

# Strategy Concept: Sustainable Development of Hiking & Ecotourism in Armenia





1 Armenia's Potential: Hiking & Ecotourism

2 The Starting Point

3 National Hiking System & Product 'Hiking'

4 Sustainable Hiking Products

5 Recommendations





## Wild, picturesque mountainous landscapes

- Different types of breath-taking landscapes, from soft hills and green valleys with romantic villages to rugged stone mountain landscapes and terraced vineyards
- Broad diversity of ecosystems- ranging from deserts to alpine meadows.





## Living cultural landscapes and traditions

- Remote mountain villages
- Small, traditional, family-run guesthouses and restaurants, with traditional-style, small-scale, family-run agricultural production
- The authenticity of the lifestyle and their traditional rural life
- Culinary experiences, local products





# Biodiversity & Protected Areas



- **USP:** outstanding richness of wildlife & flora
- 13.1% of the country protected areas
- 4 National Parks
- 3 State reserves
- 26 State Sanctuaries and
- 232 Natural Monuments





An aerial photograph of a medieval church complex, likely the Noratus Monastery, situated on a hillside in Armenia. The church features two prominent towers with conical roofs and is surrounded by a low stone wall. The surrounding landscape is arid and hilly, with sparse vegetation and a winding road visible in the lower right corner. A blue banner with white text is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

Armenia is a unique mountain tourism destination



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- Many stakeholders active in the field of hiking trail development, trail development all over the country
- No joint vision or strategy on how to develop hiking tourism as a strong tourism product for Armenia
- Very active private sector, strong willingness
- **No coordination mechanism established**
- No joint visitor information and **access to the product hiking for the individual travel market**
- Several initiatives active on the field





# Hiking Trail Infrastructure

- No national or regional inventory for hiking trails in Armenia
- No national or regional signposting and maintenance plan
- No structural and strategic approach on how to develop a country-wide system or hiking trail network
- No standards for trail marking, signposting and signage adopted on a national level
- No guidelines for trail infrastructure and maintenance adopted and applied on a national level
- No national classification system in place
- **No national hiking system yet in place**





# Signposting Examples



Signposting and signage systems should always be **clear**, **simple** and **easy to understand** for hikers, designed to **fulfil hikers' needs** and **easy to be maintained**.



# Hiking Tourism Infrastructure

## Quality of B&Bs varies

The quality of B&Bs varies significantly and there are no standards or quality criteria to guide local hosts



*The Vine Art B&B in Areni is an example of good practice with an attractive entrance area*



*The owner of "Vardges Karahanyan's B&B" in Areni has invested in the property. The outside appearance is fairly inviting, but could be improved*



*The "Barsegh & Yelena" B&B in Areni does not look very inviting from the outside and reflects the style of many B&Bs in rural areas*



*The interior is also spacious and double rooms with individual bathrooms are offered*



*The bedroom is a bit overfilled and space is tight, but there is nice handmade wooden furniture*



*The rooms are in very bad condition, messy, and need renovation*





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# Strategic Approach & Objective

- Hiking and trekking trails – drivers for economic development and backbone for rural tourism development
- The set-up of product ‘hiking’ represents the perfect starting product to set up a solid framework, standards and organisational structure, in order to then further explore ecotourism, adventure and other outdoor activities
- The objective is to develop the product ‘hiking’ and the related infrastructure and hiking trail network into a key attraction for Armenia.





## Product 'Hiking Tourism'

**National Trail System**

**Trail Standards**

Signage, Signposting, Marking

**Marketing, Visitor  
Information**

**Competitive Services**

Accommodation , Guiding, etc.

**Add On: Local Products &  
Handicrafts**

**Management & Organisation**





# The national hiking system

The basic framework for the further development of the product 'hiking' for Armenia is the adoption of a National Hiking System defining the following elements:

- Standardised signage
- Standardised signposting
- Guidelines for the marking of trails
- Guidelines for visitor information boards
- Classification of trails
- Trail categories





# Implementation Process

## Stage 1

Project initiation,  
background research,  
stakeholder  
consultation

## Stage 2

Hiking trails inventory,  
data bank set-up,  
inventory, and  
destination analysis

## Stage 3

Design of a nationwide  
network of 'trail  
experiences and digital  
trail management  
system'

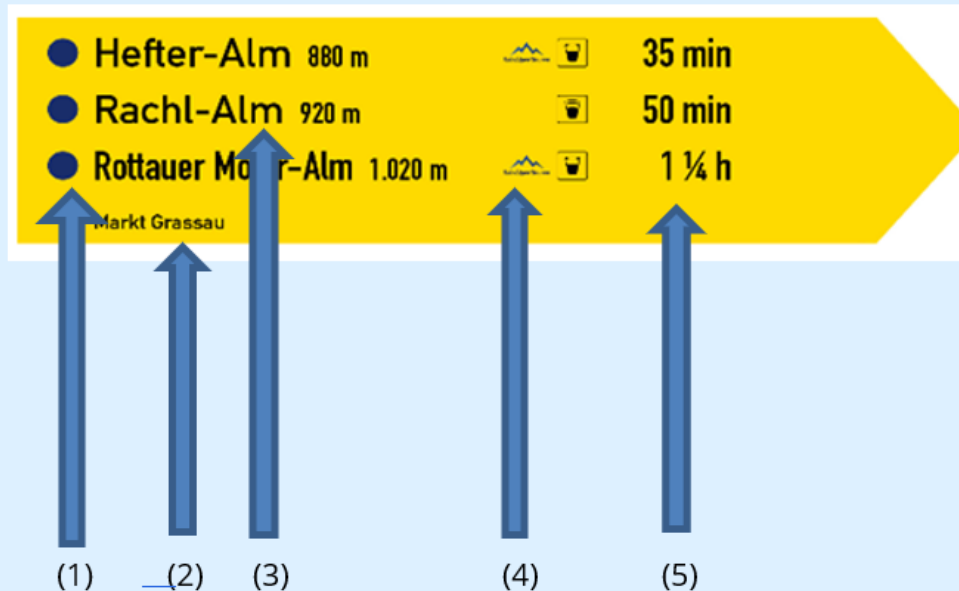
## Stage 4

Implementation  
development on-site,  
and marketing





# Signage and Signposting of Trails



## 1. Example from German DAV

- Example of German, Austrian and Swiss standard sign, for mountain hiking trails
- Size: 600 mm x 100, 650 mm x 160 mm
- Material: aluminium
- Content
  - (1) Level of difficulty
  - (2) Trail holder – entity responsible for the trail
  - (3) Destination
  - (4) Name of the Trail (logo)
  - (5) Walking time





*Signposting on the POB trail*

#### 4. Example- Peaks of the Balkans Trail

- This simple wooden sign, used on the Kosovar part of the Peaks of the Balkans trail, is simple but still efficient
- Size: 650mmx150mm
- Material: wood
- Content
  - (1) Destinations
  - (2) Walking time in hr
  - (3) PoB Branding





Following the standards of the most successful mountain regions of Switzerland, Germany and Austria and GLZ project in similar regions, the **following guidelines for the content, design and format are suggested:**

- Material: aluminium (light to carry and durable)
- Size: 650mmx150mm or 600 mm x100 mm

**Content:**

- Level of difficulty
- Target destination/s –*once mentioned the target destination needs to be repeated until it is reached*
- Walking time in hours/minutes – presentation of walking times
- *Walking time up to 45 minutes: 5 minutes apart*
- Walking time 1-2 hours: *1/4 of an hour apart*
- *Walking time more than 2 hours: ½ an hour apart*
- Name of the trail / thematic trail logo, or logo plate:





## Marking of hiking trails

**The standard marking sign for hiking trails is a red-white-red marking**



- Format: Rectangle
- (Approximate) Size: 200x140mm
- Material: oilpaint, aluminium
- Distance: Especially in difficult areas of hiking trails it is recommended to position markings so that the next marking is always visible to the hiker
- Old trail markings need to be removed
- Marking can also incorporate trail numbers (see example below)



*Trail markings can also contain the trail numbers*



- Hiking Trails
- Mountain Trails
- Alpine Routes

## Classification of Trails



Trails with a **blue point/button** are:

- Easy trails, walking and hiking trails, thematic hiking trails etc.
- Little difference of altitude, a head for heights not required



Trails with a **red point/button** are:

- Rather difficult trails, mainly narrow, often very steep and sometimes featuring fall-hazard parts
- Short parts can be difficult, but secured



Trails with a **black point/button** are:

- Difficult, narrow, very steep and featuring fall-hazard parts
- Surefootedness and a head for heights are required



- **Guidelines for trail construction and maintenance**  
Basic guidelines for trail construction, securing trails, and guidelines on how to maintain trails.
- **Marketing, communications and visitor information**
- **Development of a hiking webportal**
- **Hiking map/app**
- **Visitor information boards**
- **Competitive accommodation services related to hiking and ecotourism**
- **Management & organisational structures**





# Target Group

## Individual Hikers & Trekkers

- Interested in
- Adventure
- The outdoors, hiking, biking, and trekking
- Culture, living traditions
- Local authentic experiences and encounters with the local community
- Biodiversity of flora and fauna

## Specialist International Tour Operators

- Specialist tour operators (eg. Forum Anders Reisen), offering higher priced packages and interested in
- Sustainability, culture, authenticity, nature and hiking
- Adventure
- Mountain hiking & trekking





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## ● **Tailor-made trail network for Armenia**

- Hiking, or better, trekking, is undoubtedly the key sustainable tourism product for Armenia.
- The challenge is now to further develop the existing trails into 'hiking experiences'
- Trail routes should be carefully chosen and connect all different types of cultural, natural and historical highlights
- Hikers interested in local traditions, culture and nature, sustainability-oriented and looking for authenticity.
- That is why several trails from the different regions should be connected and developed into **one broader Armenia hiking and trekking trail network.**





## Special thematic trails

- A **biodiversity trail**—to highlight and connect biodiversity sights
- A **wine trail** connecting the vineyards and panoramic terraces
- A **spiritual trail** – connecting picturesque monasteries, spiritual places and experiences, accompanied by especially trained guides for pilgrimages.
- A **trail of living cultures** – a trail that leads to villages known for special products that are still produced in a certain way and where tourists can see how those products are produced, and taste or buy them.





## Special thematic trails

- A **trail of living cultures** – a trail that leads to villages known for special products that are still produced in a certain way and where tourists can see how those products are produced, and taste or buy them.
- **Panoramic trail with seasonal components** where tourists could visit different families or production sites where different types of local products are being produced. The high mountain landscapes of Armenia offer breath-taking panoramic views of high plains, which should be incorporated.





# Practice Example



Meditationsweg Ammergauer Alpen



*Along the way, signposting explains the history and legend of the spiritual places*

## The “Meditation Trail”

<https://www.ammergauer-alpen.de/en/Media/Artikel/Ammergau-Alps-Meditation-Trail>

The meditation path connects nature and spiritual sites in an area of upper Bavaria.

- Walk and hike between nature and culture
- Spiritual places and experiences
- Strong Christian roots in the area
- Walk and hike accompanied by specially-trained guides for pilgrimages





## “Flagship Tourism Product” for the region

- **Hiking and trekking** is the undoubtedly “the” **key product** for the region, which is why Armenia definitely needs a flagship product which should be designed and marketed to promote Armenia as a tourism destination based on the key attraction of hiking and trekking. A nationwide “**Crossing Armenia Trail**” would certainly be an excellent product to position this new region and to connect the different regions into a single hiking and trekking destination.





- **Alpine horse trekking**
- Horses and horse riding forms part of the cultural landscape and alpine horse trekking is a perfect tourism product for Armenia's rural and mountain regions.



*Tourists horseback riding in Nikaj-Mërtur , Albania*



*A group of tourists on a horse trekking safari in the national park of Hohe Tauern in Austria*



*A group of tourists on a guided trek through the high alpine mountain region of "Großglockner" , Austria*



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## **Pilot implementation project for the product ‘hiking tourism’**

- To successfully plan, develop and implement the product ‘hiking tourism’ as a first pillar for sustainable tourism products in Armenia, a comprehensive pilot project is recommended.
- Such a pilot project would support the setting up of professional structures on a national level
- A similar project approach has been successfully applied in the very successful GIZ Peaks of the Balkans mountain tourism project.







# Thank you!

