

BOOK REVIEW: **Expanded Guide to Armenia Stresses Ecology, Brims with New Information**

By Daphne Abeel
Armenian Mirror-Spectator
September 10, 2004

[Ed. Note: This book review is for the First Edition of the Stone Garden Guide, Pub. 2004]

If you are traveling to Armenia and Karabagh or just want to browse through an informative description of the region, the new and expanded Stone Garden Guide to Armenia and Karabagh should be on your reading list.

Even if you own a copy of Matthew Karanian and Robert Kurkjian's first guide, *Edge of Time*, you'll want the current edition, which contains much more information, additional colorful maps and photographs and important information on Armenia's ecology.

Karanian and Kurkjian have spent 10 years traveling in Armenia and Karabagh. As the Foreword notes, "They have traveled, eaten and slept at virtually every location they recommend, and their individual educational backgrounds allow them to make excellent and insightful commentary about the environmental issues within Armenia."

Ronald Suny's introductory chapter presents a concise history of Armenia from 6000 BC, the earliest times, when the country was ruled by kings, up to the present day, when Armenia exists as an independent, democratic republic. Readers will also find brief descriptions of the economy, architecture, politics, population and religion.

Basic information, such as airlines, national holidays, embassy locations, public transportation, safety, are covered in the chapter on "Essentials."

A special feature of the book is the chapter titled "Ecology," which notes the consequences of independence and development which have hampered Armenia's environmental policies. Nevertheless, Armenia has passed a number of laws to protect its water, air, flora and fauna and to fight global warming.

Eco-tourists will welcome directions to Armenia's forests, parks and birding areas and the list of ecological tours and hiking expeditions. At the same time, the authors make the point that Armenia's resources need more protection.

Diaspora organizations such as the Armenia Tree Project are helping reforest the country, but, the authors point out, the Armenian government also needs to champion conservation. There is a helpful list of ecological organizations in Armenia at the end of the book.

The book is divided into several sections, beginning with Yerevan, and covering central Armenia, the Lake Sevan area, northeastern Armenia, northwestern Armenia, southern Armenia and Karabagh. Each section is packed with up-to-date facts about what to see, how to get there, restaurants and where to stay.

Whether you want to visit museums and more, you'll find what you are looking for here. Every map and brilliant color photograph contributes to the reader's knowledge.

Each section of the book contains highlighted paragraphs of information on commonsensical aspects of Armenia that the reader and traveler will want to know. For example, bring bottled water on long trips, and pedestrians should be especially watchful of cars.

Karanian and Kurkjian have turned what was a basic, skeleton guide into a full-fledged and researched and illustrative volume that is a must for anyone considering a trip to the region. And it will still fit into a handbag or coat pocket.

For further information on Armenia, Karabagh, contact Stone Garden Productions, PO Box 7758, Northridge, Calif. 91327 or email info@StoneGardenProductions.com.