



NEW

## Winter in Georgia

GEORGIA - TRIP CODE GIW

DISCOVERY

### Why book this trip?

Discover Georgia on this exciting short winter break. Spend time exploring the narrow streets in Tbilisi in direct contrast to time spent snowshoeing amongst the dramatic scenery of the Caucasus.

- **Stepandsminda** - Snowshoe to the beautiful Gergeti Trinity church, set against the backdrop of the Greater Caucasus Mountains
- **Kukushka Railway** - Watch the wintery landscape roll by as we travel on the narrow gauge railway from Bakuriani to Borjomi
- **Georgian food** - Have a go at making kinkali dumplings and taste freshly baked khachapuri bread

**INCLUDED MEALS**

Breakfast: 6  
Lunch: 3  
Dinner: 3

**TRIP STAFF**

Explore Tour  
Leader  
Driver(s)

**TRANSPORT**

Bus  
Cable Car  
Train

**ACCOMMODATION**

6 nights  
comfortable hotel

**TRIP PACE:**

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 tour in Tbilisi. Explore the city on a walking tour

Arrive in Tbilisi and transfer to the hotel where the leader will meet you in the reception at 11am for a welcome meeting. Most flights arrive in the early hours of the morning and rooms have been booked so you can freshen up and take some rest on arrival.

If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Tbilisi International Airport (TBS), which is 25 minutes' from the hotel.

Today we'll get out and explore both the Old and New Towns of Georgia's cosmopolitan capital city, on foot. 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'll take a stroll along Rustaveli Avenue, where we can admire the architecture of many grand buildings that line Tbilisi's main street.

Giving our feet a rest we'll take the cable car to visit Narikala Fort, which dominates the skyline of the Old Town, and from there we walk down to the brick-domed Sulphur baths. During your free time in Tbilisi you may want to visit one of the bath houses and relax in the warm, naturally heated waters then brave a cold plunge pool to refresh the senses. It's a regular pastime for locals, especially in the winter months, with both public and private baths available.

Tbilisi has a wealth of great restaurants to choose from and tonight we'll head out and try some of the local dishes including the delicious khachapuri bread and barbecued meats and salads.



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



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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## **DAY 2 - See Mt Kazbegi from a cable car on the journey to Stepandsminda**

Leaving Tbilisi this morning we travel approximately three hours to the town of Gudauri. We are now in ski country and take the opportunity to swap our bus briefly for a cable car. The cable car takes us to Kobi and as we float over the landscape we have views of deep gorges and the dramatic peaks of the Greater Caucasus including Mt Kazbegi. Another short drive brings us to Stepandsminda, our base for the next two nights.

We start our time in the town by sharing lunch with a local family. As well as a chance to try out dishes such as lobiana - a flat bread stuffed with kidney beans and mtsvadi - barbecued meats we'll have a chance to see how these dishes are made and learn a little about family life in this mountainous region.

Fully fuelled we head outside for a snowshoe fitting. Snowshoeing is fairly easily mastered and we'll soon feel confident to begin our route to the Elia Church. The route we follow is mostly flat and no previous experience is needed. We'll cover a total distance of four kilometers and expect this to take around two hours in total however, there is no rush and we have plenty of time to enjoy the scenery as we go. Snowshoes and poles are provided, you will need to wear waterproof walking boots and waterproof trousers or gaiters are ideal.

Once we are back at the hotel there will be some time to relax before dinner. This could be the ideal chance to try out chacha, a local brandy made from the by-products of the winemaking process - a great example of minimising waste!



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Chemondani (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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### DAY 3 - Snowshoe to the Gergeti Trinity Church

After a hearty breakfast we put our snowshoes back on and make our way to the regions most well known sight, the Gergeti Trinity Church. This simple yet striking church is located on a hilltop surrounded by views of the Greater Caucasus range. In summer it's a popular destination for tourists and locals alike, in winter far fewer people make the journey allowing us the chance to take in the surroundings without the crowds and with the added beauty of being covered in snow. The walk is approximately 10 kilometers in total and we expect that to take five to six hours depending on the depth of snow.

We refuel after our efforts with lunch in the town.

This afternoon we'll visit another local family and learn about the craft of felt making. This versatile material has been used for centuries to make clothing, rugs and tents and items can be seen in markets across the country today.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Chemondani (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

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### DAY 4 - Visit the Stalin Museum in Gori and explore Uplistsikhe Cave town

This morning we leave the Kazbegi region and begin travelling south. We make our first stop at the Soviet style town of Gori, the birthplace of Georgia's most famous son, Stalin. We visit the Stalin museum and learn about his life, from his training as a priest in the Georgian Seminary, before abandoning religion to join the new Bolshevik movement. It has been suggested that Georgia escaped the worst horrors of Stalin's regime because he was afraid of his conservative Christian mother!

We then take a short drive 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.

Our final destination is the ski town of Bakuriani, popular with locals looking to escape the city and spend a weekend on the slopes.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Bakuriani Inn (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

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### **DAY 5 - Roll through the winter countryside on the narrow gauge train from Bakuriani to Borjomi**

Today we start with a relaxed journey as we take the Kukushka train from Bakuriani to Borjomi. This narrow gauge railway opened in 1902 and operates as a once-a-day shuttle service between the towns. Originally powered by an English Porter steam engine the train now uses an electric engine to power it through the snow covered forests. During the ride the train crosses from Tasgveri to Tsemi on a bridge designed by Alexandre Gustave Eiffel, built on the orders of the Russian Royal family. The journey takes approximately two hours and is a popular way for locals to travel to and from the ski resort, so we hope to practice some of the Georgian phrases our leader has taught us along the way.

After disembarking we drive to picturesque Mtskheta, the spiritual heart of Georgia. We visit the hilltop 6th century Jvari Monastery, its location offering spectacular views of Mtskheta and the confluence of two rivers below. We make our way down into the town where we visit Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, a 9th century basilica containing the grave of Sidonia, who was said to have been buried holding Christ's robe. We'll have some free time to explore the town before taking the short drive back to Tbilisi.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel KMM (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

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### **DAY 6 - Explore the old Soviet area of Tbilisi. Make kinkali dumplings at a family lunch**

We spend this morning exploring the old Soviet part of Tbilisi, walking between the University Library with its quirky design based on an accordion, to the Merani shopping centre on Rustaveli Avenue, once home to the Russian language newspaper Zaria Vostoka. The Brutalist and Constructivist architecture sits in direct contrast with the modern Peace Bridge and the pretty pastel houses that perch in Legvtakhevi Canyon overlooking the Old Bridge.

For lunch today we'll make our way to the edge of the city to the small town of Zahesi. Here we get a chance to see kinkali dumplings being made, and try our hand at making them ourselves, before feasting on them for lunch.

The afternoon is left free to explore Tbilisi, picking up some last minute souvenirs or perhaps taking another sulphur bath to relax after a week of exploring. Tonight we'll toast our final night in Georgia with glasses of chacha and local red wine.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel KMM (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

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## DAY 7 - Tour ends in Tbilisi

Our tour ends this morning after breakfast.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Tbilisi at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you need to depart from Tbilisi International Airport (TBS), which is a 25 minute drive from the hotel.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## Trip information

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## Climate and 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

### Clothing

During the winter the average daily temperature in Tbilisi is -1 centigrade, so take layers along with a good waterproof jacket, hat, gloves and a scarf.

Waterproof trousers are needed for the snowshoeing walks, or walking trousers with gaiters if you prefer.

Thermals are very useful, the guesthouses we use all have heating however at night the temperatures drop significantly so the extra layers are needed.

### Footwear

Walking boots with good grip are needed as we expect snow throughout the trip. Slippers or comfortable shoes to relax in during the evenings are useful and a nice break whilst the boots rest for the next day.

### Luggage

20Kg

### Luggage: On tour

One piece of main luggage and a day pack. Don't overpack as you'll need to be able to carry your bags from the bus to your room.

### Equipment

Snowshoes and poles will be provided locally for both walks. Take a water bottle with you and a thermos flask will be handy for carrying a hot drink on the walk to Gergerti Trinity Church.

### Tipping

#### Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that's done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It's a tricky one, and down to personal

preference, but we'd recommend between £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

### 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.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£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, Cable Car, Train

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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 citizens, check the latest Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office advice.

Please refer to our COVID-19 entry requirements page for any country-specific conditions of entry. Whilst we strive to update this on a regular basis we recommend you also check the FCDO website for the latest advice on entry requirements in this fast-evolving situation. Information can change at any time.

### **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 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



## Reviews

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**AWARD WINNING  
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS**