

EXPLORE!

Discover Georgia

9 days

Georgia - Trip code GEO

Discover Georgia

This short adventure into the Caucasus region of Central Asia discovers one of the fascinating states of the former USSR. We combine sightseeing of cultural towns and cities, walks in stunning countryside along with exploration of fascinating historical sites. Experience Georgian hospitality eating delicious traditional home-cooked food with local families, toasted with plenty of wine - the Georgian way!

Trip highlights

- ★ **Tbilisi** - Discover the picturesque Old Town of Georgia's capital
- ★ **Georgian hospitality** - Enjoy traditional meals and toasts with local families
- ★ **Vardzia** - Explore a remote 12th century cave town carved out of a cliff
- ★ **Georgian wines** - Learn about wine production and sample the local tipple
- ★ **Kazbegi** - Walk in the Greater Caucasus Mountains

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, 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.

TRIP PACE:

Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

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

DAY 1 - Join tour in Tbilisi

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



Accommodation: Hotel KMM (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - In Tbilisi, full day sightseeing

After a leisurely breakfast we head out on foot to explore both the Old and New Towns of Georgia's cosmopolitan capital city. We start our visit in the old part at the Church of Metekhi, before continuing through narrow lanes past cafes and restaurants to the Synagogue, Sioni Cathedral and Anchiskhati Church - which marks the end of the Old Town. We continue 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. This afternoon we take the cable car to Narikala Fort, which dominates the skyline of the Old Town, from there we walk down to the brick-domed Sulphur baths.



Accommodation: Hotel KMM (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 3 - Drive to Kakheti wine region; wine tasting and local hospitality

This morning we leave Tbilisi as we head east to Kakheti, Georgia's wine region. We drive through stunning countryside with

mountain views. Our first stop is at the tiny fortified town Signaghi, known locally as the Paris of Georgia! Here we visit a local winery and have the opportunity to sample the vintage. From here we continue on to a farmer's house for some home-made wine-tasting and where we see how traditional Georgian sweets 'Churchkhela' are made.


Our included lunch is with a local family who first show us how Georgian bread 'Shoti' is baked before serving us some freshly baked bread with our delicious home-made lunch. Alongside other dishes we will have a Georgian favourite 'Mtsvadi' (Shashlik) - a meat barbequed on a fire of vine branches. Our lunch is washed down with Kakhetian red and white wines and 'Chacha' the Georgian firewater. Our feast will be led by the local toast master - 'Tamada', a Georgian tradition. This afternoon we pay a visit to the imposing Gremi Fortress. Gremi was once the mighty capital of Kakheti province in the 16th and 17th centuries, serving as a trading town on the Silk Road. Afterwards we have the option to visit a local winery on our quest to discover everything there is to know about Georgian wine. We spend the night at a guesthouse in Telavi, a small city in the foothills of the Tsiv-Gombori mountain range.



Accommodation: Rusiko's Guesthouse (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

DAY 4 - Explore wine region further; drive back to Tbilisi

This morning we visit the UNESCO Alaverdi Cathedral, an 11th century Georgian Orthodox monastery. Once Georgia's highest at around 50 m, it dominates the surrounding countryside; however it was superseded in 2004 by Sameba, Tbilisi's Holy Trinity Cathedral, which stands at a magnificent 100 m! Nearby Alaverdi we visit a local master craftsman who will show us how 'Qvevri' are made. Qvevri are large earthenware vessels that are buried underground to allow for the fermentation of grapes as part of the traditional Georgian wine making method.


We return to Telavi where we have time for lunch. Here we also visit a food market where stalls are loaded with fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, spices and drinks. And we would not be able to leave the wine region behind without the chance of a final tippie! We head to the Tsinandali Duke's heritage to take a tour of the museum and enjoy a glass of wine afterwards. Driving over Gombori Pass we enjoy the views of rolling hills as we return to Tbilisi for the night.



Accommodation: Hotel KMM (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available




Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Drive via Uplitsikhe cave town to Akhaltsikhe


Leaving the capital again this morning, we drive to picturesque Mtskheta, the spiritual heart of Georgia. Here we visit the hilltop 6th century Jvari Monastery, from where we have spectacular views of Mtskheta and the confluence of two rivers below. We make our way down into the town where we visit Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. The 9th century basilica contains the grave of Sidonia, who was said to have been buried holding Christ's robe.

We continue through villages to the Silk Road 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 trade route linking Byzantium with India and China. After exploring this unusual place we drive on to Akhaltsikhe for a two night stay at a guesthouse.

 **Accommodation: Marinas Guesthouse** (or similar)


 Standard Guesthouse


 Single room available


 Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner


DAY 6 - From Akhaltsikhe, visit Vardzia cave town

Our destination today is one of Georgia's most significant sites, the cave town of Vardzia. Bigger and more dramatic than Uplistsikhe, Vardzia is cut into a towering cliff and is in remote location reached by a drive through a beautiful rolling landscape. Established 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, Tamar (later to become Queen Tamar), who created a cave monastery that became a centre of Georgian culture. This network of caves above the Mtkvari (Kura) river once numbered 3000, with up to 19 tiers in some places. Much of it was destroyed after a huge earthquake in 1456 and only 550 caves have been since discovered. There are numerous churches, meeting halls, refectories and wine cellars, all interconnected by tunnels and stairways. We have time to explore and navigate our way around this fascinating place before returning to Akhaltsikhe and time permitting we may visit Rabath Castle.

 **Accommodation: Marinas Guesthouse** (or similar)

 Standard Guesthouse

 Single room available

 Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 7 - Drive via Gori to Kazbegi in the Greater Caucasus Mountains

Today is mainly spent on the road as we head north to the mountains. We stop at the Soviet style town of Gori, where Georgia's most famous son, Stalin, was born. Here there is time to visit the Stalin museum, if you wish, and learn much about his life. Interestingly he initially began training as a priest in the Georgian Seminary, before abandoning religion to become a brigand and join the new Bolshevik movement. It has been suggested too that Georgia escaped the worst horrors of Stalin's regime because he was afraid of his conservative Christian mother! Those who prefer to explore the town have time to observe a little of local life.

Further into our journey we pay a visit to Ananuri Fortress overlooking a reservoir on the Aragvi River. As we head further north the scenery becomes more dramatic as we ascend along the Georgian Military Highway. We drive through the spectacular and breathtaking mountain scenery of the Greater Caucasus as we make our way to through Gudauri (2196 m), a winter ski resort overlooking an epic gorge and on to the mountain village of Kazbegi. This evening we enjoy the hospitality of a local family for dinner. We can enjoy more of the local firewater as well as the fresh mountain air.



Accommodation: Hotel Stepantsminda (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

DAY 8 - In Kazbegi, walk in mountains up to Gergeti Church; drive back to Tbilisi

This morning we walk from Kazbegi through Gergeti village and up to the Gergeti Holy Trinity church, stunningly located on a hilltop both overshadowed and overlooking the surrounding snowy peaks of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. The walk is a round trip of 3-4 hours.

The area is a treasure trove of mythology - it was to the majestic Mount Kazbegi (5047 m), the highest peak in this region, that Prometheus was chained. This part of the Caucasus is a protected area, and is home to a variety of flora and fauna. Georgia has over 100 different mammals, and although the European bison and Caucasian leopard have become extinct, there are still wolves and bears in the mountains. This afternoon we drive back to Tbilisi for our final night - we have the option of taking our farewell dinner at a local restaurant which features a folk dance show, no doubt with more Georgian wine and 'Chacha' to toast our adventure.



Accommodation: Hotel KMM (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Tour ends in Tbilisi

Our tour ends after breakfast.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

This short tour has been carefully planned to introduce you to the many highlights of Georgia. While all roads lead in and out of the Tbilisi, you will experience the diverse scenery on offer in this small country, not to mention the hospitality of the locals, the delicious food and the kick of the local tippie, which is generously shared!

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 8
Lunch: 1
Dinner: 5



Transport

Bus



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

1 nights simple guesthouse
2 nights standard guesthouse
5 nights standard hotel

Trip information

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.

Time difference to GMT

+4

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Christian

Language

Georgian

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.

Sighnaghi winery optional visit: 20 USD/pp (4 wines)

Kvareli winery optional visit: 15 USD/pp (2 wines)

Stalin Museum visit: 10 USD/pp

Farewell dinner: 30 USD/pp

Clothing

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. In remote parts of Georgia you should avoid shorts and vest tops; long trousers or skirts are ideal. A headscarf is essential for visiting churches and mosques.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes for visiting sites and hilly towns; sandals; lightweight walking/trail boots for day walks.

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

A waterbottle, torch, swimsuit, sunhat, suncream and sunglasses.

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.

Country Information

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.

Lunch price

£5

Dinner price

£7

Beer price

£1.00 - 3.00

Water price

£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

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus

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 consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See 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 transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. 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.

