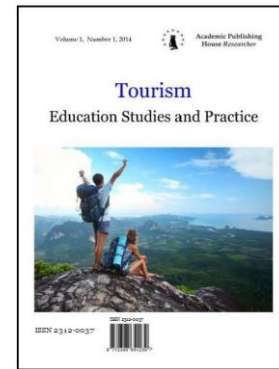


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## Tourism Development Trends in Armenia

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### Abstract

In recent years tourism develops rapidly in Armenia. The main tourism statistics, tourism competitiveness index are presented and analyzed in the article. The article discusses the main types of tourism that may be developed in Armenia such as religious, historical-cultural, spa-resort, eco- and agri-, sport and adventure, gastronomic, urban, educational, scientific, medical tourism. Although the growth of tourism in recent years, there are still many problems that hinder the promotion of tourism. The tourism statistics, marketing policy, legislation must be improved. Besides, the educational system must meet the requirements of the labor market. Tourist specialists must have all the skills for tourism industry development. Thus, the main problems are revealed and the trends and ways of tourism development are analyzed in the article.

**Keywords:** tourism, competitiveness, types of tourism, marketing, statistics, GDP, tourism development trends.

### 1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the largest industries all over the world and develops very fast. Year by year more and more people travel to visit friends and relatives, to have leisure time, or with the purpose of business travel, education, health recovery, etc. The number of international tourist arrivals reached 1,235 million in 2016. The total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was USD 7,613.3 bn (10.2 % of GDP) in 2016 in the world. In 2016, the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment was 9.6 % of full employment (292,220,000 jobs). Visitor exports generated USD 1,401.5bn (6.6 % of total exports) in 2016. Travel & Tourism investment in 2016 was USD 806.5bn, or 4.4 % of total investment ([WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2017 World](#)).

In Armenia also tourism develops fast in recent years.

The purpose of the paper is to analyze the main trends of tourism development in Armenia.

For the realization of the above mentioned purpose it is necessary to solve the following tasks:

- To analyze the statistics of the main indicators of tourism,
- To analyze the tourism competitiveness index,
- To analyze the main types of tourism in Armenia,
- To find out tourism and travel trends in recent years,

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- To analyze Armenian tourism development problems and make some suggestions for advancement.

The object of the research is tourism sphere in Armenia.

The subject of this research are the main trends of tourism development in Armenia.

Many methods are used during the research such as analysis and synthesis, micro and macro analysis, statistical analysis and graphical methods.

In the research a variety of data are used from the National Statistical Service of RA, World Tourism Organization, The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and other international organizations, etc.

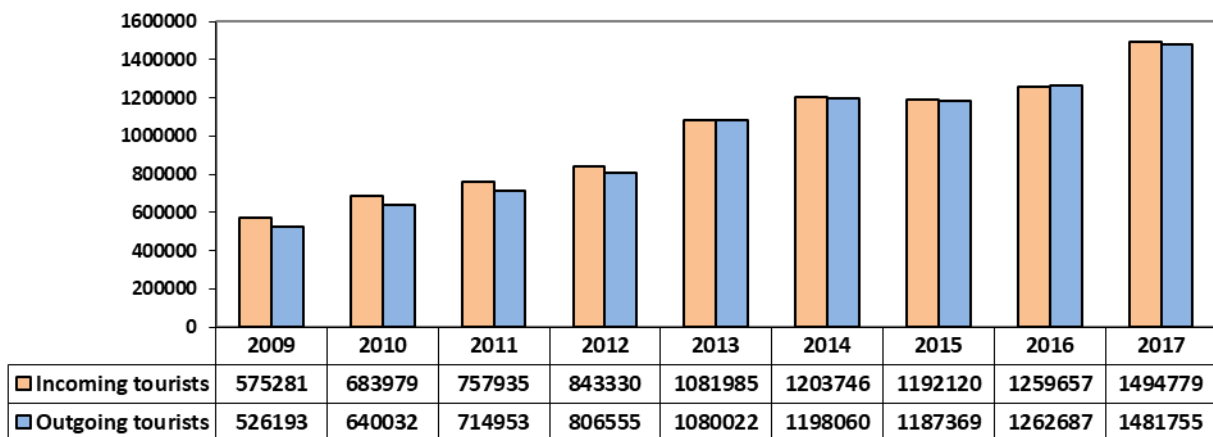
## 2. Study area

According to UNWTO glossary “Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure” ([Understanding Tourism-Basic Glossary](#)).

In Armenia tourism was announced as the main sector of economy. The governmental policy objectives of tourism are determined by the law of the Republic of Armenia “About tourism and tourist activities” ([The law of the RA...](#)) and by the Tourism Development Plan. The purpose of the governmental policy in this sphere is to enhance touristic contributions in the national fund, balanced regional development, growth of living standards of population, as well as in the process of poverty reduction which may be conditioned by creating job opportunities, increasing the number of tourist visits and the income from tourism ([Tourism Development Plan ...](#)). In Armenia, the state administration body of tourism sphere is the State Tourism Committee of the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments, which is responsible for the development and implementation of the state policy in the sphere.

In 2017 1,494,779 tourists visited Armenia ([Social-Economic Situation of the RA, 2017](#)), which is 18.7 % more than last year ([Figure 1](#)). In 2017 the number of domestic tourists in Armenia counted to be 1,086,707 ([Social-Economic Situation of the RA in January, 2018](#)).

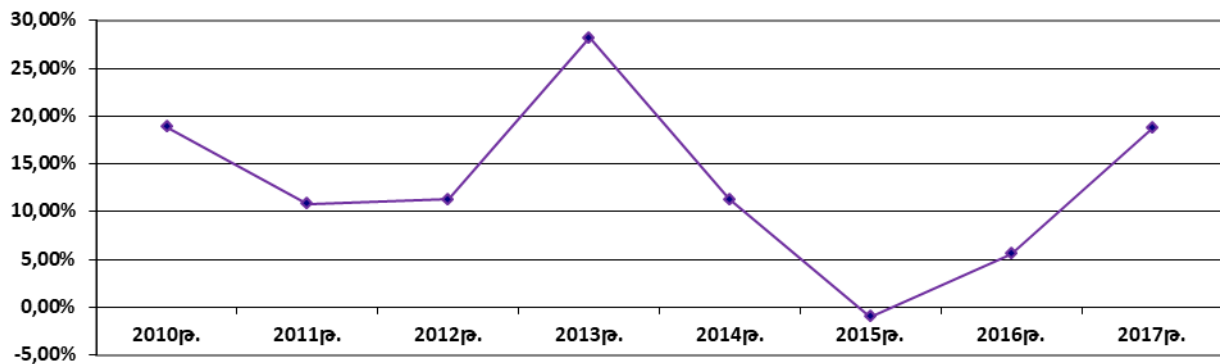
In Armenia the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was USD 0.4bn, 3.8 % of total GDP in 2016, and the total contribution was USD 1.5 bn, 14.0 % of GDP in 2016. In 2016 Travel & Tourism directly supported 38,500 jobs (3.3 % of total employment), and the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly supported by the industry was 12.5 % of total employment (143,500 jobs). Visitor exports generated USD 918.4 mn, 28.0 % of total exports in 2016. Travel & Tourism investment in 2016 was USD 0.1bn, 4.4 % of total investment ([WTTC Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2017 Armenia](#)).



**Fig. 1.** Incoming and outgoing tourists of the Republic of Armenia, 2009-2017 ([Social-Economic Situation of the RA, 2010-2018](#))

If we look at the change in the number of arriving tourists in Armenia (Figure 2), it becomes clear that in 2010, compared to the previous year the increase was 18.9 %, in 2013 was 28.2 % and in 2017 was 18.7 %, then a sharp decline was in 2015 (1 % less than the previous year, which is mainly explained by the drop in tourists' flow from Russia).

It should also be mentioned that the data about the total number of incoming and outgoing tourists is based on the information of the number of arrivals and departures from Armenia recorded at the border crossing points of the RA, as well as on the results of the "Research of Visits and Departures" conducted in 2013. During the research, 22100 people participated in the survey and based on that coefficients the number of tourists was calculated in next years. It is natural that the results will not be so accurate. In this regard, we think that the problem may be solved in the following simple way: through a computer program, the worker at the border crossing points may fix the citizenship, gender, age of tourists based on their passport and ask shortly about the purpose and duration of their visit. The received information would allow to have more accurate and complete information about tourists' number, gender, age, purpose and duration of visit. The availability of accurate statistics will increase the efficiency of the research programs of the sector.



**Fig. 2.** The change of the number of incoming tourists in Armenia, 2010-2017

In 2017 a new draft of the law on tourism was elaborated. In 2017 the Armenian Tourism Development Fund was established, which supports the Tourism State Committee of the Ministry of Economic Development and Investments of the Republic of Armenia to implement tourism marketing and promote Armenia as an attractive and favorable tourist destination.

In 2017 a cognitive visit of 102 foreign journalists to Armenia from 11 countries of the world (Russia, USA, Germany, Israel, Ukraine, Philippines, China, Korea, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Lebanon) was organized, as a result of which about 100 articles were published, 12 TV films and programs were made about Armenia's tourist attractions, which were shown by National Geographic Russia, CNN, Travel & Leisure, Russia24, NTV, ORT channels. In 2017 Armenia participated in 5 international exhibitions in Germany, Russia and Kazakhstan (ITB, World Expo Astana, Iran-TITE, Holidays, Astrakhan).

4 tourist information centers were launched in Goris, Sevan (portative), Garni, Dilijan, and new centers were opened in Gyumri and Meghri Free Economic Zone. In 2017 the following festivals were organized: "Syunyats traditions" festival in Goris, a rare carpet-weaving and decorative arts exhibition titled "Cultural Renaissance" in Dilijan, "Gata" Festival in Khachik and "Wine Festival" in Areni.

Last year a new web-page was opened ([www.armenia.travel](http://www.armenia.travel)), which provides official information about Armenia for tourists. The site had 530,000 visitors from 144 countries within a month. In this regard, it should be noted that in the past, the official website of Armenian tourism was last updated in 2013, that means that the last four years we did not have such a site. In this regard, it must be noted, that the new site needs to increase the existing information (maybe it is still under development and information completion process). For example, under the heading of religious monuments, there are very few monasteries presented, also there is a brief summary of mineral water and hot springs. Meanwhile, the Institute of Health and Physical Medicine of the Republic of Armenia has separated 10 health resorts in Armenia, which have natural healing

resources (mineral waters, mud, favorable climate conditions). The details about health resort tourism opportunities should be presented separately and detailed. It is also necessary to present the major cities of Armenia with their tourist attractions to promote the development of urban tourism. Besides, now the site is in English only, we hope it will be in Russian, Spanish, French and other languages as well.

In 2017 100 million AMD from the state budget was provided to the tourism sector, and in 2018 272 million AMD will be provided.

According to the Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017 which is published by the World Economic Forum within the framework of the Global Competitiveness and Risks team and the Industry Partnership Programme for Aviation & Travel, Spain was on the top, followed by France (2nd), Germany (3rd).

**Table 1.** Travel & Tourism Competitiveness, 2017

Rank	Country/Economy	Score	Change since 2015
1.	Spain	5.43	0
2.	France	5.32	0
3.	Germany	5.28	0
4.	Japan	5.26	5
5.	United Kingdom	5.20	0
6.	United States	5.12	-2
7.	Australia	5.10	0
8.	Italy	4.99	0
9.	Canada	4.97	1
10.	Switzerland	4.94	-4
<i>Neighbour countries of Armenia</i>			
44	Turkey	4.14	0
70	Georgia	3.70	1
71	Azerbaijan	3.70	13
<b>84</b>	<b>Armenia</b>	<b>3.53</b>	<b>5</b>
93	Iran	3.43	4

So, Armenia was in the 84th place among 136 countries ([Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017](#)).

**Table 2.** Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index of Armenia

	2017	
	Rank in 136 countries	Score (1-7)
<i>Travel &amp; Tourism Competitiveness Index</i>	<b>84</b>	<b>3.53</b>
Business environment	39	4.9
Safety and security	34	5.9
Health and hygiene	48	5.9
Human resources and labour market	45	4.8

ICT readiness	71	4.3
Prioritization of Travel & Tourism	71	4.6
International Openness	95	2.6
Price competitiveness	80	4.8
Environmental sustainability	102	3.8
Air transport infrastructure	88	2.2
Ground and port infrastructure	88	2.9
Tourist service infrastructure	74	3.9
Natural resources	89	2.6
Cultural resources and business travel	99	1.4

Armenia was ranked number one in the world in terms of population's access to clean drinking water and mobile network coverage and was at the bottom of the list in terms of the number of HIV-infected people. Armenia was also the 34th in terms of safety, 48th in terms of health care, 123rd in terms of ease of finding skilled employees, 74th in terms of tourism services infrastructure, 80th in terms of price competitiveness, 95th in terms of effectiveness of marketing and branding to attract tourists, etc. So we have a lot to do to improve our tourism competitiveness index.

### 3. Discussion

Many types of tourism may be developed in Armenia based on the existing assets:

1. Religious tourism – Armenia is the first country to adopt Christianity as a state religion (in 301 A.C.). Churches of Echmiadzin, Khor Virap, Geghard, Haghartsin, Goshavank, Haghpat and Sahinahun, Tatev, Noravank are unique sacred places with their historic traditions that can attract tourists from different corners of the world.

2. Historical-cultural tourism - Armenia has an ancient history and rich cultural heritage. There are more than 24,000 historical and cultural monuments in Armenia. The list of UNESCO's "World Cultural Heritage" includes the Haghpat and Sanahin monasteries, the Geghard complex and the upper valley of Azat, the Churches of Echmiadzin and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin Temple, Zvartnots Archaeological Temple. The UNESCO's non-material cultural heritage list includes the Armenian duduk and its music, the art of Armenian khachkars, Sasna Tsrer or Sasuntsi Davit epos, traditional Armenian bread lavash, and kochari, traditional Armenian group dance.

3. Spa-resort tourism – There are 10 resort zones in Armenia (Arzni, Dilijan, Hankavan-Marmarik, Bjni-Arzakan-Aghveran, Stepanavan-Gyulagarak, Tsaghkadzor, Syunik, Lori, Sevan, Jermuk), which have natural healing resources (mineral water, curative mud, favorable climate conditions for the organization of climate therapy) (Harutyunyan, 2010).

4. Gastrotourism – Armenian cuisine is one of the oldest cuisines in Asia. The Armenian delicious dishes (barbecue, kebab, dolma, khashlama, khash, harrisa, ghapama, lavash, wine, cognac, etc.) are attracting tourists. The old wine factory, discovered in one of the caves in Areni village, is proof that Armenians were engaged in winemaking activities more than 6,000 years ago. Wine tourism, as a variety of gastronomic, also has prospects of growth.

5. Agritourism – There are several agricultural fairs and festivals organized in Armenian villages. Specially organized agritours, which will include agricultural activities, will promote agricultural tourism and rural development.

6. Ecotourism – Armenia has picturesque nature and rich greenery, meadows, forests and green gardens. The interest towards ecotourism is rising in recent years.

7. Urban tourism – Pink Yerevan, being one of the oldest cities in the world, is a museum under the open air, with its old and new buildings, rich history and culture. In addition to Yerevan, there are prospects for tourism development in Echmiadzin, Gyumri, Goris, Vanadzor, Ijevan, Dilijan, Tsakhkadzor and other cities.

8. Medical tourism – In recent years, the number of tourists for treatment purposes has increased. In the list of preferred services dental and surgical services are included mostly.

9. Sport and adventure tourism - Armenia has many prerequisites for the development of sports and adventure tourism. The best places for skiing are Tsakhkadzor, Jermuk, Aparan,

Ashotsk and Amasia, for water sports - Lake Sevan. Adventure tourists may go to Mount Aragats, Ajdakak, Khustup Mountains, or take hiking tours in Lastiver, Trchkan, Shaky waterfalls, Noravank gorge, Garni canyon, from Dilijan forest to Parz lake and so on.

10. Educational tourism – In Armenia, many higher educational institutions have international students or international joint programs, which allows students to have short-term or long-term visits for educational or research purposes.

11. Scientific tourism – The scientific history and potential of Armenia is a prerequisite for the development of scientific tourism in our country. Ancient sites, preserves, medieval universities, scientific organizations, scientific museums may be attractive for tourists.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Although the growth of tourism in recent years, there are still many problems that hinder the promotion of tourism. As mentioned above, the statistics, marketing policy, legislation must be improved. Besides, the educational system must meet the requirements of the labor market. Tourist specialists must have all the skills for tourism industry development.

It is planned to have 3 mln tourists in 2022. However, the change in the number of tourists in the previous years shows that in 2017 the growth may not be considered as a surprise, so we need more complex activities for the promotion of tourism.

In 2018 Yerevan will become 2800 years old. This event should be actively advertised in order to bring many international tourists to celebrate the day of one of the oldest cities in the world. In addition to this, Armenia should also be presented abroad as the first Christian country, the country of wine and apricot, the homeland of worldwide famous Armenians (Charles Aznavour, Henrik Mkhitaryan, Serj Tankian, Sheryllyn Sargsyan and others). Increasing the effectiveness of marketing policy will contribute to the development of tourism.

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