

## *Gegard*

Geghard is incredible ancient Armenian monastery, partly carved out of a mountain. Though the monastery has been around since before the 4th century, the main cathedral was built in 1215.

Monastery Airivank, or a “cave monastery”, was founded here at the beginning of the fourth century. The present name can be traced back to the 13th century when, as a legend says, the legendary spear — geghard — was brought there. Under the princes of Zakharia and Ivane the chapel of Grigory the Enlightener — the most ancient structure of the monastery as well as the first cave church were built. In the second half of the 13th century the monastery was bought by princes Proshyan. Over a short period they built the cave structures which brought Geghard well-merited fame. The main monuments of Geghard take up the middle of the monastery yard surrounded with walls and towers on three sides and blocked by a steep cliff on the fourth one. This gives the ensemble a unique appearance. Numerous khachkars cut on rock surface and on the walls of the structures or put up on the territory of Geghard in memory of a deceased or in commemoration of someone’s donation to the monastery are richly ornamented with geometrical or floral motives. The composition of some khachkars’ decoration is unique. The arrangement of the khachkars emphasizes certain points of the ensemble.

