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## Discover Georgia

*Looking for the lesser known side of Europe? Totally off the tourist radar, join us as we trek through the fabled and mysterious mountain region of Svaneti, Georgia. Discover wild landscapes dotted with quaint stone villages, friendly locals who welcome you into their home to fill you up on their flavoursome traditional cooking, defensive watchtowers that punctuate the scenery and local wine crafted by the Svan's themselves.*

*An enchanting journey through untouched lands sharing with you the quieter, lesser visited side of Europe, for those who love to explore outdoors.*

### **Day 1 - Arrive Tbilisi**

Welcome to Georgia! Upon arrival in Tbilisi you will be met at the airport and transferred to your hotel. The remainder of the day is yours at leisure.

Tbilisi's cobblestoned old town reflects a long, complicated history, with periods under Persian and Russian rule. Its diverse architecture encompasses Eastern Orthodox churches, ornate art nouveau buildings and Soviet Modernist structures. Looming over it all are Narikala, a reconstructed 4th century fortress, and Kartlis Deda, an iconic statue of the "Mother of Georgia."

*2 nights Terrace Hotel or similar*

### **Day 2 - Tbilisi**

This morning after breakfast you will set off on foot to explore the city, starting at the 13th century Metekhi Church taking in the magnificent views over old Tbilisi.

Wander the narrow streets of the old districts of the city full of traditional style colourful houses structured like terraces with their patterned balconies, mixed together with wonderful examples of modern architecture. The charm of the old town is overwhelming. Learn how Tbilisi is the only city where Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijani's all live peacefully alongside each other and how the city is so well blended with mosques, cathedrals, Russian churches, synagogues and Zoroastrian temples with no religious conflict what-so-ever.

Continuing on, take a cable car up to the 4th century Narikala Fortress for panoramic views of the town below, before walking down to the historical domed sulphur bath area. Finally, the Golden Fund of the National Museum of Georgia (closed on Mondays) will prove the fact that Georgia is truly the land of the Golden Fleece. Dinner this evening is at a hidden local gem. Walk here from your hotel with your guide. (B,D)

### **Day 3 - Tbilisi - Mtskheta - Sachkhere - Chiatura - Kutaisi**

This morning you will drive to Mtskheta, the ancient capital and religious centre of Georgia. With a history dating back 3,000 years, you will visit the UNESCO World Heritage sites including the 6th century Jvari Church, and the 11th century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral – where the Robe of Christ is said to be buried. Continue the drive to Imereti Province in West Georgia, its landscape varying greatly from the cool springs, green fields and beautiful gardens of East Georgia's Kartli Province. On route, you will visit the mining town of Chiatura. Here, there are still around 20 Soviet cable cars which are still active today! Continue on to the pretty town of Kutaisi and the splendid 11th century Bagrati Cathedral. (B)

*Overnight Argo Hotel or similar*

### **Day 4 - Kutaisi to Okatse to Mestia**

This morning you will have the opportunity to see the locals buying and selling their produce at a farmers market before continuing to Okatse Canyon (closed on Mondays; involves 3 hours walking and approx. 1,000 steps).



This afternoon, get ready for the most exciting part of your trip – a journey to Svaneti, the region of the highest mountains and glaciers and the most abiding ancient traditions. Following Svaneti, you will transfer to Mestia – the centre of Upper Svaneti. (B,D)

*Overnight Kala Hotel or similar*

#### **Day 5 - Mestia to Mulakhi to Adishi**

This morning you will drive to Mulakhi village, from where you will start your trek towards Adishi village. Traversing along the slopes of Mt. Tetnuli at heights of approx. 2,800m it offers spectacular views of Chaneri Glacier, Mt. Ushba (4,700m) and the Svaneti range with its highest peak, Mt. Laila (4,010m). You will cross Ugvir Pass (2,480m) and then walk to the untouched village of Adishi (2,000m), its remoteness means that even in summer it is largely inaccessible, even for 4WD vehicles. There are only a handful of families living in the village, and tonight you will be welcomed into their homes, where you will experience true Svanetian hospitality and enjoy traditional cuisine. (B,L,D)

*Overnight in a local guesthouse (basic shared facilities)*

*Trek time approx. 5hrs. Today's trek is a moderate trek with an incline of 930m. The first half of your trek is uphill on often shale and muddy surfaces. The second half of your trek follows a gentle downhill decline. There is regular shade.*

#### **Day 6 - Adishi to Iprari**

This morning after bidding farewell to your host family, you will begin your trek to the remote village of Iprari. This full day trek will lead you along a river, down beautiful Rhododendron lined paths, past the remains of Kalde village and along the picturesque Chkhutnieri Pass (2,720m). The trek involves crossing a river, which may be crossed on horesback if the water level is high.

This afternoon, you will experience the unique cultures and traditional way of life of the Iprari people. (B,L,D)

*Overnight in a local guesthouse (basic shared facilities)*

*Trek time approx. 8hrs. Today's trek starts off with a gentle two hour trail trek before a steep, challenging and lengthy ascent. Once you cross the pass, the descent is steep. If there has been rain, there can be a lot of water on this trail and slippery muddy conditions.*

#### **Day 7 - Iprari to Ushguli**

Today you will trek to the UNESCO World Heritage listed village of Ushguli, which at 2,200m, is the highest permanently inhabited village in Europe. The village is punctuated by ancient stone watch towers, from which you can get an impressive view of the highest mountain in Georgia – Mt. Shkhara, at 5068m.

As today's trek isn't overly long, and if you're feeling energetic, you might take the opportunity to walk up the hill to Queen Tamar's Tower, before returning to Ushguli. (B,L,D)

*Overnight in a local guesthouse (basic shared facilities)*

*Trek time approx. 4 hrs. Moderate.*

### **Day 8 - Shkhara Glacier to Mestia**

Depart from your guesthouse this morning bound for the base of Georgia's highest mountain, Shkhara (5068m) and the glacier which is the main water source of the Enguri river. After reaching the glacier (2,500m) you will return to Ushguli. Today's trek will take you through beautiful meadows filled with rich alpine flowers and will finish in Mestia. (B,L,D)

*Overnight Kala Hotel or similar*

*Trek time approx. 5-7hrs. Easy to moderate*

### **Day 9 - Zugdidi to Kutaisi**

This morning after breakfast, if time permits, and if it is open, visit the local museum housed in one of the watch towers. You will then leave the Svaneti region and drive to Zugdidi where you will stop for lunch (payable locally). This afternoon, continue your drive to Kutaisi. (B)

*Overnight Argo Hotel or similar*

### **Day 10 - Kutaisi-Gori-Uplistsikhe-Kaspi-Tbilisi**

Today you will drive to Gori and visit the 1st millennium BC cave town of Uplistsikhe. Once passed through by the great Silk Road, you will explore the tunnels, streets, wine cellars and bakeries of this ancient, abandoned town. There is even a three-nave basilica church, a jail and an amphitheatre carved into the rocky mountainside.

Visit the Stalin Museum, the former Soviet leader Josef Stalin was born in the town of Gori, before continuing your drive to Tbilisi. On the way you will stop to visit a local family, where you will have the opportunity to sample the unique BIO wines produced by a traditional Georgian method in Kvevri (inscribed in the UNESCO intangible heritage list). It's noteworthy that this wine can be found on the list of unique wines of the Ritz Hotel in London.

This afternoon, check into your hotel in Tbilisi, where the remainder of the day is yours at leisure. (B)

*Overnight The Terrace Hotel or similar*

### **Day 11 - Tbilisi - Sighnaghi - Sagaredjo - Tbilisi**

Today you travel to the Kakheti region famous for being a wine making area, as well as having some of the countries warmest hospitality welcoming hospitality. Here you can see both the snowy Caucasus mountains and the fertile valleys. First, you will visit Bodbe nunnery (9th -17th centuries). Here, St. Nino, the woman from Cappadocia who brought Christianity to Georgia in the 4th Century is buried. Continue to the 18th century beautiful, small town of Sighnaghi which will impress you with its old fence like fortress walls and quaint houses with tiled roofs and decorated balconies. From here, you can see the

picturesque views of Alazani valley and Great Caucasus mountains. For lunch today, you will visit a local family where you will become familiar with the local peasant life. Enjoy a delicious meal of homemade food. Explore their gardens and vineyards, followed by a delicious homemade lunch. Experience some of the warmest hospitality in Georgia! Then its time to get hands on and participate in Churchkhela making (Georgian sweets). On the way back to Tblisi, you will visit a traditional Georgian wine cellar. Here you will taste wine made by the traditional way, in a Kvevri (clay vessel). This method of wine making is inscribed in the UNESCO intangible heritage list. Return to Tbilisi in the afternoon. (B,L)

*Overnight The Terrace or similar*

### **Day 12 - Departure**

This morning is yours at leisure until it is time for you to be transferred to the airport for your onward flight. (B)

### **End of Services**

#### **Inclusions**

- Return airport transfers
- 11 nights accommodation
- 11 Breakfasts, 5 Lunches, 6 Dinners
- Entrance fees as per the itinerary
- Services of English speaking local guide
- Sightseeing as per the itinerary
- Air-conditioned private transportation

#### **Exclusions**

- International flights
- Drinks unless otherwise mentioned
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Tips
- Inoculations
- Items of a personal nature
- Anything not mentioned in the itinerary