

An Italian Hospitality Education for EUR 4,000 a Year

YEREVAN, August 2026 - Dilijan, Armenia, is the most affordable place to obtain an international hospitality education, according to a new index by the monthly magazine [Life in Armenia](#). The study compared 19 leading hospitality schools and programs across Europe, the Caucasus, and the Middle East on tuition, living costs, safety, and visa openness, and found the region's value corridor running straight through the Caucasus, which takes all three top spots.

- **Ranking the Most Affordable Hospitality Schools Across Europe, the Caucasus and the Middle East**
- **How the Caucasus Is Outcompeting Europe on Affordable Hospitality Education**

[Apicius Armenia](#), the Italian-standard hospitality school opened in Dilijan in September 2025, leads the index at EUR 4,000 per year, in a town where monthly living costs are estimated at \$732 using Yerevan as the disclosed proxy city. The [Swiss-Armenian Academy of Hospitality](#) in Gyumri, licensed under VET by EHL, ranks second; its eighteen-month program is priced at CHF 8,000 for international students, which works out at CHF 5,333 per twelve months. [Caucasus University](#) in Tbilisi, with its US joint degree in hospitality management, completes the podium at \$7,000 in the cheapest city in the study.

The Top 5 Most Affordable Hospitality Schools

#	School	City, Country	Duration	Tuition/yr	Living/mo	Safety	Entry	Score
1	Apicius Armenia	Dilijan, Armenia	2 years	\$4,566	\$732	78	140	100
2	Swiss-Armenian Academy of Hospitality	Gyumri, Armenia	18 months	\$6,617	\$732	78	140	98
3	Caucasus University	Tbilisi, Georgia	3 years	\$7,000	\$671	74	103	93
4	Budapest Univ. of Economics & Business	Budapest, Hungary	4 years	\$6,849	\$883	66	93	80
5	Hotel School Riga	Riga, Latvia	2 years	\$5,708	\$1,013	63	93	75

The complete ranking of all nineteen scored schools and the full scoring model are published in the accompanying dataset.

Full dataset, methodology, audit status and official-source URLs: [here](#)

1 | Apicius Armenia - Dilijan, Armenia

TUITION \$4,566/YR · LIVING \$732/MO · SAFETY 78 · ENTRY OPENNESS 140 · SCORE 100

Opened in September 2025 through a partnership between the [Green Rock Foundation](#) and Florence's [Apicius International School of Hospitality](#), [Apicius Armenia](#) delivers the same curriculum taught by Italian instructors for EUR 4,000 per year, a price it publishes on its own admissions page for both years in Dilijan. Students may instead complete a second year in Florence, priced separately at EUR 9,000 to 10,000 and not used in this ranking.

Certificates are recognised across Europe and the United States. A training café and full scholarships for local applicants anchor the most affordable study destination in the index, set inside Dilijan National Park, in the most entry-open country in the study at 140 nationalities admitted visa-free or on arrival.

2 | Swiss-Armenian Academy of Hospitality - Gyumri, Armenia

TUITION \$6,617/YR · LIVING \$732/MO · SAFETY 78 · ENTRY OPENNESS 140 · SCORE 98

Opened in November 2025, [SAAH](#) is the region's first academy licensed under VET by [EHL](#) which [ranked number one](#) in the world for hospitality management and has two educational programs operating in Armenia.

The Swiss-Armenian Academy of Hospitality (SAAH) in Gyumri delivers the EHL vocational education programme (VET by EHL) inside the [Grand Hotel Gyumri](#), training operational staff up to supervisory level across three disciplines: Kitchen, F&B Service, and Hotel Administration. Alongside this, [Swiss Hospitality Business Advisory](#) (SHBAdvisory) delivers EHL's executive short courses and online programmes for mid to senior management, and provides advisory services to investors, developers and hotel operators in partnership with EHL.

Italian standards in Dilijan, Swiss standards in Gyumri: Armenia hosts the two most affordable internationally backed hospitality schools in the study.

3 | Caucasus University - Tbilisi, Georgia

TUITION \$7,000/YR · LIVING \$671/MO · SAFETY 74 · ENTRY OPENNESS 103 · SCORE 93

Georgia completes the Caucasus sweep. The English-taught joint undergraduate degree in hospitality management with [Fairleigh Dickinson University of New Jersey](#) is published at \$7,000 per year for non-residents, in Tbilisi, the cheapest city in the entire study at \$671 per month. [Caucasus School of Tourism](#) holds Georgia's first [UN Tourism TedQual Certificate](#), most recently recertified for a four-year term with a result of 94%.

4 | Budapest University of Economics and Business - Budapest, Hungary

TUITION \$6,849/YR · LIVING \$883/MO · SAFETY 66 · SCORE 80

The EU's best-value option. The public university's [Tourism and Catering BSc](#) is published at EUR 3,000 per semester for non-EU students, EU students far less, in one of Europe's more affordable capitals. It is the only public university in the top five.

5 | Hotel School Hotel Management College - Riga, Latvia

TUITION \$5,708/YR · LIVING \$1,013/MO · SAFETY 63 · SCORE 75

Riga's [Hotel School Management College](#) publishes EUR 5,000 per year for non-EU students, the second-lowest headline tuition in the study, for UK-accredited BTEC hospitality diplomas, with internships in high-level Latvian and foreign hotels and resorts built into the program. Higher living costs in Riga, not tuition, keep it out of the top three.

MATHEW ZEIN, CHIEF EDITOR OF LIFE IN ARMENIA

"For years, hospitality education was priced like a luxury product. What this ranking shows is that the map is changing. Between Dilijan, Gyumri and Tbilisi, the Caucasus now offers Italian, Swiss and American hospitality curricula for a fraction of a single year in Switzerland."

NOTES TO EDITORS

Mathew Zein is the founder and chief editor of Life in Armenia, an Armenia-focused publication. The methodology and full dataset are published for independent verification.

The index compares internationally oriented, English-taught hospitality schools that enrol international students, one entry per brand per campus city. Metrics and weights: annual academic price 45%, monthly cost of living 25% (Numbeo, single person excluding rent), city safety 15% (Numbeo) and country entry openness 15% (Passport Index Welcoming Score).

Tuition is expressed as a 12-month normalised price: published tuition divided by the months it covers, multiplied by twelve. Institutions price on different clocks - per year, per semester, per eighteen-month period, or per multi-year pathway - and without this step those figures are not comparable. Tuition, living cost and safety are then min-max normalised 1-100 across the scored field, tuition and living cost inversely. Entry openness is scored directly as the share of the world's 198 nationalities admitted visa-free, on arrival or by eTA, avoiding rescaling distortion on clustered values such as the uniform Schengen score. The weighted metrics are combined and rescaled 1-100 into the Affordable Hospitality Education Score, which is relative to the fifteen scored entries and not universal.

Career certificates, vocational diplomas and bachelor's degrees differ in duration, credential and regulatory status. Program duration and credential type are therefore published alongside the tuition figure. The index measures the defined affordability variables only and is not an accreditation, academic-quality or credential-equivalence ranking.

Price, living cost and safety are min-max normalised 1-100 across the scored field, price and living cost inversely. Entry openness is scored directly as the share of the world's 198 nationalities admitted visa-free, on arrival or by eTA, avoiding rescaling distortion on clustered values such as the uniform Schengen score. The weighted metrics are combined and rescaled 1-100 into the Affordable Hospitality Education Score, which is relative to the fifteen scored entries and not universal.

A school is scored only where its current program and price are verifiable from the institution's own website, an official fee document, an applicable regulator, or direct written confirmation from the institution retained in the research record. No third-party education aggregator establishes a ranked price. One entry, the Swiss-Armenian Academy of Hospitality, is priced on a direct confirmation from its finance department; the academy's public FAQ page states a different figure, and the dataset discloses both.

Audited but not scored: MODUL University Dubai, removed because Dubai's Knowledge and Human Development Authority lists the institution as closed in its current higher-education open data; Institut Lyfe, César Ritz Colleges and the Swiss Hotel Management School, each active but not publishing a currently verifiable official price. Because eligibility depends on published pricing, the index rewards price transparency as well as affordability.

The academic-price metric does not add housing, meals, infrastructure, service, registration or visa charges unless a school structures them inseparably as the price of enrolment. Where official sources identify compulsory extra charges, the workbook

discloses them: Hotelschool The Hague, for example, publishes a compulsory first-year residence charge of EUR 8,433 on top of tuition, and CETT-UB Barcelona's published non-EU academic price of EUR 9,671.08 combines tuition and an inseparable program cost. Readers assessing total student cost should consult each institution's complete fee schedule.

Entry openness measures short-stay visa-free, visa-on-arrival or eTA access. It is not a student-visa or residence-permit score.

The field mixes career certificates, vocational diplomas and bachelor's degrees, which differ in duration, credential and regulatory status. The index ranks the defined affordability variables only and makes no claim that the programs are academically equivalent or equally prestigious.

Currency conversions use ECB euro reference rates of 6 July 2026: EUR/USD 1.1415 and, from EUR/CHF 0.9201, a CHF/USD cross of 1.2406. Proxy cities are disclosed per row in the methodology.

Figures are compiled from each institution's published information and public data sources as of August 2026. Fees, exchange rates and living costs change over time and vary by program, intake and student circumstances; readers should verify current figures directly with each institution before relying on them.

Life in Armenia takes reasonable care to ensure accuracy and will correct any substantiated error brought to its attention at matt@lifeinarmenia.com. Media republishing this study should attribute it to [Life in Armenia](#) and link to the published methodology.

EDITORIAL DISCLOSURE

Life in Armenia has an ongoing magazine collaboration with the Green Rock Foundation and Apicius Armenia, which ranks first in this study. This index study was not part of that collaboration: it was researched and published on Life in Armenia's own initiative and was not requested, suggested, funded or reviewed by Green Rock or Apicius. Neither party selected the schools, metrics or weights, supplied or altered the data, or saw the ranking before publication.

Because a commercial relationship exists with the top-ranked school, the full dataset and scoring model are published for independent verification. The top ranking is unchanged under alternative weightings and under alternative data assumptions: Apicius Armenia holds first place and the Swiss-Armenian Academy of Hospitality second under equal weighting of all four metrics, under a price-only ranking, under a 60% price weighting, and with entry openness removed entirely. All four scenarios are published with their formulas on the Sensitivity Analysis tab of the dataset, so any reader can reproduce them. The primary-source rule was applied to Apicius exactly as to every other school; it would have been withdrawn from scoring, like the four unranked entries, had it not published a verifiable price.