



BIRTHRIGHT ARMENIA

Philosophy and Mission:

Birthright Armenia was born in 2003 of a bold vision to strengthen ties between Diasporan and Homeland youth in meaningful and impactful ways, by affording them an opportunity to engage in Armenia's daily life and to contribute to Armenia's development through immersion-style work, study and volunteer experiences.

Its creation envisions a powerful, broad-based network of individuals and organizations committed to making service to and experiences in Armenia, an essential rite of passage afforded to all young Armenians around the world. Achieving a common vision and spirit of cooperation between Diaspora and Armenia through shared experiences helps create a better understanding and respect of each others' common bonds, cultural differences, and bridging the existing gaps through communication and interaction while working side by side. It encourages the development of life-long ties and a renewed sense of a shared Armenian identity.

What We Do

Program Services: In exchange for volunteer service in the field of their choosing, young adults, 20-32 years of age, are given the opportunity to live with a local host family, learn valuable Armenian language skills, interact with other participants from around the world, travel on guided excursions every weekend, "give back" through local community service projects, and gain knowledge and education about the country, culture and current events through weekly forums and gatherings. To make the program affordable to all, in addition to travel fellowships that cover a portion or full roundtrip airfare, there is a well-developed array of programs services provided at no cost to the participant that include:

- **Jobsite Placements:** With over 600 different job site placements in our database covering A-Z, Birthright Armenia sets up each volunteer with the best matching work placement based on skills sets, interests and background experience coupled with Armenia's needs.
- **Host Family Living:** The experience of living with a host family provides volunteers with the opportunity to understand first- hand and up close family life in Armenia. It's a unique chance to spend quality time with host siblings and parents, and share in their daily lives.
- **Language Classes:** Our intensive language classes are custom designed to help and encourage volunteers from all backgrounds improve their Armenian language skills in a significant way.

- Educational Excursions: All participants are welcome to join the adventure of up-close discovery of Armenia's 12 regions through guided educational trips each week to better understand life in the countryside for a fully immersion experience.
- Forums/Havaks: Weekly forums with subject matter experts and other invited guest speakers introduce volunteers to the reality of Armenia, from its challenges to its success stories. It is through these meeting and group "havaks" that helps volunteers connect to long-term projects.
- Community Service Projects: These local initiatives in our remote satellite office locations have taken on more importance in our second decade of operation as a little goes a long way in building stronger and longer-lasting ties with villages.

Key Milestones/Impacts Reached:

- **Multi-city operations**: Birthright Armenia has grown from a capital city only program in 2004 to a four-city satellite operation that work in tandem in Yerevan, Gyumri, Vanadzor and Artsakh, to help get additional resources where needs are greatest.
- **1000th participant**: We celebrated our 1,000 participant in the spring of 2015.
- **Heritage Tour 2015**: For the 100th anniversary commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, we led 55 alumni in spring 2015 on our first group tour to Western Armenia, to experience firsthand the ancestral cities of our forefathers.
- **Consumption based economic development**: We estimate leveraged funds of over \$4 million USD via alumni returns to Armenia, sometimes with family members and friends, making investments in real estate and businesses, utilization of services and local businesses.
- **Diversity**: We now have 1,250 alumni who hail from 45 different countries around the globe—all advocates for things Armenian and supporters of a prosperous Republic of Armenia striving to reach its potential.
- **Pathway to Armenia**: 27 alums have taken advantage of this program, designed to facilitate alumni employment-based returns to Armenia by providing lodging assistance and employment search assistance. 88% of returnees successfully found employment in their field of interest.
- **Repat alumni**: The number of repat alums grows every year, with 72 now living and working in Armenia, running their own businesses, raising families, and embracing new opportunities.
- **"Next Step" Alumni Fund**: This is a special fund that assists alums financially to make their project ideas that benefit Armenia a reality. To date we've funded 17 projects totaling \$32,793, that have supported literacy, encouraged grass roots activism, revitalized public parks, taught CPR and HIV awareness, created art school computer labs, and so more.

In the News and Videos:

CNN On The Road - Armenia: https://www.armenianow.com/news/59346/armenia_cnn_on_the_road

Why Not? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1FI7dd-U0Y>

Watch the River Change Course (BR theme song): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fIn7jmx3UTI>

Blog items:

A Diasporan Volunteer's Journey in Armenia: Who is Helping Whom?

<https://www.birtrightarmenia.org/en/news/a-diasporan-volunteers-journey-in-armenia-who-is-helping-whom?highlight=WylqYW1pZSJd>

Next Steps to Literacy: <https://www.birtrightarmenia.org/en/news/little-free-libraries-takes-off-in-armenia>

A Truly Complete Experience: <https://www.birtrightarmenia.org/en/news/a-truly-complete-experience>

The Best Internship: <https://www.birtrightarmenia.org/en/news/the-best-internship>

Top Five Reasons to do Homestay: <https://www.birtrightarmenia.org/en/news/5-reasons-why-my-host-family-is-amazing>

Learn Eastern Armenian: <https://www.birtrightarmenia.org/en/news/press-release-learn-eastern-armenian-with-birtright-armenias-online-language-tutorial>

From New Zealand to Armenia: <https://www.birtrightarmenia.org/en/news/chasing-pomegranates-%E2%80%93-from-new-zealand-to-armenia>

To learn more, visit www.birtrightarmenia.org or send inquiries to info@birtrightarmenia.org

Birtright Armenia is funded by the Hirair and Anna Hovnanian Foundation.