



## SUCCESS STORY

# CAPS Helps Armenia Promote Adventure Tourism in the Country

**USAID empowers Tourism cluster working together to increase the competitiveness of Armenia's Tourism industry.**



**CAPS is working with the tourism cluster to improve the quality of Armenia's tourism products. CAPS is also seeking to target specific segments of the tourism market, increase the awareness of the outfitters about Armenia's tourism potential. This will not only serve as an example to tour operators to specialize in their product offerings but will lead to increased sales to a higher value clientele.**

*"Who would have thought that Armenia had so many mountains or such long history? It boggles the mind how beautiful is the just out of reach Mt. Ararat. I enjoyed both Armenia and Georgia and would like to come back in the future."* — John Nagle and Belle Plaine

*Armenia & Beyond* – was the title of the itinerary offered by US-based Wilderness Travel Company that brought John and Belle to Armenia together with 12 other tourists, to explore various forms of adventure travel in the Caucasus region between 17 September and 5 October 2007.

Six adventure travel itineraries offering trips to Armenia and the Caucasus region were developed by Roger Williams, an adventure travel industry consultant and trip leader with Wilderness Travel, California as part of CAPS efforts to promote Armenia's adventure tourism opportunities to the North American market.

A recent report from Mr. Williams suggests that Armenia has significant adventure tourism potential for high value foreign clients and that prominent outfitters in the US may be interested and willing to organize trips to Armenia. Trekking, mountain biking and other adventure pursuits combined with Armenia's religious culture, history and architecture show the greatest potential.

While in Europe and other major source markets the primary way to promote a region and its tour operators is by attending travel and tourism trade fairs, the North American market is better targeted through one-on-one visits and presentations to these outfitters at their offices.

After travelling throughout the country Mr. Williams presented Armenia's Adventure tourism potential to six selected American tour operators offering adventure tour packages. Wilderness Travel was very receptive to Armenia as a possible new destination. As a result of the presentation, the company offered one of the six itineraries - Armenia & Beyond: Armenia, Georgia & Azerbaijan - as an expedition to their clients with a September 2007 departure. The trip proved very popular and quickly filled with the maximum 15 participants and an additional six people on the waiting list.

The popularity for the trip has been continuing, and in summer 2008 Wilderness Travel sent another group for Armenia & Beyond. In addition, a second itinerary, Armenia Discovery: Armenia & Nagorno Karabagh was listed in their 2008 catalog. Moreover, this trip became the winner of "Outside" Magazine's 2008 Trips of the Year Award.

Today, Wilderness Travel continues to offer regular trips to Armenia with the itineraries developed by Mr. Williams through CAPS support. Departures are planned for May and September 2009.