

ITINERARY FOR A TASTE OF GEORGIA: SVANETI

6th – 15th July 2026 2390 euros per person



Adishi glacier, Caucasus mountains

Georgia Svaneti, is one of the newest itineraries of those offered by The Walking Party. It is a hard itinerary as it involves mountains with steeper inclines and descents than usual and possible shared bathrooms and loos on two nights in simple accommodation and a foreign language I cannot master but I have guides to help us!

Georgia is a fascinating country with beautifully dramatic landscape, a culture built on a rich gastronomy and wines made in large terracotta amphorae and polyphonic singing and dynamic dances and a devoted religious cause. I will be adding a non-walking week soon to concentrate on the cultural side. This week though is to show the drama of the Caucasus mountains and the cultural side in and around Tbilisi and Kutaisi.

Day 1 ARRIVAL

You will fly into Tbilisi on the Monday. You will stay at the Khokhobi hotel in the heart of the old city. This charming hotel has a wonderful position. All bedrooms have bathrooms en suite. A perfect choice to start our week. The tour starts with dinner in the city.

Day 2 TBILISI to KUTAISI

After breakfast we shall drive to Kutaisi stopping on the way to see the magnificent monastery of Svetitskhoveli. This is the heart of Georgian culture and a World Heritage Site. There are wonderful fables about its creation. After time here wandering around and listening to the stories we shall continue to another monastery; that of Samtavisi. I love coming here as it is a major example of the transition from one monastic style to another and is off the mainstream tourist track. We will take lunch on our way to the Archil Guniava Vineyard. At Archil Guniava you will see the process for making world class wine with charm and less extravagance perhaps than others. This is a wonderful example of how keeping your direction simple produces such excellence! We then contrast this by moving on to the vineyard of Vadis Xivi which is a big investment project with ambition and vision. A huge idea of investors, sponsors etc. We shall drive on to Kutaisi after this. You will stay in the heart of the city. All bedrooms with bathrooms en suite. Dinner in Kutaisi.

Day 3 KUTAISI to MESTIA

Set off after breakfast. We will head for the Bagrati monastery which was a World Heritage Site but was taken off after a controversial restoration project by Saakashvili earlier this century. We will then drive two hours to Zugdidi for lunch. After lunch continue in the vehicle to Mestia which is approximately three hours plus. We are in the mountains here. The hotel is simple but comfortable with bathrooms en suite and good food and lovely people.

Drive 2 hours morning pm 3 hours

Day 4 MESTIA to ZHABESHI

After breakfast we shall walk to the Mikheil Khegiani House Museum which is a fascinating insight into the climbing days of yore and the Svan houses of old. Khegiani was a CCCP climber who was highly revered and climbed with John Hunt. This will warm you up to the endeavours to follow! We then set off towards Zhabeshi. The walking involves a few good puffs at certain times before lunch. After lunch quite a long gradual descent before arriving at a traditional farmhouse. The rooms are simple but rather sweet with balconies and small shower rooms en suite. The landscape is mountainous around setting you up for the few days to come! Dinner at the farmhouse.

Walk: 14km 8 hours including all breaks



On the way to Adishi

Day 5 ZHABESHI to ADISHI

A good breakfast and then we set off for with the first pull of the week. After three plus hours we get to the top and a rather disappointing sight : a ski lift ! Never mind there is a make shift bar ! We will move on at 2500 metres and start a beautiful descent towards the pretty and rather dodderly isolated village of Adeshi. Picnic lunch on the way. We stay in a verandahed house which has a great balcony for having a good time on! Playing cards or games etc. There is en suite accommodation but also the possibility of a shared bathroom between those of us in the group. Bedrooms and beds are simple. Dinner is good and at the guesthouse.

Walk 12km 9 hours including all breaks.

Day 6 ADISHI to IPRALI

Another hearty breakfast with mountain honey and breads etc before we start along the valley to meet up with the horses (two and half hours). The horses are here because the Adishchala river is flowing quite fast. We cross the river on horseback (it takes three minutes !) and then continue up the hill on foot for another two and half hours passing the beautiful Adishi glacier beside Tetnaldi and coming across the lovely snakeshead fritillary flowers. The peak of Tetnaldi mountain rises to about 4858 metres. We will climb to around 2655 metres and cross over at the Chkhunderi pass. There are fabulous views here especially along a small side trail that puts you in a *cirque* of 3000 to 5000 metre peaks. We will eat our packed lunches up here and then continue zigzagging down to Iprali. The flowers start getting richer still here. Tansies,

Cranesbill, Bell flowers, Lilies, Tulips ... We shall be looking out especially for the beautiful yellow Georgian lilies. Walk along the side of the mountain towards Khalde with the Khaldechala river way below. If time, stop for a beer at Khalde and then continue on for an hour to Iprali. The beds are better in Iprali but there are just three bathrooms with loos for the whole hotel. Locks on loo doors of course and it is not as bad as it sounds ! It is very do-able and the food and ambiance is great.

Walk 17km 9 hours including all breaks.

Day 7 IPRALI to USHGULI

After breakfast we descend to Davberi village before starting our climb to around 2100 metres. Hopefully lots of butterflies like the glorious Apollo (which for me is the whole point of today's walk ... she is SO graceful!) and beautiful Fritillaries and Ringlets and then even more flowers and different vegetation. It gets quite rain foresty almost with massive gunnera and giant hogweed. Eventually we descend and arrive at a clearing in the valley for packed lunches wine and cold beers. We will drive from here to Ushguli. Ushguli is a World Heritage Area and sits at the foot of one of the largest mountains of the Caucasus: Shkhara, whose peak rises to 5193 metres. We will not climb this one (!) but have an opportunity to continue another 8 kilometres to see the glacier and have lunch. Return to Ushguli via the church. Stay in Ushguli.

Walk 13km 4 hours



Day 8 USHGULI to KUTAISI

After breakfast we head off for a four hour drive to the fabulous church of Nikortsminda. This church is on the waiting list of World Heritage Sites and is one of the most important churches in Georgia. It has a beautiful early eleventh century exterior with C17th frescoes inside. We then continue to Kutaisi for one and half hour drive to wander around and take time off.

Day 9 KUTAISI to TBILISI

We leave Kutaisi after breakfast and drive towards Tbilisi stopping on the way to meet a kvevri maker and see the ancient art of how these extraordinary amphorae are made. We should arrive in Tbilisi by lunch. Lunch in the capital city before a voluntary walk to the National Museum to see the collection of gold, dating back to Jason and the Argonauts, and the Pirosmiani paintings. The intricacy of this goldsmith work is extra-ordinary some of which dates back to 5000 BC. We shall then walk back to the Khokhobi hotel past some of the modern architecture commissioned by Saakashvili and received with mixed feelings by the Tbilisi folk. I love it! Time for a 'Turkish' bath before a visit to the Gabriadze Puppet Theatre if a show is on. This is a fabulous experience of a culture we have failed to take seriously in Europe though the Slavic countries excel at puppetry. Then farewell dinner in a favourite restaurant in a Tbilisi garden.

Day 10 TBILISI

Off to the airport according to your flight details. I would like details of flights of course to see if we can help with taxis.



NOTE: This tour starts and ends at Tbilisi airport. The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate. Flights in and out of the mountains may be cancelled due to bad weather conditions in which case there may be more driving than envisaged.