

# EXPLORE!

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NEW

## Discover Georgia - Private Tour

GEORGIA - TRIP CODE PTGEO

DISCOVERY

### Why book this trip?

With new flight routes and the growing popularity of its wine production, Georgia is the perfect destination for a short holiday that covers natural beauty, history and food. Combine walks in the stunning Caucasus region, with its strong nod to the former USSR architecture and culture, along with sightseeing of historic towns and the promise of delicious food and drink.

- **Tbilisi** - Roam through the capital's narrow medieval cobbled streets and alleyways
- **Kakheti** - Feast on delicious home-cooked food and sample a host of hearty Georgian wines
- **Kazbegi** - Walk amongst the snow-capped peaks of the Caucasus Mountains and visit Gergeti Church



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
 Breakfast: 8  
 Lunch: 1  
 Dinner: 2



**TRIP STAFF**  
 Driver(s)  
 Local Guide(s)



**TRANSPORT**  
 Cable Car  
 Car



**ACCOMMODATION**  
 8 nights  
 comfortable hotel



**TRIP PACE:**  
 Full on

## Itinerary

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

### DAY 1 - Trip begins in Tbilisi

You will be met on arrival at Tbilisi International Airport (TBS) by a local guide, and driven the 25 minute journey to your centrally-located hotel. There are no planned activities for today, so you are free to arrive in Tbilisi at any time. For those booking their own flights, you will just need to let us know your flight details no later than three weeks prior to departure, in order to be met on arrival.

Many flights from the UK arrive into Tbilisi in the early hours of the morning (around 3am), which should be booked for arrival on the morning of Day 2. If you arrive in the morning of Day 1, please note that your hotel room may not be available to check-in until after 2pm, and so you may wish to book an additional night's accommodation.

Please note that many of Georgia's museums close on a Monday, so if you wish to visit a particular attraction then please check that it is open on the day you want to visit.



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

**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



**SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE**





MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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## DAY 2 - In Tbilisi, full day sightseeing

Set out today with a local guide, to discover both the Old and New Towns of Georgia's cosmopolitan capital city on foot. If you've arrived in the early hours of the morning, your guide will set a slightly later start time in order to give you time to rest after your flight.

Starting the visit in the old part at the Church of Metekhi, continue through narrow lanes past cafes and restaurants to the Synagogue, Sioni Cathedral and Anchiskhati Church, which marks the end of the Old Town. Take a stroll along the lively Rustaveli Avenue, admiring the architecture of many grand buildings that line Tbilisi's main street, and in the afternoon take the cable car to Narikala Fort, which dominates the skyline of the Old Town, before walking down to the brick-domed sulphur baths.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel KMM (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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

Leave Tbilisi and head east to Kakheti, Georgia's wine region, driving through stunning countryside with mountain views. You'll be travelling with a local guide throughout the trip, who will be able to point out the many places of interest en route. Stop first at the Tsinandali estate, a magnificent historic home that dates back to the 1700s and has been at the heart of Georgian wine production for over a hundred years. Take tour of the museum here, before continuing on to the Kondoli winery where you can try two types of the region's 'bio wine'. Biodynamic wine uses organic farming methods both to grow the grapes and in the creation of the wine, along with following a schedule aligned with astronomical events. Alongside a local master, learn how 'Qvevris' are made, the large earthenware vessels containing the wine which are buried underground. You'll also have the chance to try some of the local firewater known as chacha! Later in the afternoon, continue on to Telavi.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Old Telavi (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

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#### **DAY 4 - Eat a traditional lunch and taste some more regional wines; drive back to Tbilisi**

Combine Georgia's underrated food scene with its impressive history today, in a full day of exploration. Set out to Telavi's food market this morning, where stalls are loaded with fresh fruit and vegetables, meat and fish, spices and drinks. Next up, 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. Continue to a local farmer's house for lunch, and to see how the local Georgian sweets ('churchkhela') and bread ('shoti') are made. Lunch is included here - the delicious Georgian delicacy 'mtsvadi', meat barbequed on a fire made from vine branches. Vegetarian options are also available.

It wouldn't be right to leave the wine region without a final tipple! Travelling back to Tbilisi over the Gombori Pass, stop at Kakabeti village and visit the 'Velino' winery to taste three further kinds of bio wine.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel KMM (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

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#### **DAY 5 - Drive via Uplitsikhe cave town to Akhaltsikhe**

Leaving the capital again this morning, drive to picturesque Mtskheta, the spiritual heart of Georgia. Visit the hilltop 6th century Jvari Monastery and take in the spectacular views of Mtskheta and the confluence



of two rivers below. Make your way down into the town and visit Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. The 9th century basilica contains the grave of Sidonia, who was said to have been buried holding Christ's robe.

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, drive on to Akhaltsikhe for a two night stay.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Lomsia Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 6 - From Akhaltsikhe, visit Vardzia cave town

Today's destination is one of Georgia's most significant sites, the cave town of Vardzia. Bigger and more dramatic than Uplistsikhe, Vardia is cut into a towering cliff and is in a 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. You'll have time to explore and navigate your way around this fascinating place before returning to Akhaltsikhe. Time permitting, you may also be able to visit Rabath Castle on the way back (closed on Mondays).



ACCOMMODATION:  
Lomsia Hotel (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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

At approximately five hours, today's drive is the longest of the trip, as you head north to the mountains. 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!

Further into our journey, pay a visit to the Ananuri Fortress, which overlooks a reservoir on the Aragvi River. The scenery becomes more dramatic throughout the ascent along the Georgian Military Highway. Drive through the spectacular and breathtaking mountain scenery of the Greater Caucasus, passing Gudauri (2196 m), a winter ski resort overlooking an epic gorge, before reaching the mountain village of Kazbegi.



ACCOMMODATION:

Hotel Stepantsminda (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

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### **DAY 8 - Walk in the Caucasus up to Gergeti Church; drive back to Tbilisi**

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, drive back to Tbilisi for your final night.



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ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel KMM (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 9 - Trip ends in Tbilisi

Today the trip ends, and you'll be taken to Tbilisi International Airport (TBS) for your international flight, approximately 25 minutes from the hotel. There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart Tbilisi at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day, luggage storage facilities are available at the hotel.



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.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+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.

Sighnaghi winery optional visit (possible on Day 3): 20 USD/pp (4 wines)

Stalin Museum visit: 10 USD/pp

## Clothing

Weather is changeable in the north and in the mountains; it can be cool especially at night, so a warm jacket is recommended. Winter brings snow and skiing to Georgia, so certainly warm layers are essential at this time of year. Raingear may be needed at any time. 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 your walk in the Caucasus.

## 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.

## Equipment

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

## Tipping

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. With that in mind we recommend approximately 3USD per day for a driver, and 4USD per day for a guide, which can be given either in USD or in local currency. 1-2 USD is about the going rate for restaurant tipping.

## 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

Cable Car, Car

### Accommodation notes

During this trip, you will be staying in comfortable hotels that are well-located to explore your locations. Our hotel in Telavi has its own wine cellar, which is perfect for your appreciation of Georgia's wine region. By contrast, the Soviet-style hotel in Kazbegi is simple, but one of the best offerings in the area and with a spectacular location in the mountains.

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## Essential Information

### Government Travel Safety 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

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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## **Additional Information**



## Tour Staff

Unlike our group tours our private journeys do not have a Tour Leader. However, you are still in safe hands as we work closely with our expert local suppliers on the planning and organisation of your holiday to ensure that you have a fantastic time. You'll be met on arrival in Tbilisi by a driver and a local guide, who will be your point of contact for the trip, and who will go through your itinerary with you and be able to answer any questions. Our guides really help to bring the destination to life. At times you may travel unaccompanied, but you will have all the information that you need to explore and there is always the reassurance that you have someone on hand with our 24/7 emergency contact number.

## 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!

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## Reviews

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PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE



AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS