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ARMENIA

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ECOTOURISM DEVELOPMENT PLANNING IN THE GORIS COMMUNITY



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Recommendations for Ecotourism Development Planning in the Goris Community, Armenia

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Table of Contents

Acronyms.....	4
Executive Summary	5
1. Introduction	7
2. Methodological Approach	9
3. Site Profile.....	14
4. Stakeholder Insights and Local Priorities.....	17
5. Tourism Baseline.....	18
6. Suitability Assessment and Zoning.....	22
7. Ecotourism Product Development	24
8. Infrastructure and Service Needs	27
9. Governance and Institutional Arrangements.....	28
10. Visitor Management System.....	30
11. Local Economy and Benefit Sharing.....	31
12. Environmental and Climate Considerations	32
13. Monitoring Framework.....	34
14. Investment and Implementation Plan.....	36
15. Final Site Classification and Conclusions	40
Annex 1: Ecotourism Assessment Tool.....	41
Annex 2: Stakeholders and Consultation Status.....	47
Annex 3: Summary SWOT Analysis for Ecotourism Development in Goris Community	48

Acronyms

AMD	Armenian Dram
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
EU4Environment	European Union Programme for Environment
GIS	Geographical Information Systems
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NTFPs	Non-Timber Forest Products
PA	Protected Area
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ToR	Terms of Reference

Executive Summary

Goris can strengthen its position as a southern Armenia tourism hub by organizing the town, cave-settlement landscapes, heritage sites and surrounding nature into a connected ecotourism system that generates longer stays and stronger local economic linkages. Goris Community includes the town and surrounding rural settlements and sits within the wider Syunik visitor corridor connecting Goris, Khndzoresk, Tatev and southern mountain destinations. Its conservation context includes the 1,850-hectare Goris State Sanctuary, managed by ArmForest SNCO, together with candidate Emerald Network geography and sensitive cave, cliff and mountain environments. The Plan therefore supports controlled development in which Goris serves as the principal service and visitor-management base for verified surrounding experiences.

The proposed ecotourism offer combines landscape, heritage, nature interpretation and community services. Priority experiences include routes connecting Goris town with the Stone Forest and Old Goris; interpretation of Khndzoresk and cave-settlement landscapes; sanctuary-linked nature experiences where access and environmental conditions permit; and packages connecting accommodation, guides, meals and local products with the wider Tatev–Goris corridor. The Tourism Information Center is expected to play an important operational role for maps, route-status information, seasonal warnings, referrals and booking links. A Tatev–Goris–Kapan southern itinerary can also be developed through clear operator agreements and visitor handovers, helping convert corridor movement into overnight stays and local expenditure.

The principal barriers concern route readiness, sensitive-site management and incomplete local market evidence. Current visitor volume, provider capacity, trail condition, cave and bat sensitivity, local economic effects and accommodation use are not sufficiently quantified at community level. Proposed cave, cliff and wildlife-related experiences require specialist screening before promotion, and routes must be checked for legal access, land and site manager, safety, fire and slope risks and maintenance responsibilities. The Plan also emphasizes that regional Syunik hotel statistics cannot be interpreted as Goris-specific demand. This prevents unsupported projections from driving infrastructure decisions.

The first implementation phase therefore concentrates on the operating system needed for safe product development: attraction, route and GIS validation; a visitor and service baseline; a stronger TIC coordination function; two priority route pilots; cave/bat and cliff screening; guide and provider readiness; Tatev–Goris and local-value package pilots; and a maintenance and adaptive-management mechanism. Phase 2 can consolidate guiding and interpretation, accommodation linkages, verified local food and product points and stop-based visitor facilities. Phase 3 allows selective strengthening of information, route-support infrastructure, longer-stay packages and service coordination where earlier evidence demonstrates viability.

Public and private investments are complementary sources of funding. Public financing is most relevant for route organization, signage, interpretation, safety and coordination, while donor or project resources can support biodiversity-sensitive product design, guide capacity and visitor-management tools. Private investment can improve accommodation, food, guiding, transport and other visitor services. No destination-scale PPP or unsupported revenue forecast is proposed. Product-level business cases should be prepared once actual prices, capacity, expected bookings, operating costs, maintenance duties and season length are known. The available 2022–2024 Syunik series is retained only as regional context, with scaling based on observed visitor, booking, sales, route and environmental performance.

The expected result is a better-organized Goris destination that converts strong existing landscape and heritage assets into bookable, safe and locally beneficial experiences. Success

should include verified routes, clear visitor information, improved environmental and cave/cliff safeguards, stronger provider linkages, increased use of accommodation, meals, guiding and products, and a maintenance and monitoring system capable of adjusting or closing products when conditions deteriorate. Goris demonstrates how an established tourism gateway can increase local value by improving product integration and management discipline before adding major new infrastructure.

The present document was developed with financial support from the European Union under the European Union for Environment (EU4Environment) program.¹

¹ Since 2018, the “European Union for Environment” (EU4Environment) Action has helped the Eastern Partnership countries preserve their natural capital and enhance people’s environmental well-being, by supporting environment-related action, demonstrating and unlocking opportunities for greener growth, and establishing mechanisms to better manage environmental risks and impacts. The program was funded by the European Union and principally implemented over 2019–24 by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the World Bank. Over 2025–26, the World Bank will finalize the implementation of the program’s Result 4 area.

1. Introduction

This Ecotourism Management Plan provides a structured framework for assessing and guiding ecotourism development at the community level. It is based on a standardized ecotourism assessment tool that evaluates ecological conditions, socio-economic context, tourism assets, and associated environmental and operational risks.

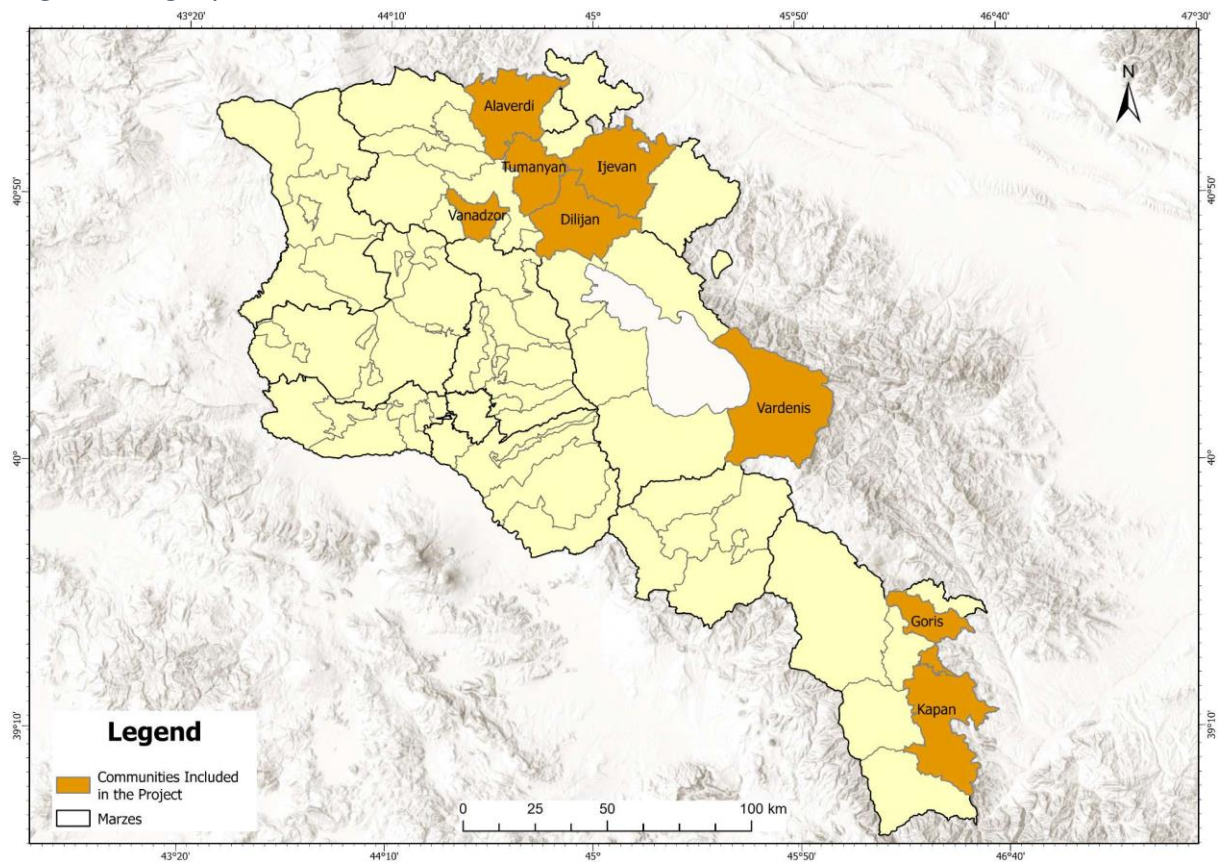
The plan is developed as part of a broader effort under the EU4Environment programme, implemented with methodological alignment to World Bank approaches and within the framework of the OIKO initiative. The overall activity focuses on supporting selected communities in identifying realistic and environmentally responsible ecotourism opportunities, while ensuring that development remains compatible with local ecological and socio-economic conditions.

Within this context, the project includes the application of a unified assessment tool across target communities, stakeholder consultations to capture local perspectives and priorities, and the preparation of site-specific management plans. These plans are intended to translate assessment results into practical guidance, including zoning considerations, identification of suitable ecotourism products, infrastructure needs, governance arrangements, and basic management measures.

The purpose of this plan is to support decision-making on whether and how ecotourism can be developed in a controlled and sustainable manner. It ensures that tourism activities are aligned with conservation requirements, particularly in areas with sensitive ecosystems or species of concern, while also identifying opportunities for local economic engagement. The approach follows sustainable development principles by promoting low-impact tourism, supporting local livelihoods, and encouraging the use of natural and cultural assets without compromising their integrity. It also aims to strengthen coordination between local authorities, communities, and other stakeholders involved in tourism and environmental management.

The map illustrates the spatial distribution of the eight communities included in the project in Armenia: Alaverdi, Tumanyan, Vanadzor, Dilijan, Ijevan, Vardenis, Goris, and Kapan. Together, these locations create a broad territorial coverage across the northern, eastern, and southern parts of the country and reflect different ecological, landscape, and accessibility conditions relevant to ecotourism planning. The map helps situate the project within the national context and illustrates that the selected communities represent different types of mountain, forest, and protected area settings where ecotourism opportunities and management needs may vary.

Figure 1. Eight pilot communities



Source: REC Caucasus.

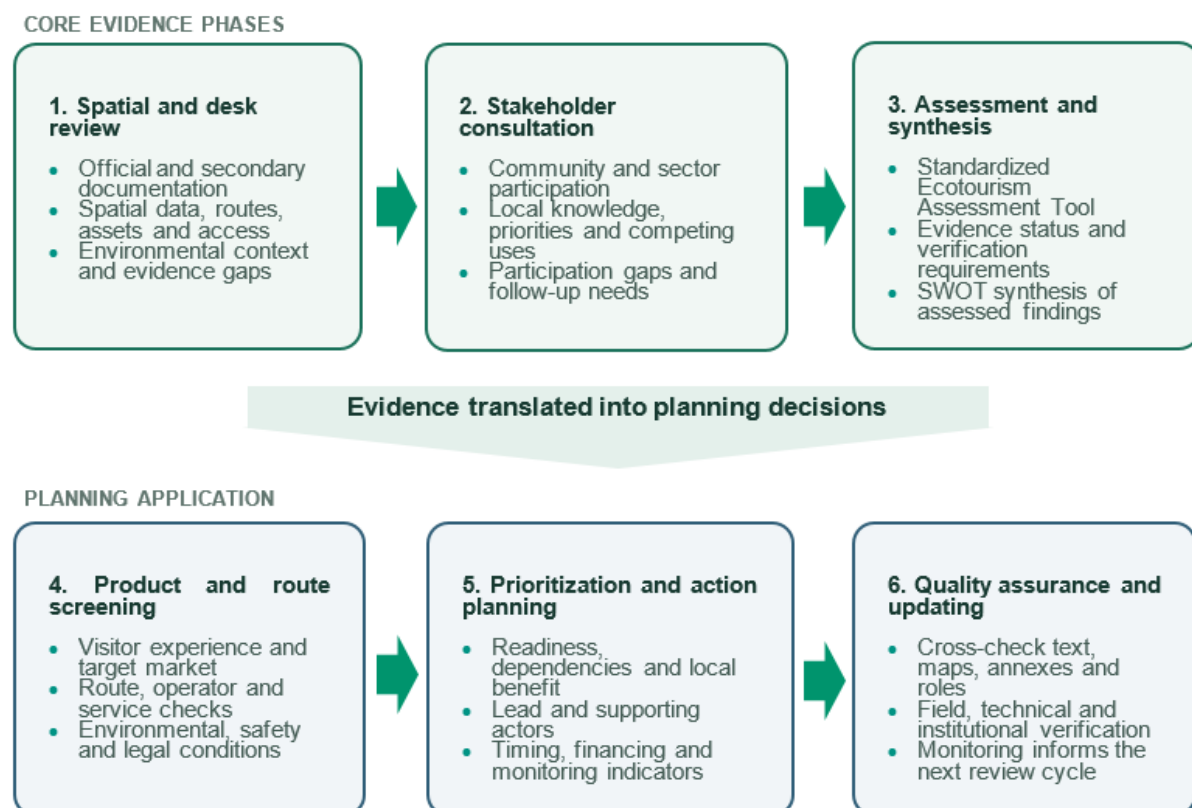
2. Methodological Approach

The Ecotourism Management Plan was developed through three complementary methodological phases: (i) spatial analysis and desk-based review; (ii) stakeholder consultation and participatory validation; and (iii) development and application of the Ecotourism Assessment Tool, followed by synthesis through SWOT analysis. Thus, these phases provide the evidence base for the Plan while distinguishing between information supported by available documentation and stakeholder inputs and aspects that still require field, technical or institutional verification.

The three phases form a connected and iterative process and thus possess an application logic and repeatability. Desk and spatial analysis establish the initial evidence base and identify gaps; consultation tests, corrects and supplements that evidence; and the Assessment Tool organizes the combined findings into a consistent community assessment. SWOT analysis then summarizes the assessed situation, while management recommendations translate the findings into actions, conditions and responsibilities. The same sequence should be followed when a Plan is prepared, reviewed or updated so that new evidence can be incorporated without changing the common analytical structure.

Additionally, these three phases are complemented with a follow up phases related to the planning application: (iv) product and route development, (v) prioritization and action planning and (vi) quality assurance and updating. The methodology sequence and its application to plan preparation, review and updating are summarized in Figure below.

Figure 2. Ecotourism development planning methodology



Source: Authors' elaboration.

Phase 1 – Spatial analysis and desk-based review

The first phase consisted of the review and consolidation of available project documentation, official and secondary sources, existing tourism and territorial information, and project-supplied GIS and spatial data. The spatial analysis was used to examine the community context, natural and cultural assets, settlement and accessibility patterns, protected area and Emerald Network context, and the spatial relationship between potential tourism areas and environmentally sensitive features. The analysis provided the initial basis for screening ecotourism opportunities and constraints and for identifying information gaps requiring subsequent verification. Importantly, the GIS layers and maps used in the Plan provide a planning and screening context; they do not in themselves confirm land tenure, legal access, ecological condition, route readiness or the suitability of individual sites for tourism development. This distinction is already reflected elsewhere in the Plan, including the requirement to confirm candidate Emerald boundaries and route relationships before zoning or promotion.

Evidence classification and treatment:

Information used in the assessment is classified according to its source and level of confirmation. The principal categories are: information confirmed through official documentation; information supported by project or technical sources; stakeholder-reported information; findings derived from spatial analysis; experience transferred from another community; planning proposals; and matters requiring field, legal, ecological, commercial or institutional verification. A statement is not treated as confirmed merely because it appears in more than one secondary source. Where sources agree, the finding may be used with greater confidence; where they differ, the inconsistency is retained as an evidence gap and addressed through a verification requirement rather than resolved by assumption.

Minimum spatial review and data handling:

For each community, the spatial review should consider community and settlement boundaries; forests; protected areas and candidate Emerald Network areas; recorded tourism routes; natural and cultural attractions; roads and transport access; settlements and service locations; environmentally sensitive features; known hazards; and links with neighbouring communities. Route records from official and user-generated spatial data should be screened for duplicate or alternative alignments and, where possible, checked for start and end points, distance, elevation, surface condition, land and management status, seasonal accessibility and connection to visitor services. Every map should identify its purpose, source and limitations. Spatial proximity does not by itself establish legal access, ownership, environmental suitability, visitor readiness or management responsibility.

Phase 2 – Stakeholder consultation and participatory validation

Stakeholder engagement was undertaken through two principal consultation and capacity-building stages. The first took place in March 2026, when representatives of the target communities participated in introductory stakeholder engagement activities. This phase introduced the project and ecotourism planning approach, applied a structured 28-question consultation instrument, and used participatory discussion and group work to identify local opportunities, constraints, existing initiatives and priorities. The second stage took place in July 2026 and shifted from initial identification of issues towards capacity building, review and validation of the emerging EMP proposals. The July process enabled stakeholders to review proposed measures, question assumptions and discuss implementation requirements, including responsibilities, financing, maintenance, visitor management and monitoring.

The stakeholder evidence and its documentation status are summarized in Annex 2 – Stakeholders and Consultation Status, which also distinguishes confirmed community-level participation from stakeholder roles and responsibilities that still require actor-specific confirmation.

Minimum stakeholder-engagement standard:

Application or updating of the template should seek input, as relevant to the community context, from the community administration; forest and protected-area managers; tourism businesses, guides and transport providers; accommodation and food providers; cultural and heritage managers; local producers and community groups; environmental organizations; technical specialists; and groups whose views may otherwise be underrepresented. The purpose is not only to collect proposals, but also to identify existing practices, competing resource uses, management constraints, business capacity, maintenance needs, environmental concerns and the actors able to implement or verify proposed measures. Participation should be recorded by date, format, represented institution or stakeholder category and the subject of the input provided.

Consultation evidence, participation gaps and differing views:

Community-level participation is distinguished from confirmation by a particular institution, business or responsible authority. If a relevant actor did not participate, or if the available participant record does not establish the actor's identity, the gap is retained and a follow-up requirement is assigned. Stakeholder views are treated as local knowledge and planning input, not as substitutes for legal, technical or environmental approval. Where participants express different priorities or interpretations, the Plan should record the issue and identify the decision-maker or verification process needed to resolve it.

Phase 3 – Assessment and Synthesis

A standardized Ecotourism Assessment Tool was developed and applied to structure the assessment of each pilot community. The tool covers screening and eligibility; ecological and conservation characteristics; socio-economic and community context; tourism assets and baseline use; suitability and zoning; potential ecotourism products; infrastructure and services; governance; visitor management; benefit sharing; environmental and social safeguards; climate resilience; monitoring; investment and implementation considerations. The completed community assessment is provided in Annex 1 – Ecotourism Assessment Tool and forms the analytical basis for the management recommendations presented throughout the Plan. The findings were subsequently consolidated through a SWOT analysis, presented in Annex 3, which distinguishes verified or desk-supported strengths and weaknesses from indicative opportunities and potential risks/threats. The SWOT therefore serves as a synthesis of the preceding assessment rather than as a separate feasibility study.

The Tool is applied as an evidence and decision record. For each relevant topic, the assessment should identify the available evidence, current condition, evidence status, principal gap, proposed management response, further verification needed and the institution or actor expected to confirm or implement the response. Conclusions should be traceable to the corresponding assessment fields, consultation evidence or spatial finding. A numerical score should be used only where an agreed scoring method, evidence basis and interpretation have been applied consistently; otherwise, findings should remain qualitative and conditional.

The attractions needs to meet specific requirement in order to become an ecotourism product. The identification of an attraction does not by itself establish an ecotourism product. A proposed product

should have a sufficiently defined visitor experience; a usable and legally accessible route or site; an identifiable visitor segment; a capable operator or service provider; available or realistically achievable guiding, transport, food, accommodation or information services; acceptable environmental and social conditions; defined safety and maintenance responsibilities; and a reasonable mechanism for local economic benefit. Product proposals that do not yet meet these conditions should be presented as conditional opportunities, together with the checks, partnerships and service-development actions required before launch or promotion.

Phase 4 - Product route and screening

Where a route, attraction cluster or visitor itinerary extends beyond one community, it should be assessed as a shared product rather than assigned entirely to the community in which the analysis began. The Plan should identify the participating communities and site managers, route and visitor handovers, operator roles, maintenance responsibilities, information and booking arrangements, emergency coordination and the intended distribution of accommodation, meals, guiding, transport and product sales. Cross-community proposals remain indicative until these responsibilities and benefit-sharing arrangements are agreed.

Phase 5 - Prioritization and action planning

Recommendations are prioritized according to their evidence base, implementation readiness, environmental and social conditions, institutional ownership, dependency on other actions and likely contribution to visitor experience and local benefit. Actions may be grouped as immediate organizational or low-cost measures; measures requiring field or technical verification; pilot products suitable for testing; infrastructure requiring feasibility, design and environmental assessment; and longer-term measures dependent on financing, permits or institutional agreements. Each priority action should identify an indicative lead, supporting actors, sequence, timeframe, verification requirement and monitoring indicator. The absence of a confirmed owner or maintenance arrangement is treated as an implementation gap rather than left implicit.

Phase 6 - Quality assurance and updating

Before completion, the Plan should be checked for consistency between the main text, assessment annexes, stakeholder record, maps, SWOT analysis, product proposals, action plan and monitoring framework. Names, boundaries, route references, responsibilities and evidence status should be used consistently throughout. The Plan should be updated when field verification changes route information, protected-area or Emerald data are revised, responsible actors are confirmed, visitor and provider data become available, infrastructure is implemented, or monitoring identifies environmental, safety, service or management issues. Updates should record the source, date and consequence of the new information.

Methodological Limitations

Methodological scope and limitations:

The preparation of this Plan did not include a feasibility study, detailed technical design or systematic field/site verification of the proposed routes, tourism sites or investments. Consequently, identification of a potential route, attraction, tourism product, visitor facility or investment in the Plan should not be interpreted as confirmation of its technical feasibility, environmental compatibility, legal availability,

safety, commercial viability or implementation readiness. The assessment deliberately identifies these evidence gaps and converts them into requirements for subsequent implementation. The Plan itself already reflects this principle by requiring route/GIS validation, specialist ecological screening and route-specific technical design before particular investments proceed.

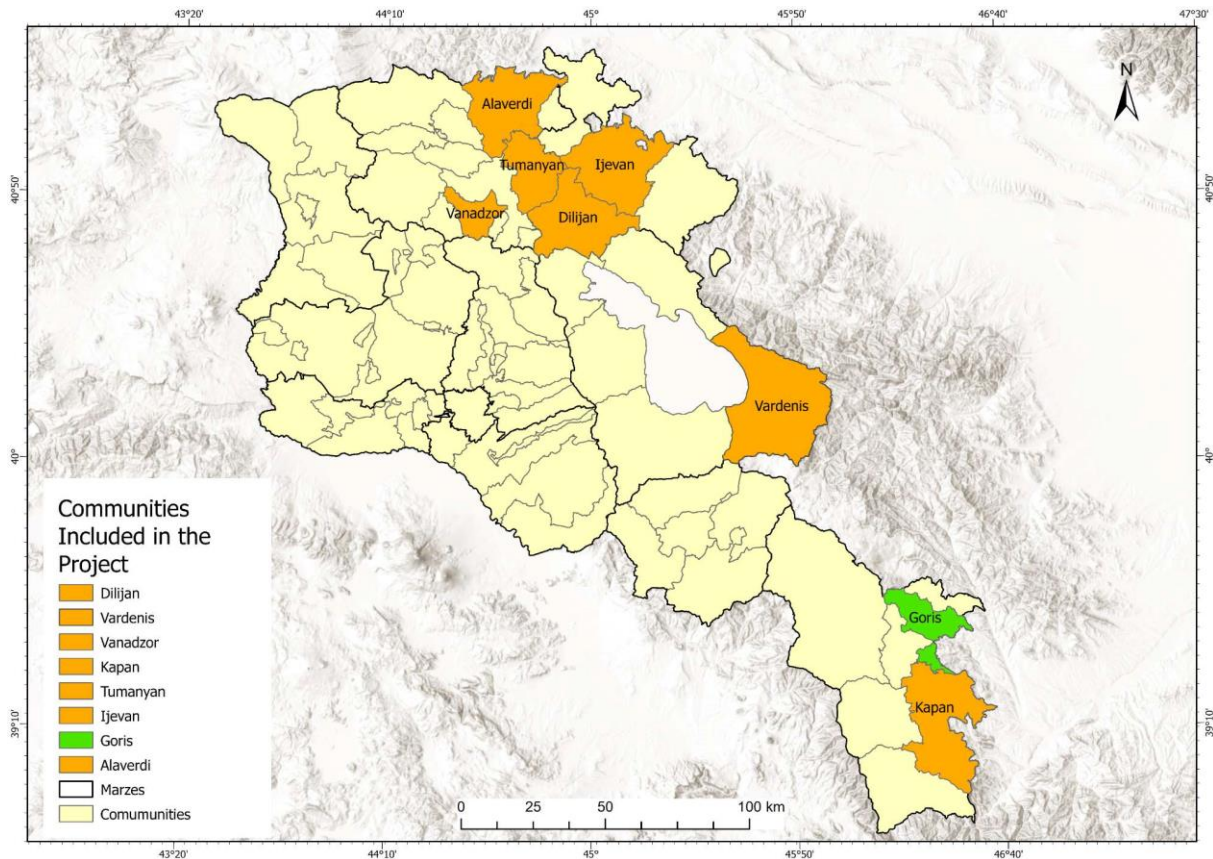
Additional evidence limitations:

Community-level tourism statistics, visitor profiles, household information and provider records may be incomplete or unavailable, and consultation participation may differ between communities and stakeholder groups. Consultation findings are therefore not treated as statistically representative survey results unless a representative sampling method is applied. Spatial data may vary in date, scale, accuracy and completeness, while route and site conditions may change seasonally or after the assessment period. These limitations should be stated wherever they materially affect a conclusion, target, product proposal or investment recommendation.

3. Site Profile

The community of Goris is located in Syunik marz in southern Armenia and represents one of the project's southern pilot communities. Its geographic position within a mountain and valley landscape gives it a distinct territorial profile shaped by natural landforms, settlement concentration, and regional connectivity.

Figure 3. Goris and other communities included in the project

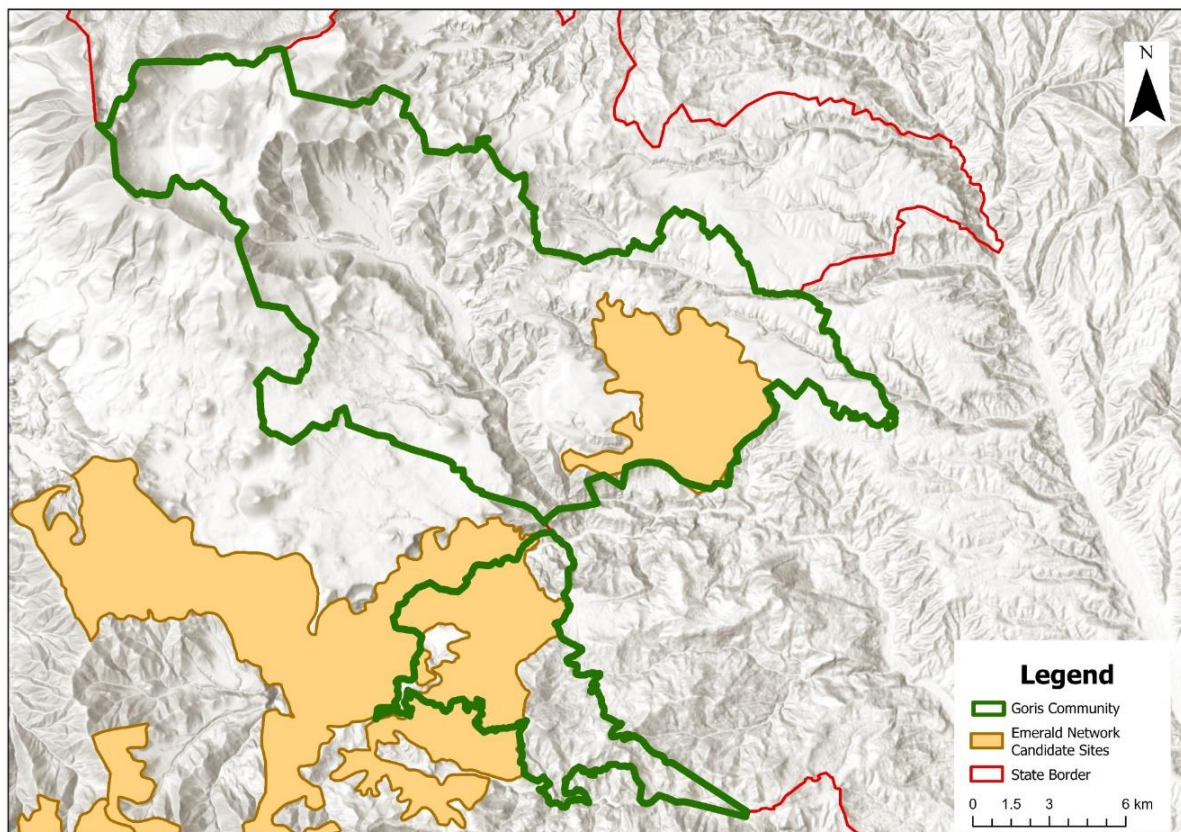


Source: REC Caucasus.

3.1 Location and Context

Goris Community is in Syunik marz and includes the town of Goris and surrounding rural settlements. The assessment records a permanent population of 25.1 thousand as of 1 January 2025 (17.6 thousand urban and 7.5 thousand rural). Earlier corridor planning links Goris with Khndzoresk, Tatev, cave-settlement landscapes and southern routes, but this is context rather than proof of its present visitor volume or service capacity. The planning task is to test and manage those links at community, provider and route level.

Figure 4. Goris Community and Emerald Network candidate-site context



Note: Candidate polygons are context layers; exact site names, boundaries, qualifying features and route overlaps require confirmation against the official register and GIS data.

Source: Project-supplied GIS map.

3.2 Ecological Characteristics

Goris has a confirmed conservation setting through the 1,850-hectare Goris State Sanctuary, managed by ArmForest SNCO, and through nearby/overlapping candidate Emerald Network geography shown on the supplied project map. The Council of Europe candidate list identifies Tatev (AM0000016) and Khndzoresk (AM0000018); their exact relationship to the community boundary, sanctuary and proposed routes must be confirmed in GIS before zoning or promotion. The Ecoregion Conservation Plan also places southern Armenia within a wider connectivity agenda between the Khosrov and Zangezur ranges. This is planning context rather than a local legal zone, so route decisions require habitat and authority validation.²

The confirmed conservation object is the sanctuary's forest landscape and typical fauna. Rock, cave, river/forest and heritage features add interpretation potential, but their sensitivity and present visitor use must be established by site. The management response is route-specific screening and precaution rather than an assumed high-pressure classification.

² Evidence note: Ministry of Environment sanctuary register; Council of Europe Candidate Emerald Site List (October 2025); Ecoregion Conservation Plan for the Caucasus.

3.3 Socio-Economic Context

The assessment records a population of 25.1 thousand and identifies agriculture, tourism and services as livelihood categories, but it does not quantify Goris employment, business turnover, service capacity or tourism-linked income. These are baseline fields, not confirmed strengths.

The following baseline brings together the visitor, service, market and route-access evidence required by Sections 4-6 and shows how each gap will be measured and used for management decisions.

Table 1. Visitor, service and market baseline

Baseline field	Current evidence	Year 1 collection method	Management use
Community/site visitors	Not available; 'medium' classification withdrawn	TIC/site counters, guide logs and short counts at priority nodes	Set route-specific baseline and concentration triggers
Day vs overnight / stay length	Not available	Exit survey + accommodation referral/booking data	Test one-night and two-night packages
Routes and trails: number, length, condition and furnishing	Not verified; existing text only says limited/fragmented	GIS and field audit with route ID, length, surface, slope, access rights, vehicle legality, seasonal status, hazards, signs, emergency response and manager	Approve, improve, close or do not promote each route
Accommodation capacity, occupancy and price	Community figures not available	Provider census: rooms/beds, seasonal opening, occupancy, rates, accessibility and package interest	Decide whether overnight promotion or capacity support is justified
Catering and meal price	Community figures not available	Sample providers by season; record menu/meal range and group capacity	Build transparent packages and identify service gaps
Tourist purchase of local agri-food/NTFP products	Share not available	Voluntary supplier and retailer sales log plus visitor survey	Measure local value capture; avoid unsupported percentages
TIC readiness	Facility is named; current operator, hours, staff, languages and functions not verified	Operational audit and service log	Confirm or redesign its role as the coordination/referral node
Syunik marz context	Province-level hotel visitors: 5,967 (2022), 15,516 (2023), 8,960 (2024)	Use as context only; do not allocate to Goris	No local forecast from three regional observations

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Syunik marz figures provide regional context only. They cannot establish Goris Community's accommodation and food activity, visitor-information readiness, employment or visitor spending. Table 1 therefore requires provider, price, occupancy, service and local-sales data before economic conclusions.

Earlier corridor planning identifies Goris as a southern hub and overnight base, but the plan does not contain current community-level data proving that this role continues at the same scale. The working proposition is therefore to test whether Goris still captures overnight stays, meals, guiding and local purchases from Tatev and Khndzoresk traffic. The visitor baseline in Table 1 will establish current day/overnight shares, length of stay, provider use and reasons for pass-through travel before targets are set.

4. Stakeholder Insights and Local Priorities

This section combines the community-level priorities recorded during the March 2026 stakeholder process with desk and regional evidence. The meeting summary records participation by Goris representatives, while the available participant list does not allow attribution to named individuals or organizations. Accordingly, shared workshop themes are used at community level, transferred regional learning is identified separately, and proposed priorities remain subject to confirmation with Goris Municipality, ArmForest, site and heritage managers, providers and affected settlements before implementation.

Desk sources suggest route and product integration as a proposition: link verified Goris and Old Goris assets with separately agreed Khndzoresk and Tatev services. No demand or local-spending effect is assumed; pilot outcomes are measured.

Earlier Khndzoresk production-support material suggests a possible local-food and product linkage. It does not prove current suppliers or market readiness. The required next step is an open provider and supplier inventory with source, safety, capacity and price checks.

Secondary material describes a Syunik destination-management function and tourism mapping work. Its current mandate, staff, data, products and willingness to participate in the Goris plan are not verified; Annex 2 lists validation actions.

Earlier cluster work reports short stays, pass-through travel, infrastructure and staffing constraints, and fragmented offers. These findings are useful hypotheses, not verified 2026 Goris conditions. Table 1 converts them into local checks on length of stay, provider capacity, prices, trail condition, visitor-information readiness and reasons for pass-through travel.

Earlier regional work reports investments in accommodation, training, trails, monuments, visitor information and promotion, but it does not establish current Goris asset condition or institutional agreement. For this plan, those claims become audit fields and coordination tasks, not consultation findings.

The proposed market test is specific: compare the present baseline with a one-night and a two-night Goris offer. The attraction register shows enough distinct themes for a structured two-day stay - historic Goris and Stone Forest/Old Goris; Khndzoresk cave landscape; Tatev and the ropeway as a corridor anchor; and a validated nature route or interpretation stop. The first objective is not an assumed increase, but evidence that at least one bookable overnight combination can operate safely, attract demand and generate local accommodation, meal, guide, transfer and product purchases.

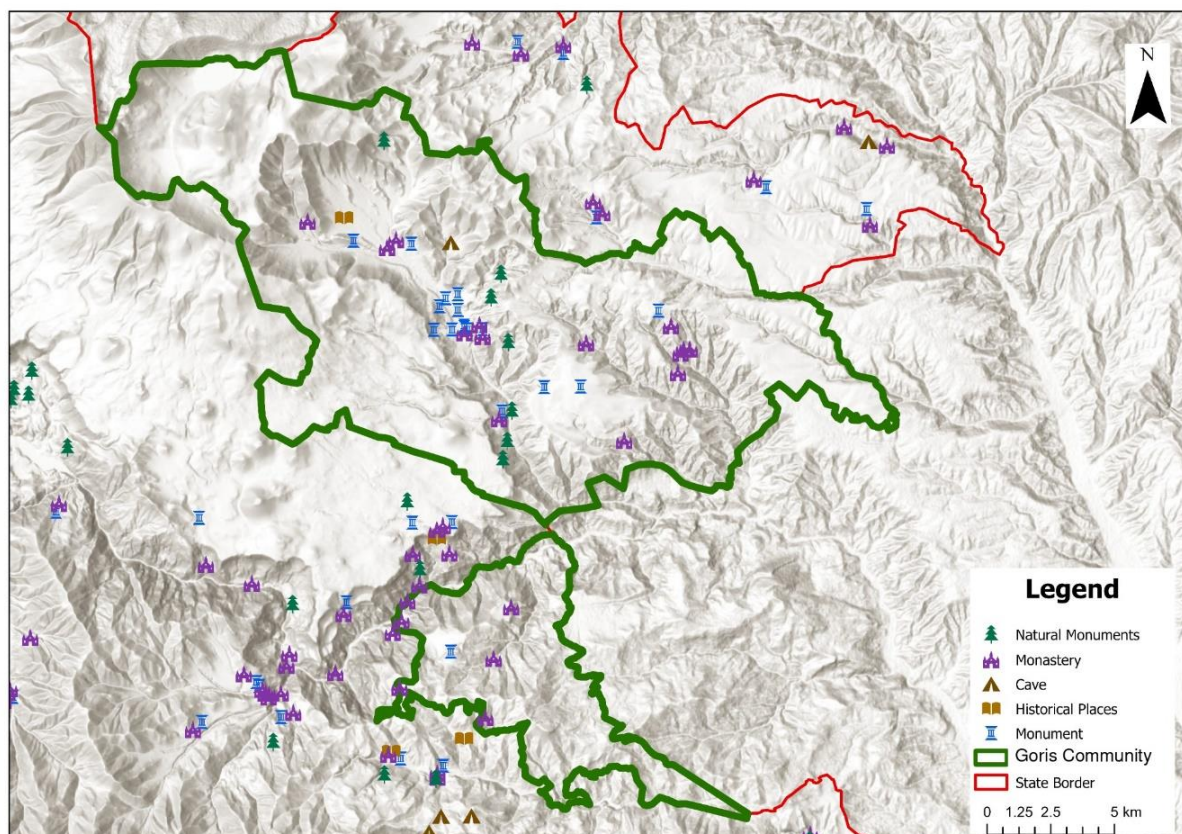
5. Tourism Baseline

Attractions

Goris has a strong landscape-and-heritage attraction base, but product readiness differs by site. Confirmed visitor themes include the historic town, Old Goris/Stone Forest, Khndzoresk cave-settlement landscape and the wider Tatev corridor. The Goris State Sanctuary is a conservation context rather than an automatically open tourism attraction. Wildlife tourism is only a conditional opportunity because site-level species, viewing locations, seasons and disturbance limits are not yet documented.

The existing plan and project map identify cultural categories and named or unnamed features associated with historic Goris, Old Goris, Khndzoresk and the wider Tatev corridor. Current opening, manager, access, condition and interpretation readiness must be confirmed for each. The map does not itself prove visitor readiness or a current hub role.

Figure 5. Attraction categories in and around Goris Community



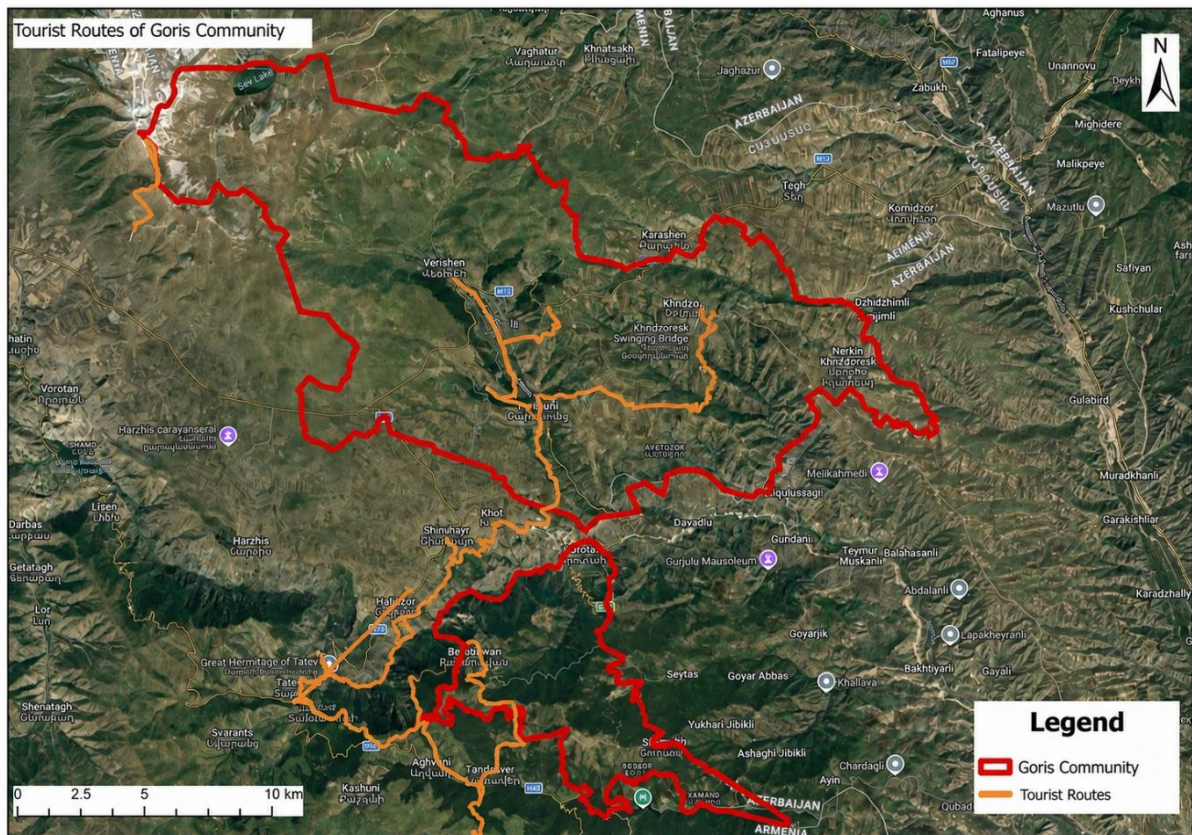
Note: The symbols are not named or numbered and do not confirm ownership, access, condition, sensitivity or visitor readiness. Nearby symbols outside the boundary may support cross-community packages only after verification.

Source: REC Caucasus.

Analysis of available official and user-generated spatial data identified a series of recorded walking routes and longer corridor alignments associated with Goris. These include short routes around Old Goris and the Bakunts area, a Bakunts–Karahunj connection, several routes through the Khndzoresk gorge and cave-settlement landscape, the Goris–Shinuhayr stretch, an Ishkhanasar route

and longer Syunik corridor alignments connecting Goris with Tatev and Kapan. The identified routes vary considerably in length and operating context, from approximately 2–7 km local routes to 26 km and 113–144 km corridor alignments.

Figure 6. Recorded tourist-route alignments in Goris Community and the wider Syunik corridor



Source: Project spatial-data analysis based on available official and user-generated geographic information. The mapped alignments are presented as planning evidence and do not establish official route approval, legal access or current visitor readiness.

The mapped pattern supports three planning scales. First, short town-edge and heritage routes could connect Goris, Old Goris, the Bakunts area and Karahunj. Second, the Khndzoresk spatial data indicate several possible guided cave-settlement, bridge, church and gorge itineraries that require a separate route-selection and management decision. Third, the Goris–Shinuhyayr, Ishkhanasar and Goris–Kapan alignments represent longer corridor or specialist routes extending beyond a single community.

Before any recorded alignment is promoted, its route ID, start and end points, length, gradient, land and management status, surface condition, hazards, seasonal accessibility, environmental and heritage sensitivity, emergency access, signage and maintenance responsibility must be verified. Routes extending outside the Goris boundary also require coordination with the relevant communities, site managers and competent authorities.

The following attraction and evidence-readiness (Table 2) register separates their possible visitor role, current evidence gap and responsible validation lead.

Table 2. Goris attraction and evidence-readiness register

Attraction / cluster	Possible visitor role	Current evidence and gap	Validation lead
Historic Goris and museums	Town-based orientation, architecture, local history	Named in the existing plan; current opening/access and operator status to confirm	Municipality/TIC + heritage and museum managers
Old Goris / Stone Forest	Guided geology, settlement-history and viewpoint walk	Route, ownership, edge safety, erosion and visitor nodes not yet audited	Municipality + route/heritage/ecology specialists
Khndzoresk cave landscape	Guided cave-settlement and cultural-landscape visit	Candidate Emerald site AM0000018; cave/bat, path, bridge, crowd and heritage controls required	Site manager/municipality + environmental and heritage authorities
Tatev and Wings of Tatev	Gateway anchor for a two-day Goris extension	Candidate Emerald site AM0000016; outside operators and schedules require agreement	Ropeway/site operator + DMO/TIC + Goris providers
Goris State Sanctuary	Conservation interpretation from approved routes/viewpoints only	Protected object confirmed; no visitor route or site-level species inventory confirmed	ArmForest SNCO and the responsible Forest Economy/territorial forestry unit
Cliff, cave and river features	Conditional bird/cave/geology interpretation	Named sites, species use, bat roosts, access and safety not verified	Qualified biodiversity/cave expert + competent authorities

Source: Authors' elaboration.

The combined historic-town, cave-settlement, rock-formation, forest and river themes support a corridor-based product proposition. They do not prove that Goris currently functions as a major hub or that individual attractions are visitor-ready. The attraction register separates the possible visitor role from the evidence and operational checks required at each cluster.

Activities

The completed assessment tool lists hiking, camping and guided tours, but their present scale, operator base, routes, safety arrangements and environmental controls are not verified. They are therefore treated as activities to audit and structure, not as proof of a complete operating ecotourism product.

Hiking and guided interpretation are priority candidate directions because they match the mapped landscape and heritage themes; their present scale and readiness are not verified. The Wings of Tatev ropeway should be used as a corridor gateway rather than treated as a Goris-owned attraction: a visitor arriving for Tatev can be offered a verified transfer, one overnight stay in Goris, and a second-day Old Goris/Stone Forest or Khndzoresk experience. This requires an operator-to-operator package, aligned schedules, booking/referral, transport on legal roads and clear separation of responsibilities.

Wildlife tourism is underexplored, not shown to be uninteresting. The evidence gap concerns exact species, sites, seasons, viewing feasibility and disturbance risk. Until these are established, the marketable nature offer should focus on landscape ecology and conditional cliff-bird interpretation from approved viewpoints, without promising sightings of sensitive mammals or directing visitors toward breeding, roosting or refuge sites.

Visitor Flow

Community-level visitor flow is not quantified. The previous 'medium' label had no numerical scale and is removed as a planning conclusion. Syunik marz hotel data confirm a regional market but cannot show how many people visit Goris, which sites they use, whether they stay overnight, or how visitor pressure varies by route. Goris should establish route/node counts and provider data before classifying flow or setting limits.

Goris is a documented destination and corridor location, but the current volume and distribution of use are not established in the available package. The management implication is to measure route/node use, day and overnight stays, provider referrals and pressure signs before applying scale labels, numerical limits or growth targets.

Accessibility

'Easy accessibility' refers only to reaching Goris town by the main road network. It does not mean that caves, cliff viewpoints, sanctuary-related areas or walking routes are safe, legal, open in all seasons or suitable for every visitor. Table 1 separates destination access from site access and requires route-specific checks for surface, slope, ownership, vehicle legality, seasonal status and emergency response.

The assessment labels town access 'easy', but this has not been converted into route-level evidence. No conclusion is made about individual site access until road and surface conditions, slope, access rights, vehicle legality, seasonal status, hazards and emergency response are checked. Table 1 consolidates these access checks with the visitor and service baseline used throughout Sections 4-6.

6. Suitability Assessment and Zoning

Goris is provisionally suitable for controlled ecotourism development because it combines a confirmed protected-area and landscape context with town-based service potential. This is not evidence that all routes are open or that visitor demand is high. Site/route access, sensitivity, management authority and present use remain screening fields, and the zoning decision must be updated after the GIS and field validation described below.

Sensitivity is site-specific, not a general label. The confirmed receptors are the Goris State Sanctuary's forest landscape, candidate Emerald site geography around Tatev and Khndzoresk, river and forest edges, cliffs/caves that may support birds or bats, heritage features, and unstable or fire-prone slopes. Possible impacts include off-route trampling and erosion, noise and crowding at caves/cliffs, vehicle spread, waste and fire, informal viewpoint creation, and disturbance if wildlife sites are promoted without evidence. Each proposed route must therefore pass the operational zoning screening set out below.

Road access to Goris town supports its use as a service and orientation point. Access beyond the town is route-specific and may be affected by ownership, legal road status, surface, slope, weather, fire conditions or emergency access. These factors must be recorded before any route is promoted.

A controlled ecotourism route is justified only where a mapped route passes ecological, heritage, land/manager and safety checks. Until that happens, the term describes a proposed management function rather than an approved spatial zone.

The plan cannot draw defensible zone boundaries from the supplied raster maps alone. It therefore defines provisional zone functions and a decision procedure rather than inventing polygons. A GIS layer showing approved service areas, controlled routes, seasonal closures and no-promotion areas is a required implementation output. No new route or facility enters promotion until land/manager status, protected/Emerald relationship, habitat sensitivity, heritage constraints and safety are confirmed.

The resulting approach is selective: concentrate visitor services in verified lower-risk locations, approve individual routes through screening, keep unassessed sensitive features out of promotion, and use temporary caution or closure where a stated trigger applies.

Maps 1 and 2 (Figures 3 and 4) provide boundary, candidate Emerald context and attraction categories. They do not show sanctuary boundaries, habitat features, land tenure, approved trails, route condition, sensitive caves/cliffs, service nodes or tentative operational zones. The operational zoning framework below states what the missing zoning layer must contain and who must validate it.

Table 3. Operational zoning decision framework

Zone / layer	Spatial test	Permitted use	Validation and control
Service and support area	Existing built-up/service locations in Goris and verified visitor stops	Accommodation, food, TIC/referral, local products, transport and orientation	Municipality confirms land/use, sanitation, access and operator
Controlled ecotourism route	Only a mapped legal route or node that passes ecology, heritage and safety checks	Guided/independent use as approved; route rules and seasonal status displayed	Municipality + ArmForest/competent site authority approve their respective responsibilities
Sensitive / no-promotion overlay	Sanctuary-sensitive features, unassessed caves/roosts, nesting cliffs, unstable slopes or other confirmed receptors	No marketing or general access; research/management access only where authorized	Competent environmental/heritage authority defines restrictions
Temporary closure / caution area	Fire danger, slope instability, severe weather, wildlife/bat season or incident	Warning, guided-only use or closure until trigger clears	Named authority issues status; TIC/providers communicate it
Required GIS output	Routes, nodes, zone function, owner/manager, sensitivity, seasonal status, emergency access	Versioned operational map for managers and simplified visitor map	GIS specialist + working group; annual and incident-based update

Source: Authors' elaboration.

7. Ecotourism Product Development

The product system should convert the confirmed attraction base into specific services with an operator, visitor format, season, access method, environmental limit and maintenance duty. Candidate Emerald context is treated as a compatibility requirement, not as a marketing label that automatically opens sites. The following tools are conditional pilots: each is launched only after the attraction, route, operator and safeguard fields are complete.

The most relevant visitor groups are relatively clear:

- The first target segment is corridor and heritage visitors who may already be travelling to Tatev, Khndzoresk or other southern attractions. Their present use of Goris is not quantified; the proposed offer tests whether clear referral, an overnight stay and a second-day experience can convert pass-through travel into local service purchases.
- A second target segment is nature and landscape visitors interested in validated rock, canyon, protected-landscape and walking interpretation.
- A third target segment is cultural-landscape visitors interested in historic-town, church, museum and cave-settlement themes after site and manager validation.
- A fourth target segment is small guided nature-interpretation and local-food or product groups; no wildlife sightings or visitor wild harvesting are promised.

The priority candidate product combines cultural-landscape interpretation with walking: historic Goris, Old Goris/Stone Forest and, after separate site agreement, Khndzoresk. Its distinctiveness lies in reading geology, settlement history and living services together. Route readiness and market response must still be tested.

The number, length, furnishing and operational status of established hiking trails are not verified in the available files. Hiking promotion must therefore begin with a route audit, not a claim of readiness. Each route needs a unique ID, start/end coordinates, length and difficulty, land/manager, surface and hazard record, signs/facilities, seasonal status, emergency access, ecological/heritage screening, maintenance owner and publication decision.

The distinctive nature offer is the meeting of rock formations, cave-settlement history, forest and river landscapes and the wider Tatev-Khndzoresk candidate Emerald context. Wildlife can enrich interpretation, but current evidence does not justify species-led tours or promised sightings. A conditional cliff-bird or landscape-ecology pilot may proceed only after a qualified survey identifies a low-disturbance viewpoint, season, group rule and no-go features.

Camping may operate only at a named, lower-risk, legally usable site with a responsible operator or manager, defined capacity after site assessment, toilets/waste arrangements, water/fire rules, emergency access and seasonal status. Dispersed camping, campfires and vehicle-based access in sanctuary-related, cave/cliff, forest or unstable-slope areas should not be promoted.

Season and operating dates must be set route by route from surface and weather conditions, fire status, cave/bat or cliff-bird sensitivity where relevant, provider availability and emergency access. The plan does not claim a strongest season from community data. A one-night/two-day pilot should combine

a town/Old Goris experience with either a separately validated Khndzoresk, Tatev-linked or nature route; results are measured through bookings, stay length, service use and incidents.

The product and service framework below states the operator/value chain and its launch conditions. The product family is therefore limited to validated walking and cultural-landscape offers, the Tatev–Goris core package with an optional Kapan extension, a legal-road transfer service, a local food/product stop, and a conditional nature-interpretation pilot. These products are intended to function as an interconnected offer, linking Goris-based accommodation, guiding, food and visitor services with the wider Tatev and Khndzoresk tourism corridor. Table 4 translates this product concept into practical tourism and service tools, identifying for each its proposed visitor format and market, potential local value chain and the minimum conditions that must be met before launch.

Table 4. Priority Ecotourism Product and Service Tools

Product / service tool	Format and market	Local value chain	Launch conditions
Goris town-Old Goris-Stone Forest interpretive walk	Half/full-day guided product for heritage and landscape visitors	Local guide, TIC/referral, museum/heritage stop, meal	Approved route, edge/erosion screening, signs, group rule and maintenance owner
Khndzoresk cave-landscape visit	Guided half/full day; culture, geology and cave-settlement interpretation	Guide, legal transfer, local food/product stop	Candidate Emerald and heritage check; bat screening; bridge/path and crowd protocol
Tatev–Goris core package with optional Kapan extension	Day 1 Tatev/ropeway; overnight Goris; Day 2 Goris or Khndzoresk; optional Day 3 Kapan through a separate agreed operator	Tatev operator, Goris accommodation/guide/meals/transfer/products and, for the extension, Kapan providers	Partner agreement, realistic transfer times, aligned booking/schedules, operator handover, cancellation/responsibility terms and local-benefit records in both communities
Legal-road trailhead transfer	Pre-booked local shuttle/4x4 only on validated public/legal roads; no off-road driving	Licensed/qualified driver, guide, TIC/accommodation referral	Road/land status, vehicle suitability, weather status, passenger log, no-go points and emergency plan
Conditional cliff-bird / landscape ecology stop	Small guided interpretation group; no guaranteed sightings	Trained nature guide and local transport	Species/site/season confirmed; fixed viewpoint; no approach to nests/roosts; closure trigger
Goris local taste and product stop	Pre-booked tasting/sales linked to an itinerary, not unverified wild harvesting	Food provider, honey/herb/fruit producers, women/youth enterprises	Food safety, source record, price/menu, capacity and sustainable-sourcing check

Source: Authors' elaboration.

To complement the priority product and service tools identified above, indicative retail price ranges have been developed as a preliminary 2026 market benchmark. For Goris, these ranges are intended to help translate the proposed walking, cultural-landscape, nature-interpretation and corridor-based products into potentially bookable offers, while providing local guides, accommodation providers, food businesses, transport operators and other service providers with an initial reference for product packaging and commercial positioning. They are indicative planning ranges only and do not constitute recommended or approved tariffs. The proposed products themselves remain subject to the route, operator, environmental, heritage and safety conditions identified in Table 4.

The ranges are expressed in AMD and reflect comparable publicly available tourism and activity offers in Armenia. Per-person prices assume the stated paying group size, while vehicle prices assume the stated capacity. Before launch, each product should have a confirmed itinerary, participating providers and supplier quotations, minimum group size, inclusions and exclusions,

applicable taxes and commissions, cancellation conditions and any authority-set fees. Prices should be reviewed annually and adjusted to actual operating costs, market conditions and service quality. This is particularly important for Goris because current community-level accommodation prices, catering prices, provider capacity and visitor spending have not yet been comprehensively established and are identified in the Plan as Year 1 baseline requirements.

Market benchmark: publicly available offers accessed on 8 September 2026, including ONE WAY TOUR day tours (AMD 8,000–13,500/person); Meet Dilijan and Yell Extreme Park activities (AMD 5,000–25,000); Armenian Explorer full-day 4x4 excursions (AMD 100,000/vehicle); and ExploreArmenia four-day specialist birdwatching tours (USD 460–910/person).

Table 5. Indicative Product Price Ranges (2026 planning benchmark)

Product / service tool	Indicative 2026 retail range	Unit / base	Principal inclusions / exclusions
Goris town-Old Goris-Stone Forest interpretive walk	10,000-20,000 AMD / 18,000-30,000 AMD	Per person; half day or full day; 4-6 participants	Guide and interpretation included; full-day range may include one local meal. Transfers and entry fees extra unless stated.
Khndzoresk cave-landscape visit	15,000-30,000 AMD	Per person; half/full day; 4-6 participants	Guide and legal local transfer included; meals, bridge/site charges and other entry fees extra.
Tatev-Goris core package with optional Kapan extension	80,000-135,000 AMD / 130,000-210,000 AMD	Per person; 2 days/1 night or 3 days/2 nights; 4-8 participants	Accommodation, breakfast, guiding and corridor transfers included; other meals, entry fees and optional activities extra unless quoted.
Legal-road trailhead transfer	25,000-60,000 AMD	Per vehicle, round trip; up to 4 passengers	Legal-road transfer and agreed waiting time included; guide, activity, meals and entry fees extra.
Conditional cliff-bird / landscape ecology stop	15,000-30,000 AMD	Per person; 2-4 hours; 3-6 participants	Specialist guide and approved route/viewpoint interpretation included; transport, meals and specialist equipment extra.
Goris local taste and product stop	8,000-18,000 AMD	Per person; 1-2.5 hours	Hosted tasting, meal or demonstration included as specified; take-home purchases and itinerary transport extra.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

8. Infrastructure and Service Needs

Desk sources identify accommodation, visitor-information and tourism-service functions in and around Goris, but the package does not verify current operators, capacity, opening periods, accessibility, quality or willingness to participate. Infrastructure planning must therefore start with the provider, route and TIC audits in Table 1.

The available files do not contain a complete, current sign and trailhead inventory. Each validated route should record existing signs, gaps, responsible owner, inspection date and repair priority before new signs or panels are commissioned.

The visitor-information function should become operational only after the TIC readiness audit confirms who performs it. Required tasks are route-status publication, map and code distribution, provider referral, basic counts, incident/referral logging and seasonal notices; if the TIC cannot perform them, the municipality assigns another named node.

Visitor facilities should be proposed only at audited nodes. A route/site record must first confirm land and manager, existing use, access and safety, sanitation/waste need, sensitive features, maintenance owner and technical design requirement.

The most realistic infrastructure agenda for Goris should therefore focus on a limited but highly practical set of improvements:

- Consolidation and clarification of the main trail network, especially between the town, Stone Forest, Old Goris, Khndzoresk, and other priority nodes
- Stronger directional signage, route markers, trailheads, and interpretation panels
- Fuller use of the Goris Tourism Information Center as the operational orientation point for ecotourism and visitors
- Better linkage between accommodation, guiding, local transport, and route-based tourism products
- Selective improvement of basic visitor facilities at the most used tourism stops
- Stronger safety and hazard-related infrastructure and signage in exposed or seasonally sensitive areas
- Careful placement of any new small infrastructure only in lower-risk and already used spaces.

Infrastructure investment should be selective and tied to verified routes and services. The immediate outputs are an operational route network, status information, safety and environmental controls, basic facilities at justified nodes, and named maintenance duties—not general tourism construction.

Operational rule: no trail, viewpoint, cave, transfer or information service is described as visitor-ready until its corresponding baseline and launch conditions in Tables 1, 2 and 4 are complete.

9. Governance and Institutional Arrangements

The eventual governance form should be a written Goris Ecotourism Coordination Protocol, not a new legal authority. Goris Municipality leads local coordination; ArmForest SNCO and the territorially responsible unit retain their conservation and management functions for Goris State Sanctuary and forest land; heritage and site authorities retain their mandates; the TIC or DMO role is confirmed through an operational audit; and providers deliver services under agreed route, information and incident procedures. Community-level participation is recorded, while actor-specific mandates, commitments and named focal points remain subject to confirmation during implementation.

Goris Municipality is proposed as the local convener because the package assigns it a role in local coordination and because route information, public-space functions, maintenance coordination and provider linkage need one local focal point. This does not confirm that accommodation, the TIC or tourism providers are currently operating at a stated scale; those functions remain subject to the Table 1 audits and institutional validation.

The Goris Tourism Information Center is a potential operational node, but the plan does not verify its present operator, opening hours, staff, language coverage, visitor volume, map stock, digital tools, booking/referral role or emergency/closure communication. A readiness audit must determine whether it can maintain the route-status board, provider register, visitor count, incident/referral log and seasonal notices proposed here; otherwise the municipality must assign those functions elsewhere.

Community participation should include the administrative and resident representatives of settlements affected by routes; local guides and drivers; accommodation and food providers; honey, herb, fruit and other product producers; women- and youth-led enterprises; and volunteer or interest groups concerned with heritage, trails, nature or visitor services. The March 2026 process records Goris participation at community level, while named organizations, individual commitments and implementation roles remain to be confirmed and documented.

Environmental, heritage, community-development or tourism organizations may support facilitation, specialist screening, training and inclusive provider outreach. No organization is presented as participating until its role, scope and contact are confirmed in the Goris validation process.

The available files do not confirm a shared management arrangement, revenue-sharing agreement or operating protocol for the proposed routes and products. That gap is addressed through the written coordination protocol and the operational outputs set out below. It must be validated with the responsible institutions and providers rather than described as already agreed.

A large investment partnership is not a prerequisite for the first phase. The immediate institutional priority is to assign existing legal functions and operational responsibilities for route approval, visitor information, maintenance, incident response and provider coordination, while any later partnership or financing arrangement should be based on validated assets, responsibilities and costs. The proposed Goris Ecotourism Coordination Protocol should translate these responsibilities into a limited set of practical mechanisms that can be applied consistently by the Municipality, ArmForest and other competent site authorities, the TIC or assigned information node, providers and community representatives. Table 6 sets out these mechanisms, identifying the responsible actors and the operational output required for each.

Table 6. Goris coordination, control and guide-quality mechanism

Mechanism	Responsibility	Operational output
Annual route/product plan	Municipality convenes; ArmForest/site authorities validate matters under their mandates	Approved route/product list, status, manager and annual work plan
Route-status and closure board	Named authority issues restriction; TIC/municipality/providers repeat it	One dated status source used online, at trailheads, bookings and accommodation
Rule communication	Municipality/TIC prepares standard code; operators explain before service	Map/QR, booking message, trailhead sign and guide briefing use the same rules
Field control and incident response	ArmForest/site authority controls protected/managed land; municipality controls local public functions; guides report	Incident log, evidence/photo where safe, referral, correction and temporary closure process
Guide readiness register	Municipality/TIC maintains a service-quality register; training provider assesses competence	Training, route briefing, first-aid evidence, code signature and annual update; not a statutory national licence
Maintenance assignment	Working group assigns each route/sign/facility to a named manager and funding source	Inspection calendar, defect report, repair deadline and closure if unsafe
Quarterly working session	Municipality, ArmForest/local unit, site/heritage managers, providers and community categories	Review counts, incidents, environmental signs, provider participation and actions

Source: Authors' elaboration.

10. Visitor Management System

The practical visitor-management package is a single route-status system: an approved map, trailhead code, booking message, seasonal status, guide/provider briefing, incident log and named closure/maintenance authority. It is applied first to Old Goris/Stone Forest and Khndzoresk pilots, then extended only after the first season is reviewed.

The core principle is route-based concentration of use. Visitor movement should follow routes and nodes that have a known manager, legal access, current status and screening record; unassessed sanctuary-related, cave/cliff, river-edge or unstable features remain outside general promotion.

Visitor management is needed in Goris because popular scenery, caves, cliffs and protected/candidate Emerald context can concentrate people at specific nodes even when a community-wide total is unknown. Generic daily caps are not proposed. Route-level counts are collected first; restrictions are triggered by safety incidents, trail damage, repeated off-route movement, fire/weather status, cave/bat or bird sensitivity, or a competent authority decision.

Visitor rules must be short and consistent across booking messages, the route map, trailheads and guide briefings. They cover approved routes, no-go or seasonal-status areas, cave/cliff restrictions, waste, fire, managed camping, legal-road access and incident reporting. Rules are route-specific where evidence or authority requirements differ.

The immediate mechanism is prevention plus escalation: use one approved map and code; place signs/barriers only after authority agreement; train registered guides/providers; record incidents; refer violations to the competent authority; repair or close damaged/unsafe sections; and publish reopening status. Guide training supports a local readiness register and quality mark, not a new legal certification. Any formal licensing/certification must follow national law and the competent authority.

The visitor-management model is therefore route-based and evidence-triggered. It combines approved routes, visible rules, guided formats where screening requires them, current status notices, incident reporting and authority-led restriction or closure. Its purpose is to make public use compatible with the sanctuary, cave/cliff and heritage context while community-wide visitor volume remains unquantified.

11. Local Economy and Benefit Sharing

The package identifies plausible local revenue channels—guiding, accommodation, meals, transport and products—but does not quantify their present scale in Goris Community. Benefit sharing therefore begins with a provider census, open participation rules, service contracts/referrals and voluntary sales data rather than assumptions about a strong local tourism economy.

Syunik figures describe the province (marz), not Goris Community. They demonstrate regional accommodation activity but cannot establish Goris occupancy, accommodation prices, catering prices or visitor spending. Table 1 therefore requires a Goris provider census and seasonal price sample before package pricing, capacity support or revenue forecasts are prepared.³

Potential paid roles include guiding, accommodation, meals, legal-road transfers, interpretation, retail/product supply and maintenance. The number, seasonality and value of these roles are not yet known; pilots should record participating providers, paid assignments and sales by service type.

Local-value performance must be tested rather than inferred. Provider participation, referrals, bookings, tourist-linked sales and maintenance contributions should be reviewed after each pilot season, with open calls or targeted support used where participation is narrow.

No formal community revenue-sharing mechanism is confirmed. The first-stage mechanism is transparent local procurement and referral, named maintenance duties, and recording of actual service and product sales. A collective financing or benefit-sharing arrangement should be considered only after stakeholders agree its purpose, legal form, contribution rule and accountability process.

³ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia

12. Environmental and Climate Considerations

The confirmed planning context combines the Goris State Sanctuary, community and heritage landscapes, and candidate Emerald geography around Tatev and Khndzoresk shown by the supplied map. Candidate Emerald status does not itself create a local tourism zone, but it requires route and product compatibility with the qualifying habitats/species once official spatial and ecological data are obtained. Sensitive areas remain unpromoted until that check is complete.

The plan confirms protected forest landscape, river/forest edges, cliffs, caves and unstable slopes as receptors requiring screening. It does not confirm the earlier list of Red Book species at proposed visitor sites. The relevant tourism pathways are still practical: off-route movement and erosion, noise/crowding at cliffs or caves, vehicle spread, unmanaged camping/fire, litter, informal viewpoints and infrastructure placed before ecological and safety review.

Cave tourism can affect bats through repeated entry, noise, lighting, smoke, crowding, physical alteration or blockage of cave openings, especially where roost use and season are unknown. No cave should be illuminated, modified or promoted for interior access before a qualified bat/cave survey. Where evidence is absent, interpretation should remain outside the entrance; confirmed roosts require site-specific group, distance and seasonal closure rules set by the competent expert/authority.

The project scoping report identifies practical gaps in site-specific trail, parking and visitor-control arrangements. Applicable tourism, environmental, forest, heritage, land, transport and safety requirements must therefore be checked with the competent authorities for each route, structure and service before approval; this plan does not substitute for those legal decisions.

The most appropriate mitigation approach for Goris is therefore strict, practical, and spatially selective:

- Keep visitor use concentrated on defined routes and visitor nodes rather than allowing free movement across the wider sanctuary-linked and cave landscape.
- Avoid opening tourism functions in cliff habitats, nesting areas, unstable slopes, or sensitive river-edge sections without validation.
- Use the tourism information center and guides to communicate route discipline, sanctuary sensitivity, and visitor conduct.
- Prohibit unmanaged camping, open-fire use, and informal viewpoint creation in exposed and fire-prone areas.
- Apply seasonal caution in mountain and gorge areas where weather and slope conditions reduce safety.
- Keep new small infrastructure in already used, lower-risk locations and away from visually and ecologically sensitive sites.
- Align tourism development with protected-area management logic and with the cultural-landscape value of cave settlements and historic sites.

Environmental mitigation is required before and during each route or product pilot, regardless of total visitor volume. The operating model is therefore controlled, interpretation-led and route-based, with screening for sanctuary and candidate Emerald compatibility, cave and cliff sensitivity, fire and slope conditions, and cumulative signs of visitor use. These risks require not only preventive measures but also predefined management responses where conditions change or impacts are detected. Table 7 translates the environmental and climate considerations identified above into an operational risk-response framework, linking each principal risk pathway to its potential effect, required control and the trigger for corrective action, restriction or temporary closure.

Table 7. Environmental, cave and climate risk-response tool

Risk pathway	Potential effect	Required control	Trigger / response
Unverified sensitive species	Marketing draws visitors toward assumed habitat	Do not promise sightings or publish locations; verify species/site/season first	No species-led product until signed evidence record exists
Caves and bats	Entry, light, noise, smoke or alteration disturbs roost use	Specialist survey; exterior interpretation where unknown; no lighting/alteration; seasonal closure where required	Roost evidence or concern triggers closure and expert review
Cliffs / birds	Approach, noise or drone use disturbs nesting/roosting	Fixed screened viewpoint, no drone/approach rule, seasonal status	Observed disturbance or nesting sensitivity triggers closure/relocation
Trail erosion / off-route movement	Trampling, shortcuts and widening affect soil, vegetation and heritage	Clear route, signs/barriers where approved, guide briefing and inspection	Repeated deviation or damage triggers repair, reroute or closure
Vehicle access	Off-road spread, noise, dust and unsafe stopping	Legal-road transfer only; fixed stops; no off-road driving; operator log	Road/weather/land-status problem cancels or changes service
Camping / fire / waste	Fire, sanitation and scattered use	Named managed site only; no open fire; waste/toilet and emergency plan	Fire warning, waste failure or incident triggers suspension
Slope and severe weather	Rockfall, landslide, snow/ice or storm affects access	Route-specific status, warning and emergency access	Authority/inspection/weather trigger produces caution or closure
Candidate Emerald / sanctuary compatibility	Promotion precedes official boundary/feature and authority review	GIS overlay plus route/product screening and documented decision	No launch until competent review is recorded

Source: Authors' elaboration.

13. Monitoring Framework

Monitoring is intended to support adaptive management of Goris's ecotourism system and has five defined objectives: (1) keep visitors on approved routes and out of unassessed or sensitive areas; (2) detect and correct environmental, cave, heritage and safety impacts; (3) test whether Goris converts corridor travel into longer stays and use of local services; (4) measure local provider and product participation, including opportunities for women and youth; and (5) verify that the coordination, closure and maintenance system responds to recorded evidence. Monitoring therefore combines visitor and route use, environmental condition, visitor experience, local economic participation and management performance. Table 7 translates these objectives into an operational framework by linking each objective to measurable indicators, an initial management direction or target, monitoring frequency and responsibility, and a predefined management response.

Table 8. Operational Monitoring Framework

Objective	Indicator and baseline	Initial direction / target	Frequency and lead	Management response
Route concentration and safe access	Counts by node/route; off-route observations; incidents; route status. Baseline absent.	100% of promoted routes audited and status displayed; numerical thresholds after first season	Monthly in season / Municipality + route manager	Repair, reroute, guide-only use or temporary closure
Conservation and cave compatibility	Disturbance, erosion, litter, cave/bat or cliff-bird signs. Baseline absent.	No product launched without screening; zero unauthorized cave lighting/alteration	Pre-launch + seasonal / ArmForest or competent site authority	Suspend product; expert review; change route/season/rules
Visitor experience and stay	Day/overnight share, stay length, satisfaction, package/referral use. Baseline absent.	Set first-year baseline; test at least one one-night/two-day offer	Seasonal / TIC or assigned node + providers	Revise timing, service links, information or package
Local economic participation	Active guides, accommodation, food, transport and product providers; local-sales sample. Baseline absent.	All pilots list named local suppliers; targets set after provider census	Quarterly/annual / Municipality + provider group	Open supplier call, training/referral or package redesign
Rule and maintenance performance	Briefing records, incidents closed, sign/trail defects and repair time. Baseline absent.	All incidents/defects logged with owner and action status	Monthly in season / working group	Escalate overdue action; close unsafe or unmanaged asset
Inclusive participation	Women/youth-led providers and paid roles by service type. Baseline absent.	Record baseline and remove identified access barriers; target after first review	Annual / Municipality + partners	Target training, supplier outreach or procurement adjustment

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Goris-specific field focus. The common indicators in Table 8 should be applied route by route at Old Goris and the Stone Forest, Khndzoresk cave-settlement locations, approved sanctuary- or candidate Emerald-linked routes and other promoted nodes. Field checks should record trail widening and erosion, off-route movement, litter, cave or cliff disturbance signs, marker and interpretation condition, and fire, landslide, weather or access hazards. Monitoring must not assume that an unverified species occurs at a visitor site; any field sign or proposed wildlife use should instead trigger review by the competent authority or a qualified specialist.

Stay and local-value test. The distinctive market question for Goris is whether corridor and Tatev-related travel is converted into one-night or two-day stays and use of community-based services. TIC or assigned visitor-node records, route and package bookings, accommodation and meal use, guide and legal-transfer assignments, product sales and visitor feedback should therefore be reviewed together. Provider participation should be recorded by service type, including paid roles and opportunities for women- and youth-led businesses.

Review and management response. The municipal coordination group, TIC or assigned visitor function, route and site managers and participating providers should review the combined evidence during the operating season and at least annually. Repeated off-route use, erosion, litter, unsafe behaviour, cave or cliff concern, damaged infrastructure or an unresolved maintenance duty should lead to a documented response such as revised briefing, repair, guided-only use, rerouting, temporary closure, targeted training or redesign of the relevant package.

14. Investment and Implementation Plan

The investment logic is phased and management-led. Confirmed starting assets are the landscape/heritage setting, Goris State Sanctuary and candidate Emerald context; current visitor volume, provider capacity, trail readiness, species use and local economic effect remain gaps. Investment therefore begins with validation, operating systems and two small pilots rather than expansion based on assumed demand.

Syunik marz accommodation statistics demonstrate a regional tourism market but cannot be assigned to Goris Community. They justify testing Goris products, not a conclusion about current community demand, occupancy, spending or service readiness.

Figure 7 summarizes the common three-phase implementation sequence. The dates indicate planning periods rather than automatic progression; movement to the next phase depends on the monitoring evidence and readiness conditions stated below.

Figure 7. Phased investment and implementation sequence



Source: Authors' elaboration.

Phase 1

The first implementation period (2026-2032) should complete the route/GIS, visitor/service, TIC, safeguard and coordination outputs. Public promotion begins only for routes and products that pass those gates.

- Formal validation of priority ecotourism routes and visitor nodes, especially between the town, Stone Forest, Old Goris, Khndzoresk, and sanctuary-linked access areas
- Improvement of trailheads, route markers, directional signage, and interpretation points
- Stronger use of the Goris Tourism Information Center as the operational orientation hub for maps, route advice, seasonal warnings, and visitor conduct guidance
- Preparation of a practical visitor-management package for high-use and high-sensitivity parts of the tourism landscape
- Coordination between the municipality, the relevant protected-area authority, local service providers, and community representatives on route use, seasonal access, and visitor rules
- Basic safety-oriented improvements in exposed or unstable sections where landslide or fire risk affects tourism use.

These are launch prerequisites, not administrative preliminaries. They establish where visitor use is legal and safe, who is responsible for each route and service, what information must be collected, what is monitored, and what conditions trigger corrective action or closure. Initial investment should therefore concentrate on establishing the operational system required for Goris's ecotourism model to function before larger or more permanent investments are considered. Table 9 translates these first-phase requirements into priority investment objects, specifying the minimum output, responsible actors, implementation timing and the additional technical or financial information required before costs can be finalised.

Table 9. Priority investment objects and implementation requirements

Investment object	Minimum output	Lead / partners	Timing	Cost status
Attraction, route and GIS validation	Named features, route IDs, manager/land status, zoning and closure layers	Municipality + GIS, ArmForest/site/heritage authorities	0-6 months	Technical survey/BoQ required
Visitor/service baseline	Counts, stay survey, provider census, prices, occupancy and local-sales sample	Municipality/TIC-assigned node + DMO/providers	0-12 months	Data-collection design required
TIC/coordination function	Operator audit, route-status board, provider register, logs and referral process	Municipality + TIC operator/DMO	0-9 months	Cost after readiness audit
Two priority route pilots	Trailhead, markers, interpretation, safety and maintenance package	Municipality + competent route/site managers	6-18 months	Route-specific design and BoQ
Cave/bat and cliff screening	Survey, no-go features, seasons, viewpoints and visitor protocol	Qualified expert + competent authority	Before cave/wildlife launch	Specialist scope required
Guide/provider readiness	Training, route brief, first-aid evidence, code and local service register	Training partner + Municipality/TIC	6-12 months; annual update	Participant and curriculum costing
Tatev-Goris and local-value package pilots	Partner agreement, booking/referral, legal transfer, overnight/meal/product links	Operators + providers + DMO/TIC	6-18 months	Business case after baseline
Maintenance and adaptive-management fund	Named asset owners, inspection calendar, repair/closure budget line	Municipality + site managers + service partners	From first launch	Annual budget after asset register

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Completion of these initial investments provides the basis for subsequent product consolidation and selective scaling. Progression to later phases should depend on evidence generated through the route pilots, visitor and provider baseline, environmental screening and monitoring system, particularly evidence of safe operation, visitor uptake, local service participation, manageable environmental effects and adequate maintenance capacity.

Phase 2

For the period 2033-2036, the emphasis should shift toward product consolidation and stronger local economic linkage. If the first phase succeeds in improving route clarity and visitor discipline, the next step should be to deepen the actual ecotourism offer and spread benefit more visibly through the local economy. The most relevant actions should include:

- Strengthening guiding and interpretation for protected-area-linked nature tourism, cave-settlement landscapes, and cultural landscape routes.
- Link verified accommodation providers in Goris Community and the Khndzoresk area with guided experiences and route-based tourism after capacity, prices and operating periods are recorded.
- Develop small local food and product points only with verified suppliers, food-safety/source records and agreed sustainable sourcing; visitor wild harvesting is not part of the product.
- Improvement of stop-based visitor facilities in already used and lower-risk locations.
- Stronger packaging of cultural landscape tourism so that the town, cave settlements, scenic routes, and nature interpretation function as one system rather than separate attractions.
- Seasonal review of route condition, visitor pressure, biodiversity-sensitive areas, and local service participation.

Product consolidation should proceed only where the first-season data show safe operation, visitor uptake, provider participation and manageable environmental effects. The aim is to improve links and local value per trip rather than multiply attractions.

Phase 3

For the period 2037–2040, investment should shift toward selective strengthening and institutional consolidation, conditional on the results of the preceding phases. Later facilities or more formal institutional arrangements should proceed only where monitoring demonstrates sustained visitor use, safe operation, manageable environmental effects, adequate maintenance capacity and broader local participation. The objective is not continued physical expansion, but selective improvement of the elements that have demonstrated a clear operational need and contribution to the Goris ecotourism system.

- Upgrading visitor-information and interpretation functions through existing facilities rather than through large new construction
- Selective improvement of route-support infrastructure in the most used and ecologically and physically manageable sections
- Clearer maintenance and financing arrangements for signage, route markers, interpretation panels, and visitor facilities
- Stronger integration of local product sales and accommodation into longer-stay ecotourism packages
- Gradual development of more formal benefit-sharing or service-coordination arrangements where tourism use becomes regular enough to support them.

Progression to this phase should therefore be determined by monitoring and implementation evidence rather than by the planning timeframe alone, allowing investments to be advanced, modified or deferred according to actual performance and site conditions.

Financing, Costing and Investment Review

Financing should follow the staged asset and responsibility plan. Public, project/donor and private funding are possible sources, but no source is assumed or committed. Each investment requires a validated owner/manager, technical scope, cost, maintenance duty, safeguard decision and procurement/financing route.

The most appropriate financing mix for Goris is therefore:

- Public financing for route organization, signage, interpretation, safety measures, and coordination
- Donor or project-based financing for biodiversity-sensitive tourism design, guide support, local-product integration, and pilot visitor-management tools
- Private financing for accommodation quality, guiding, local food and product sales, transport services, and other service-based improvements.

Investment and revenue estimates should be developed progressively as individual products and investment objects reach operational and technical readiness. No defensible quantitative revenue estimate can currently be produced from the available Goris data. Product-level business cases should therefore be prepared once provider prices and capacity, expected bookings, operating costs, maintenance responsibilities and season length are available. Until then, the Plan identifies the principal revenue channels—guiding, accommodation, meals, legal transfers and local-product sales—and requires pilot products to record actual transactions and sales so that subsequent business cases can be based on observed performance rather than assumed returns. Similarly, precise investment amounts should only be established once the relevant route or investment object has a validated owner or manager, defined technical scope, biodiversity and safeguard requirements, quantities or Bills of Materials where applicable, maintenance responsibilities and an identified procurement and financing route.

Investment review and scaling should be based on observed performance rather than a predetermined long-term visitor-growth scenario. The available 2022–2024 Syunik marz series provides useful regional context but consists of only three annual observations, includes an exceptional peak in 2023 and does not measure Goris Community or site-level ecotourism. Regression coefficients, significance tests, R-squared values or extrapolation to 2040 would therefore not provide a defensible basis for investment decisions, and no long-range visitor forecast is adopted. A future forecast may be considered when a longer comparable time series and Goris-specific visitor and provider data become available, with the model, assumptions, uncertainty and validation method clearly stated. In the meantime, progression between implementation phases and decisions on additional investment should draw on the visitor, route, stay, booking, provider and sales data generated through implementation, together with monitoring of environmental and heritage condition, safety, local economic participation and maintenance performance.

15. Final Site Classification and Conclusions

Goris is provisionally suitable for controlled ecotourism development, with visitor-service functions concentrated in the town and other verified lower-risk locations. This conclusion consolidates the baseline, attraction, zoning, product, infrastructure, governance, environmental, monitoring and investment assessments and replaces the preliminary eligibility statement previously presented near the beginning of the Plan.

The classification is supported by a strong landscape-and-heritage system. Historic Goris, Old Goris and the Stone Forest, Khndzoresk's cave-settlement landscape, the Goris State Sanctuary, nearby candidate Emerald geography and the wider Tatev corridor provide enough thematic range for town-based interpretation, guided landscape routes and linked one-night or two-day offers. Goris can function as an orientation and service base, but the available evidence does not yet establish current community-level visitor volume, stay length, provider capacity, route readiness, local economic effect or the site and seasonal occurrence of sensitive species.

The classification does not authorize open tourism expansion. Protected, candidate Emerald, sanctuary-linked, cave, cliff, forest and other sensitive areas require route-specific screening, authority conditions and enforceable visitor rules. Unassessed areas should remain outside promotion. Wildlife or cave products remain conditional on verified species or feature information, appropriate season and viewpoint selection, disturbance controls and a responsible operator. Service investment should be concentrated in the town, Khndzoresk and other verified nodes where legal access, safety, operating responsibility and maintenance can be demonstrated.

The planning conclusion is a phased, evidence-led approval. The first implementation phase should complete the route and GIS register, visitor and provider baseline, TIC and coordination functions, environmental and cave or cliff screening, provider readiness and two priority route or package pilots. Product consolidation and later facility upgrading should occur only where monitoring shows safe operation, visitor uptake, longer stays, local service participation, manageable environmental effects and adequate maintenance capacity. Goris therefore has a credible ecotourism pathway, but its progression depends on converting confirmed assets into controlled products and tested local services rather than relying on assumed demand or unrestricted access.

Annex 1: Ecotourism Assessment Tool

Annex 1 presents the completed ecotourism assessment for the site, forming the basis for the management plan.

Component	Field / Criteria	Input / Selection	Notes / Logic
Screening & Eligibility	Critical habitat overlap	☒ Yes ☐ No	
	Endangered species presence	☒ Yes ☐ No	
	Land ownership unclear	☐ Yes ☒ No	
	Community opposition	☐ Yes ☒ No	
	Climate risks (fire, landslide, drought)	☒ Yes ☐ No	
	Access constraints	☐ Yes ☒ No	Mountain roads and seasonal access constraints to surrounding sites.
Site Identification & Planning Context	Site name	Goris Community	
	Marz / Municipality	Syunik/Goris	
	Coordinates / GIS reference	Latitude: 39.5090° N Longitude: 46.3439° E	
	Legal status	☒ Goris State Sanctuary; community land; candidate Emerald context ☐ Emerald Site ☒ Community Land ☐ Other	The official candidate list includes Tatev (AM0000016) and Khndzoresk (AM0000018). Exact GIS relationships and qualifying features must be confirmed before route zoning.
	Link to existing plans	☐ PA Management Plan ☒ Community Development Plan ☐ Tourism Strategy	https://econews.am/?p=5919&l=am https://nabu.am/hy/eco-education/bhpt/argelavayrer http://env.am/shrjaka-mijavayr/yndhanur-teghekutyuner
Ecological & Conservation Profile	Ecosystem type	☒ Forest ☒ Grassland ☐ Wetland ☒ Alpine ☐ Mixed	
	Key habitats	Mixed deciduous forest	Key habitats include the Vararakn/Goris River valley and the Vorotan basin, rocky cliffs and cave landscapes, juniper scrub/open woodland, oak-hornbeam woodland patches, riverine vegetation, and grassland-steppe habitats.
	Species of concern	Site-level occurrence not verified	The official Goris State Sanctuary entry protects forest landscapes and typical fauna but does not confirm the previous species list at proposed

Component	Field / Criteria	Input / Selection	Notes / Logic
Socio-Economic & Community Context			visitor sites. Do not market species or design wildlife products until authority/survey evidence confirms site, season and sensitivity.
	Conservation sensitivity	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☒ High	HIGH → Conservation priority, tourism strictly limited; MEDIUM → Controlled ecotourism; LOW → Potential for broader ecotourism development
	Population	25.1 thousand permanent population as of 1 January 2025 (17.6 thousand urban; 7.5 thousand rural)	
	Main livelihoods	☒ Agriculture ☒ Livestock ☐ Forestry ☒ Tourism	Main livelihoods include agriculture and livestock in surrounding villages, trade and services, tourism and hospitality, and small-scale/light industry including food processing.
	NTFPs present	☒ Honey ☒ Herbs ☒ Mushrooms ☒ Berries ☐ Other	NTFPs likely important in the wider Syunik/Goris area include honey, medicinal and aromatic herbs, wild berries and fruits (including blackberry and rosehip), and mushrooms.
	Cultural assets	Caves and rock-cut cave settlement, old cave villages, historic urban fabric, museums, local gastronomy, traditions	Key cultural assets include the Old Goris Cave Dwellings - rock-cut cave settlement inhabited from at least the 5th century, Old Khndzoresk Cave Village - historic cave town near Goris with dwellings and churches, St. Gregory the Illuminator Church (Goris) - main city church, Goris ethnographic and archaeological Lore Museum, Goris cave town & rock formations ("stone forest") - cultural landscape of caves, churches, and cemeteries (18th-19th c. remains), historic urban fabric of Goris, Saint Hripsime church/basilica, the Axel Bakunts house-museum.
Tourism Assets & Baseline Use	Community willingness	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☒ High	
	Natural attractions	Stone Forest, river valley, caves, rocky landscapes	Natural attractions include the Goris Stone Forest, the Vararakn/Goris River valley, cave landscapes and rock formations around Old Goris and Khndzoresk, and scenic mountain grassland and open woodland landscapes around the community.
	Cultural attractions	Historic center of Goris, unique architecture, old Goris style buildings/houses, churches, museums, cultural institutions	Goris Historic Town Layout - 19th-century planned urban layout with stone houses and regular street grid, imperial-era urban design. Saint Hripsime church, Old Goris Cave Dwellings - historic cave settlement

Component	Field / Criteria	Input / Selection	Notes / Logic
			(5th century), Old Khndzoresk Cave Village - large cave town near Goris with dwellings, churches, and a suspension bridge; Tatev Monastery - 9th-century monastery, Tatevi Anapat, 17th-century hermitage complex located in the Vorotan Gorge. Saint Gregory the Illuminator Church (Goris), Goris Local Lore ethnographic, archeological museum,
	Existing activities	☒ Hiking ☒ Camping ☒ Guided tours ☐ None	Existing activities are present but not yet structured as a comprehensive ecotourism product.
	Visitor flow	☐ Not quantified - establish community and route/node baseline ☒ Medium ☐ High	
	Accessibility	☒ Town access generally good; site/route access variable and unverified ☐ Moderate ☐ Difficult	
	Ecological sensitivity	☐ Provisional high caution; determine by route/site screening ☒ Medium ☒ High	
Suitability Assessment & Zoning	Accessibility	☒ Good ☐ Moderate ☐ Poor	
	Tourism demand	☐ Not quantified - establish community, route and provider baseline ☐ Medium ☒ High	Earlier hub/corridor descriptions are planning context only; current demand and distribution must be measured before classification or targets.
	Zone classification	☐ Strict Conservation Zone ☒ Controlled Ecotourism Zone ☒ Sustainable Development Zone	Local livelihoods (tourism, agriculture, services) and settlement presence require multi-use landscape management. Zoning must be validated with spatial data (GIS, habitat maps, PA zoning where available)
Ecotourism Product Development	Hiking routes	☒ Yes ☐ No	
	Wildlife observation	☒ Yes ☐ No	Conditional only after site/species/season and disturbance validation; no guaranteed sightings

Recommendations for Ecotourism Development Planning in the Goris Community, Armenia

Component	Field / Criteria	Input / Selection	Notes / Logic
	Agro-ecotourism	☐ Yes ☒ No	Community participation required
	Cultural landscape tourism	☒ Yes ☐ No	
	NTFP-based experiences	☒ Yes ☐ No	
Infrastructure & Service Planning	Trails	☒ Yes ☐ No	Number, length, condition, furnishing, legal status and maintenance responsibility not verified - field/GIS audit required
	Signage	☒ Yes ☐ No	Partial
	Visitor centers	☒ Yes ☐ No	Facility named in the source; current operator, hours, staff, services, data and referral/closure functions require operational audit
	Accommodation	☒ Desk-reported; current capacity and participation require provider audit ☐	Verify operator, rooms/beds, seasonal opening, occupancy, price, accessibility and package interest before use in a product or forecast.
Governance & Institutional Arrangements	Protected Area Authority role	☒ Assigned	
	Municipality role	☒ Assigned	
	Community groups role	☒ Assigned	
	Private sector role	☒ Assigned	
	NGO role	☒ Assigned	
	Co-management agreement	☐ Yes ☒ No	
	Revenue-sharing agreement	☐ Yes ☒ No	
Visitor Management System	Public-private partnership	☐ Yes ☒ No	
	Visitor limits	☐ Yes ☒ No	
	Seasonal restrictions	☐ Yes ☒ No	Seasonal accessibility issues in mountain and gorge areas
	Guided-only access	☐ Yes ☒ No	
	Zoning enforcement	☒ Yes ☐ No	
	Max visitors per day	N/A	
Benefit Sharing & Local Economy	Max group size	N/A	
	Local employment	☒ Yes ☐ No	Goris has strong potential for tourism-related employment in local guiding services (nature, cultural and hiking guides), accommodation services (guesthouses, small hotels, homestays), transport services (local transfers, tour operations, taxi services, food and hospitality (restaurants, cafes, traditional food services)

Recommendations for Ecotourism Development Planning in the Goris Community, Armenia

Component	Field / Criteria	Input / Selection	Notes / Logic
	Local product sales	☒ Yes ☐ No	
	Community revenue share	☐ Yes ☒ No	
	Women / youth inclusion	☒ Yes ☐ No	
Environmental & Social Safeguards	Biodiversity disturbance risk	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☒ High	
	Community impact risk	☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High	
	Cultural heritage risk	☐ Low ☒ Medium ☐ High	
Climate Resilience	Drought risk	☒ Low ☐ Medium ☐ High	
	Fire risk	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☒ High	
	Landslide risk	☐ Low ☐ Medium ☒ High	
Monitoring Framework	Visitor numbers	Baseline: not available / First-season counts by route and node / Seasonal	
	Local income	Baseline: not available / Provider and local- sales baseline in Year 1 / Quarterly and annual	
	Biodiversity condition	Baseline: route/site condition and sensitivity screening before launch / Seasonal and incident-based	
Investment & Financial Structuring	Estimated investment	Cost after site survey, technical design and bill of quantities	
	Financing type	☒ Public ☐ PPP ☒ Private	
	Revenue sources	☐ Guiding, accommodation, meals, legal transfers and local products; no quantitative forecast before baseline	

Recommendations for Ecotourism Development Planning in the Goris Community, Armenia

Component	Field / Criteria	Input / Selection	Notes / Logic
Implementation Plan		☒ Services	
		☒ Products	
	Financial viability	☐ Low	
		☐ Medium	
		☒ High	
	Action	Validate and pilot priority routes/products; establish visitor, safeguard and local-value systems	
	Responsible	Goris Municipality with ArmForest/site authorities, TIC/DMO function, providers and affected community representatives	
	Timeline	0-18 months for validation/pilots; annual review and phased scaling only after evidence	

Annex 2: Stakeholders and Consultation Status

The March 2026 meeting summary records participation by Goris representatives, while the available participant list does not identify their names or organizations. This annex therefore distinguishes community-level participation from actor-specific confirmation and records the next validation step for each stakeholder category. Before implementation, Goris Municipality should document named focal points, agreement or disagreement, responsibilities and remaining evidence gaps.

Record / source	Finding	Permitted use in this plan
March 2026 workshop participant record	Goris representatives recorded as participating; names and organizations are not attributable from the available list	Use community-level themes without attribution to named actors; confirm responsibilities before implementation
Desk/regional evidence	Tourism-corridor, official protected-area/Emerald, project mapping and secondary tourism material	Use as evidence/context with limits; verify current local conditions

Required Implementation Stakeholders and Status		
Stakeholder	Expected role	Evidence / next action
Goris Municipality	Local lead; convening, public-space/signage, data and maintenance coordination	Community-level participation recorded; confirm the named municipal representative, mandate and focal point
ArmForest SNCO and the responsible Forest Economy/territorial forestry unit	Goris State Sanctuary/forest compatibility, access status, monitoring and enforcement within mandate	Official management role confirmed; actor-specific participation or contact is not attributable from the available list
Goris TIC operator / assigned visitor-information node	Route status, maps, referrals, counts, provider/incident logs	Facility named; present operator/readiness not verified
Syunik destination-management function	Cross-community packaging, provider linkage, marketing after validation	Secondary-source role; participation in this plan not confirmed
Tatev/Wings of Tatev and Khndzoresk site/heritage managers	Package timing, site rules, visitor data, cave/heritage safeguards	Required for product pilots; consultation not confirmed
Affected settlement/resident representatives	Route use, impacts, local priorities, maintenance and benefit	Community-level participation recorded; document names, settlement representation and decisions during validation
Guides, drivers and tour operators	Deliver guided/legal-road services; brief rules and report incidents	Provider census and readiness assessment required
Accommodation, food and retail providers	Overnight/meal/product packages, price/capacity and sales data	Provider census and voluntary data arrangement required
Local producers and women/youth enterprises	Food/product stops, supply and inclusive paid participation	Open identification and sourcing/safety check required
Environmental, cave/bat and heritage specialists/NGOs	Screen sites, seasons, routes and interpretation; support training	Expert organizations and scope to be selected
Emergency and safety services	Route emergency plan, access and incident procedure	Consult before public launch

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Annex 3: Summary SWOT Analysis for Ecotourism Development in Goris Community

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
▲ [Verified] Goris combines a historic town, cave-settlement landscapes and distinctive rock formations within a documented southern-tourism corridor context. ▲ [Verified] Goris State Sanctuary provides a confirmed conservation setting; its official protected object is forest landscape and typical fauna. ▲ [Verified] Official candidate Emerald sites include Tatev and Khndzoresk, supporting wider landscape and route planning. ▲ [Desk evidence] Accommodation, food, transport and visitor-information functions are reported at regional/community level; current operators, capacity and readiness require verification.	▲ [Verified] Goris participation is recorded at community level in the March 2026 meeting summary, but names and organizations cannot be attributed from the available participant list. ▲ [Verified] Community visitor numbers, stay length, prices, occupancy, tourism-linked product sales and trail condition are not quantified. ▲ [Verified] Species occurrence at proposed visitor sites is not confirmed; the previous species list was too broad. ▲ [Verified] Routes, zoning boundaries, maintenance duties, closure rules and a shared incident log are not yet operational.
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
▲ [Indicative] A two-day Tatev-Wings of Tatev-Goris-Khndzoresk package can convert corridor travel into overnight use and local spending. ▲ [Indicative] Guided Stone Forest, Old Goris and cave-landscape products can combine geology, settlement history and conservation interpretation. ▲ [Indicative] Legal-road transfers, local food/product stops and provider referral can turn existing services into bookable tools. ▲ [Indicative] A Municipality-ArmForest-provider protocol can connect route approval, visitor rules, maintenance, monitoring and temporary closures.	▲ [Risk] Off-route movement, unmanaged camping, fire, waste and unsafe access can damage habitats, heritage features and visitor safety. ▲ [Risk] Cave visitation without bat screening can create disturbance and lead to inappropriate lighting or access changes. ▲ [Risk] Promotion before route, operator and ecological validation may spread visitors into sensitive or unstable areas. ▲ [Indicative] Continued pass-through visitation may leave Goris with management costs while accommodation, food and product spending remains limited.

Source: Authors' elaboration.