

# EXPLORE!



BEST SELLER

## Cycling in Georgia

GEORGIA - TRIP CODE CGE

CYCLING

### Why book this trip?

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A cycling adventure in the Caucasus - a beautiful land steeped in history that straddles two continents. Travelling by bus and bike, we explore ancient Silk Road cave towns, castles and the wine producing region of Kakheti to visit local farms, vineyards and try the delicious cuisine.

- **Cycle Georgia** - Discover beautiful landscapes and countryside from the saddle
- **Tbilisi** - Explore the picturesque Old Town of Georgia's capital
- **Georgian food and wine** - Superb food and the birthplace of wine



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
 Breakfast: 9  
 Lunch: 6  
 Dinner: 3

**TRIP STAFF**  
 Explore Tour  
 Leader / Cycle  
 guide  
 Driver(s)

**TRANSPORT**  
 Bus  
 Bicycle

**ACCOMMODATION**  
 3 nights  
 comfortable  
 guesthouse  
 6 nights  
 comfortable hotel

**CYCLING GRADE:**  
 Moderate

**GROUP SIZE:**  
 10 - 16

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join trip in Tbilisi

Arrive in Tbilisi and transfer to the hotel. People travelling on the group flight from London are not scheduled to arrive until the very early hours of tomorrow morning.



**ACCOMMODATION:**  
 Hotel KMM (or similar)

**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE**



**MEALS PROVIDED: NONE**

### DAY 2 - In Tbilisi, full day sightseeing. Visit ancient Mtskheta

After a leisurely breakfast we head out on foot to explore Georgia's cosmopolitan capital city. We start our visit in the old quarter at the Church of Metekhi, before continuing through narrow lanes past cafes and restaurants to the Synagogue, Sioni Cathedral and Anchiskhati Church. We continue, now in the newer part of town, on to the fascinating Georgian National Museum of History, before taking a stroll along Rustaveli Avenue, where we can admire the architecture of many grand buildings that line Tbilisi's main street. We take the cable car to Narikala Fortress overlooking the city, from there we walk down to

the brick-domed Sulphur baths. This afternoon we drive for about an hour to Mtskheta, the spiritual capital of Georgia. Here we visit Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, founded on the site chosen by St. Nino as the place for the first church in Georgia, and Jvari Monastery (6th century) - both UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Later we return to Tbilisi for the evening.

No cycling today.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel KMM (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 3 - Cycle to the Silk Road cave town of Uplistsikhe

Leaving the capital this morning, we drive for about an hour back to Mtskheta. Before we start our first cycle ride there will be some time for fitting to ensure all are happy with our bikes and to make any minor adjustments. Our cycle route follows the Mtkvari river and the valley opens up the more we ride. There is passing traffic near the villages and towns we pass through, especially for the first part of the route and the traffic thins out in the second half of the ride. We plan to stop along the way for a picnic lunch before we reach our destination in the cave town of Uplistsikhe. Here an entire town of streets, churches, palaces and residential buildings has been carved into the mountainside. Dating from the first millennium BC, it gradually grew to be an important city on the Silk Road trade route. After exploring what remains of this unusual place we drive on for about 2.5 hours, stopping briefly in Gori to see where Stalin was born, to Akhaltsikhe where we stay in family run guesthouses. Georgian cuisine is famously good with influences from Asia, Europe and the Middle East. There are a variety of vegetarian dishes but many dishes are meat based. Food and wine are central to Georgian culture and feasts can last for hours where the role of the toastmaster is important.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 61 kilometres (total 640 metres accumulated ascent and 520 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Marinas Guesthouse (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Guesthouse





SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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#### **DAY 4 - Ride from Akhaltsikhe to Vardzia cave town**

After yesterday's warm up ride we tackle a few more hills and ride slightly further on today's cycle through beautiful landscape to one of Georgia's most significant sites, the cave town of Vardzia. Our route follows the Mtkvari River upstream for the entire day. The first 48km of today's ride, until we reach Khertvisi fort, is along the road that leads to Turkey and Armenia and there are some trucks and articulated lorries in the passing traffic. The start of the ride has gentle ascents and descents until after the dam when these become more pronounced. We will stop to view Khertvisi fort from the outside before carrying on the final 17km on a quieter, undulating road with some steeper and longer ascents to finally reach Vardzia. We will check into our family run guesthouse and have a very late lunch on arrival before exploring this remarkable site later in the afternoon. Bigger and more dramatic than Uplistsikhe, Vardzia was cut into a cliff face by King Giorgi III in the 12th century as a stronghold against the Turkish Sultanate (the Turkish border is only 10km away). Vardzia was subsequently developed by his daughter Queen Tamar, who created a cave monastery that became a centre of Georgian culture. This network of caves once numbered 3000, with up to 19 tiers in some places. Much of it was destroyed after a huge earthquake in 1456 and only about 600 chambers survive. There are numerous churches, meeting halls, refectories and wine cellars, all interconnected by tunnels and stairways.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 65 kilometres (total 870 metres accumulated ascent and 560 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:

Valodias Cottage (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Guesthouse**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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#### **DAY 5 - Ride from Vardzia to Akhalkalaki. PM optional Khinkhali dumpling making**

This morning after breakfast we retrace our tracks and enjoy a scenic ride back down the valley to Khertvisi Fortress. From here we re-join the same road from yesterday that leads to the border and we

start the gently-graded, 30km long ascent to Akhalkalaki where we spend the night. The ascent follows the Paravani River, with some short steep sections and the final few kilometres have potholes. Much of the area we visited today and yesterday lies close to the border with Turkey and was a controlled military zone in soviet times. Nowadays the Soviet military base is closed and this small town is largely populated by ethnic Armenians, as it once belonged to neighbouring Armenia. Akhalkalaki sits on the edge of the Javakheti Plateau, a volcanic plateau over 2000 metres in altitude with large grassy plains and lakes. In the afternoon there is the option to learn how khinkhali (dumplings) are made - a popular Georgian dish.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 46 kilometres (total 830 metres accumulated ascent and 380 metres descent).



**ACCOMMODATION:**

Hotel ArtSegi (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST**

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**DAY 6 - Pedal past Lake Paravani and across Georgian 'Siberia'; bus back to Tbilisi**

We start the day with a drive of about 1.5 hours to Lake Paravani where we get on the bikes. Georgia's largest lake is located on the treeless plains of the Javakheti Plateau, known locally for their harsh winters where temperatures can reach 30 degrees below zero. In summer this area of lakes and nature attracts many birds and you can see crane nests in the villages. Our first 5km are spent riding across this impressive landscape before a sweeping descent on smooth tarmac leads us towards Tsalka, and the route flattens out with small ups and downs and some sections of road with potholes and broken tarmac. After a break to visit the small local market in Tsalka our route ascends out of town and we plan to stop for a picnic lunch with views. The roads are quieter in the morning for the first 30km and then become a bit busier after Tsalka. There is a short and steep descent after lunch, into more forested hills, then flat before a long descent to the end point of the ride. Although we climb a few hills the general tendency today is downhill. At the end of the ride we drive for about 1.5 hours back to Tbilisi.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 74 kilometres (total 520 metres accumulated ascent and 1700 metres descent).



**ACCOMMODATION:**

Hotel KMM (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

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### **DAY 7 - Cycle over Gombori Pass into Kakheti wine region. Learn about Qvevri and try Chacha**

Travelling east from the capital this morning we drive for about 1.5 hours through forested countryside into the central mountains. Back on our bikes we start our ascent of the Gombori Pass, the most challenging part of the holiday. The first few kilometres are gentling ascending through the trees and the final 10 km of the ascent is steep with some very pronounced sections. It isn't a race and the support vehicle is available today (and every day) in case anybody wants to opt out of the uphill. There will be passing traffic throughout the ride today. Our efforts are rewarded with fine views from the Gombori Pass (1620m) and there is a short trail leading to a viewpoint above the café. We plan to have our picnic lunch here before starting a long descent through the woodland into Kakheti, Georgia's wine region, with the Caucasus looming beautifully ahead of us. We drive the steep final 3km (optional cycle) to our guesthouse overlooking Telavi, a small town in the foothills of the Tziv-Gombori mountain range. Georgia is one of the oldest wine regions in the world, has been producing wine for over 8000 years and the traditions of wine are inseparable from the national identity. We spend the next few days discovering more about Georgian wine. This afternoon we visit a local master craftsman who will show us how Qvevri are made. Large earthenware vessels, Qvevri are buried underground as part of the traditional Georgian wine making method. This traditional method has largely been replaced by modern ways. We will also get the chance to try Chacha (Georgian grappa).

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 39 kilometres (total 1020 metres accumulated ascent and 1110 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Family Hotel Telavi (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Guesthouse**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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### **DAY 8 - Ride past vineyards to Kvareli; wine-tasting**

After breakfast and before leaving Telavi we visit the local food market where stalls are loaded with local produce. Today's cycle ride starts out of town and leads us on largely straight, flat roads with passing local traffic, past vineyards to the small town of Kvareli. Our first stop is at Gremi Fortress - once the

capital of Kakheti province in the 16th and 17th centuries, Gremi served as a trading town on the Silk Road. Our next stop is to visit the old monastery at Nekresi, using a local bus up the steep access road. We plan to have a picnic lunch here before continuing the final section of the ride that ends with a gentle ascent into Kvareli. In grape harvest season (early Sept to early Oct) we may have the chance to have a go. Later this afternoon we can relax and enjoy a wine tasting visit in Kvareli.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 45 kilometres (total 280 metres accumulated ascent and 600 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Chateau Kvareli (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

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### DAY 9 - Cycle to Velistsikhe village; visit family farm for typical Georgian food

We commence our final cycle ride today, on a relatively short ride to Velistsikhe village, on relatively flat and straight roads with passing local traffic. The ride ends in Velistsikhe and then a short drive takes us to the 18th century town of Signaghi, perched on a ridge overlooking countless vineyards below. After a wander around town we drive a short distance to enjoy our final family hosted lunch with a view. We also plan to see how traditional Churchkhela Georgian sweets are made and should have the chance to try a Georgian favourite - Mtsvadi (Shashlik) - meat barbequed on a fire of vine branches. After a final included wine tasting we drive for around 2 hours back to Tbilisi for our final night in the capital.

Our total cycling distance today is approximately 31 kilometres (total 150 metres accumulated ascent and 180 metres descent).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel KMM (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

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### **DAY 10 - Trip ends in Tbilisi**

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## **Trip information**

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### **Country information**

#### **Georgia**

##### **Climate**

Georgia has a temperate climate with warm dry periods from June to September. Early and late in the season, temperatures can drop to sub-zero at higher altitude.

<b>Time difference to GMT</b>	<b>Plugs</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Language</b>
+4	2 Pin Round	Christian	Georgian

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### **Budgeting and packing**

#### **Optional activities**

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Akhalkalaki - Khinkhali dumpling making - approx 10 USD per person

#### **Clothing**

When cycling: quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts, lightweight wind and water proof jacket and warmer breathable layers where local conditions require. Weather is changeable in the north and mountains; it can be cool especially at night, bring a warmer jacket. Raingear is essential at all times .A



sarong can be useful for covering up your legs when off the bike and visiting religious places. A headscarf is essential for visiting churches and mosques.

General: Pack essentially for mild or hot weather depending on the time of the year.

## Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to tours that combine sightseeing with cycling.

Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

## Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

If you are planning on taking any prescription medications with you on tour it is recommended that you also carry a prescription issued by your doctor.

## Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn.

Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow US\$ 20. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

## Georgia

## Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

<b>Lunch price</b>	<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>	<b>Water price</b>
£5	£7	£1.00 - 3.00	£0.3

## Foreign Exchange

### Local currency

Lari.

### Recommended Currency For Exchange

We recommend you take your money in undamaged mixed denomination US\$ notes issued post 1993.

### Where To Exchange

Most major towns - your Tour Leader will advise you on arrival.

### ATM Availability

Only in major towns.

### Credit Card Acceptance

Very limited.

### Travellers Cheques

Travellers cheques are difficult to change

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## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Bicycle

### Accommodation notes

Comfortable - Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

The Guesthouses have fewer amenities and the en-suite rooms have a simpler character than the hotels we stay at on this trip.

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## Essential Information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and

customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, click [here](#)

### **Under 18 immigration guidance**

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### **Price Guarantee**

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### **Visa and Passport Information**

Georgia: Visas are not required for EU nationals, UK, Canadian or US citizens. Other nationalities should consult the relevant consulate.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

### **Booking conditions**

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and [Booking Conditions](#).

### **Transfers**

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

#### **Booking a land only package with Explore**

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

#### **Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## **Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## **Flight information**

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

### **Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## **Georgia**

### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory but we recommend protection against malaria, typhoid, tetanus, infectious hepatitis and polio. Consult your travel clinic for latest advice on different prophylaxis available against malaria.

Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare

provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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### Cycling information



CGE\_DistanceChart

### General cycling information

On this tour we cycle 361 km over seven days (an average of 52 km a day). The terrain is a mixture of flat and undulating with some longer and sometimes steep ascents, most pronounced on days 5 and 7. We ride mainly on tarmac and road conditions are generally good with pot holes on some sections. Most routes have passing traffic, becoming busier around urban areas. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We have graded the route as moderate.

### Bike included

21-24 gear mountain bike with front suspension

### Bike information

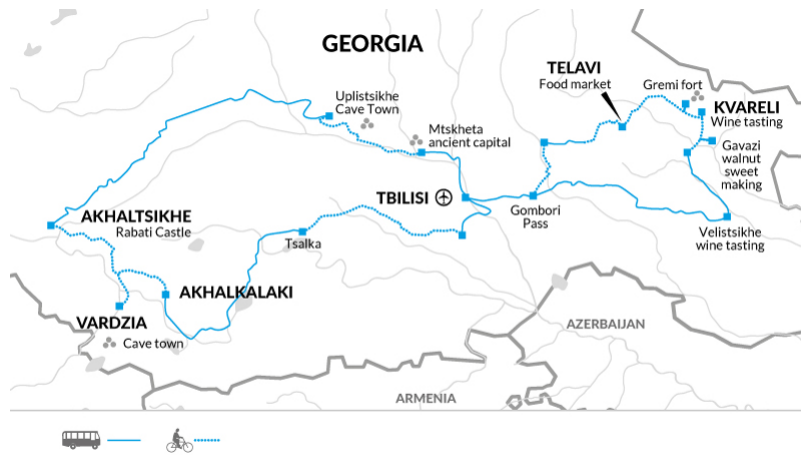
Your included bike is a 21 gear Ghost Kato unisex mountain bike with front suspension and will be the correct frame size for your height. You are welcome to fit your own pedals and saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides throughout the tour. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

### Cycling grade

Moderate

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### Additional Information



## Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

## Reviews



AWARD WINNING  
EXPLORE LEADERS



PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE



AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS