



Discovering Azerbaijan

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SIM: in a fantasy world

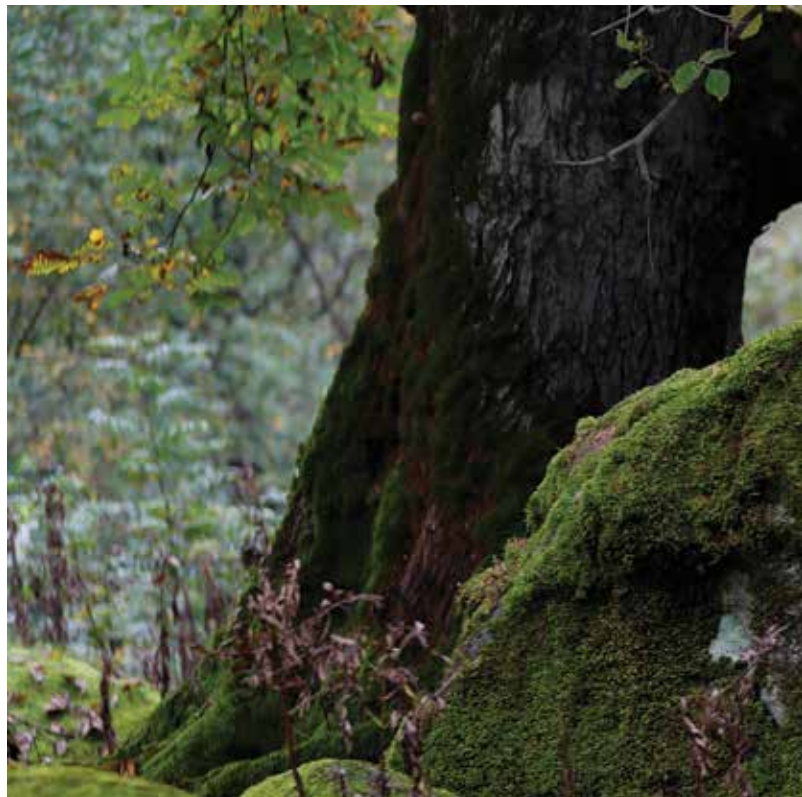






The village of Sim has long been a popular destination for foreign and local tourists, swayed by the beauty of this region. Sim is located in Astara district of Azerbaijan, in the southern subtropics, in a place where Iran begins beyond the Talysh Mountains. The journey from Baku runs along a new highway and takes about three hours to reach the site of the Lovain Reservoir, overlooking the picturesque mountains. From here, it is only 20 kilometers to Sim, but the journey takes almost an hour, as the climb into the mountains begins. The road winds along steep slopes and cliffs. The scenery here is magnificent – heavily tree-covered peaks, often shrouded in fog, with a few houses scattered here and there. It feels like you have entered a fairy tale with elves, trolls, and other forest creatures. Gradually, the surface turns into a dirt road, the bushes and trees increasingly give way to thickets of ferns.

On the way to Sim, you can stop at Agh-Korpu (White Bridge) mineral spring for tea. Another dash over dusty potholes, and here is Sim. Near the entrance, on the left, there is another cafe perched directly above a turbulent stream with rapids and waterfalls. From here, locals can take you by SUV to the other end of the village, where





a waterfall lies in the forest. It is certainly beautiful, but the true treasures are hidden in the village itself, which is worth exploring. The best time to walk here is autumn or spring, when it is cooler. Besides, the road is uphill, and not everyone can handle it. If you are here for just one day, it's best to hike with the locals to the waterfall and then walk back down through the village. The first thing you will notice is how completely different Sim is from other villages in Azerbaijan. Each family organizes their own way of life, their houses are completely different, and only have blue and white paintwork in common. No one builds high fences here, and any passerby can see almost everything in the farmstead. The residents of Sim love flowers and plant them everywhere, adding a touch of color to the already enchanting landscape. Everything in this village seems to transport you to a fantasy world – huge, moss-covered boulders scattered everywhere, trees of amazing shapes, incredibly vibrant greenery, and a huge number of streams and springs. It feels surreal, as if you have entered a fairy tale filled with giants, orcs and sorcerers. The very nature of this place is astounding; it is impossible to imagine how all these stone boulders ended up in their places. Ideally, it is best to visit Sim for a few days to fully immerse yourself in its atmosphere. There is a guesthouse, a café, and a couple of shops where you can buy everything you need.





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In total, Sim has about 220 houses and almost 900 residents, all of whom are fascinating to observe. The majority of the region's population are Talysh, an Persian-speaking people who have preserved their language and traditions. There are virtually no poor families in Sim. All the residents are extremely hardworking, quite busy and always on the go. They have many chores: every home has livestock, poultry and a vegetable garden. Local housewives typically rise at five in the morning, shouldering all the household chores. Despite their difficult lives, they are cheerful and good-natured, their beautiful, long faces beaming with smiles. They don't need any make-up at all: the pure mountain air, spring water and healthy food are the secret to good skin and youth. Children are also busy – they sell honey to visitors and go shopping. The local children love to learn; they have a large and well-equipped school, a library, and even a bookstore. The men are beekeepers, grow and sell vegetables, fruits, and walnuts, and in the warm season, they earn extra money as drivers and guides for tourists.

If you are lucky, you might be shown another waterfall, north of the village, which is much more difficult

to access: with narrow rocky paths through sheer cliffs and ravines, steep ascents and descents. Going there without a guide is quite risky. Near Sim there is also a cave called «The Glacier», as well as ancient cemeteries and the remains of watermills. Residents often find pottery shards in their gardens, which visiting scientists date back to the second millennium BC. The history of this settlement remains completely unexplored, and the only thing that has been able to lift the veil of mystery are the petroglyphs on those very same stone boulders. Hidden under the thick layer of moss on any of the stones are rock engravings, which, incidentally, are a reference to the famous Gobustan petroglyphs near Baku. In short, Sim holds many surprises and mysteries. Yes, getting here is not easy, but that is a good thing – the further Sim is from civilization, the longer its unique fairytale atmosphere will linger. Those fortunate enough to have seen this village, hidden among the mountains, will forever remember the thick fog rolling down from the peaks and the emerald green of the forests – a small island where fantasy is born... ✨

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