

## Travelling from Spain to Armenia by motorcycle



I did not think of volunteering in Armenia and then planned how to get there, it was rather the other way around. I was on a return motorbike trip to Central Asia and decided to stay in Armenia longer and volunteer with AVC. This means I did the trip twice, once in late spring and taking my time to stop in many places in Greece, Turkey and Georgia, and again in late autumn non-stop from Armenia to Spain. Before I left Spain, it took me five weeks to import my motorbike into the EU, arrange all the documentation and paperwork, buy some extra gear and service my motorbike for the trip. Since EU citizens do not need visas for none of those countries, if a motorbike is already legalized to ride in the EU, it should take just a few days to obtain the insurance green card to enter Turkey and, meanwhile, some gear and technical service can be arranged. I would say that a week is enough to get ready.

My main concern during the trip was the fact that the last BMW dealer going east is in Adana-Marlin, Turkey, and getting spare parts or fixing the bike would be very difficult in Georgia and Armenia. In the end, I had no problems and I got to know that there is a very good BMW mechanic in Tbilisi and some people who can help in Yerevan, although the service can be improved. Spare parts can be difficult to obtain so I recommend carrying basic items like an oil filter and spark plugs. Beware of weird driving rules in Turkey where speed limits are 20km/h lower for motorbikes than for cars and do not get too scared of corrupt policemen because it is really all right in all



those countries... it gets rough in Azerbaijan and Central Asia, though.

I think that, with proper gear, the trip from Europe to Yerevan is manageable all year round except in winter. I had to ride on snow in Tsaghkadzor in mid-December over the mountain pass but temperatures were always above zero in the rest of the journey. The whole trip took nine days, taking ferries between Greece and Italy and between Italy and Spain: Yerevan, Tbilisi, Batumi, Osmancik, Kesan, Thessaloniki, Igoumenitsa (ferry), Rome (ferry), Barcelona, Madrid and Caceres, my hometown. The fuel cost on a 1200cc bike is quite significant, using 5 liters of gasoline per 100 km. Taking those two ferries, the distance is about 3000km and the cost of gasoline in Europe and Turkey is about 1.5 euros/l. Georgia and Armenia are about half the price but distances are short so it does not affect calculations very much... which renders something between 200 and 250 euros in gasoline. Food costs vary enormously but it is easy to stay on a budget of less than 10 euros per day in Armenia, Georgia and Turkey, whereas European countries are more expensive and you should probably count on at least triple that amount of money if you dine in restaurants but not much more if you buy food in supermarkets. Camping is very cheap but hotels are expensive, especially in Europe. Upon entering Turkey, EU citizens are required to pay a fee of around 25 euro, which is increasing every year.

If you have the time and money to do this trip overland, I would definitely recommend you to go for it because you get a totally different idea of the countries that surround Armenia and realize how cultures and people change progressively from Europe to the Caucasus. And it is a lot of fun.