

## **GORGEOUS GEORGIA: A TASTE OF THE CAUCASUS**

**01-10 JUNE 2019**

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*Tsminda Sameba (Holy Trinity Monastery)*

Join us in June 2019 for an **amazing journey** that will take you to a **fascinating country**. A land of wine and gold, delightful monasteries, castles and cathedrals and spectacular mountain scenery. From the Gardens of the Romanovs to Stalin's birth place; from the magical Saro Fortress to the statue of Medea and the Golden fleece in the land of Kolkhis; this will be an **epic adventure**.

This rich itinerary will introduce you to the vast diversity of this country: from the warm Black Sea, to perpetually snow-covered peaks of the Greater Caucasus; from fertile valleys full of vineyards, to rocky canyons; from vibrant Tbilisi, to barren plateaus; from futuristic skyscrapers, to primeval rock-hewn towns and picturesque monasteries.

Georgia, however, does not consist only of marvellous nature and historical treasures – it is the motherland of wine and delicious cuisine. Georgian feasts, enriched with poetic toasts, are legendary. Our itinerary includes copious dinners, which will allow you to experience the flavours of Caucasian feasts and hospitality.

## DETAILED ITINERARY:

**Day 1:** [June 1<sup>st</sup>](#), Saturday, Depart London Gatwick for Tbilisi at 21:50.

**Day 2:** [June 2<sup>nd</sup>](#), Sunday:

Arrival in Tbilisi around 7:00 am local time. Transfer from the airport to the hotel. Breakfast. Time for a rest after the flight.

- ⇒ **City tour**
- ⇒ **National museum**
- ⇒ **Narikala castle**



*One of the ancient gold treasures in Tbilisi National Museum*

In the afternoon we visit the National Museum which has a striking collection of ancient gold treasures. A walking tour of Tbilisi's historical centre with its winding narrow streets, ancient shrines, oriental-style sulphur baths, historical houses with wooden carved balconies. Then we go on a short cable car ride above the old town to the Narikala castle hill. Supper in a local restaurant with live music and an ethnic dance show.



*View of Tbilisi's old town from the cable car*

**Day 3: [June 3<sup>rd</sup>](#), Monday**

⇒ **Georgian Wine**

We visit the valley of Kakheti called the cradle of wine and where the oldest finds of viniculture were found dating back 8000 years! The region produces the majority of Georgian wine and is home to more than 300 endemic species of vine.



*Kindzmarauli winery*

Wine producers still follow here an ancient technology of aging wine by keeping it in large clay pots dug into the ground called Kvevri. This way of winemaking is listed as an intangible world heritage by UNESCO.



We then proceed to Signagi, a beautifully renovated 17th century town. A stroll around it's streets and defensive walls. We then drive to the town of Kvareli, where we'll visit one of the oldest producers of wine, Kindzmarauli Marani and taste 5 types of wine. At another wine producer, Khareba, we'll visit a 7-kilometer tunnel where thousands of bottles and barrels are kept.



*Signagi*



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⇒ **Georgian Feast**

In the evening a traditional Georgian feast: The Supra, with poetic toasts, live music, copious amounts of food, wine and other drinks awaits us.

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**Day 4:** [June 4<sup>th</sup>](#), Tuesday

⇒ **David Gareja Cave & Monastery (3 hour trek)**



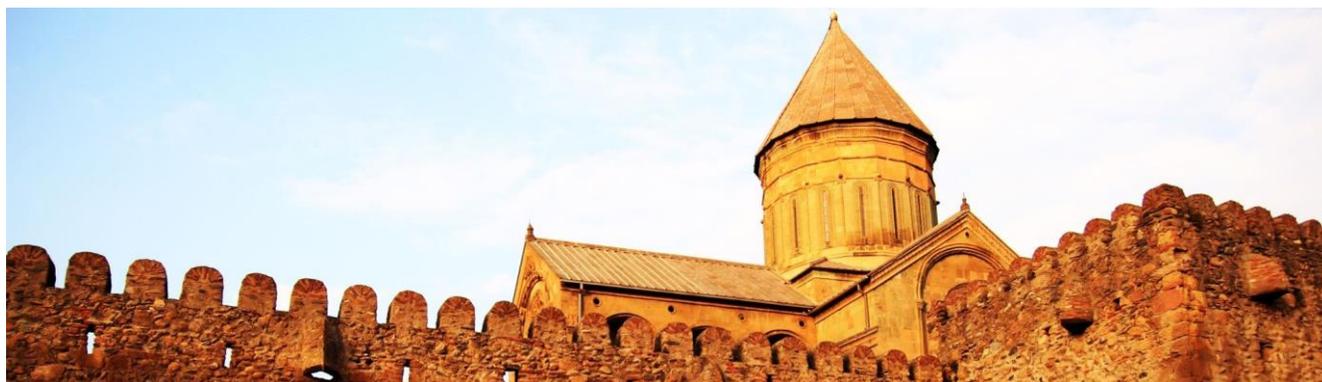
Travel to David Gareja cave complex (6th Century) located in the semi-desert area at the border with Azerbaijan. A rock-hewn David Gareja monastery complex, see amazing frescoes, caves and the convergence of architecture into the semi-desert environment. The monastery exerted significant influence in Georgia, being a centre of fresco painting and manuscript rewriting. Around 3-hour trek around the hill where different parts of the monastery complex are located.



Drive to Tbilisi, supper and overnight in the hotel.

## Day 5: [June 5<sup>th</sup>](#), Wednesday

- ⇒ **Mtskheta**
- ⇒ **Svetitskhoveli Cathedral**
- ⇒ **Georgian Pamukkale**
- ⇒ **Jvari Monastery**
- ⇒ **Ananuri Castle**



*Sveti Tskhoveli cathedral in old capita, Mtskheta*

We visit the city of Mtskheta (former capital of the Georgian Kingdom during antiquity and early middle ages). We visit the magnificent Svetitskhoveli cathedral church, a spiritual heart of Georgia, containing a royal necropolis and numerous important Christian relics. It contains the relics of the apostle Andrew, royal tombs and according to folklore Christ's robe which is buried underground. After sightseeing in the town, short drive to the 6th-century Jvari monastery built at the top of a nearby hill. We will see the old capital from above, lying in the fork of the Kura and Aragvi rivers.



*Ananuri Castle*

Then a trip through the Georgian Military Road, a mountainous route passing over the top of the Great Caucasus Range. Stopovers on the road include: the 17th century Ananuri castle standing on the shore of the blue Zhinvali reservoir; at the viewing platform just below the Jvari Pass (the Cross Pass, 2395 m a. s. l.) with an astonishing panorama of the High Caucasus. Short walk on the travertine formation, "Georgian Pamukkale". In the afternoon we will reach the town of Stepantsminda, lying at the foot of the glacial mount Kazbek (5047).

An evening meal and overnight in a hotel in the Great Caucasus.



*High Caucasus from the viewing platform.*

**Day 6: June 6<sup>th</sup>, Thursday**

- ⇒ **Tsmindasameba Monastery**
- ⇒ **Trek at Foot of Mt. Kazbek (5 Hour Trek)**



*Tsminda Sameba – Holy Trinity monastery*

Excursion to the Tsminda Sameba (Holy Trinity) monastery (2200). The spectacular view from the monastery which is one the most renowned in the whole of Georgia – a crown of rocky peaks of the Dariali Gorge, snowy Kazbek green gentle alpine meadows below. Around 5-hour trekking through the alpine meadows to the height of approximately (2900)

Travel back to Tbilisi, supper and overnight in the hotel.



*Kazbek Mountain*

**Day 7: [June 7<sup>th</sup>](#), Friday**

⇒ **Gori**

⇒ **Imereti**

⇒ **Prometheus Cave**

Visit the city of Gori (Stalin's birthplace) and the museum dedicated to the life of the great dictator.



The we visit region of Imereti. sightseeing in the Prometheus cave: a kilometer-long walk inside the cave among impressive chambers, one of each exceeds height of 20 meters. Supper and overnight in the hotel.



**Day 8: June 8<sup>th</sup>, Saturday**

- ⇒ **Batumi**
- ⇒ **Botanical Garden**
- ⇒ **Dolphinarium**



*Botanical Garden of Batumi*

Travel to Batumi, a coastal resort on the shore of the Black Sea. Visit the 100-year-old botanical garden situated picturesquely at the subtropical Green Cape. It's impressive collection contains thousands of species of plants, i.e. bamboos, palms, great sequoias or thorny succulents. Walk around the city centre with its newly built skyscrapers and coastal promenade. Dolphins' acrobatics show at the local dolphinarium. Supper in a local restaurant. Transfer to Kutaisi, overnight in a hotel.

**Day 9:** [June 9<sup>th</sup>](#), Sunday

- ⇒ **Rocky Canyon of Kura River**
- ⇒ **Rabat Castle**
- ⇒ **Cave City of Vardzia**
- ⇒ **The Pre-Historic Fortress of Saro**



*Rabat Castle, town of Akhal-Tsikhe*

We drive to the south of Georgia, to the rocky canyon of the Kura river. We'll visit the Georgian-Turkish castle of Rabat with recently renovated gardens, walls, and golden-domed mosque, then to the medieval cave city of Vardzia (500 chambers carved into the vertical wall of the canyon).



*Vardzia cave town*

An afternoon trip then to prehistoric fortress of Saro (2nd Century millennium BC). A fortress as old as legendary Troy or Mycenae, and the time when Georgian tribes were forming their first states. Built directly at the top of the Kura canyon, it allows visitors to admire the spectacular 500-meter deep gorge. We then travel to the city of Akhaltsikhe, supper and overnight in a hotel.

**Day 10:** June 10<sup>th</sup>, Monday

⇒ **Medea & The Golden Fleece**

⇒ **Park of The Romanovs**

⇒ **Healing Springs**

We visit the resort of Borjomi famous for its Sulphur springs. It developed during 19th century as a residence of the House of the Romanovs. We then visit the statue of Medea holding the Golden Fleece. This part of Georgia in ancient times was known as Kolkhis – the land of the golden fleece.



A short walk in the spa park, a chance to try healing waters directly from its springs. Transfer to Tbilisi. Meal in the restaurant.



*Borjomi spa park*

Transfer to the airport. Departure to London at 19:30

## **COST**

£795 (For payment before [February 28<sup>th</sup> 2019](#))

£895 (For payment before [April 28<sup>th</sup> 2019](#))

£995 (For payment after [April 28<sup>th</sup> 2019](#))

## **Recommended flights: Georgian Airways**

Saturday, [June 1<sup>st</sup> 2019](#), London Gatwick – Tbilisi, 22:50 – 06:40<sup>+1</sup>

Monday, [June 10<sup>th</sup> 2019](#), Tbilisi – London Gatwick, 19:00 – 21:20

## **Includes:**

- 9 nights stay in hotels twin share room
- Single room supplement: £175
- Transport (air-conditioned minibus or bus) across Georgia
- 9 breakfasts and 9 dinners
- With each dinner at least 0.5 liters of table wine per person
- Entry tickets for all visited sites including at least two wine tastings, a dolphinarium show, cave ropeway and 4x4 drive and other attractions
- English-speaking tour guide

## **Excludes:**

- Airfare
- Any other meals except those stated above
- Insurance
- Any other items not listed above

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