EU Market Analysis Report
Tourism Armenia

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Disclaimer

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1. Executive Summary

This market analysis examines the European outbound tourism market and its relevance for Armenian tourism small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It covers key EU market trends, consumer preferences, buyer requirements, priority source markets and recommended market segments. The study draws on secondary research from the Center for the Promotion of Imports (CBI), the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), UN Tourism, Europ Assistance and the Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen (FUR) Reiseanalyse, as well as expert interviews with European tour operators.

1.1. Key Findings

1. Armenia's EU visitor base is small but growing. In 2025, approximately 150,000–200,000 EU tourists visited Armenia, representing 8–10% of total arrivals. The most important European source markets are France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. Armenia's heavy dependence on Russia (40%+ of arrivals) makes diversification towards EU visitors a strategic priority.

2. EU market trends strongly favour Armenia's core offer. Growing European demand for authentic cultural experiences, off-the-beaten-track destinations, soft adventure (hiking, trekking, e-bike), religious and heritage tourism, and gastronomy and wine tourism all align directly with what Armenia can offer. The Middle East conflict and rising long-haul flight costs are accelerating the shift towards closer, authentic, value-for-money destinations — a trend Armenia can benefit from.

3. The six priority segments for EU market entry are: cultural, heritage and religious tourism (age 45–70, Germany/France/Italy); hiking, trekking and cycling/e-bike (age 35–65, Germany/Netherlands/France); diaspora and roots tourism (France/Germany); gastronomy and wine tourism (age 40–65, all key markets); senior travellers (65+, Germany/France/Austria/Switzerland); and winter sports including heli-skiing (Germany/Austria/Switzerland/Poland).

4. Three critical gaps must be closed. Almost no Armenian DMC (Destination Management Company) or accommodation holds a recognised European sustainability certification (Travelife, TourCert). Armenia's destination brand and visibility in European markets remain significantly underdeveloped compared to Georgia. And wine tourism infrastructure and international promotion — despite Armenia's extraordinary winemaking heritage — are still insufficiently developed.

5. Three priority actions for Armenian tourism SMEs: (a) Pursue Travelife or TourCert certification as a baseline for European market entry; (b) Invest in destination marketing and trade fair presence in key European markets to close the visibility gap with Georgia; (c) Develop combined Caucasus itineraries with Georgian partners to benefit from Georgia's stronger European brand awareness; and invest in wine tourism infrastructure and international wine marketing to convert Armenia's ancient winemaking heritage into a bookable, recognisable European tourism product.

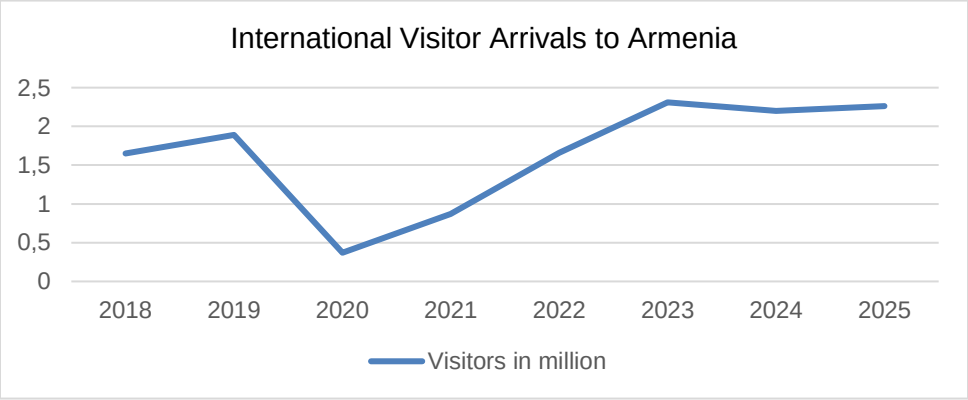
2. Overview

Armenia has emerged as a notable tourism destination in recent years, with visitor numbers growing substantially over the medium term and the sector establishing itself as an important pillar of the national economy. While growth has not been entirely linear — arrivals peaked at 2.33 million in 2023, dipped slightly in 2024, and have shown modest recovery in 2025 — the overall trajectory remains positive. The country's strongest market segments lie in outdoor activities, nature tourism and heritage tourism, areas that align well with current EU market trends: European travellers are increasingly moving away from classic mass tourism and towards more conscious, sustainable and individualised travel experiences. Armenia's monasteries and Christian heritage, mountainous landscapes around the Caucasus and its growing network of hiking routes therefore match well what European visitors are looking for.

In 2025, Armenia welcomed approximately 2.26 million international tourists, of which an estimated 150.000–200.000 came from the EU. The largest source market by far is Russia, accounting for more than 40% of all arrivals, followed by Georgia and Iran. The EU collectively contributes around 8-10% of total arrivals, with France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands standing out as the most relevant individual markets.[1] While this share is still comparatively small, it indicates considerable future potential for growth, especially if Armenia manages to position itself more visibly within European outbound travel markets.

The Armenian government clearly recognizes the importance of the sector and is currently working on a new Tourism Development Strategy 2026-2030, which sets a target of 3 million visitors by 2030.[2] Reaching this goal will likely require not only further growth from existing source markets but also a more diversified visitor base, in which the EU can play a more significant role.

Figure 1: Number of international visitor arrivals to Armenia



Source: CEIC Data, 2025; Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2025

[1] CEIC Data, 2025; Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2026
[2] Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2026

3. EU Market Trends in Tourism relevant for Armenia

The European outbound travel market has now fully recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2025, European residents made a total of 1.19 billion trips, an increase of 4.4% year-on-year and roughly 5% above pre-2019 levels.[3] Armenia has followed the same upward trend, with international arrivals growing from 1.9 million in 2019 to 2.26 million in 2025. The first four months of 2026 even showed a 34% increase compared to the same period in 2025.[4]

3.1. Main Trends

European travel demand entered 2026 from a position of historic strength. According to the Europ Assistance Holiday Barometer 2025, 79% of European residents planned to travel in summer 2025 — a historic record — with younger generations showing the highest enthusiasm. The average European summer vacation budget per person reached €2,080 in 2025, up €162 from 2023, and nearly half of Europeans (47%) planned to increase their budget further.[5]

However, the picture has changed materially since early 2026. The US and Israeli attack on Iran on 28 February 2026 triggered a major escalation at the Persian Gulf with severe consequences for the travel industry. The Ifo Institute's industry indicator for the German travel sector (April 2026) found that business sentiment cooled sharply in March, with travel agencies and tour operators bracing for weaker business and rising prices. UN Tourism estimates the conflict will reduce global growth in international arrivals by 1–2 percentage points below its initial 2026 forecast, as flight disruptions, spiking oil prices and jet fuel shortages push up airfares well beyond the Middle East itself.

3.2. Safety Concerns

The FUR Reiseanalyse 2026 explicitly identifies safety as the central booking criterion in the German market, with some travellers increasingly preferring organised trips over independent travel — a trend that benefits specialist tour operators offering reliable itineraries in complex regions.[6] This is consistent with the broader European picture: according to the Europ Assistance Holiday Barometer 2025, 32% of European travellers cite safety as their primary criterion when choosing a destination, up from 23% in 2021, and 57% now consider the risk of armed conflict in destination countries an essential factor in their choice. This creates both a challenge and an opportunity for Armenia: while the broader Caucasus region carries reputational risk due to geopolitical tensions, Armenia itself is consistently rated as safe and tourism-friendly by visitors — making clear and proactive destination communication all the more important. This is strongly confirmed by expert interviews. One expert notes that Armenia is perceived within the travel trade as peaceful and easy to travel, despite the regional context. Another travel expert and Caucasus specialist, confirms that his clients have experienced no security incidents and that Armenia’s image as a safe country is well established among experienced Caucasus travellers. Other experts likewise describe Armenia as a peaceful country with very friendly people, while noting that safety sensitivity is most pronounced among older cultural travellers and somewhat less acute among their younger hiking clientele. The broader

[3] Eurostat Tourism Statistics, 2026
[4] Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2025
[5] Europ Assistance: Holiday Barometer, 2025
[6] Forschungsgemeinschaft Urlaub und Reisen (FUR): Reiseanalyse 2026, 2026

challenge is one of perception rather than reality: the Caucasus region is sometimes broadly perceived as unsafe in Europe, and differentiation between the three countries (Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) is not yet fully established among European consumers.

3.3. Sustainability

Sustainability is a structural trend shaping European outbound travel. According to Booking.com's 2024 Sustainable Travel Report, 83% of travellers globally confirm sustainable travel is important to them, reinforced by regulatory pressure under the EU Green Deal. However, the Europ Assistance Barometer 2025 reveals a significant intention-behaviour gap: environmental impact consistently ranks lowest among actual destination decision factors, and air travel reached a four-year high in 2025. Sustainability is therefore best understood as a meaningful differentiator — especially for authentic, community-based products — rather than a primary booking driver. For Armenia, whose rural homestays, community-based tourism and uncrowded natural landscapes are inherently sustainable products, this represents a clear marketing opportunity. European tour operators increasingly ask partners for proof of sustainability commitment, and holding a recognised certification is becoming a competitive advantage — yet almost no Armenian DMC or accommodation currently holds one. One tour operator, undergoing certification itself, confirms Armenia is well-predisposed for sustainable travel concepts given its natural resources and distance from mass tourism — but remains at an early stage of formal sustainability implementation.

3.4. Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing tourism segments globally, with roughly 40% of all international tourists considered culturally motivated.[7] Religious and heritage tourism is a particularly relevant sub-segment: Christianity remains the dominant religion across all major European source markets, and sacred sites attract believers and non-believers alike for both spiritual and cultural reasons.

3.5. Soft Adventure Tourism: hiking, trekking & cycling

Soft adventure represents one of the most consistently strong segments in European outbound travel. Europe is the second-largest outbound adventure market globally after North America, and soft formats such as hiking and trekking clearly dominate over hard adventure. According to ATTA's long-term industry trends research, hiking, trekking and walking have ranked among the most popular adventure activities across nearly two decades of operator surveys, and 80% of European tour operators are active in the adventure tourism segment, with walking the second most-offered activity after wildlife watching.[8] Traveller motivations are well-aligned with Armenia's offer: seeking new experiences, going off the beaten track, and travelling like a local have remained the top three motivations since 2019. The 'Core Adventure' segment makes up 45% of European outbound travellers with Germany, the Netherlands, the UK and France as the leading source markets.[9] Expert interviews confirm a parallel product evolution: a specialist tour operator in active, hiking and trekking group travel, reports that purely classic hiking trips are becoming progressively harder to sell, with demand moving towards lighter 'soft

[7] CBI: The European Market Potential for Cultural Tourism, 2025
[8] ATTA: Adventure Travel Trends & Insights Report, 2026
[9] CBI: The European Market Potential for Adventure Tourism, 2026

trekking' and hiking-plus-culture itineraries — active travel enriched with cultural experiences.

Within this, cycling and e-bike tourism is one of the fastest-growing niches. Germany and the UK are the largest European source markets for cycling tourism, followed by the Netherlands. E-bikes have been identified by ATTA as a top trending adventure tourism activity, with their key appeal being that they open hilly and mountainous terrain to a much broader range of travellers — including older and less physically experienced riders. For Armenia, e-bike tourism represents an emerging opportunity to extend its adventure offer to the active 50+ segment.

3.6. Gastronomy and wine tourism

Gastronomy and wine tourism are a fast-growing niche in the European outbound market. CBI research in 2025 found that more than one in four European travellers (27%) cited food and drink as a key reason to travel, with interest set to rise further across all major source markets.[10] The most sought-after experiences go beyond restaurant dining: food trails, artisan producer visits, cooking classes and wine tastings are increasingly what travellers seek. Armenia's ancient winemaking heritage and outstanding cuisine make it a well-positioned emerging destination for this segment.

3.7. Off-the-beaten-track Travel

Off-the-beaten-track and value-seeking travel is another fast-growing trend. Overtourism at well-known cultural hotspots is pushing European travellers towards less-visited alternatives. Rising travel prices have reinforced this shift. CBI research confirms increased demand for off-the-beaten-track destinations, with adventure, community-based tourism, culture, food, nature and wellness as the most popular niches. Armenia's relatively low visitor numbers and competitive pricing are, in this context, an asset rather than a limitation.[11]

3.8. Solo and small-group Travel

Solo and small-group travel are among the fastest-growing formats in European outbound tourism. Solo travellers now account for 18% of global tourism bookings, motivated primarily by the freedom to travel on their own terms and the desire to connect with like-minded travellers along the way. Safety and the opportunity to meet new people are key criteria when choosing a destination and operator. Solo travellers tend to generate higher per-day spend, investing more in guided experiences and private tours. Small-group travel — typically 4–12 persons — is growing alongside solo travel, driven by Millennials and Gen Z who value authentic, personalised itineraries but prefer the social dimension of a small group over travelling entirely alone. Both formats are well-suited to Armenia's compact size, safe environment and rich cultural and outdoor offer.[12]

3.9. EU Regulatory Framework

The EU Package Travel Directive (2018) makes European tour operators strictly liable for the entire package they sell, meaning they will pass on tougher requirements on cancellation, refunds, insurance and information duties to Armenian partners — making

[10] CBI: The European Market Potential for Food Tourism, 2025
[11] CBI: Which Trends Offer Opportunities or Pose Threats, 2026
[12] CBI: European Market Potential for Solo Tourism, 2024

reliability and contractual clarity essential. The EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) does not directly apply to Armenian SMEs, but indirect pressure from CSRD-reporting EU buyers is increasing as they require sustainability data along their supply chains. Finally, all Armenian airlines have been on the EU Air Safety List since 2020, preventing direct flights into the EU by Armenian carriers. A removal process is underway, and a successful delisting would significantly improve air connectivity and could become a major catalyst for EU arrival growth.[13]

4. Demand Patterns, Consumer Preferences, Quality & Certification Requirements in the EU

4.1. Consumer Preferences: Pan-European Overview

European travellers to emerging destinations consistently prioritise authenticity, cultural depth, local food and off-the-beaten-track experiences — motivations covered in detail in Chapter 3. What is worth emphasising here is the practical implication for Armenian operators: 43% of Europeans cite making memories as the most valued aspect of travel, and 40% highlight experiencing different cultures and trying new foods. [14] Cost-consciousness is increasing but is driving a shift towards better value rather than lower quality — with 39% of Germans willing to pay more specifically to avoid crowded destinations. For Armenia, these preferences translate into a clear product brief: itineraries combining cultural depth, authentic local encounters, outdoor activity and good food and wine, delivered by reliable, locally owned operators who communicate professionally and ideally hold recognised sustainability credentials.

4.2. Booking Behaviour and the Customer Journey

European online travel penetration reached 68% in 2024 and is expected to climb to 74% by 2028.[15] Online booking dominates, but the channel mix varies considerably by product type and destination. The European travel purchase follows a five-stage customer journey: Dreaming → Planning → Booking → Experiencing → Sharing. Around 81% of travellers use the internet to research destinations, but social media plays a secondary role to trusted information sources such as travel websites, search engines and review platforms like TripAdvisor. Because visitors are unlikely to book the first time they encounter a provider, operators need to guide potential customers through an inspire–help–convince–sell sequence.[16]

Booking lead times for Armenia's relevant segments range from 6–9 weeks for shorter trips to 4–6 months for group and cultural tours. Germany is characterised by long planning horizons — 74 days on average — and retail agencies remain more important there than in other European markets, with travel agency bookings seeing a notable comeback among 25–34-year-olds for complex itineraries.[17] For Armenia, the tour operator channel is the primary route to market, though digital discoverability matters: inspiration and initial research happen online well before any business-to-business (B2B) contact is made.

[13] CBI: What are the Requirements for Tourism Services in the European market, 2023
[14] Europ Assistance: Holiday Barometer, 2025
[15] Phocuswright, 2025
[16] CBI: How to be a Successful Tourism Company Online, 2024
[17] CBI: The European Market Potential for Adventure Tourism, 2026

The sharing phase is growing in strategic importance. Positive reviews on TripAdvisor, Google and Online Travel Agency (OTA) platforms feed directly back into the discovery phase for future travellers — for a destination with low international awareness like Armenia, word-of-mouth from satisfied European visitors is one of the most cost-effective ways to build visibility.[18]

4.3. Quality Requirements of European Buyers

European tour operators — particularly from Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands and France — have a set of operational quality expectations that Armenian DMCs must meet in order to build and sustain partnerships. These go beyond product content and extend to the reliability, professionalism and consistency of the entire service delivery chain.

On the **product side** European buyers look for creative, immersive and authentic experiences that go beyond standard sightseeing. European buyers specifically seek partners who bring new ideas to the table — ideally offering something their existing portfolio does not already cover. They value locally owned companies, prefer smaller high-quality operators, and expect a genuine commitment to sustainability demonstrated through concrete practices: working with sustainable suppliers, waste and water management systems, and meaningful community benefit. Insight from the active-travel niche reinforces this: One tourism company stresses that the decisive factor in partner selection is a shared philosophy between the two companies — a DMC should genuinely understand hiking and trekking in the destination, not merely sell it. Such dedicated specialists are sometimes hard to find, and personal rapport — being "on the same wavelength" — also weighs heavily.

On the **communication and service side** the expectations of German speaking markets are particularly demanding: fast response times and prompt communication; a single dedicated point of contact; attention to detail in proposals and itineraries; a proactive rather than reactive approach to client management; full transparency about what is included and how problems will be handled; and the willingness to take responsibility when things do not go as planned. Slow response times, multiple contact persons leading to confusion, and failure to take responsibility are among the most common reasons European tour operators do not renew partnerships with suppliers in emerging destinations.

On **logistics and operational reliability,** European buyers expect itineraries to run smoothly and on schedule. European buyers expect full delivery on every itinerary promise — if an element cannot be guaranteed, it should be left out. Accommodation should be locally owned and of consistent quality and comfort, with a preference for boutique, characterful properties over international chain hotels. Liability insurance and the ability to work with European payment terms and commission structures are also baseline requirements.

Finally, **language capability** is a practical quality threshold. For the German-speaking market German-language materials, itineraries and ideally guides represent a meaningful competitive advantage. For France, French-language programming is equally important.

[18] CBI: How to be a Successful Tourism Company Online, 2024

For the Netherlands and Italy, English-language materials are generally sufficient, though local-language marketing content increases credibility.

4.4. Certification Requirements

European tour operators are increasingly asking their partners in destination countries for proof of sustainability commitment — and in some cases, holding a recognised certification is becoming a formal requirement rather than simply a differentiator. This trend is confirmed by expert interviews: One tourism company itself is undergoing certification and increasingly expects this from its partners.

The most practical entry point for Armenian SMEs is Travelife for Tour Operators and Travel Agents, designed specifically for SMEs in developing countries, with three progressive stages (Engaged, Partner, Certified), affordable fees and biannual recertification. It is well recognised in the DACH region (Germany, Austria and Switzerland), the UK and the Netherlands. TourCert is a further relevant option for the German-speaking market, with two certification stages (Qualified and Certified) and strong recognition across DACH. The expert interviews show that certification operates on a spectrum from useful differentiator to growing expectation: one tour operator confirms that, while certification is not mandatory, an existing scheme such as Travelife or TourCert is a clear plus that signals a strong grasp of sustainability, and that concrete practices carry real weight in partner selection. So far, adoption of these schemes among Armenian DMCs and accommodations remains very limited — a gap that early movers can turn into a competitive advantage.

5. Main European Source Markets for Armenia

Demand patterns, preferred booking channels and product expectations differ considerably from country to country. The following EU markets are either already established or are particularly promising as source markets for Armenia.

5.1. Germany

Germany is by far the largest outbound market in the EU, with around 114 million foreign trips in 2024. German travellers are characterised by long planning horizons, a strong interest in cultural depth, nature and authentic experiences, and a well-documented preference for quality over price. They are detail-oriented, expect reliable and transparent communication, and — particularly in the 45+ age segment most relevant for Armenia — continue to rely heavily on specialist tour operators and travel agencies for complex, long-haul and culturally rich itineraries. Sustainability awareness is high, and half of German tourists prefer accommodations with a sustainability label. For Armenia, the most promising product categories are cultural and study tours, Christian heritage circuits, trekking, soft adventure and combined monastery-and-wine itineraries. On the B2B side, Germany has a mature and well-structured travel trade with a strong specialist operator segment — personal relationships built at trade fairs such as ITB Berlin are important for market entry, and Armenian DMCs should prioritise outreach to the growing number of

German operators with existing or potential Caucasus programmes. Air connectivity from multiple German cities is strong, with direct flights via Eurowings, Wizz Air, Lufthansa and Condor.

5.2. France

France generated around 55 million foreign trips in 2024, making it the third largest outbound market in the EU.[19] French travellers are strongly motivated by cultural depth, heritage and authentic experiences — motivations that align closely with Armenia's core offer. A defining and unique feature of the French market is the large Armenian-French community, estimated at over 700,000 people and concentrated in Paris, Marseille and Lyon[20], making diaspora and roots travel one of the strongest entry points. Beyond the diaspora, France is a significant source of culturally motivated independent travellers and small-group tour participants, with a particular affinity for Christian heritage, trekking and gastronomy. French travellers tend to book further in advance than most European markets and expect high-quality, well-documented itineraries with French-language materials — making language capability a meaningful differentiator for Armenian DMCs. On the B2B side, France has a well-developed network of specialist cultural and experiential operators, and personal relationships built through trade fairs and roadshows remain important for market entry. Direct flights from Paris, Marseille, Lyon and Nice improve accessibility considerably.

5.3. The Netherlands

Despite its small population of 17 million, the Netherlands punches well above its weight as an outbound tourism market — the Dutch are among the most internationally active and environmentally conscious travellers in Europe, with 99% internet penetration and a strong preference for active, nature-based and sustainable travel. For Armenia, the Netherlands is a particularly well-aligned source market: Dutch travellers are experienced, open to off-the-beaten-track destinations and consistently rank among the most sustainability-minded in Europe — making certification an especially important competitive signal for this market. The typical Armenian-relevant traveller profile from the Netherlands is active, aged 35–65, interested in hiking, nature and cultural depth, and willing to travel independently or in small groups. On the B2B side, the Dutch travel trade is highly digitalised and Fully Independent Traveller (FIT)-oriented, but specialist operators active in adventure, nature and trekking remain relevant for guided group itineraries. Direct flights are available with FlyOne from Amsterdam twice a week.

5.4. Italy

Italy is another large and culturally oriented market, with around 31 million foreign trips per year. [21] Italian travellers are particularly drawn to culture, Christian heritage and gastronomy, all three of which are core strengths of Armenia. The shared Christian background, Armenia's monasteries and the country's emerging gastronomic and wine scene offer strong narratives that resonate with Italian travellers and Italian tour operators. Direct flights are now available from Rome, Milan, Naples and Bari to Yerevan, operated

[19] Eurostat Tourism Statistics, 2026
[20] Office of the High Commissioner for Diaspora Affairs, 2025
[21] Eurostat Tourism Statistics, 2026

mainly by Wizz Air and FlyOne, which makes Armenia significantly more accessible for Italian visitors. Politours and Catai already feature Armenia in their catalogues.

5.5. Poland

Poland has developed into the largest Central European outbound market and is currently growing rapidly. The Polish traveller profile differs from the Western European markets described above: travellers tend to be younger, more price-conscious and more often fully independent rather than booking through traditional operators. For Armenia, the most attractive products in this market are adventure travel and culture-focused trips, especially for younger travellers looking for affordable and authentic destinations beyond the standard European routes. The daily direct LOT service from Warsaw to Yerevan provides a basis, and given the speed at which the Polish outbound market is expanding, it should be considered an important secondary market with significant growth potential in the coming years.

6. Competing destinations, Gaps & Opportunities for Armenian Tourism Companies

6.1. Competing destinations

Armenia's most direct competitors for the European outbound market are its South Caucasus neighbours Georgia and Azerbaijan, while Turkey dominates regional beach and culture tourism at a different scale. Armenia is most commonly sold as part of combined Caucasus itineraries rather than as a standalone destination — the typical format being 10 days Georgia combined with 5 days Armenia. However, demand for Armenia-only itineraries is growing in the FIT and small-group segment, with 4–5 day standalone formats increasingly viable. One tourism company confirms this pattern from the operator side: an Armenia-only itinerary is difficult to sell, whereas Armenia–Georgia combinations perform noticeably better.

6.1.1. Georgia

Georgia is by far Armenia’s closest competitor and currently the strongest regional brand within the European outbound market. In 2025, the country received around 5.5 million international tourists, of which roughly 500,000 came from the EU and UK. The Spanish, Italian and British markets all grew by more than 40% in 2025, which shows that Georgia is currently trending strongly in Europe.[22] The largest source markets however remain Russia, Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia’s leading tourism products, wine tourism, Tbilisi as a vibrant city destination, trekking in the Caucasus and the Black Sea coast, overlap significantly with Armenia’s own strengths, with the exception of Georgian beach tourism on the Black Sea. The similarity in cultural heritage, mountain landscapes and wine traditions makes it difficult to differentiate between the two countries in the eyes of EU travellers, which is both a challenge and an opportunity. Travellers who already

[22] Georgia Today, 2026; Georgia National Tourism Administration, 2026

have Georgia on their radar could be convinced to add Armenia to their itinerary, especially in the form of combined Caucasus tours.

6.1.2. Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan welcomed approximately 2.63 million international tourists in 2024, of which around 106,000 came from the EU. The main source markets are Russia, Turkey, India and Iran, which suggests a stronger orientation towards Asian markets compared to Georgia.[23] The country's top tourism products include the city and architecture of Baku, the Formula 1 Grand Prix as a high-profile international event, the Caspian Sea coastline, mountain trekking in the northern regions and cultural heritage sites. While Azerbaijan offers some products similar to Armenia, such as trekking and heritage, it positions itself more strongly as a modern, urban and event-driven destination. As a result, it competes only partially with Armenia in the European market and addresses a somewhat different traveller profile.

6.2. Gaps & Challenges for the Armenian Tourism Sector

6.2.1. Low visibility in Europe

A major challenge for Armenia's tourism sector is its still relatively low visibility in the European source market. While neighbouring Georgia was prominently featured as the partner country of ITB Berlin in 2023[24] and has invested heavily in international tourism marketing, Armenia's presence at major European tourism fairs remained comparatively modest. This creates a mixed situation: on the one hand, Armenia can continue to position itself as an "off-the-beaten-path" destination that appeals to travellers looking for authentic and less commercialized experiences. On the other hand, low awareness remains a significant barrier for market expansion, as many potential visitors still know very little about the country and its tourism products.

6.2.2. Air connectivity

Air connectivity also remains as a weakness for Armenia. Although airlines such as Wizz Air have expanded operations in recent years, Yerevan still lacks direct flight connections to many major European capitals and secondary cities, especially in Northern and Eastern Europe.[25] This limits Armenia's competitiveness compared to destinations with broader flight networks. In addition, Armenia's inclusion on the EU aviation blacklist continues to negatively affect perceptions of the country's aviation sector and complicates the development of stronger air links with European markets.

6.2.3. Geopolitical perceptions

Geopolitical perceptions present an additional challenge. Although Armenia itself is generally considered a safe destination for travellers, the broader regional context often negatively influences European tourists' risk perceptions. Armenia's location in the South

[23] The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2026
[24] ITB: Press Release 01. June 2022
[25] Flightconnections.com

Caucasus, its proximity to Iran, and recurring international media coverage related to tensions with Azerbaijan can create uncertainty among potential visitors unfamiliar with the region. This creates an important communication challenge both for Armenian tourism SMEs and for European tour operators selling Armenia as a destination. Furthermore, the closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan limit regional connectivity and prevent the development of cross-border tourism routes.

6.2.4. Underdeveloped wine tourism infrastructure

Armenia's wine tourism sector has strong growth potential, related infrastructure and promotion remain significantly less developed than in neighbouring Georgia. Wine routes, visitor centres, integrated tourism services and international branding initiatives are still comparatively limited, and Armenia has so far invested little in communicating its wine heritage to international audiences. Georgia, by contrast, has built a globally recognised wine tourism brand backed by UNESCO recognition of its qvevri tradition, dedicated wine routes, a strong presence at international food and wine fairs, and active promotion through its national tourism authority. Although Armenia possesses one of the world's oldest winemaking traditions and several high-quality wineries, the supporting tourism infrastructure and the international marketing needed to convert heritage into bookable visitor experiences are both still developing.

6.3. Opportunities for the Armenian Tourism Sector

Despite existing challenges, Armenia’s tourism sector offers significant opportunities for future growth, particularly in the European market. One of the country’s greatest strengths is its highly distinctive tourism product. Armenia combines ancient cultural heritage, religious tourism, nature-based experiences, and gastronomy in a way that few destinations can easily replicate. Importantly, Armenia’s offering aligns closely with several current European travel trends.

6.3.1. Visa regulations and accessibility

Armenia currently offers one of the most liberal visa regimes in the wider Caucasus region for European travellers. Citizens of all EU-27 countries can enter Armenia visa-free for up to 180 days within a 12-month period[26], which is more generous than the conditions offered by Azerbaijan and several Central Asian or Caucasus destinations. While Georgia still maintains more favourable travel conditions and stronger connectivity overall, Armenia remains comparatively accessible for European tourists.

6.3.2. Combined regional itineraries

There is also considerable potential for combined regional itineraries with Georgia. Many international visitors already view the South Caucasus as a broader travel region rather than as separate destinations. Armenia and Georgia complement each other well in areas such as culture, wine tourism, mountain tourism, and gastronomy. Joint itineraries could

[26] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, 2026

therefore help Armenia benefit from Georgia's stronger international tourism profile and attract travellers interested in multi-country experiences.

6.3.3. DMC Quality and Professionalization: A Strong Foundation

Expert interviews highlight Armenian DMC quality as a genuine competitive strength and opportunity. One expert assesses Armenian DMCs as good overall, with multilingual capabilities — including back-office staff — as a particular advantage. Another similarly rates Armenian operators as professional and well-organised. Other tour operators similarly regard the region's DMCs as professionally set up. Armenia's tourism product itself — monasteries, landscapes, cuisine and hospitality — is considered authentic and compelling by both operators. This strong operational foundation means that Armenian DMCs are well positioned to serve European tour operators, and that the main work required is not building quality from scratch but rather increasing visibility, formalising partnerships and developing product depth for specialised European segments.

6.3.4. Infrastructure

Armenia's infrastructure is stronger than its reputation sometimes suggests: One tour operator notes that approximately 70% of the road network is well-paved and suitable for self-drive tours, and guesthouses are generally clean and well-maintained. Yerevan offers strong hotel standards across all price points. The recommended action is to selectively invest in upgrading accommodation quality in the southern and more remote mountainous regions, where standards are more variable. Targeted investment in regional guesthouses and lodge-quality accommodation along key trekking and wine tourism routes would directly strengthen Armenia's product for higher-spending European segments.

6.3.5. Capital city Yerevan

Yerevan itself represents another emerging tourism asset. International media attention has increasingly highlighted the city's attractiveness, atmosphere, and affordability. CNN, for example, ranked Yerevan among Europe's most beautiful cities with few tourists.[27] The city's growing bar, café, and gastronomy scene appeals particularly to younger urban travellers looking for destinations that combine cultural experiences with vibrant nightlife and food culture.

6.3.6. Affordable destination

Finally, Armenia benefits from a comparatively low-cost tourism environment. Average spending by independent travellers is estimated at around USD 700 per trip, significantly below costs associated with many Western European or Mediterranean destinations.[28] This affordability can make Armenia particularly attractive for younger travellers, backpackers, long-stay visitors, and value-oriented European tourists, especially during periods of economic uncertainty and rising travel costs across Europe.

[27] CNN, 2019
[28] ARKA News Agency, 2025

7. Priority Market Segments and Target Groups for Armenian SMEs

Segment	Target Group	Age	Priority Source Markets	Armenia Product	Operator Type
Cultural, Heritage & Religious Tourism	Culturally motivated travellers, Christian heritage visitors, study tour participants	45–70	Germany, France, Italy	Monastery circuits, UNESCO sites, guided heritage tours, study tours	Specialist cultural & study tour operators
Hiking & Trekking	Active travellers, small-group adventurers, FITs	35–65	Germany, Netherlands, France, UK	Transcaucasian Trail (TCT) routes, monastery treks, multi-day mountain itineraries, village stays	Adventure & trekking operators
Cycling & E-bike Tourism	Active 50+ travellers, recreational cyclists, couples	45–70	Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland	E-bike day tours, multi-day cycling routes, mountain cycling with cultural stops	Cycling specialist operators, adventure operators with e-bike offer
Diaspora & Roots Tourism	Armenian diaspora, roots travellers, family visit tourism	30–65	France (Paris, Marseille, Lyon), Germany	Heritage & genealogy tours, family visit itineraries, Yerevan city breaks	Diaspora-focused operators, FIT direct bookings, OTAs
Gastronomy & Wine Tourism	Food & wine enthusiasts, experiential travellers	40–65	Germany, France, Netherlands, Italy	Areni wine region, winery visits, cooking classes, food trails, gastronomy tours	Cultural & experiential operators, specialist wine tour operators, FITs via OTAs
Winter Sports & Ski Touring	Budget-conscious skiers, backcountry & ski touring enthusiasts	25–55	Poland, Czech Republic, Germany (secondary)	Tsaghkadzor ski resort, Jermuk wellness & ski, ski touring in mountain regions	Winter sport specialists, adventure operators with ski offer, FIT direct bookings
Senior Travellers	Travellers with high disposable income & time, flexible shoulder-season travellers	60+	Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland	Cultural itineraries, guided group tours, tailor-made cultural packages	Established tour operators for guided group tours with reliable logistics, referral-driven

Table 1: Priority Market Segments and Target Groups for Armenian Tourism SMEs (EU Market)

Armenia is not a mass-market destination. Its European visitor base is defined by travellers seeking authentic, culturally rich and off-the-beaten-track experiences — profiles that align well with the country's core offer. The dominant age group visiting Armenia overall is 35–65, and the most active travel demographic is 35–50. This is consistent with the client profile from one of our interviewed tour operators: travellers typically from 40 years of age, middle-class, curious and open-minded, with little prior knowledge of the region, and increasingly travelling in small groups or as FITs of 2–10 persons rather than in larger tour groups. The target group matrix above provides a quick-reference overview; the descriptions below integrate the target group profile into each segment.

7.1.1. Cultural, Heritage and Religious Tourism

The strongest and most immediately accessible segment. Armenia is the world's first Christian state (301 AD), home to hundreds of medieval monasteries, three UNESCO World Heritage Sites and some of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements on earth

— a heritage density matched by few destinations of comparable size. The typical European traveller in this segment is aged 45–70, well-educated, with medium to high disposable income, and already experienced in organised cultural tours across Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. They value expert guides, detailed itineraries, reliable service and quality local accommodation. They book 4–6 months in advance, primarily through specialist cultural and study tour operators. Key source markets are Germany, France and Italy. Armenia's positioning in this segment is not as a well-known pilgrimage destination competing on volume, but as an authentic, largely undiscovered heritage experience. Two tour operators describe Armenia as "different, but not too different" — accessible enough to attract first-time Caucasus visitors, yet distinctive enough to offer genuinely new experiences.

7.1.2. Hiking, Trekking and Cycling

Armenia's mountain landscapes, untouched nature and rural hospitality make it well suited for "slow adventure" itineraries of 10–14 days combining hiking with village stays, monasteries and wine tourism. In 2025, Armenia was crowned Destination of the Year for Adventure Tourism by PATWA. The typical traveller is aged 35–60, active, and motivated by authentic alternatives to mass-tourism trekking destinations. They travel as couples or in small groups, often combining physical activity with cultural immersion. One operator confirms this trend, noting a clear shift from group tours to small-group and FIT formats (2–10 persons, typically all known to each other), with clients characterised as open-minded and curious, with little prior knowledge or prejudice about the Caucasus — a profile that responds particularly well to authentic, personalised itineraries. Another company reports the same evolution from the product side: its active-travel clientele sits in the 45–65 bracket and is increasingly drawn to lighter "soft trekking" with a higher cultural share rather than purely classic hiking — reinforcing the case for combining trekking with monasteries, villages and gastronomy. The growing e-bike segment extends this offer to active 50+ travellers who prefer motorised assistance on mountainous terrain. Travellers in this segment book through specialist adventure and walking operators or independently as FITs via OTAs. Key source markets are Germany, the Netherlands and France.

7.1.3. Diaspora and Roots Tourism

A strategically important niche unique to Armenia. With an estimated diaspora of over 700,000 in France and significant communities in Germany and the Netherlands, these travellers — aged 30–65 — are motivated by ancestral connection, family visits, genealogy and emotional reconnection with their homeland. They tend to book independently, stay longer, spend more per visit and act as informal ambassadors who encourage non-Armenian friends and partners to visit. This segment requires less conventional marketing and more diaspora-specific outreach through community organisations, diaspora media and French and German-language cultural associations.

7.1.4. Gastronomy and Wine Tourism

A fast-growing niche with strong potential. Armenia's ancient winemaking traditions — centred on the Areni region and over 400 indigenous grape varieties — combined with its outstanding cuisine create a compelling narrative for food- and wine-motivated European travellers. One tour operator rates Armenian cuisine as on par with or better than Georgian food and more affordable. On wine, the expert consensus is nuanced: quality is high and the heritage compelling, but brand recognition lags far behind Georgia's, and few European wine-specialist operators currently include Armenia. This creates a first-mover opportunity: Armenian wine and gastronomy specialists who build visibility in Germany and France will face limited competition. The core target group is aged 40–65, high-spending, interested in authenticity and experiential immersion, and this segment overlaps strongly with cultural travellers.

7.1.5. Winter Sports and Ski Touring

Winter sports represent a secondary but growing niche. Tsaghkadzor offers modern gondola infrastructure and intermediate slopes; Jermuk combines skiing with wellness and thermal spa tourism. While Armenia cannot match Alpine destinations on infrastructure or snow reliability, it offers competitive prices and an unusual combination of skiing with cultural sightseeing. A particular draw for European enthusiasts — especially from Germany — is heli-skiing: the remote terrain of the Geghama and Zangezur ranges offers exceptional off-piste conditions that are either unavailable or prohibitively expensive in the Alps.

7.1.6. Senior Travellers

Senior travellers aged 65+ represent a growing and highly attractive segment for Armenia. Today’s European senior is often in good health, physically active, well-travelled and with significant disposable time and income — in Germany, the 60+ population accounts for the largest share of total holiday spending. A particular advantage of this segment is its flexibility: freed from school holiday constraints, senior travellers can travel in the shoulder seasons — April/May and September/October — when Armenia offers ideal conditions and Armenian DMCs have available capacity, making them especially valuable for smoothing seasonal demand. Armenia suits this group well: its compact geography allows a rich 10–14-day cultural itinerary without logistical complexity, and its visa-free access, good air connectivity and safe environment reduce barriers for older travellers. Senior travellers book primarily through established tour operators offering guided group tours or tailor-made packages with reliable logistics and are heavily influenced by personal recommendations. Key source markets are Germany, France, Austria and Switzerland.

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