

**Community-Based Tourism Program
Koghb village, Tavush Region,
Republic of Armenia**



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INTRODUCTION

The community based tourism program for Koghb community (Republic of Armenia, Tavush Marz) was developed in the frame of the regional project “Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighbourhood Policy East Countries and Russia” (ENPI-FLEG) by WWF Armenia as a part of the workplan activity “Analysis of alternatives for forest use (non-wood forest products, ecotourism etc.), analysis of private sector/local population access to wood and non-wood resources, pilot projects on alternative forest use by communities aimed at local livelihood improvement and sustainable use of forest resources”. In 2010 in the frame of the same activity the pilot project for Koghb community was elaborated with a component aimed at community-based tourism development.

The survey implemented during development of the pilot project revealed that ecotourism is a prospective area for the community, which can serve as a source of alternative livelihoods along with ensuring forest use without causing damage to forest. There are good prerequisites for ecotourism development in the area – beautiful nature and forests, attractive natural and cultural heritage, Zikatar sanctuary and Zikatar regional forest training center and others. Therefore, by the pilot project a number of tourism development activities were envisaged, including development of a community-based tourism program.

This program includes description of the area, natural and cultural heritage, human resources and community engagement, tourism infrastructure and other resources, cooperation with tour-operators, action plan on tourism development and others. It can serve as the basis for development of community-based tourism in the community.

CHAPTER 1. The Concept of Community –Based Tourism

Tourism is the largest industry in the world and with an annual growth rate of around 7.4%. Tourism has become a key word in rural development projects, in programs to alleviate poverty and in the conservation of cultural diversity of local communities. For many rural areas tourism is seen as the main option to diversify the rural economy in order to create a new perspective for the rural population, to reduce poverty or land abandonment. One of the best-practice types of rural tourism is Community-Based Tourism (CBT). The generation of funds through tourism to support rural development and conservation is a major component of CBT.

CBT is a form of tourism in which a significant number of local people has substantial control over, and involvement in its development and management. The major proportion of the benefits remains within the local economy.

Members of the community, even those who are not directly involved in tourism enterprises, gain some form of benefit as well (e.g. community fund, multiplier effect). CBT should never replace traditional economic activities by becoming the main or only source of income for a community. But it can certainly be a helpful additional side-income.

Some further general characteristics of CBT are as follows:

- it includes education and interpretation as part of the tourism service;
- it increases local and visitor awareness of conservation;
- it is generally, but not exclusively, organised for small groups by small, specialised and locally owned businesses;
- it minimises negative impacts on the natural and socio-cultural environment; and
- it supports the protection of natural areas by generating economic benefits for the management of these areas.

Furthermore, the following service activities can be offered by local communities:

- Guiding
- Provision of transport
- Catering
- Accommodation, homestays
- Handicrafts
- Cultural performances (dance, songs, storytelling, etc.)
- Cultural demonstrations and instruction (weaving, agricultural practices, music, craft-making, cooking, etc.)

Models of CBT

There are different models of CBT.

Model 1: The whole community is involved in the project

Model 2: Parts of the community or families are involved in the project

Model 3: Joint Venture between the community or some of its members and business partner(s)

Table 1. Different forms of community involvement in tourism

Type of enterprise/institution	Level of local involvement	Examples
Private business run by outsiders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Employment■ Supply of goods and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Kitchen staff in a lodge■ Sale of food, building materials, etc.
Enterprise or informal sector operation run by local individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Enterprise ownership■ Self-employment■ Supply of goods and services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Craft sales, food kiosk, campsite, guest-houses■ Guiding services■ Sale of food, ect.
Community enterprise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Collective ownership■ Collective or individual management■ Supply of goods and services■ Employment or contributed labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Community campsite■ Craft centre■ Cultural centre■ Guest-house
Joint venture between community and private operator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Contractual commitments or shared ownership■ Share in revenue■ Lease/investment of resources■ Participation in decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Revenue-sharing from lodge and/or tour operation to local community on agreed terms■ Community leases land/resources/concession to lodge/tour operation■ Community holds equity in lodge/tour operation
Tourism planning body	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Consultation■ Representation■ Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Local consultation in regional tourism planning■ Community representatives on tourism board and in planning fora

Source: Adapted from Ashley/Roe 1998

Another challenging process is income distribution. In order to avoid any romantic and unrealistic expectations, it must be realized that income from tourism will probably never be shared equally within a community

The more powerful and active members usually have a larger share, but this is a normal development in all economic sectors worldwide - be it in a village in Nicaragua or in Norway. Nevertheless, one of the main objectives of CBT is collective income and equitable distribution. Collective income can be used for a productive investment used by the community (e.g. wells,

solar energy, water supply, health or education programs) or for the poorest households of the village.

Table 2. Advantages and limitations of CBT

Advantages - the positive scenario	Limitations and disadvantages - the negative scenario
Concerning local development	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a significant number of jobs for local people especially for young people and women, which can alleviate rural poverty • Community income • Business opportunities • Acquisition of practical skills • Provision of associated infrastructure (roads, telephone, water, power) • Institutional development • Pride • Stemming the out-migration from rural areas to the cities • Local control and responsibility for what is done in village homelands and what happens to resources used by the communities • Education of younger people in both traditional knowledge and western science, and education of the outside world about community goals and ways of living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited investment in training • Risky investment • Infrastructure only for tourists, not residents • Control by outsiders (Government, business sector, NGOs) • Local conflicts exacerbated, especially with neighboring villages who do not benefit from CBT in the same region
Concerning economic growth	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater local income • Stimulation of local economy, with a strong multiplier effect into agriculture and other local activities • Economic diversification, particularly in rural areas, where agricultural employment is insufficient • Encouraging SME rooted within the local community • Stressing the importance of responsible business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unstable demand • Over-dependence • Conflict among members of the community regarding income distribution • Increase in the cost of local goods
Concerning conservation and culture	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of natural resource management • Education of travellers and locals on the importance of conservation • Improved waste management • Increased/improved conservation of biological diversity, water, forests, cultural landscapes, monuments, etc. • Preservation and enhancement of cultural values • Revival of local traditions and crafts • Sharing of cultural knowledge and experience can be beneficial for hosts and guests • Enhanced income to help pay for the preservation of archaeological sites, historic buildings, and districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-use of natural resources • Insufficient benefits, narrowly-distributed, and not visibly linked to conservation of the resource base • Rapid development, over-development, and over-crowding can forever change the physical environment and ecosystems of an area; sensitive areas and habitat may be lost • Litter and water problems • Capacity and other prerequisites lacking • Breakdown of social values, culture and norms

CHAPTER 2. Inventory of Tourism Resources and Infrastructure

2.1. About the village and community

Koghb community is located in the Northeast of Armenia in former Noyemberyan Region of Tavush Marz, close to Yerevan-Ijevan-Tbilisi main road, at right and left banks of Koghb River. It has 197 km and 57 km distance from Yerevan and Ijevan Marz centre, respectively.

The community shares common border with Berdavan community lands in the Northeast, with community lands of Noyemberyan in the East, and with forest lands of Noyemberyan Forest Enterprise in the South, Northwest and Southwest. The second plot of the community is bordering with the Republic of Georgia in the North, with the Republic of Azerbaijan in the East, and is regarded as border area.

Koghb is the oldest and biggest community of Noyemberyan Region, as well as of Tavush Marz with a history of over 1600 years.

Koghb was the centre of Koghbapor province of Gugarats State and can be found in historical notes (Pavstos Buzand, Movses Khorenatsi "History of Armenia", 387). The surveys prove that the village has been existing from earlier times. The history of Koghbapor is old; there are traces of ruins of Hellenistic period. Koghb had monasteries, churches, holy areas. Mshkavanq (10-13 centuries) is the best preserved among them.

The administrative area of the community is 4663 ha as of 01.01.2006, and is located within three plots: (I) community adjacent, (II) Ghiasi Qar and (III) Karmir Gyugh.

The total area of agricultural lands is 3380 ha and reserve lands 403 ha. The agricultural lands owned by community inhabitants take up 1013 ha, including 500 ha irrigable (60 ha irrigated in practice). There are 976 ha (including 724 ha privatized) arable lands, 7 ha fruit bearing orchards, 48 ha grape orchards, 355 ha meadows, and 2038 ha pastures and 282 ha forest lands within the administrative boundaries of the community.

The number of households of the community is 1547 with the population of 5090 (including 2682 male and 2402 female), number of pensioners is 958. There are two secondary schools (669 pupils, 102 teachers), two kindergartens, two libraries, art centre, medical dispensary, music and art schools operating within the community. There are also three pharmacies, five barber's shops, eight shops, 60 trade outlets, two centres of technical maintenance and a bakery.

Noyemberyan Forest Enterprise office is located in Koghb, and the "Zikatar" Forestry Training Centre is located 8 km from Koghb.

2.2. Landscape diversity and natural resources

- **Geography**

The community has favorable geographical position and mild climate. Gugarats Mountain Chain disunited by Kozman ridge is located in the Southwest of the community. The altitude above sea level is 800 meters.

The climate is mild with moderate temperature in summers and winters. The average annual temperature is recorded at +13°C, the mean annual precipitation is 600-700mm. Springs are short and rainy and autumns are mild and long-lasting.

Zikatar Mountain (1646 meters) - majestic cone-shape peak of the mountain has dominating position in the area. It opens up a magnificent view to Great Caucasus and Kur Plain.

- **Flora and fauna**

Forest lands of adjacent Zikatar Sanctuary are characterized by vertical zonation, various types of relief and corresponding rich plant diversity, which is mainly conditioned by geographical location and altitude above sea level.

In the lower zone of Noyemberyan area (up to 1000 m) the forest is composed of hornbeam coppice with presence of oak, ash and maple. Bush diversity is represented by cornel cherry, hawthorn, dog-rose, blackberry, medlar and others. Hornbeam coppice has secondary origin; they replaced previously cut oak forests.

In the middle mountainous zone (1000-1700 m) the northern slopes are mainly occupied by beech and southern slopes – by oak. In beech stands there are hornbeam, oak, lime-tree and ash. There are also different species of bush.

The southern slopes up to 1200 m are occupied by mixed forests of *Quercus iberica*. At the altitudes of 1200-1400 there are mixed stands of *Q. iberica* and *Q. macranthera*. Above 1400 m up to the upper timberline the forest is presented by *Q. macranthera*. The oak forests have mixture of other species such as hornbeam, ash, elm, lime-tree, apple, pear and others.

The fauna is represented by species characteristic for the Caucasus broad-leave forests. In the area there are 1 species of amphibians, 4 reptiles, 84 birds and 24 mammals. The fauna diversity is conditioned by the ragged mountainous relief, presence of natural caves, dense forests, abundant waters as well as closeness of the River Kur basin. The representatives of fauna include roe-deer, bear, wild boar, wolf, fox, badger, hare, hedgehog, squirrel, wild cat as well as species of reptiles, amphibians, birds and insects. There are also several fish species in the rivers.

- **Natural springs**

Koghb river valley stands out for its unique flora, and perfect preconditions for organization of recreation and leisure. There are around 30 spring-monuments with comfortable pavilions at Koghb riverside.

There are also several mineral springs in the area, among them the one located within Zikatar forest training centre is the most used.

2.3. Historical and cultural resources

- **A brief historical-geographical overview**

The village of Koghb is located in the north-east of the Republic of Armenia and is the largest village in the Tavush region. Koghb has also been known as Koghbakar, according to the Ashkharatsuyts. Koghb was the administrative center of the Koghbapor province of the Gugark State in Greater Armenia (Pavstos Buzand, Movses Kohrenatsi, Armenian History 387). Koghb was also a provincial area in the Utik State and was an intersection point of roads from Asia Minor, Iran, Georgia, and Assyria in addition to the States of Ayrarat, Gandzak and Aghvank. The province of Koghbapor was located in the governorship of Gugark which was founded to protect the northern gate of Greater Armenia.

Archeological excavations have shown that the village has been occupied since prehistoric times. The history of Kohbapor is so rich that there are still traces of pagan structures. Koghb has monasteries, sanctuaries and churches.

Late 19th century bishop and historian Makar Barkhudaryan wrote the following about Koghb: “Koghb has a church named Surb Astvatsatsin, built on six pillars, 22 x 12 m and has two priests. The church has a Gospel manuscript, written by deacon Nasip in village Tag in the Dizag province, in 1563.”

Before 1920, Koghb was a part of the Kazakh province of the Yelizavetpol state. From Soviet times until 1937, Koghb was a part of the Dilijan, Alaverdi, and Ijevan regions. Later, following the establishment of the Tavush region, it has remained a part of the Noyemberyan region.

To the south-west of Koghb lies the Gugarats Mountain at an elevation of 800m which is divided with a ridge, Kozman. Koghb has a moderate climate. The average annual temperature is 13 degrees and the average rainfall is between 600-700mm. Winter and summer are moderate, spring is short and rainy, and autumn is long and mild.

The village is located in an active seismic zone, as it has been since medieval times. According to Kirakos Gandzaketsi, Mshkavank was ruined and four priests died during an earthquake in 1188. There have been less severe earthquakes in 1988 and 1997.

The river Koghb flows through the village. Ghamshutala and Kozman have mineral water reserves. There is zeolite, clay, gypsum, and limestone in the area. Old iron mines have been identified (Bover). The soil here is gray-brown and the relief is ragged.

- **Museum of History of Koghb**

The Museum of History of Koghb was founded in 1970 based by Suren Abovyan, who was the director of the Cultural House of Koghb from 1946 until 1999 and was the custodian of funds until 2009. Suren Abovyan achieved much with his work with the museum. An invaluable contribution to the cultural life of the village was made through his efforts in collecting and preserving the culture and history of the village.

This community museum is unique in the Tavush region. Here is the past of Koghb on display. It is a big exhibition room, which includes hundreds of exhibits, beginning from the Bronze Age. The artifacts displayed here were found during excavations as well as construction or agricultural works.

The exhibits are grouped to represent different eras. Each artifact describes its intended use and the time period. The museum has an excellent ethnography exhibit.

Thanks to good geographical location, mild climate, and rich flora and fauna, the area has been densely populated for a long time. The museum displays this history through exhibits dating from the Late Bronze Age.

The museum has several unique objects, including a well preserved sword from the stone tomb. There are also clay vessels preserved from 3000-3700 years ago. There are interesting exhibits, including coins, models of temples that existed in Koghb, handicrafts, photos of those killed, lost or imprisoned during World War II (WWII), letters, “black papers” (notification of the death of someone in a war), and personal items of the heroes and victims of WWII. The number of exhibits and the attendance areas are growing day by day; visitors are encouraged to leave their remarks in a guest book.

Now reconstruction and restoration works are taking place in the museum.

- **Historical places and monuments**

The Memorial

In 1941-1945 750 villagers of Koghb took part in Great Patriotic War, 276 of them never returned home. In the center of the village there is a memorial to the war victims.

Mshkavank (Surb Astvacatsin vank)

Church Mshkavank (Mshakavank) was built on the south of Koghb, 3 km far from the village, on the right side of the river of Koghbaget on the top of a forest hill. Church "Surb Astvatsatsin" and the eastern nave are remained. Nobody knows when it was built, but Vardan Areveltsi wrote about an earthquake in 1219 and also mentioned Mshkavank.

Ageghtsi (5-7 century)

Two kilometers to the south-west is lies Ageghtsi, where the old village was located. The eastern part of a tripartite church still remains. The church had north and south entrances. The thinness of the walls and the lack of arches indicate that the building was covered by wood.

Central Church of Koghb (St. Astvatsatsin, V-th century)

Dilapidated sacristy and three gravestones remained. In 1936 the church was destroyed.

Tvaraeghtsi (Tvarageghtsi)

Koghb has several medieval monuments. There is a ruined church, Tvaraeghtsi, on the left side of the river is an old manor witheastern wall still remaining. There is a cemetery that surrounds the church. Stone graves were found during road construction.

Sanctuary "St. Nshan" (Bacrel)

It is located on the southern side of the village on a mountain top. It had a wooden roof. Only one cross-stone remains.

Old Koghb (patrimony Koghbapor)

One kilometer from the new site of Koghb, on the right side of the river, lies the former settlement, a church and an old graveyard.

Mkhitar Vardapet (Chapel)

This chapel lies on the left side of the river, near the gardens. The roof was covered with wood. Several cross-stones and ornaments remain.

Church of central cemetery

A 13th century cross-stone and a part of wall remain.

St. Arakel (Khechi car)

This rock-made chapel is located in the north-western side of the village, on a hill top. Some dilapidated walls, an old settlement and several cross-stones remain.

Vardi Gyugh - St. Gevorg

A destroyed chapel, an old settlement and several cross-stones remain in the western side of the village.

Barsom, the village site

There is a cemetery and a ruined chapel, which is also called "Barsomi Chgnavor"

Mount of bachelors

This mount is located in the western side of the village. 30 young men fought and won lezgins here, but later on lezgins returned and killed them.

Zikatar Old settlement

Remains of 2-1 millennia castle and tomb are found here.

- **Arts & crafts**

Cultural Center of Koghb

The Cultural Center was established by the council of the village in 1945. Cultural life in Koghb was very active and prominent. In 1976, a new building of cultural center was built. In 2002, the House of Culture was renamed as the Cultural Center of Koghb (CCK) and got a status of legal person. The center staff includes 12 employers. Many activities are organized by the CCK. A museum of history was established in 1970. The museum has many interesting exhibits and is visited by many people every year. The CCK has two libraries. The libraries organize poetry and literature events. Dance, embroidery, and macramé events also take place here.

The Cultural Center of Koghb organizes activities for celebrations, holidays and other days important to the community with participation of talented people from Koghb. Much is accomplished with the assistance of the authorities in Koghb, but there are still many issues yet to be resolved due to a lack of funds, such as the poor physical condition of the building (roof, concert hall, theater chairs, gym, etc).

Koghb Art School

Koghb community member Karo Ghulijanyan opened the Koghb Charity Art School in 1999. The school was opened to offer opportunities to and bring together talented young people, living far from the capital of Yerevan, to appreciate art and enrich their lives through culture. The school teaches graphic arts, painting, composition, and history of art. Previously the Koghb Cultural Center used to provide a room for the Art School, but recently the Art School moved to a separate building constructed behind the Cultural Center with international support.

The new building provides a comfortable studio for students to practice; in their turn the teachers work hard to expand and develop the school's programs. The activities are not just limited to art courses; various cultural events are also organized for the community, including exhibitions, holiday celebrations, meetings with artists, symposiums, etc.

Musical School

The Musical School was founded in 1993. There are currently 12 teachers and 76 students studying at piano, clarinet, canon and pipe classes.

Theater

The troop of CCK was founded in 2005. The troop has staged many plays.

The puppet-show of CCK was established in 2006 and it is of great interest for tourism development. They staged the folktale "Mouse Groom" by A. Khnkoyan and "Meeting of Mice". The following works of H. Toumanyanyan were preformed: "The Dog and the Cat", "The End of Evil", "The Barekendan," "The Lying Hunter", "The Mindless Man", "The Lazy Hour". They

are going to stage "The Three Little Pigs" and "The Bremen Town Musicians". The group performed plays in 35 settlements of the region, as well as in Lori, in the house-museum of H. Toumanyan and Puppet Theater in Yerevan. Art director and creator of puppets is the director of CCK Sasun Muradyan

Local performances and festivals

The favorite festival in the community is *vardevar*, which is being organized outside the village at beautiful natural sites. There is a prospective plan to make a tradition organization of annual meetings of all community members with participation of former villagers – traditional “Days of Koghb”.

- **Cultural landscapes**

There are centralized vineyards outside the village; cultivated species are mainly "rkatsiteli (red bean)", as well as “Lalvari”, which is widespread in the northern part of Armenia. A wine factory is functioning in the neighboring Berdavan village where the “Ayvazyan wine” is produced.

In Soviet times the “sovkhoz” of the village was specialized in horticultures. Peach, apricot, pear, apple, almond have been grown, and on average about 2,000 tons of fruit, 500 tons of grapes, 200 tons of crops, 150 tons of vegetables and 30 tons of tobacco have being produced per year.

- **Food specialties**

The traditional homemade wines and vodkas from different fruits (cornel, wild pear and apple) are prepared in the village. Different jams and juices are also prepared using dewberry, dog-rose, hawthorn, wall-nut, medlar, pear, apple and others.

The special dishes are cornel cherry “pshejur” (a liquid dish with acid taste), dock-sorrel “pshejur” (with wall-nut) and “tsandil” (with corn, beans and groat).

2.4. Accommodation resources and food facilities

There is no experience of accommodating tourists in the community yet (no tourist lodges, hotels, guest houses, camp-sites or hostels). However the preliminary investigations revealed the possibilities of homestays in the village.

In the village there are many different types of shops and other trade points, as well as hairdresser’s.

Zikatar regional forest training centre, which is one of the key points of ecotourism trails, is also located not far from the village. The center has the appropriate facilities and is able to provide services for the visitors.

Zikatar Regional Forest Training Center, technical equipment

The main building of the training center occupies 400sq.m area. The administration building is two-storied with the following facilities:

First floor:

- The conference/training room for 55 participants (with a round table for 25 participants, and separated tables for 30 trainees)

- Dining room
- Laboratory
- Two administrative offices
- Two bathrooms

Second Floor:

-12 Bedrooms (3 single, 9 double rooms with separate bathrooms, cold and hot water supply). There are also 3 wooden cottages: each of them has 4 double bedrooms, as well as the ranger station for guard and support staff.

Communications include telephone, fax and internet. The official web-site of the center will be launched soon.

Address: Koghb, Tavush region, Armenia

Tel.: (+374 10) 563081, (+374 10) 563081, (+374 066) 52772

E-mail: zikatar_center@yahoo.com

2.5. Access and transportation, travel services

The roads are in good condition for any type of transportation to get to the village. The majority of tourist trails are passable only for off-road cars and only during no-rain season (May-October). The distance from Noyemberyan town is 4 km, there are regularly functioning minibuses; taxi also can be used.

The minibuses connect Koghb with capital Yerevan (3 times daily, price 2500 AMD); taxi costs 3000 AMD/person. There are minibuses connecting Koghb to Vanadzor (2 times daily).

2.6. Information/Visitor Services

• Visitor Centre

The community has provided a room in the Cultural Center, where a Visitors Center has been established with support of the Project “Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighborhood Policy East Countries and Russia” (ENPI-FLEG) by WWF Armenia. Visitor Center was renovated and furnished, as well as equipped. Next to the Visitor Center is the History Museum of the community, which also is a potential source of information for visitors.

• Tourism equipment

In the frame of ENPI-FLEG project WWF Armenia provided to community tents with sleeping bags and mattresses. It is envisaged to provide also mountain bikes.

• Availability of public toilets

There are few public toilets in the village; however their sanitary condition is far from being satisfactory.

In the frame of ENPI-FLEG project WWF Armenia provided garbage bins (120 and 240 l) to be installed at different locations.

• Rest and picnic areas

Koghb River valley is distinguished by a unique flora, as well as by excellent opportunities for recreation and leisure management.

Along the Koghb River shores there are about 30 springs with comfortable shelters nearby for having rest and picnic.

- **Telephone, fax and internet communication**

There are telephone facilities in all administrative buildings and in all households, most people use also mobile phones.

Internet connection exists in all institutions, as well as in the houses of some residents. An Internet Club used to function in the village, but at present it does not function.

- **Banking, money exchange**

Novemberyan town has branches of several banks: Gyughbank, Khnaybank and Artshinivesbank. The ATM of Gyughbank is planned to be installed soon.

2.7 Access to medical services

A polyclinic and two pharmacies function in the village. A health center - the Nasibyan Hospital operates in Noyemberyan town.

2.8. Water, energy and sewerage

The community is provided with drinking water by 70%, there are 8 large and small reservoirs (1200 tons of general capacity). Although natural gas is available to the whole village, but the majority of the population still uses firewood, which is relatively cheap. It is mainly gained from forest dead-wood.

There is no centralized sewage system in the village.

2.9. Private funding for tourism development

Among investments by private persons aimed at restoration of public buildings it should be mentioned that a resident of Moscow city, born in Koghbyan village provides financial support to build a church in the village instead of a ruined one.

CHAPTER 3. Tourists Attractions in the Neighboring Areas (Communities)

- **Historical-cultural sites of neighboring areas:**
 - Medieval settlements with cross-stones (*Khashtarak village*)
 - Moro-Dzoro or Tsrvis Vank of 5-12 c, Astvatsatsin church of 13 century (*Lusahovit village*)
 - Monastery of Makaravank with gavit of 13 century - inside is a church of 10-11 century, Astvatsatsin church of 12 century, a small ruined chapel beside (*Achajur village*)
 - A ruined Nahatak (martyr) church of 17 century, then S.Hovhannes church (*Achajur village*)
 - A church of 14 century, Iron Age tombs nearby (*Sevkar village*)
 - A cyclopean fort of 8-7 century BC, ruins of Tsakageghtsi church, another small fort (nearby *Sarigyugh village*)
 - S.Hakob church and cross-stones (*Tsaghkavan village*)
 - Cemetery and a picnic area, ruined but impressive outbuildings of the 13 century (*Acharkut village*)
 - Arakelots (Apostles') Monastery complex, ruined chapel, a little church and cross-stone of Khndzorut (*Acharkut village*)
 - Deghdznuti Vank of the 13 century, Samsoni Vank of 12-13 century, Kirants Monastery of 13-14 centuries (*Acharkut village*)
 - Astvatsatsin church of 7 century, (*Voskepar village*) Tower fort with arrow slits, medieval stone bridge, a ruined church (nearby *Upper Askipara*)
 - Ruined church of 10 century (*Baghanis village*)
 - A church of 19 century (*Voskevan village*)
 - Jujevank monastery and a 12-13 century chapel (*Jujevan village*)
 - Three Iron Age cyclopean forts (*Noyemberyan town*)
 - Cemetery of S.Sargis, a pilgrimage site (*Dovegh village*)
 - Cyclopean fort traces (*Archis village*)
 - Ruined prehistoric fort, bronze figures of 10-8 century BC (*Ayrum village*)
 - Castle of 10-11 century (*Berdavan village*)
- **Biological natural monuments in the neighboring areas**
 - "Plane of Noyemberyan" natural monument, located near village Zorakan in Chinaradzor (Chinar gorge). It is a giant beautiful tree with 5 trunks. There is a spring nearby.
 - "Oak of Vardan Mamikonyan" natural monument, located in Aknaghbyur village. It has national significance, as by historical data it was planted by Vardan Mamikonyan. It is a holy place for locals. A new chapel was built nearby.
 - "Plane of Sarigyugh" natural monument, located in Sarigyugh community on the right site of Yerevan-Noyemberyan road. It is a giant beautiful tree with numerous

trunks, some of them damaged. There is a spring and cross-stone nearby. The surrounding territory is well-maintained.

- **Nature trail: Kirants & Samson Gorges**

The “Armenian Monuments Awareness Project” NGO developed a trail, which starts in Ajarkut village near the entrance to Kirants Gorge. The length of the trail is 18 km. Details see Annex 2.

- **Apaga Tour** (www.apaga.info)

Yenokavan village is situated in the north-east of Armenia, 10 kilometers from the town of Ijevan. It is located at the altitude of 1,000-1,300 meters, surrounded by hills, and close to a forest-covered gorge about 100 meters deep that ranges for about five kilometers. For several years this area has been a tourist magnet as a result of investments by the Moscow-based doctor Artak Chibukhchyan, a native of the village, who set up the Apaga Tour Company and decided to turn his birthplace into a recreational area for those who prefer a healthy and active holiday. Tourists are offered several sight-seeing tours on horseback or on foot, which include the natural wonders, as well as many historical and cultural monuments – fortresses, churches, cross-stones.

CHAPTER 4. Tourism and Recreation Management Methods and Recommendations

4.1. Elaboration of agreed vision for community-based tourism

Methodology of consultations with the community

In order to succeed in tourism the community-led and community-focused strategy is necessary which has environmental, social and economic aims and attainable objectives.

An extended community meeting should be set up to launch the idea of community-based tourism and to discuss the main issues of CBT. The meeting should be facilitated by local authorities with the professional assistance of tourism expert. The participation of national and regional stakeholders would be also very welcomed.

This should begin with a process to identify the community features or assets of a destination. These may include natural physical features and/or social and cultural assets and strengths. The tourism product will likely be built around these natural and/or cultural assets. Making an inventory of the following features will provide a starting point for the community to determine what tourist experience they want to offer.

What will visitors come to see? In addition to the preliminary inventory the potential features or assets that can form the tourism product should be discussed with community:

- Natural features, resources and attributes, such as mountains, forests, landscape, hot springs, etc.
- Cultural sites, traditions, and history, including historical monuments, crafts and cultural festivals, local food and dress, legends, etc.

These assets or tourist products are ‘sold’ effectively when the following features are also present:

- Location and close proximity to other tourism sites, to build upon regional assets.
- Accessibility: distance from main cities, air service, roads, telephone or Internet service.
- People skills/knowledge, technology: local knowledge of plants and animals, museums.
- Popularity or fame of tourism assets: national or international recognition of the product or destination.
- Access to tourist *attractions or activities*, both within the immediate area and wider.

(Source: Mountain Institute Community Based Tourism for Conservation and Development Resource Kit 2000)

To align assets with community objectives

Developing a tourism product is not just about identifying and selling environmental or cultural assets. Determining what kind of experience a community will offer to visitors needs to consider assets alongside community objectives. Identifying objectives, which might include income generation, conservation, skills development and cultural exchange, will help the community to work out what should be on offer and processes for developing and managing the CBT venture (CBT vision, objectives and planning). To do this, it is necessary to move beyond thinking about

‘*what* can be sold’ to asking ‘what does the community *want* to sell’ and ‘*how* will the product on offer help the community to achieve CBT objectives’?

Build products from assets

Once the community assets and objectives have been identified the next stage is to define how selected assets can provide the foundation of a tourism ‘product’. For example, cultural sites and traditions alone do not constitute a product, however when offered as an experience for visitors including appropriate interpretation (of landscapes and cultural sites), these assets can make the community an attractive destination.

Is the community sufficiently organized and strengthened for CBT?

Effective structures for community involvement and the method of distribution of income should also be discussed:

- Private tourism businesses employing local people;
- Local individuals selling produce and handicraft to visitors directly or through tourism businesses;
- Individuals, with links to the broader community, running their own small tourism businesses;
- Communally owned and run enterprises.

It is necessary also to select an effective and principled Management Team and assign roles and responsibilities.

Results of preliminary consultations in Koghb on CBT vision and objectives

The tourism in Koghb community should:

- be a component of sustainable development of community;
- be compatible with sustainable management of natural ecosystems, including Zikatar sanctuary and Zikatar regional forest training center as a part of tourism development;
- involve local population to ensure fair distribution of obtained benefits.

The main aim of CBT in Koghb is to create the source of alternative income for the community while ensuring forest use without causing damage to it.

The following preliminary objectives were also formulated:

- Awareness raising in the community on environmental and sustainable tourism (ecotourism) issues;
- Development of an agreed CBT strategy;
- Establishment and development of tourism product, including infrastructures and services;
- Development of human potential and professional resources for successful implementation of CBT;
- Organization of marketing, promotion and advertisement.

4.2. Development of human potential and professional resources

Tourism is a highly competitive and demanding industry in which skills and experience are needed to deliver a high quality visitor experience to ensure sustained viability of the CBT venture. For a community to develop an appropriate CBT venture, it is first necessary to ensure the community is prepared to manage the delivery of tourism. Local staff will require several steps of tourism capacity building and training across a range of areas. In CBT ventures where there are partnerships involved in the delivery of the tourist product, partners are likely to need some form of capacity building too.

Key areas for community and staff capacity building are: understanding the tourism industry (supply and demand side), asset and financial management (appropriate protocols and procedures), knowing how to interact with external tourism stakeholders (government, partners, supporters and founders), and understanding the CBT marketing 'mix' (to be able to get the message 'out there' in the right way).

Training and development of professional skills are vital and necessary in order to implement CBT in a successful way. The whole community, or at least its interested members, should be integrated in training sessions.

Providing technical support

The capacity building and training programs with local communities is very important. It is important to get the level of delivery and content right. This should be carefully discussed with the communities themselves. In general, it has been found that short, technical courses have had little impact. Longer courses, including learning by doing and on the job training, have proved necessary.

Important topics of several training sessions with interested members of the community include:

- Product development issues, including nature and cultural program;
- Handling visitors, customer care and hospitality skills;
- Marketing and communication (in cooperation with tourist boards and/or tourism companies);
- Environmental management;
- Working and negotiating with commercial operators;
- Management skills, legal issues and financial control;
- Income distribution and rotation system;
- Handicrafts;
- First aid;
- Guide training, including content and delivery; and
- Basic language training.

However it is worth mentioning that, many CBT lessons cannot be taught through training and are best learnt through delivery.

4.3 Physical infrastructure

Community would need to consider the existing infrastructure when designing the tourism product. Will existing facilities support an influx of visitors or, conversely will a lack of infrastructure undermine the success of the tourism experience?

Appropriate physical infrastructure will promote community tourism.

The following tourism infrastructure can be created in the community:

- Visitor Centers
- Lodging accommodations
- Public catering and merchandizing
- Infrastructure for observation and research
- Roads, tracks and water routes
- Informational infrastructure
- Interpretive infrastructure
- Infrastructure to handle the physical needs of visitors
- Infrastructure for common use and waste disposal

- **Visitor Center**

A Visitor Center that has been established in the frame of the Project “Improving Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in the European Neighborhood Policy East Countries and Russia “ (ENPI-FLEG) by WWF Armenia. It can combine both informational and interpretative functions. The Center was provided with some material-technical base – furniture and computer equipment. It should be supplied with appropriate informational and interpretative materials.

In addition, the database on lodging facilities and other services should be developed with various reservation opportunities: through the phone, visit or internet. A souvenir panel also can be created in the Visitor Center.

- **Lodging facilities**

As an initial step it is recommended to select 4-6 of rural houses and to adapt it as guesthouses for visitors.

There are two types of requirements set forth for the lodging facilities:

- a) quality of service, and
- b) ecological standards.

Quality of service

Quality of service in tourism is a highly-specialized task.

Therefore, it is suggested that all accommodation facilities should undergo the **hotel certification procedure** applied in Armenia and be graded accordingly.

According to the Republic of Armenia Law on Tourism and Tourism-Related Activity the RA Government established the hotel certification procedure on the territory of Armenia which is being practiced since 2004. According to that Law“ The objects of the hotel business are considered to be hotels, motels, B&Bs, spa centers, rest houses, camps, or guest houses,

pensions, tourist, youth and camp infrastructure, tourist homes.” In order to get certificate, it is necessary to apply to the committee functioning under the RA Ministry of Economy. For details see: RA Governmental decision N 947N from 10.06.2004 on “ Approval of the order and terms of hotel service provision, orders for certification of hotel objects and certification procedure” with 10 annexes (<http://www.mineconomy.am/upload/file/pdfs/Karvoroshum11.pdf>).

Ecological standards

The ecological standards and sustainable use of natural resources are very important for the rural tourism service providers.

The lodging facilities should be able to meet the following environmental standards:

- Be designed, built and exploited in harmony with the natural and cultural environment.
- Reduce wastes, improve waste collection and disposal practices.
- Improve the sewage clean-up and removal techniques, particularly related to lavatories.
- Ensure the use of ecologically clean drinking water and food.
- Adopt water conservation policies.
- Minimize the use of energy from non-renewable sources, adopt the energy saving policy.
- Initiate environmental research and conservation programs or participate in the current initiatives.
- Acquire and disseminate educational and interpretative materials on environment and environmental protection (to educate both tourists and their staff).
- Offer educational and participatory eco-tours to visitors.

• Infrastructure for information and interpretation

Building basic infrastructure to ensure that information and interpretation can take place regardless of the weather would be necessary. This includes works such as production and installation of interpretation signs and to build access pathways for visitors.

Beside the Visitors’ Center the informational and interpretive infrastructure should be located at the most popular places:

- Zikatar training center
- Along the paths;
- In the surroundings of the cultural –historical monuments and on the roads leading to them;
- On the roads, at the entrance and exit of the community.

These should include direction signs, regulatory signs, exhibition halls, advertisings etc. Signs, marks, advertisings billboard should be well prepared, planned, easy-to-understand and placed at all the strategic points and not boring.

Information and interpretation should be available in at least 2 languages – Armenian and English. In particular, it is necessary to prepare and install interpretive signs in English for the exhibits of the Museum of the History.

In the frame of ENPI-FLEG project WWF Armenia envisages preparation and installation of some information and interpretive signs near the Visitor Center and Zikatar training center as well as along touristic trails and other relevant locations (see section 4.12 Action Plan).

- **Infrastructures for physical needs of the visitors**

Among these we can list the recreation and meal places, toilets, springs (with potable water), shelters and garbage disposal utilities. This sort of infrastructure is necessary to be created at the most popular areas, as well as in the surrounding of the cultural-historical monuments:

- at the Visitor Centers,
- in the vicinity of historical and natural monuments,
- along the paths.

In the frame of ENPI-FLEG project WWF Armenia provided to community garbage bins (capacity 120 and 240 l) to be installed in different locations. Within the same project it is envisaged in 2012 to organize a cleaning campaign for Koghb touristic areas with participation of local school children. The educational seminar will also be organized aimed at awareness raising on forests and environmental issues.

4.4 Information and interpretation

One of the characteristics of CBT is that it includes education and interpretation as part of the tourism service.

Cultural sites and traditions alone do not constitute a product, however when offered as an experience for visitors including appropriate interpretation (of landscapes and cultural sites) these assets can make the community an attractive destination. Interpretive programs are essential for tourists to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the places they visit. Visitor experience can be further increased when their environmental awareness is enhanced as a result of interpretation. CBT should emphasize interpretation so that in addition to increasing visitor satisfaction, the understanding of local customs and cultures will occur, as well as the negative impacts on the environment will decrease.

In order for communities to diversify interpretation program, it will be necessary to build the capacities of community members to develop such programs.

4.5 Equipment and accessories

The community could have the equipment and accessories to give out to the visitors, including:

- tents, sleeping bags, hiking utensils;
- binoculars;
- horse and saddles;
- mountain bikes,

- skiing equipment.

Besides, CBD should be provided with all the necessary equipment of first aid equipment and kits.

4.6. Recommended tourism types and routes

It is evident that Koghb community and surroundings, where one can find many untouched pieces of unique natural complexes is an attractive place for green tourists. The village with its landscape, local traditions and unique cultural and historic monuments has a great potential to lure the tourists. The areas are of great interest for tourism development with the combination of the elements of eco-, agro- and adventure tourism such as walking, skiing, horse and donkey riding, culinary and wine tours, cultural-historical tours, etc.

One unique opportunity for Koghb rural community is to organize the annual (or biennale) Art Festival based on the rich art traditions of the village.

Representing tourism interest CBT is most likely to succeed if surrounding areas offer complementary tourism experiences. For the international market in particular, tourists are unlikely to invest substantial funds and time to travel and visit one CBT site. This is important for both product development and marketing, as the most successful approach is likely to be one that demonstrates how a particular CBT experience fits with other nearby tourist attractions. In addition, positioning the CBT product as complementary to surrounding tourist activities can assist with marketing.

The following issues should be taken into consideration:

- **Review surrounding tourism destinations**

An assessment of likely direct or indirect tourism competition in the destination or region can provide a picture of the existing challenges and available opportunities. If places in the region or on common travel itineraries offer similar products and services then it will be important for CBT operation to consider what they can offer that is different.

- **Investigate trends and possible future scenarios**

Government tourist agencies can provide valuable statistics and data regarding trends in tourism. Use this information to identify future scenarios and consider how CBT fits within wider tourism landscape.

- **Identify the CBT as a ‘value-add’**

Consider how CBT might complement or add value to nearby activities. Is there a particular niche CBT offers that is not already available in the surrounding area? Is the authenticity of CBT a potential selling point and feature that will attract visitors? Identifying how the CBT product both fits with and adds value to mainstream tourism experiences will help to position CBT as an attractive option.

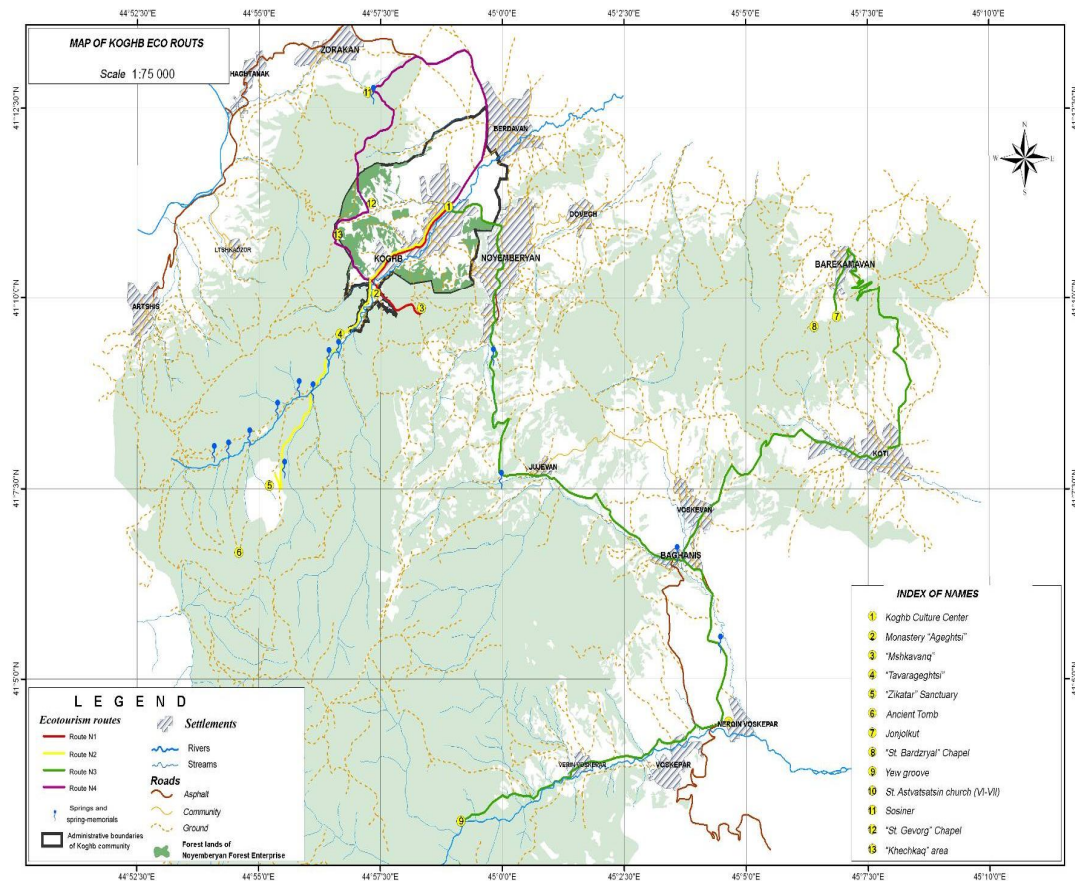
- **Aim to collaborate rather than compete**

Collaborate with managers of surrounding tourist sites. Tourism operators can refer visitors to each other's destinations. Rather than competing, consider ways to work together and encourage tourists to visit multiple destinations in the local area.

Touristic trails connected with Koghb community

All four trails proposed start from the Cultural centre of Koghb community, which also hosts the museum of community history. In this building in the frame of ENPI-FLEG project WWF Armenia has established an information and visitor center, where the visitors can obtain information on touristic opportunities available in the community and neighbouring areas as well as on other tourism related issues.

Map 1. The map of ecotouristic trails proposed for Koghb area



Touristic trail N1 – “Mshkavanq” area

The trail starts at Cultural Centre of Koghb, hosting the history museum of the community, continues towards Noyemberyan Forest Enterprise office. Upon reaching the edge of the community, the road leans to left and continues upwards towards the top of forest covered mountain. Mshkavanq- with unique architectural solutions- can be found in a large glade. There are freshwater springs and shelters around the monastery. The area is rich in wild berries (wild pear, wild apple, blackberry, cornelian cherry, dog-rose, medlar, walnut, etc.).

The ancient cemetery with numerous cross stones is located 300 m from the monastery.

The trail is favourable for amateurs of both historical-cultural and recreation tourism. The length of the trail is 4 km. It can be passed on foot, with horse and all-terrain vehicle.

Touristic trail N2 – Zikatar Sanctuary

The trail starts at Cultural Centre of Koghb, continues towards Noyemberyan Forest Enterprise office until the edge of the community. The old village can be found in here, the ruins of the church are present. The crushed stone road continues towards West along the left riverside of Koghb.

“Tvaraeghtsi” dilapidated church is located on the 5th km of the route. From the 7th km the road turns to left, passes Koghb River and continues upwards towards Zikatar Mountain (peak is 1665m). The Sanctuary with the area of 150 ha and “Zikatar” forestry training regional centre are located on the slope facing North. The centre is equipped with computers, telephone line, has a library and a canteen. It has the best conditions for work and rest. The area is incredibly beautiful. Almost all tree and bush species typical for North-eastern Armenia grow in the area. The old mausoleum of Zikatar is also located in the area.

The length of the trail is 10km. The trail can be passed by all types of transportation.

Touristic trail N3 – Yew groove

The trail starts at Cultural Centre of Koghb, continues through the main road to Yerevan until the crossroads of Voskevan community, then it turns to left, passes Voskevan and Koti communities and reaches Barekamavan community. 800m towards Southwest from Voskevan community the unique natural population of Bladder nut (*Staphylea pinnata* L.) can be found on the area of one ha. Famous St. Bardzryal chapel is not far from here. Coming back with the same road until Voskevan crossroads, the trail continues till Voskepar community through Yerevan main road. The “Yew” groove is located 3km towards West from Voskepar community, on the right riverside of Koghb. The surroundings are rich with forests of high density.

The famous St. Astvatsatsin church (VI-VII centuries) is situated in the territory of Voskepar community. Ruins of fortress from middle ages (IX- XII Centuries) can be found in the surroundings.

The length of the trail is 50 km. It can be passed by transport means.

Tourist trail N4 – “Khechqar” plot

The trail starts at Cultural Centre of Koghb, continues 6 km through the road to Ayrum train station and then turns to West (500 m) reaching «Hayots Ojakh» restaurant. The plane tree of almost 800 years growing here is registered in the list of nature monuments. There are many spring-monuments in the area, comfortable for organising rest and leisure. The surrounding areas are rich in cornelian cherry. The trail then turns to South and continues until Vardi Guyx plot through forest. St. Gevorg chapel is situated here. Following the forest road, the trail turns to East, to reach Koghb community. The length of the trail is 22 km, It can be passed by all-terrain vehicles.

4.7. Marketing and advertisement

‘The aim of marketing is to sell the right products or services to the right customers, at the right place, the right time and the right price, using the right promotion techniques to reach the right type of tourist. Marketing is concerned with bringing all aspects of a tourism project together. It plays an important role from the very beginning of a project and is crucial for its success. Good preparation will prevent errors such as developing a product without a market. A good marketing strategy will result in the identification of the appropriate market for the tourism product and delivery the instruments for selling the product effectively to the market.’ Cottrell (2001)

- **Identification of target visitor group**

Clearly identifying what kind of visitors the community is seeking to attract (the target market) underpins many other aspects of developing and managing a CBT operation. Characterizing the target market is important so that the community is able to effectively market the experience they are offering, and to ensure that visitors to the community have a shared philosophy with community operators, in terms of respect for local culture and an interest in supporting sustainable and equitable local development. The marketing messages must provide a clear and accurate description of what the visitor experience will be like. This kind of information helps the visitor decide if it is the right destination for them.

Characterizing the target market will inform product development and marketing and ensure management of the CBT operation meets community objectives. Generally, visitors interested in CBT are likely to be seeking a more ‘authentic’ experience than travelers who stay within larger cities or resort style accommodation. This means CBT travelers are likely to be interested in meeting and spending time with community members and in learning about past and present customs and cultures. This following table provides examples of how visitors can be characterized.

Table 3. Traveler types

Traveler type	Travel values
Authentic Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns everything about a place, time or culture before, during and after your travel there • Enjoys vast natural settings and wonders • Cultural immersion and integration with the local culture • Travel is about personal development, not escape • Comfortable adjusting to new environments • Seeks self-improvement through understanding others
Cultural Explorer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journeys with like –minded people • Enjoys ancient history and modern culture • Seeks to learn everything about a place, time or culture • Constant exploration – always planning for the next trip • Does not need to see every “recommended” site to have a good trip • Experiences the culture as genuinely as possible
Cultural History Buff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learns everything about a place, time or culture • Hobbies; pursues personal interests when travelling • Too much comfort detracts from authentic experiences, luxury hotels are not your style • Rejects standard tourist “fare”; not afraid to chart your own course • Likes to understand past cultures and their present context • Prefers to visit places alone or in small groups • Little interest in learning about one’s own roots or heritage; focuses on the cultures of others
Personal History Explorer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys sharing experiences with close friends/family • Indulgence – prefers the best money can buy • Likes to see and experience a bit of everything • Not interested in learning about the cultures of others • Constant travel is not a priority

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks a deeper understanding of personal heritage
Gentle Explorer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek comfort in familiar surroundings • Prefers pre-planned trips that leave little room for error • Selective – wants luxury, exclusivity and pampering • Not sentimental and not concerned about travel memories • Focuses on relaxation, not the local culture] • Likes organized tours that leave decision making to others
No Hassle Traveler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks a getaway from everyday stresses and responsibilities • Likes the purity and serenity of open spaces • Prefers safety of familiar places • Not interested in standing out in a crowd or being obvious • Many trips focused on visiting family and friends • Enjoys group travel and socializing with others
Free Spirit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sampler – likes to see and experience a bit of everything • Indulgence – enjoy the best that is affordable • Constant exploration • Prefers journeying with like- minded people • Assesses several options for the best value • Free and easy – some structure and planned activities are good, if you feel like it.
Rejuvenator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks a getaway from everyday stresses and responsibilities • Prefers familiar surroundings • Wants comfort, but is not wasteful • Likes sharing experiences with close friends/family • Leave the culture and history for school, anything that might involve work is not a holiday • Enjoys being pampered and cared for
Virtual Traveler	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoys simple, understated pleasures • Seeks comfort in familiar surroundings • Little interest in exploring cultural roots or historical sites • Being part of the group and seeing all the main tourist attractions is not their style • They like following their own schedule

Source: (from <http://uk.canada.travel/traveller-types>)

The Koghb community CBT project could attract the first three traveler types. It is necessary to look at both local and international markets.

Targeting a local or national market in addition to appealing to international travelers can help to build and sustain a critical mass of visitors and can minimize the seasonal low characteristic of tourism dependent on international markets.

- **Development of advertising and promotional materials**

All the tourism service providers need the informational, advertising and promotional materials on their goods and services. These can be the separate brochures for each provider, or one general publication for Catering and B&B services for the whole community. Advertising materials can provide information on natural and cultural values of the area as well as lodging and catering services.

Community needs to manage the expectations of visitors. Some visitors can have unrealistic expectations about the extent to which they will be able to spend time with host community, the standard of accommodation and food on offer etcetera. When developing the CBT product, ensure it is described in realistic terms to potential visitors. It is necessary to inform visitors prior to their arrival of what to expect in relation to the type of food offered and also the standard of accommodation. Pictures and testimonials can also convey this type information to the visitor so they have an idea of what to expect.

Without effective promotion tourists are not able to get information about the project, and due to a lack of tourists the failure of the CBT project is likely to occur within the first years.

Internet website

Internet provides comparatively new and not expensive means for tourism marketing.

From the perspective of the information placed on the website it is necessary using the larger capacities of the internet as compared to the printed materials, thus placing more comprehensive and detailed information on the cultural and natural heritage and peculiarities.

Website should have not only flexible interrelated structure inside, but also be connected to other related sites; allowing to apply to other sites and receive feedback references. This is a very important tool for the CBT, making it possible to become a part of the internet community.

The web should be promoted in the internet that again supposes a number of professional activities with the ultimate result to attract as many users as possible. Beside the standard mechanisms used by the skilled professionals, it is necessary using special web services, acting as tour operators for adventure and natural tours. Here one can register the CBT tour package in its entirety, or in separate specific portions, with prices for services. Electronic tour operator will add to the price according to the level of its mediator services and sell the tour package in the internet.

Tourism website of Koghb community can be launched separately or can be a part of the community website www.koghb.am.

- **Dissemination of advertising materials**

It is not sufficient for community-based tourism projects to rely simply on tour operators to supply visitors. For example, although pre-arranged groups may be easier to handle, backpackers or independent travelers may often be better suited to the product in question, but tend not to purchase inclusive packages through operators in their home country. The marketing plan, therefore, will also need to address issues such as local information delivery, internet promotion, media and guidebook coverage, linkages with other projects, and promotion through national tourism campaigns.

The community can distribute advertising materials through two ways:

- Distribution through mass media: *adds, articles, specialized travel monthly magazines, travel guides, TV*;
- Distribution through mediators *specialized tour operators, tourism information centers, local hostels and capital city hotels, airports*.

Tour operators are the main link in the chain in cooperation with whom community can attract visitors (for details see section 4.8). Since 2001 there is a Visitor Information Center operating in Yerevan (URL: www.armeniainfo.am.) This Center can also market community-based tourism.

Besides, the annual tourism exhibition “Country of Talking Stones” is held in Yerevan, Koghb community may also be a participant of this fair.

- **Organization of Familiarization and Advertising Tours**

An extremely popular and effective way of advertising is the organization of Familiarization and Advertising tours for tour agencies, foreign traders, mass media, tourist writers etc. As this is quite an expensive and time consuming activity the community can implement these activities in cooperation with other service providers. Community should also cooperate with national tourism development structure that is regularly organizing informational tours for the mass media representatives. The national tourism development structure is constantly expressing its readiness to provide such mutually beneficial programs to the tour industry representatives, and CBT can play as such.

- **Participation in the Tourism-Related Events**

Participation in traditional annual travel exhibitions is extremely important for all tourist service providers, including the CBT.

While participation at such kind of events organized abroad is very costly, the Koghb community could successfully participate in the annual tourism exhibition “Caucasus Travel Exhibition”, held in Yerevan by Armenian Association of Travel Agents.

- **Handling of Applications and Inquiries**

CBT tourist service providers will be doing regular consistent work in handling of applications and inquiries. This refers to both Visitor Center visitors and e-mail applicants. Tourism service provider should be able to react promptly to the e-mail questions. Late e-reply is equal to lost client.

4.8. Partnership with the private tourism sector

Major actors of tourism sector are on the one hand the tourists themselves (**demand**) and the tourism agencies on the other hand (**supply**). Suggesting tourism activities is the sphere of the private sector, mostly. Tourism agencies are to be the major link that will support the development of tourism and provide for the flow of tourists to the community. By establishing close connections with tourism private sector, community can better understand the real needs and interests of the tourists and will more efficiently provide the clients with quality products and services.

Partnerships between communities and the private sector are likely to offer greater security for community managers than short term funds or donations from philanthropic and development agencies. Private sector agencies are always better placed than community managers to undertake market research. Working with commercial companies to promote the destination is particularly important for a small CBT initiative, and is likely to improve the chances of CBT being sustained over the longer-term.

Marketing is expensive and most communities are neither able to afford press tours, attend trade fairs or publish a catalogue, nor do they have the skills to run a costly marketing campaign on their own. Therefore, it is highly recommended to work from an early stage with local (eco) tourism companies who can provide not only investment but also skills, such as foreign languages and specialized knowledge. They can establish linkages between communities and the national and international tourism market. From the very beginning the private sector and the community should build up structures that enable the community to benefit and have decision-making power over the level and nature of tourism in its area. It should be possible for both sides to make adjustments at any point of the business partnership. There are various ways in which

the community can relate to private enterprise. The degree of community involvement and benefit can develop over time.

Appropriate engagement with the private sector can benefit CBT. Realistically, the community may not have all the resources and skills necessary to run an effective CBT venture. It makes sense to work with private sector and private operators when they are able to 'fill a skills gap' or offer services in a cost effective way. Private sector partners can provide capital, business and marketing skills and a client base to complement community assets including land, labor and local knowledge. Private firms can be particularly helpful during the early phases of a CBT initiative.

Clear contractual arrangements and taking time to develop a shared understanding of the type and level of service expected will help to ensure the relationship is satisfactory for both parties. This can include discussing with private firms the objectives and philosophy underpinning a CBT venture and ensuring both parties have a shared understanding of values and corresponding modes of operating. For example, if the community is hoping to promote conservation through their tourism venture, it is important that any private sector partners commit to respecting this goal and working in a way that will promote, rather than compromise this objective.

A vital ingredient for many projects is to form a close working relationship with one or more specialist tour operators. These should be selected carefully to ensure they are well established and are delivering reliable business. Contact, directly or through handling agents, should be made in the early stages, before the development of the offer has occurred, so that the operator can advise on what can be sold and adjustments, if necessary, can be made. Setting up a fully saleable program can take time. An initial step may be to test the program with one or two groups. This also has the advantage of acquainting the community with the experience of handling guests.

Different types of private tourism enterprises

To clarify the mechanisms of community – private tourism sector cooperation mechanisms in the future, below the major components of tourism industry and their brief descriptions are presented:

1. Outgoing tour operators

They organize and sell the entire tour package (full, including all the services). The head offices of the majority of the outgoing tour operators are usually situated in the countries providing the major number of tourists. Outgoing tour operators send groups to different countries and locations; they usually have their own representation/agents in the receiving country, or may operate through the Incoming tour operators of the given country.

2. Incoming tour operators

These are those tour operators that are located in the given country or location, implement the activities to support the creation/formation, development and fulfillment of the tourism product, as a result providing the final tour package. Incoming tour operators implement the whole tour within the borders of the given country. They may operate totally independent or cooperating with Outgoing tour agencies and can suggest and organize tours not only for the foreign visitors, but for the local citizens as well.

Based on all this it is more appropriate for the community to cooperate with the Incoming tour operators, than with the overseas Outgoing ones.

3. Transportation means

In this list are both international (airlines, railroads, water and on-land) transport and local transportation means, used by the local tour operators, aquatic transport, public transportation, such as taxi, autobuses etc.

4. Accommodation

These are hotels, motels, guesthouses, sanatoriums, holiday houses, camping, etc.

5. Caterers/meal providers

These are restaurants, bars, cafes, as well as food producers and providers.

6. Events and sites interesting for the visitor

Among these are a number of events and locations that attract tourists: museums, exhibitions, trade centers, sport, cultural and thematic events etc.

Major steps of cooperation

The community should make practical steps for making contacts with the private tourist sector, including preparation, establishment and strengthening of cooperation. The practical measures to be undertaken by the community to strengthen the cooperation with tourist enterprises are:

1. preparation for the cooperation,
2. establishment of contacts,
3. strengthening of contacts.

The preparation for cooperation envisages implementation of start-up steps aimed at improving the chances for effective collaboration. It assumes:

- a) definition of the desirable tourism development levels and types,
- b) creation of the tourism product,
- c) promotion of mechanisms to ensure the integrity of tourism and environmental objectives.

Establishment of contacts assumes correct selection of stakeholders including the specific steps to reach them. The information to be transferred at the initial stage during first meetings is highly important for the contact to be set on permanent footing.

The national Incoming tour-operators, as well as the representatives of foreign travel agencies form the network of companies which promote and realize the complete package of in-country tours. Foreign and partially local tourists will visit the community through this chain. Furthermore, it is the most competent segment to deal with the practical business issues with the capacity to support the development of tourism in community due to its expertise and knowledge.

In addition, the cooperation with the Union of Incoming Tour-operators would be particularly useful. Its mission is to assist in finding the partners in the area of tourism in Armenia.

Expansion of business links with the international travel agencies interested in Armenia is quite a difficult, expensive and time consuming task. Therefore, the CBT projects mostly prefer to cooperate either with the national travel agencies or with the local representations of international tourist companies.

Strengthening of contacts implies continuous work on strengthening links and cooperation. If the private entity decided to include the community in its list of tours, then the community needs to provide regular information on all developments and changes related to community tourism.

4.9. Obtaining support of tour operators and visitors

Ecotourism experiences should raise awareness of conservation and community issues among visitors and tour operators and include mechanisms for enlisting their support. Significant additional benefits can be achieved through improving communication with visitors themselves and with the tour operators who bring them. These benefits include greater awareness of environmental and social issues, modifying behavior when visiting, and generating direct support for local communities and conservation causes.

In almost all cases, the experience of a CBT program will have an impact on how people think in future about the area and habitats they have visited. However, this can be made more or less meaningful depending on the information they receive before, during and after the visit, and how it is delivered. Careful attention should be paid to the messages put out by tour operators to their clients and to the quality of guiding and interpretation on site. Mechanisms for follow-up contact should be explored. Visitors should be encouraged to ‘multiply’ their experience by writing and talking about it. Many websites now offer this opportunity (see www.responsibletravel.com).

A number of codes of conduct for visitors have been produced. Some are generic, others are area or site specific. These tend to cover questions such as prior reading and understanding, selection of operators and destinations, respect for local cultures, minimizing environmental impact, purchasing decisions, activities to avoid, and conservation issues to support. Similarly, codes for tour operators cover issues such as particular environmental and cultural issues in the destination concerned, selection of sites, relationship with indigenous communities, messages to put across to staff and clients and more specific instructions and regulations. These codes can be adapted for all ecotourism destinations. The codes should cover issues such as minimizing resource use and other impacts, awareness-raising, support of conservation, relationships with communities and safety guidance.

Raising finance or other forms of support from visitors (such as participation in research) has become quite a common practice in ecotourism destinations. This is often through a levy applied by tour operators or through inviting donations. Although some operators resist this, the effect on tour prices can be relatively small. Visitors appear to applaud the opportunity to make a contribution, creating a marketing advantage for the operator. Money may be put into a local development fund. Visitors may be invited to discuss beneficiary schemes and to get to know them. These can be conservation initiatives or social programs within the community.

4.10 Collaboration Between Communities and Tourism Authorities

Government tourism authorities can be a helpful source of information for CBT managers and can provide support for community managers in branding and positioning the CBT operation within the wider tourism marketplace.

The community can expect this kind of support from both national and regional governments, informing them about the intent to develop CBT and seeking their input and advice on how the CBT initiative fits within the wider regional tourism marketplace and strategy. The tourism authority should be able to provide information about other nearby tourist ventures, potential partners including commercial operators, tips and tricks related to developing the tourism product and advice related to marketing.

In many cases, tourism authorities and industry bodies will be able to directly assist with marketing, by including the CBT initiative within tourist information brochures and other promotional material. Working with tourism authorities and/or commercial operators can assist with marketing. Maintaining regular contact with partners and promoters is important so that information about packages and prices is up to date.

In Armenia the state authorized body in tourism is the RA Ministry of Economy. Its Tourism Department is a structural division of the Ministry. The Head of the Department is Mekhak Apresyan. Contact information: Tel: +37410 597155, e-mail: mapresyan@mineconomy.am

National Competitiveness Foundation of Armenia NGO was established in the frame of cooperation between the RA Government and leading Armenian businessmen from different countries. The aim of the Foundation is to promote national competitiveness through development of key areas of economy. The tourism is among target areas of the Foundation. Contact information: Yerevan 0010, Mher Mkrtchyan 5; Tel: +37410 543167, e-mail: info@cr.am.

4.11. Financing of CBT

Most of tourism service providers need additional investments of various degrees for further development of their tourism services.

Community which is interested in running CBT quite often expects that investment (e.g. training, infrastructure, marketing, etc.) will be fully sponsored by donor agencies or the government. However, experiences in all kinds of development work have shown that projects fully financed or run by donors fail at the moment the donor leaves the project.

The local community becomes used to the idea that the money will just keep coming in – somehow from somewhere - regardless of how well the project performs commercially. In contrast, in projects that are run successfully, local partners had to invest something into the project themselves.

Most communities are able to contribute to a development project, if they really are interested in it. The amount of the contribution depends on the local situation. It does not even have to be a cash contribution – it could also be in non-monetary terms, like constructing a guesthouse. This can also be a sign that the community is willing to invest energy and time in the project.

The nature of the financial assistance must avoid inhibiting incentive and causing problems within and between communities. Soft loans and long-term credit, well targeted to local needs, may be most appropriate. The use of local committees to approve financial offers has proved successful in some areas. It is important to demonstrate to governments and donor agencies the success of small community-based projects, including appropriate credit schemes, in order to encourage more financial assistance programs.

4.12 Action Plan

	Activity	Time frame	Responsibility	Cost USD (AMD)	Source of financing
1.	Community meetings				
	Organization of an extended community meeting with professional support of tourism experts to discuss main issues of CBT and environmental protection	2011-2012	Community ENPI-FLEG	1000 (370000)	Community WWF Armenia
2.	Tourism infrastructure and information materials				
	Finalization of interior works and equipping the Visitor Center	2011-2012	Community ENPI-FLEG	20000 (7400000)	Community WWF Armenia
	Establishment of a stand for souvenirs in the Visitor Center	2012-2013	Community ENPI-FLEG	500 (185000)	Community WWF Armenia
	Establishment/renovation of a WC adjacent to the Visitor Center	2011-2012	Community	5000 (1850000)	Community
	Provision of information and interpretative materials to the Visitor Center, Zikatar Center and other related structures	2011-2013	Community ENPI-FLEG International projects	10000 (3700000)	Community WWF Armenia International organizations
	Preparation and installment of information and interpretative signs near the Visitor Center, Zikatar Center as well as along touristic trails and other relevant sites	2011-2012	Community ENPI-FLEG International projects	15000 (5550000)	Community WWF Armenia International organizations
	Selection and adaptation (renovation, restructuring) of 4-6 rural households as guest houses (B&Bs) for visitors	2012-2015	Community International projects	40000 (14800000)	Community International organizations
3.	Marketing, advertisement and cooperation				
	Development and implementation of a tourism marketing program (should include Zikatar Center)	2011-2015	Community International projects	50000 (18500000)	Community International organizations
	Creation and maintenance of a database on tourism accommodation and other services with possibility of various types of reservation	2011-2012	Community International projects	3000 (1110000)	Community International organizations

	Preparation, publication and dissemination of advertising materials	2011-2015	Community International projects	15000 (5550000)	Community International organizations
	Creation and maintenance of a web-site and	2011-2015	Community International projects	5000 (1850000)	Community International organizations
	Participation in (annual) tourism exhibitions/events in Yerevan and others places	2011-2015	Community International projects	15000 (5550000)	Community International organizations
	Establishment of contacts with tour-operators	2011-2012	Community ENPI-FLEG	500 (185000)	Community WWF Armenia
	Organization of a familiarization tour for tour-operators	2012	Community ENPI-FLEG	3000 (1110000)	Community WWF Armenia
	Keeping continuous contact with a number of selected tour-operators	2011-2015	Community	2000 (540000)	Community
	Cooperation with the tourism authorised bodies in Armenia	2011 - 2015	Community	1000 (370000)	Community
	Analysis of the neighboring tourism opportunities and cooperation with other tourism sites	2013 - 2015	Community International projects	5000 (1850000)	Community International organizations
4.	Development of human potential				
	Organization of training courses for development of professional skills of the CBT community management team and the staff of the Visitor Center and Zikatar Center	2011 - 2015	Community ENPI-FLEG International projects	15000 (5550000)	Community WWF Armenia International organizations
	Organization of a professional training for CBT guides (main skills for handling and guiding visitors, field training on guiding skills along with detailed survey and mapping of touristic trails)	2011 - 2015	Community ENPI-FLEG International projects	15000 (5550000)	Community WWF Armenia International organizations
5.	Awareness raising and other activities				
	Organization of a cleaning campaign with participation of community school-	2012	Community	2000	Community

	children		ENPI-FLEG	(540000)	WWF Armenia
	Organization of an educational seminar on forests and environmental protection for community school-children	2012	Community ENPI-FLEG	1000 (370000)	Community WWF Armenia

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9. Management plan of Noyemberyan forest enterprise, Indufor, Yerevan, 2008.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. The list and contact information of the most active Armenian tourism service providers offering tours with a focus on countryside attractions

Tour - operator	Website, e-mail	Tel:
Avarayr	www.avarayr.am avarayr@arminco.com	Tel: 56-36-81
Wishup Adventures	www.adventures.am tamanyan13@gmail.com	Tel: 58-04-46; (93) 224533
Seven Springs Tour Company	www.7springstour.am shahbekyan@yahoo.com	Tel: (99)91-2008
ARTIMPEXPO Tour Company	www.tourismarmenia.am info@tourismarmenia.am	Tel: (91)555-938
BAL Adventure	www.bal.am ; info@bal.am	Tel:56-89-89
AdvenTour Travel	www.armeniaexplorer.com adventour@netsys.am	Tel: 53-96-09; 48-22-71 (374 91) 426745
Armenia Travel +M	www.armeniatravel.am information@armeniatravel.am	Tel: 56-21-04
Apaga Tour	www.apaga.info info@apaga.info	Tel: (91)29-07-99, Irina
Yerkir Nairi	www.erkirnairi.am info@erkirnairi.am	Tel: 58-23-39
Армянское Бюро путешествий	www.abp.am abp@abp.am	Tel/Fax: 56-13-27, (93) 88-56-42
Orient Explorer:	www.orientexplorer.net orientexplorer@xter.net	Tel: 22-41-12; 39-70-04
Nueva Vista Travel Agency	www.travelarmenia.net	+374 10 518836
Natoura Tour	www.natoura.am natoura@mail.ru	Tel: (374-10) 56-04-36 (374-93) 518454
Aquarius travel Tigran Ghahramanyan	www.aquarius.am aqtrav@arminco.com	Tel: 374-10 536767; 374-91 407654
Geographic Travel Anna Kirakosyan		Tel: 51-88-33; 091-722036 Mkhitar
Rumea Ruben Grigoryan	www.rumea.am info@rumea.am	Tel: 32 31 41; 32 82 48; 32 99 29; 32 93 98

Annex 2. Nature trail: Kirants & Samson Gorges

The trail starts from Ajarkut (Kirants) Village- length 18 km.

The trail features the stunning Sevkar Forest and five historic monuments: Arakelots, Kirants, Deghznut and Samson Monasteries and Berdkar (Mahkanaberd) Castle. These magnificent monuments lay in an enchanting forest setting, home to dozens of flower species and mammals including the rare Brown Bear, Wild Cat and European Roe Deer.

Kirants/Samson Gorges, Sevkar Forest

The area consists of hilly slopes covered with broad-leaf forests interspersed with open glades of various types and rock outcrops in the upper and wider parts of the gorge.

Fauna

Wooded slopes of various steepness interspersed with open glades are home to the European Roe Deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) which can be seen grazing in open areas in the morning and evening hours. At late dusk, deep in the woods one can hear the crunch of twigs under the feet of Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*). A rare glimpse of an elusive Wild Cat (*Felis silvestris*) is occasionally caught in the very midst of the forest, while Stone Martens (*Martes foina*) forage in shrubby thickets. Deep snow tracks in winter betray a Red Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) chasing a Brown Hare (*Lepus europaeus*).

Birds

The entire diversity of bird species (around 80 bird species) seen at different times of the year in this beautiful and mesmerizing Samson gorge is determined by the continuity of forest cover with dense under story, lush forest floor, tall grass stands and open and shrubby glade habitats, as well as small rocky outcrops in the upper parts of the gorge.

European Honey-buzzard (*Pernis apivorus*), Northern Goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*) and Lesser Spotted Eagle (*Aquila pomarina*) nest in the dense tree canopy but forage primarily in the open glades, both in the forest and above upper tree line. Common Scops-owl (*Otus scops*), Tawny Owl (*Strix aluco*) and some woodpecker species, such as Black (*Dryocopus martius*) and Eurasian Green (*Picus viridis*) Woodpeckers have found a refuge in the old and mature tree hollows where they brood their young.

Arakelots Monastery (13th-14th centuries)

Thick defensive walls with round towers surround the complex, which consists of two churches, a gavit, living quarters and auxiliary structures, most in ruins.

The main church is dated to the 13th century, a domed type with four arches connecting the pillars that support the dome. The small central space is topped by a central dome with a round drum. Once enlivened by frescoes, the interior still boasts fragments of exquisite design.

The Gavit is connected to the main church on the west; defensive walls for the complex serve as the northern and eastern walls of the gavit. The structure is a rectangular building with a vault made from 2 pairs of cross-arches. The cross-arches form a square which supports the yerdik (dome with central aperture), following the “hazarashen” (“thousand pieces”) type of peasant houses.

Kirants Monastery (13th century)

The complex consists of three churches, gavit-halls, refectory, dwelling and service structures, defensive walls with a large arched gate. Uniquely, most of the complex is made of brick, with some structures and details made of finely hewn durable sandstone.

The main church is a domed cross form made from baked brick, very rare in Armenian medieval architecture. The eight-facet drum is decorated with a mosaic of incrustated multi-color and multi-shape glazed tiles.

Deghdznut vank (monastery, 12th-13th centuries)

Deghdznut vank is set in the deep forest of the Khndzorkut (literally apple seed) River canyon. The monastery was founded by the Archimandrite (Superior) Arakel from the Cilician city of Tarson, whose fragmented tomb stone is in the monastery gavit (1292).

The church has a domed-hall design with eastern pillars serving also as the sides of the altar, located at the eastern end of the building. The altar is flanked by two annexes; the entrance to the second story is from the altar. The church has a richly decorated exterior; the walls enhanced with arches. Construction material is finely hewn pink tufa stone. Some experts date the main church at Deghdznut to the 8th century and believe that it is the same as old Taghdzank monastery.

Samson Monastery (12th-13th centuries)

The monastery complex includes 2 churches, a half-ruined chapel, ruins of dwellings and other buildings.

The main church (size: 5.6m x 5.3 m) is a domed hall type, built of finely-hewn sandstone. Its east end has a half-circular altar apse with a low apron. Entrance is from the west. Pay attention to the drum of the dome – circular on the inside and faceted on the outside, its octahedral facets decorated with small half-columns.

Berdkar Fortress (12th-13th centuries)

Some scholars think this medieval Armenian defensive structure is the same as the historic seat of power for the Artsrunis, Mahkanaberd. Berdkar is located between Deghdznut and Samson monasteries, perched on top of a cliff on the Right Bank of the Khndzorkut branch of the Aghstev River. The fortress has an impregnable natural position: the only access to it is through a barely passable path, perfect for protecting the fortunes of those inside from invaders.