



Nagorno-Karabakh

📍 374 / POP 146,500

Includes ➔

Stepanakert.....	267
Shushi.....	270
Southern Karabakh.....	271
Northeast Karabakh.....	272
Northwest Karabakh.....	272
Kelbajar.....	273
Understand Nagorno-Karabakh.....	273
Survival Guide.....	274

Best Historic Sites

- ➔ Tigranakert (p272)
- ➔ Dadivank Monastery (p272)
- ➔ Shushi (p270)
- ➔ Gandzasar Monastery (p272)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Vallex Garden Hotel (p268)
- ➔ Park Hotel Artsakh (p268)
- ➔ Saro's B&B (p271)
- ➔ Karina Guesthouse (p268)

Why Go?

Nagorno-Karabakh is the fourth piece of the South Caucasus jigsaw, a geopolitical product of the Soviet Union and a self-declared republic recognised by no one. The subject of a brutal war between 1990 and 1994, this small region is Armenian culture on land claimed by Azerbaijan. Its name sums up its myriad cultural influences: *na-gorno* means mountainous in Russian, *kara* means black in Turkish and *bakh* means garden in Persian. To further confuse matters, Karabakhtis call their land Artsakh.

While there exist many questions about Nagorno-Karabakh and its political status, the beauty and cultural richness of its remote mountain landscape are undeniable. The Karabakh War left deep psychological scars on the people but the Karabakhtis are moving on, rebuilding their land stone by stone. Travel here is still an adventure, but rapidly improving infrastructure means better hotels, restaurants and hiking trails, while Karabakhti hospitality makes the challenges a joy, even in difficult times.

When to Go

- ➔ Summer and early autumn (June to September) are the best times for hiking.
- ➔ An excellent time to visit is the 9 May Victory Day, which also marks the Day of Liberation in Shushi.
- ➔ Spring (March to mid-May) is often wet and foggy.



Nagorno-Karabakh Highlights

1 Visiting **Gandzasar Monastery** (p272), the most important building in Karabakh with its rich friezes and magnificent detail.

2 Wandering around the lovely hilltop town of **Shushi** (p270), Karabakh's cultural capital.

3 Winding your way through Karabakh's rugged landscape to reach little-visited **Dadivank Monastery** (p272), an overgrown masterpiece on the edge of Kelbajar.

4 Hiking the excellent **Janapar Trail** (p272), a well-marked 190km-long walking

trail that takes you past many of Karabakh's most important sights.

5 Exploring the ancient remains of **Tigranakert** (p272), one of the four cities built by Tigran the Great and home to an excellent museum.