

Better than SLEEP

You should be prepared for Cappadocia: it's absolutely medieval. The Middle Ages stretch forth right outside the walls of Argos in Cappadocia hotel: you walk out of the door — and it's to your right.

Text by Olga Sushko

Morning in Cappadocia starts at 5a.m. Muezzin sings the Azan prayer call: "Allah is above all". At first, I can't pick out melodies, written by Suleiman the Magnificent, in his singing. To me, it comes across more like fervent cries. He sings: "Hurry to pray. Prayer is better than sleep. Hurry to your salvation". He's so convincing that you feel uncomfortable slugging in bed. Whether you like it or not, you get up. Not like someone, who woke up because of someone's obnoxious screams, but like someone, who doesn't want to miss something important — like the end of the world, for example. I am far from being a Muslim, but I put on my cashmere midi-dress and a soft-shell jacket, take my camera and a wooly hat — and walk out of the decorated doors of the hotel, waiting on a miracle to happen.

— Good morning, — says one of the hotel staff.

I'm staying in Argos in Cappadocia hotel, and to me, this hotel is a cinematographic set, in a sense. It's located in Uchisar, a Turkish village in Cappadocia, and, like a true wonder, is on the UNESCO World Heritage list. The hotel was formerly a cave-monastery, known as "Bezirhane", and is now 1500 years old. It was the dwelling place of the monks and a place to pass the night for caravans travelling along the Great Silk Way. Here, they produced flax oil but then abandoned it. It took twenty years to recover the monastery from under the layers of earth and sand, to restore it and rebuild the austere caves into the hotel rooms of Argos in Cappadocia, and then equip them with fireplaces, carpets, walk-in wardrobes, antique vases, terraces and swimming pools.

The rooms and suites can really be called a success: it's a neat and professional combination of national color and comfort of modern times — tempered design, laconic, bright, wholesome and clear, which focuses on tranquility, simplicity and comfort of everyday human life.

One can get around the hotel outside — walking through the gardens and taking chimney staircases, or inside — through the labyrinths of underground passages (this would also be a sure path to the hotel's wine cellar, the biggest one in Cappadocia).

— Good morning, — I reply.

I am taken to breakfast — to a table on the stone terrace with a view of Uchisar fortress, cut into the rock just like my hotel. In the early morning one can see dozens of hot-air balloons from here — it's one of the most beautiful sights in the world.

Turkish cuisine is simple. All the dishes can be tried over breakfast and dinner. A usual Turkish breakfast consists of bryndza, bread, honey, cucumbers, jam, olives, tomatoes, sausage, boiled eggs and butter. Dinner is a set of meze appetisers, sarma — the stuffed grape leaves, lamb meat with eggplant puree and kebab, char-roasted on skewers. And also, Turkish coffee and baklava.

There is a cooperative in the center of Uchisar, which specialises in hand-made baklava. Local women get together in this women's center and spend several hours making sweets by hand, every day. They really can't do anything else apart from making traditional sweets and keeping their households. They are expected to be back home for the evening prayer.

There are two more key points. The Spa-center with hammam and fitness is the first, and the second one is the so highly esteemed in the Middle East sitting room: low settees, an impressive fireplace, a wine bar and humidior chests.

1. The room for lunches and wine degustations in Argos in Cappadocia hotel, previously a Christian monastery Bezirhane.

2. Cappadocia is about exceptional moonlit landscapes: the Blue Valley, the Uchisar fortress and dozens of hot-air balloons at dawn.
3. Some of the hotel suites have swimming pools, which is very convenient if one comes to stay in the off-season period.
4. All rooms in Argos in Cappadocia hotel used to be monastic cells.
5. Every one of 51 hotel rooms was cut into the rock.