Gyumri we will go to the Dzitoghtsyan Museum of Social Life and National Architecture of Gyumri.

The old mansion houses collections related to both history and the everyday-life of Gyumri, as well as paintings and other works of art.

Lunch in Gyumri. You will be served some of the famous dishes typical only for Gyumri: tatar boraki, dolma, kufta, khazan barbeque or kyala.

The second part of our tour will be a little religious because we want to show you the main churches in Gyumri. People used to call Gyumri "The Town of Seven Churches". In fact, seven churches were built in Gyumri, among them four Armenian Apostolic churches, a Russian, a Greek and Catholic churches.

Another church worth visiting is the church "Seven Wounds of Virgin Mary". This church has the oldest icon in town, "Seven Wounds of Virgin Mary",. The name of the church is related to the icon which, according to the legends, was painted on a parchment by Luke the Evangelist. This icon symbolizes seven wounds or sorrows of Holy Mary.

Holy Saviour's Church is a 19th-century church which occupies the southern side of the Vartanants Square at the centre of Gyumri. It was constructed between 1858 and 1872 and consecrated in 1873.

We are leaving Gyumri and proceeding to the monastic complex known as Marmashen Vank. It is located on a shelf overlooking the left bank of the Akhurian River, 15km northwest of Gyumri. It was built between 986 and 1029 by Prince Vahram Pahlavuni. Marmashen village is known for its cross-stones and the monastery complex with King Argishti I inscriptions.

We are sure our tour is a great chance to discover Gyumri with its 18th-19th century unique and indigenous architecture, cuisine and the most hospitable people.

Duration: 8-10 hours