



HOVNANIAN SCHOOL

Armenia Trip Frequently Asked Questions and Answers



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1. What safety precautions are taken?

When traveling, no student or adult is ever by themselves. Students are expected to walk with the group, wearing their school-issued brightly colored sweatshirts to allow for easy visibility. Once the group arrives in Armenia, they will travel with a Mercedes Benz van, fully equipped with seat belts, a tour guide, air conditioning, and bottles of water.

In the hotel, students are allowed to visit each other's rooms after informing the chaperones. For their own safety, they are never permitted to invite *anyone* into their hotel rooms. They must keep the door closed at all times and keep the noise at a respectful level. It is important to be good guests, as well as not to draw unwanted attention. In previous years, students have represented Hovnanian School in a positive light. Each year, the hotel personnel have paid our groups compliments. For future groups, it is important to maintain a positive image of our school.

Students are issued brightly colored sweatshirts to make it easy to locate each member of the group. They are reminded that they are to stay with the group at all times. At any time, if students conduct themselves in a disrespectful or unsafe manner, parents will be called immediately. At the discretion of the chaperones, if the actions of the students warrant it, **students may be sent home at the parents' expense**. Examples include lying and separating from the group without a partner or informing a chaperone. The chaperone's primary priority will be the **safety of the group**.

Chaperones will not take unnecessary risks by traveling to areas considered unsafe for travel. This year, that includes Artsakh. While the experience of visiting Artsakh may be life-changing, the chaperones' **greatest priority is student safety**. Families are recommended to visit Artsakh during another trip.

2. What vaccines are recommended before traveling to Armenia?

If the student's routine vaccines are up to date, the CDC recommends the Hepatitis A vaccine as well. Hepatitis A can be contracted through contaminated food or water regardless of where you are eating or staying.

3. What documents and forms are required?

- Medical Information Form
- Medical Health Insurance information
- Emergency/Medical Release Statement Form
- One recent photo of child (for passport? Dimensions?)
- Consent Form, notarized by notary public (complete with \$1000 non-refundable deposit)



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* Please note that there is no form to submit to the US Embassy by the parents. Hovnanian School will inform the US Embassy in Armenia of the names of travellers and dates of the trip.

4. What other information must be shared with the chaperones?

Parents are required to share any medical or personal issues or concerns not previously disclosed to provide information that will help the chaperones protect and care for the student, bearing in mind HIPAA regulations.

5. What electronics are allowed?

Electronics are not allowed. Being in Armenia with friends for this capstone experience will be the opportunity of a lifetime. To maximize the educational and emotional return this trip can afford, **no electronic devices** will be allowed, with the exception of a basic camera without wifi capabilities for taking pictures. While in Armenia, there will be no phones, games, cameras, fitbits, etc. to be used or even in the student's possession for the duration of the trip. If a student is found with any of these items, they will be confiscated, and the parents will be called immediately. The item will be returned to the parents upon return to **Newark International Airport**.

6. What should students pack?

Students must not exceed the weight limit for luggage. Careful packing will be crucial.

CLOTHES

- Students should pack no more than two pairs of jeans, a week's worth of shirts, plenty of underwear and socks, and two nice outfits for special occasions.
- In a carry-on bag, students should bring one day's worth of extra clothing in case of an unforeseen situation.
- Bring warm comfortable clothing, comfortable shoes, jacket, raincoat, and the Hovnanian School sweatshirt and T-shirt provided by the school.
- Pack one or two nice outfits to meet with the Catholicos and other special events.
- Pack no more than three pairs of shoes, including comfortable walking shoes or sneakers, nice shoes for special occasions, and flip-flops for showering.

TOILETRIES AND MEDICATION

- Place all liquids in your personal handbag prior to departure, remembering that all liquids should not be more than **3 oz.**
- With your toiletries, pack sanitizing wipes, baby wipes, **MOSQUITO REPELLENT** and a face towel.
- If your child's pediatrician has prescribed medication in case of serious illness, please pack this medicine in your personal handbag. Each student will also be asked to pack a gallon-sized



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plastic bag of the over-the-counter medication that the nurse will provide and administer to any student who may happen to need it during the trip. The only additional over-the-counter suggestion students may want to include is probiotics to avoid potential gastrointestinal issues.

VALUABLES AND INCIDENTALS

- Keep all valuable items in your personal handbag: Passports, important documents, a basic camera, and money.
- An amount of \$400-\$500 is recommended, as well as 30 Euros for the layover. There will be few occasions when students may want to purchase gifts with their spending money. They will be told that day to bring some money and reminded not to speak loudly about how much they are carrying. They will be taught how to haggle respectfully, because this is a useful and empowering skill that is employed throughout Vernissage and elsewhere. Otherwise, every meal, admission ticket, etc. has been purchased in advance. No other money will be necessary. For the remainder of the trip, students should keep their money in their personal handbag.
- Students may want to pack snacks, cookies, candy, and/or pretzels.
- Pack a notebook and a pen (daily journal).
- The electricity in Armenia is 220 volts. Bring a voltage adapter if a student is planning to bring any electrical appliances, such as a hair dryer or flat iron.

7. What happens in the case of an injury or sickness?

Between Digin Mesrobian's leadership, Digin Dabaghian's expertise, and both of their experience, the students could not be in better hands. At the same time, accidents and illnesses happen. If they are minor, Digin Dabaghian will treat the student with the first aid kit or over-the-counter medications. In the case of sickness, one of the chaperones will stay at the hotel with the student as the group continues with the itinerary.

Parents will be informed of major accidents or illnesses. If Digin Dabaghian determines a student needs to be seen by a doctor, she will contact the doctor, Dr. Zara Janibegian, who has been the trusted, licensed professional for this trip for ten years. In extreme cases requiring hospitalization, Digin Dabaghian will keep in close contact with the parents.

In a medical emergency warranting hospitalization, the child will be transported to:

Nairi Medical Center

OR

Izmirian Medical Center

Paronian Street 21, Yerevan

Aharonian Street, Building 6

Telephone: 011-374-10-53-75-00

Kanaker, Zeytun Adm. District

Telephone: 011-374-10-52-00-99

reception room: +374-10-244010

reception: +374-10-242024



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8. Can the students visit people not on the trip while in Armenia?

Parents must provide a letter to the school with necessary information, including the name(s) of the visitor(s) and **valid** phone numbers, giving permission for the student to visit the relative(s) or friend(s) away from the group. If a student receives an invitation to meet with relatives or friends, she or he will be allowed only at the discretion of the chaperones. The friends or family members may not join the group on the trip, and they must pick up and drop off the child at a predetermined location for **ONE** trip not to exceed **three hours**.

9. Who is responsible for the passports?

The children are responsible for their own passports. When we pass the borders, they should have their passports with them. One of the benefits of this trip is to teach the children how to take care of themselves. Copies will be made of their passports, which the chaperones will keep with them at all times. The original passports will be kept in a safe in the chaperone's hotel room. They will be occasionally reminded, but the passports are their own responsibility.

10. What is a typical day like?

- 8:00 Meet in the lobby for breakfast
- 9:00 Visit a site
- 12:00 Eat lunch
- 1:00 Go on an excursion
- 4:00 Return to the hotel room and journal
- 6:00 Eat dinner together
- 8:00 Down time to enjoy each other
- 10:00 Shower and go to bed relatively early

11. What and when will they eat?

Meals are provided throughout the trip, including complete breakfast, lunch, and dinner each day at the hotel and restaurants. Bottled water will be provided and students will be instructed not to drink unpasteurized milk or water from fountains.

12. Are the students ever alone? Do they have down time?

After dinner, the students will have the chance to relax, write in their journals, speak with the parents, and spend time with each other in their hotel rooms before lights out.



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13. How and when can we speak with our children?

EVERY DAY! Students will have the opportunity to speak with their parents at a time that will depend on the day's itinerary. Conversations should be **brief** and mostly informational. Based on decades of experience, students are encouraged to keep the storytelling and deep reflection and sharing for an in-person conversation when they return.

14. What sites will they visit? What is the itinerary?

The itinerary is decided and organized for several months and is not finalized until arriving in Armenia. Some sites are important enough to visit each year, such as Dzidzernagabert, Etchmiadzin, and Sardarabad. Other visits are opportunities that present themselves like the TUMO center, the Armenia Tree Project worksite, and the school to which they chose to make a donation. For student safety, the itinerary is not posted or made public.

15. Who provides transportation in Armenia?

A Mercedes-Benz van is rented for the two weeks, driven by a professional driver and accompanied by a tour guide, both of whom the students will get to know. The van is modern, complete with air conditioning and other amenities. The students will travel safely and comfortably throughout the trip.

Students are reminded to always be polite and courteous to the driver and tour guide greeting them and remembering their pleases and thank you's. On a daily basis, students will be responsible for leaving the bus **spotless** and checking their belongings before leaving the bus.

16. Should parents purchase extra insurance?

International medical insurance is generally included on parents' credit cards. However, the final decision is made by the parents. Travelers Insurance is included in the price of the trip, which Hovnanian School purchases.

17. What are the greatest concerns for international travelers?

- Generally, the greatest health concern for international travelers is traveler's diarrhea and stomach upset. It is important to understand that upset stomach and loose bowel movements can be attributed to the stress of international travel due to the change in time, geography, and climate. This type of stomach disturbance should resolve in the first 1-2 travel days. In case of diarrhea, drink lots of fluids to stay hydrated. It is highly recommended to carry antibiotics to treat diarrhea if the child starts to get sick.



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- Students should think carefully about what they eat and drink, choosing food that is cooked and served hot. They should avoid unpasteurized dairy products, eat raw fruits and vegetables only if washed with clean water or peeled, drink only beverages from factory-sealed containers, and avoid ice that may have been made from unfiltered water.
- Students should wash their hands often with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom and before eating. If soap and water are not available, they should use alcohol-based hand sanitizer. In general, it is a good idea for students to keep their hands away from their mouths.

18. SUMMARY OF EXPECTATIONS

- Students will abide by **U. S. Law**.
- Students will abide by **Republic of Armenia Law**.
- Students will abide by the **rules of Hovnanian School**
- Students must not bring **electronics** with the only exception of a basic camera *without* WiFi capability.
- During excursions, students must **stay with the group** at all times.
- Students must be **ready and on time** for all activities.
- Students must be **courteous and respectful** towards hotel personnel and must observe the rights of other guests. Actions, such as prank calls, being noisy, rearranging furniture, and screaming in the hallways, are prohibited.
- Students must be **courteous and respectful to local residents**.
- Students **must not call other rooms** from the hotel phone.
- Any **property damage** in a room, accidental or otherwise, is the joint responsibility of each room occupant and/or the individual who caused the damage.
- Students must **shower nightly**.
- **NO visitors** are allowed in the hotel rooms. Visitors are allowed in the reception hall only after obtaining a chaperone's permission
- In the event that students wish to visit with **relatives or friends** away from the group, the chaperones must have a signed letter from both parents advising of relatives' or friends' names, including home phone numbers and valid cell phone numbers. Relatives or friends will pick up the student from the hotel and drop off the student wherever the group is.