

**26.09.2017, starting from 15:00, duration: 4-5 hours**

Yerevan - Oshakan Village - St. Mashtots Church - Ashtarak Town - Karmravor Church - Hovhannavank - Saghmosavank - The Armenian Alphabet Monument - Yerevan. Distance: 95 kilometers. Dinner at “Nor jraghats” (New water-mill) restaurant in Ashtarak gorge is included in the trip.

### **Oshakan village/Mesrop Mashtots Church**



*Mesrop Mashtots Church*

Oshakan is the village near Ashtarak Town in the Aragatsotn Province with population about 6000 people.

There are many places of interest in Oshakan but the most important of them is St. Mesrop Mashtots Church. It was built between 1873 and 1879. Before that on its place was a chapel, constructed in 443. The church is famous of being the burial place of St. Mesrop Mashtots, the creator of Armenian alphabet. Several years ago 36 *khachkars*, traditional Armenian cross-stones, were placed in the yard of the church. These cross-stones are depicting the 36 original letters of Armenian alphabet, created by St. Mesrop Mashtots in 405 A.D.

There are numerous archaeological and architectural monument within and around Oshakan such as cyclopean fortress (2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.), castle (7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.), more than 1000 Urartian tombs, St. Zion church (7<sup>th</sup> century A.D.), an original monument (7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> centuries) which marks the grave of the Byzantine Emperor Mauricius or his mother.

## Karmravor Church (7<sup>th</sup> century)



*Karmravor Church*

Karmravor (which means *reddish*) Church, a.k.a. Church of the Holy Mother of God, is the only church in Armenia which preserved its original tile roof. It is situated in Ashtarak Town, Araghatsoin Province. It has a cruciform shape and a dome with an octagonal drum and a Byzantine-style red tile roof. The church has been slightly restored in 1950s. There are many *kachkars* (traditional Armenian cross-stones) in the yard of the church. The most famous of them is the one named *Tsak-Kar* (stone with a hole) because of the hole in the pedestal. It is dated back to year 1268. Earlier there was a convent in Karmravor. Nowadays there are two remarkable relics to see in Karmravor: Indian picturesque curtain, brought from Calcutta at the very end of 18<sup>th</sup> century and Shukhonts handwritten Bible.

## Hovhannavank Monastery



*Hovhannavank Monastery*

Hovhannavank is a medieval monastery in Ohanavan village, Aragatsoin Province. The monastery stands on the western edge of Kasakh gorge from where opens the very special and beautiful view.

Hovhannavank belongs to the most famous historical-architectural monuments of 13<sup>th</sup> century. The oldest structure of Hovhannavank is the single nave basilica of St. Karapet (4<sup>th</sup> century). Tradition claims, that it was built by St. Gregory the Illuminator who converted Armenia from paganism to Christianity. It is one of the first Christian churches in Armenia. St. Karapet main church was build between 1216 and 1221. It is adjacent to the basilica. The church is rectangular from outside and cruciform from inside. It has many high reliefs and bas reliefs.

There are also the narthex-chapel (built in 1250), the Obelisk Monument (built in 6<sup>th</sup> century), the Winged-Khachkar (cross-stone) dates to Early Middle Ages. There were also the school building (built in 1629) and the two-storeyed building of congregation (17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries). Unfortunately those parts of the Hovhannavank monastery are not preserved.

Hovhannavank was one of the ancient Armenian script centers.

### **Saghmosavank Monastery (Monastery of the Psalms)**



*Saghmosavank Monastery*

The monastery complex of Saghmosavank is situated near the village of the same name in Araghatsoin Province. Like the Hovhannavank Monastery Saghmosavank is also situated atop the precipitous Kasakh gorge. There is a fantastic view opening from there.

Saghmosavank Monastery was mentioned in the chronicles from the Early Middle Ages. The Monastery was fully constructed in the first half of 13<sup>th</sup> century. The complex included the Church of St. Zion (built in 1215), narthex (built between 1215 and 1235), repository of manuscripts (built in 1255), *St Astvatsatsin* Church (the Holy Mother of God, built in 1235). There is also a graveyard near the complex.