

Karabakh
a hidden treasure



Hunot Canyon

State Natural-Historical Reserve

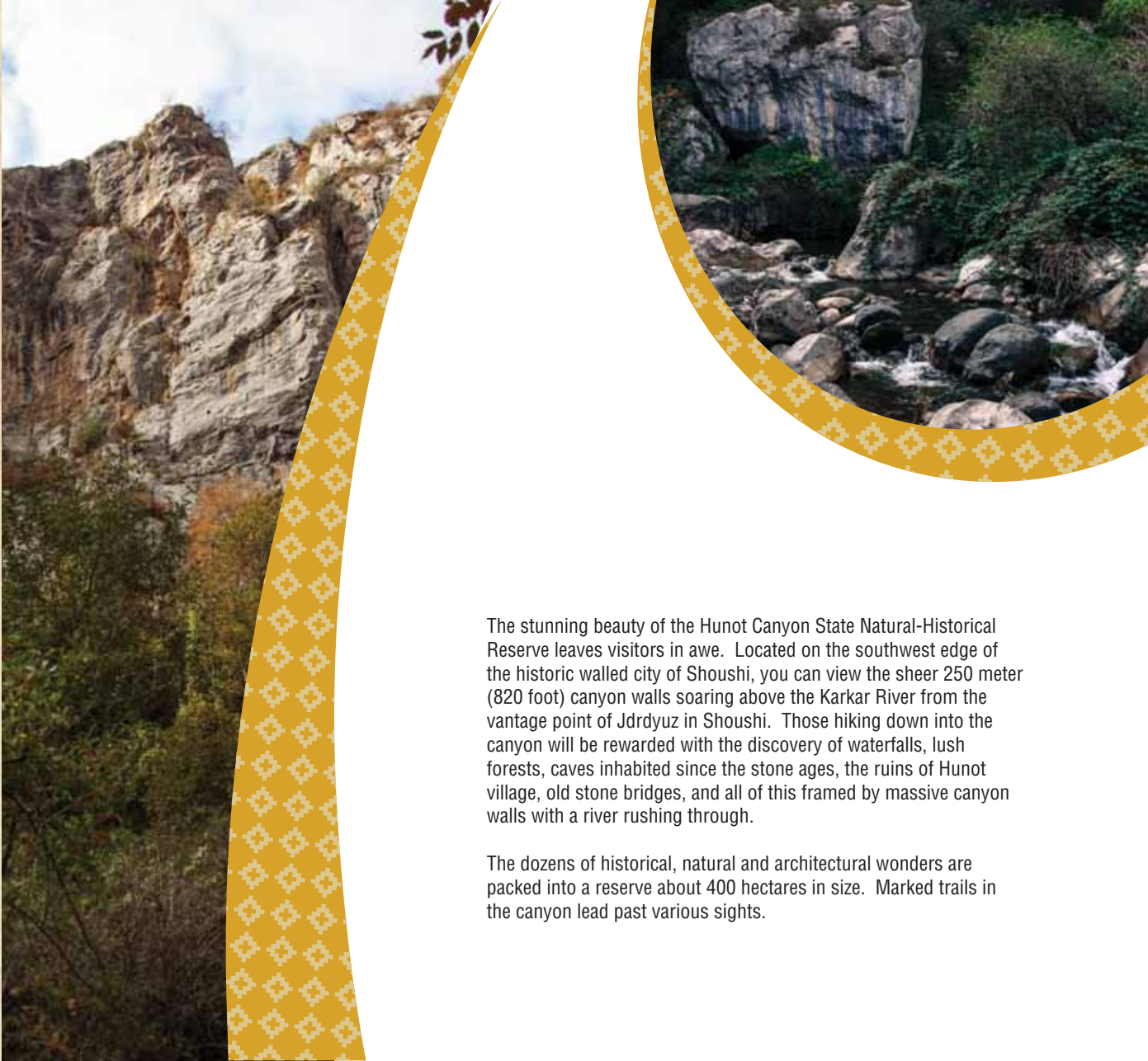


**REPUBLIC OF
MOUNTAINOUS
KARABAKH**



Hunot Canyon

State Natural-Historical Reserve



The stunning beauty of the Hunot Canyon State Natural-Historical Reserve leaves visitors in awe. Located on the southwest edge of the historic walled city of Shoushi, you can view the sheer 250 meter (820 foot) canyon walls soaring above the Karkar River from the vantage point of Jdrdyuz in Shoushi. Those hiking down into the canyon will be rewarded with the discovery of waterfalls, lush forests, caves inhabited since the stone ages, the ruins of Hunot village, old stone bridges, and all of this framed by massive canyon walls with a river rushing through.

The dozens of historical, natural and architectural wonders are packed into a reserve about 400 hectares in size. Marked trails in the canyon lead past various sights.

There are three trails marked with signs leading visitors along different routes, allowing hikers to make their way to different sites within Hunot Canyon State Natural-Historical Reserve.

Route 1 - The main trail leading into the canyon is marked with blue signposts, taking you to the picturesque Mamrot Kar waterfall, also known as Hovanotsner or Zontik, both meaning umbrella. This is definitely a highlight of Hunot Canyon that is not to be missed. Along the way you will pass by ruined historical mills, and some natural springs with sweet water.

Route 2 - Red signposts mark an offshoot of the main trail, and will take hikers to both Amarat cave and Zuyg cave.

Route 3 - Another offshoot of the main trail is marked with green signposts. This trail leads past Hunot's arched old stone bridge, natural springs, mills and the ruins of Hunot village.

Known popularly as Hovanots or Zontik

A deep water source comes out of the stone of the canyon to form a perpetually dripping waterfall in the shape of a huge mossy umbrella. With a cave underneath the umbrella, this spectacular natural monument causes wonderment to visitors of all ages, and is a highlight of the canyon.

Mamrot Kar waterfall is alongside the Karkar River in a beautiful spot with a swimming hole. The picturesque spot is also under the ever-present cliffs of Hunot canyon, making for a setting of almost surreal beauty.

The city was entirely built of local white limestone. With its long balconies, Tigranakert stretched until the foot of the mountain. It was surrounded by mighty fortress-like walls and channels carved of rock. It was a magnificent white city, surrounded by lush, green orchards, and a lively urban centre until the 14th century.

The fortified wall was built with expertly flattened stones and without the use of any adhesive substance, using an advanced dovetailing technique (with triangular niches in the blocks to strengthen the wall and hook it into place). The wall leaves an unforgettable impression on tourists and awes experts with its clever use of technique. The stones are so tightly laid that one cannot even stick a needle through the space between them.





Hunot Village Ruins

The village of Hunot was founded in the 18th century, and was abandoned in the 20th century. Today the ruins of the small village cover almost 1.5ha on the left bank of the river. There are remnants of village buildings and a cemetery that visitors may explore during their hike.

In 1895 the village had a total of 130 inhabitants and played an important role for the town of Shoushi. Most of the mills producing flour for Shoushi were located along the river in Hunot Village, and it was transported up to Shoushi after being milled. Hunot was abandoned in the 1930s.



Bridges have formed an important link between Shoushi and the rest of the world. The stone arched bridge of Hunot was built in 1720, and still serves as a solid river crossing to this day. This particular bridge, in the ruins of the village once served as an important link from Shoushi to Varanda and beyond.

Hunot Bridge is 25 meters long, 4 meters wide, and reaches a height of 8 meters. It is built at 889 meters above sea level.







The ruins of over a dozen mills at the site of Hunot and its vicinity testify to the main industry that once flourished here. These mills played a critical role in the production and supply of flour for the town of Shoushi towards the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. The attractive buildings were sited along the scenic river in the canyon, where the water would serve to power the mills. Today the ruins of many of these mills can still be found along the river.

HUNOT MILLS |

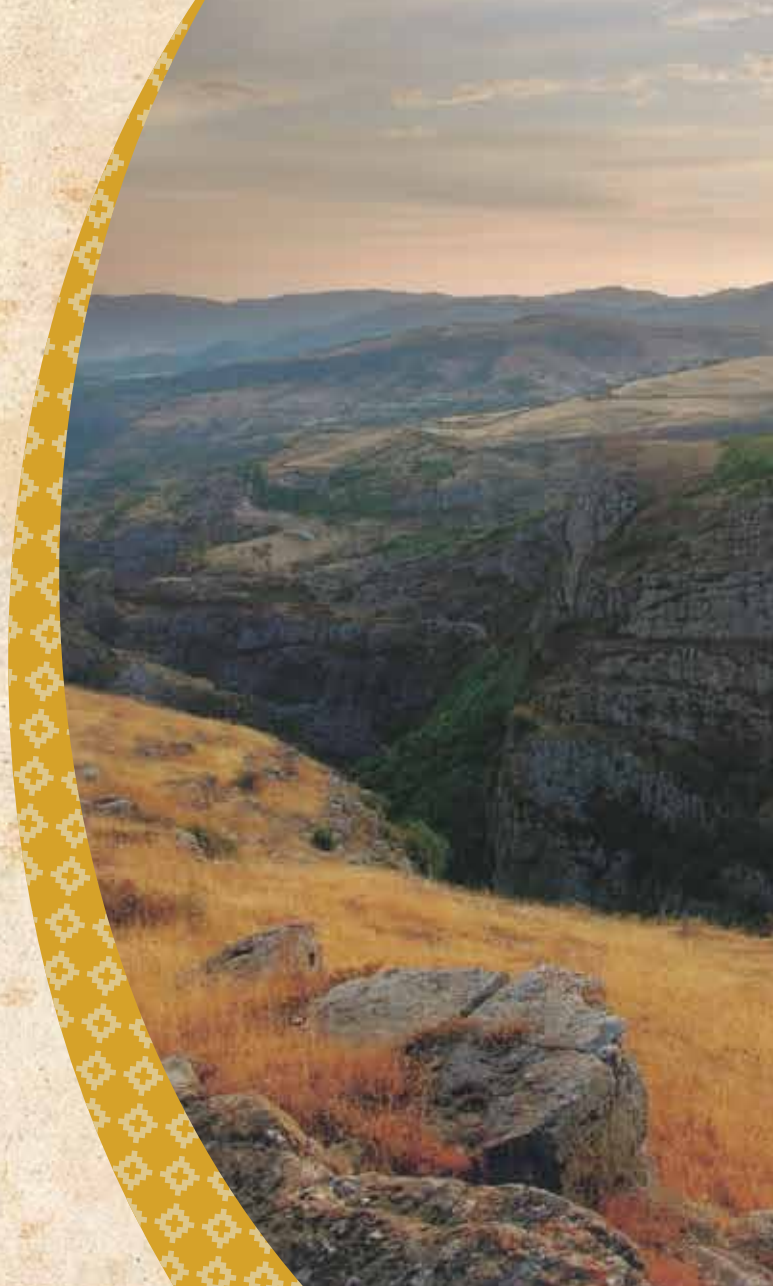
■ AVANA KARAN CAVE

The fortified city of Shoushi has a well known series of caves in the canyon it is built above. The largest and best known is the Avana Karan cave. Located southwest of Shoushi, Avana Karan is in a difficult to approach place called Avani Gerts. The cave is nearly 78 meters deep, with a width of up to 15 meters, and a height ranging between 7-10 meters.

On the steep approach to the cave, you will notice manmade passages, stone walls, and other constructions. These were created over the years to serve various needs, as the cave was used by man beginning from the 2nd millennium BC until the 18th century.

■ ALEKSANA GHUZEH CAVE

Found southwest of Karintak Village is the cave known as Aleksana Ghuzeh. It is found at the foot of Kapen Gerts mountain, on the left side of the Zar river. This cave is over 50 meters deep and has 7 nearly separated chamber-passages. Inhabited in Hellenic times, the cave was the site of pagan worship between the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD. Today the cave is home to Artsakh's only population of white-winged bats, which should be avoided since the presence of people can cause them great harm when they are hibernating or raising young.





On the edge of the town of Shoushi, right atop of the cliffs is a field and lookout known as Katarot, or Jdrdyuz. With spectacular views of the canyon and Karkar valley below, this is one of the most photographed sites by visitors to Artsakh. Hiking around along the canyon-top rewards you with ever changing perspectives and views of the canyon below.

The field is nearly 5 hectares in size, a small portion of which is covered in fir trees. Most visitors come during the day, but it's also possible to take it all in on a starry night.

Among the most interesting sites of the reserve are the highlands atop the Shoushi-Karkar Canyon. From the highlands, the drop into the canyon varies from areas with a more gradual almost step-like drop, to places where the drop is immediate with sheer cliffs.

FORTIFICATION WALLS

Defensive structures can be found in the areas between the fortified cliffs of Shoushi and Hunot Canyon. There are a number of fortified towers, as well as stone walls reaching up to 40 meters in length. These stone fortifications provided Shoushi with important defenses against invaders from the south, attacking from the direction of Mkhitarashen or Karintak. They also helped to protect the mills of Hunot, which were critical in the supply of flour to Shoushi.

The construction of these fortifications began in the early 18th century. Walls coming down from the city were built from rough local stones and cement to increase the defenses of the fortified city. The main such wall stretches southwest for 15 meters before turning west to surround and protect the important Avana Karan Cave, important in the defense of the fortified town of Shoushi.







The people of Artsakh have made humor an integral part of their character, regardless of any hard times in their past. A testament to their love of the fun spirited is the memorial stone dedicated to Pily Pughy, the court-jester of Shahnazar, who was the Melik of Varanda (meliks were rulers of small principalities). Pily Pughy would entertain the melik and his guests in times of celebration and rest. At times he would boldly venture criticisms of even the melik's decisions when they fell short, often helping the melik to resolve difficult problems.

The famed fast-tongued Pily was born in 1731 and though he passed away in 1810, he lives on in popular folklore, and is known to every family of Artsakh. According to legend, Pily Pughy's body is located in a cave between Shosh and Mkhitarashen villages, and a stone memorial was erected in his memory in 1976.

■ PLY PUGHY MEMORIAL STONE ■



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