

ITINERARY FOR A TASTE OF TUSHETI, GEORGIA

Tusheti is an area of the Caucasus mountains that has been little touched by modernism and tourists. It is wild and relatively inaccessible. Of course this may well change over the years but for the time being four wheel drive is essential to get in and out of the area and the people of Tusheti, the Tush, still live lives that relate to their traditions of olde handed down by generations. This is wild walking and we need to be reasonably fit!

Day 1 ARRIVAL

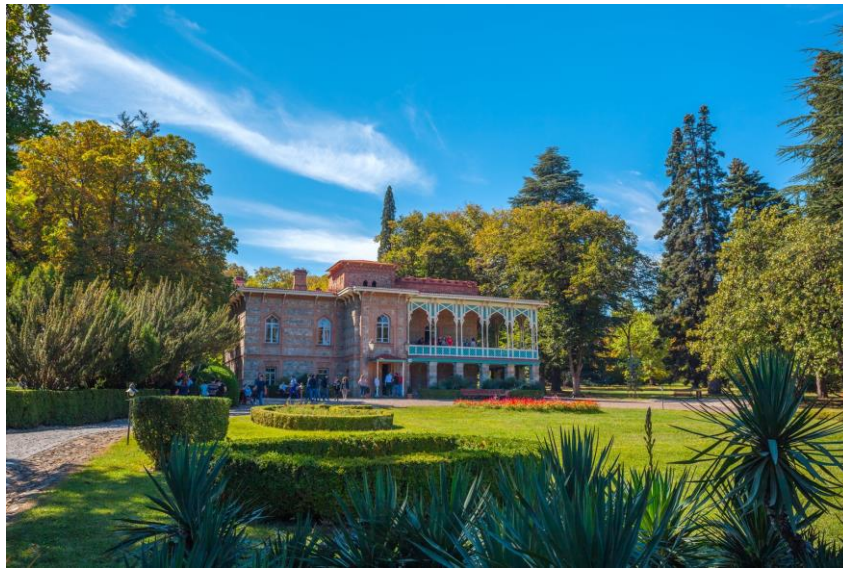
You will fly into Tbilisi. The minibus will meet you and drive you into the city centre. You will stay at the Khokhobi hotel situated in the heart of the old city. All bedrooms have bathrooms en suite.



Day 2 KAKHETI CULTURE

After breakfast you will be met at your hotel in Tbilisi. You will be driven to the Kakheti region. This region is full of places of interest. We start our cultural day with a visit to “new” Shuamta. The “new Shuamta” is a church and a nunnery which was built in the 16th century. The inside frescoes are quite well preserved. Drive on to Telavi, the main city in Kakheti. See the colourful local market, the fortress of the last king of Kakheti, Erekle II and the little streets. After a quick picnic lunch, we shall be driven to Tsinandali, a large estate with an historic winery which once belonged to the 19th-century aristocratic poet, linguist and wine maker Alexander Chavchavadze (1786–1846). We shall visit the beautiful house and the garden built in 1835. After the visit we shall head for the Babaneuri Hotel stopping at the magnificent Alaverdi Cathedral on the way.

Accommodation : The Babaneuri hotel has lovely views over the plain towards the Alaverdi Cathedral and the Lesser Caucasus mountains. There is a heated swimming pool overlooking the valley. They also produce their own excellent wine according to the traditional Georgian method in Qvevri. We can visit their wine cellar and enjoy a wine tasting. Dinner at the hotel.



Day 3 LALISKURI – TUSHETI - OMALO

After breakfast, we shall go by 4WD to the Tusheti region. The path was constructed after the second world war and is carved into the rocks. We shall drive over the ‘Abano’ Pass which lies at 2926m. The pass marks the border between the Tusheti and the Kakheti regions and offers a splendid vista. We will end up in Omalo, the main village of the Tusheti, located in the heart of the Tusheti National Park at 2000m high. We arrive at our first guesthouse.

Accommodation : Guesthouse with shared bathroom facilities. Dinner will be a discovery of Georgian and Tush specialities. Shared bathroom facilities in the Guesthouse.

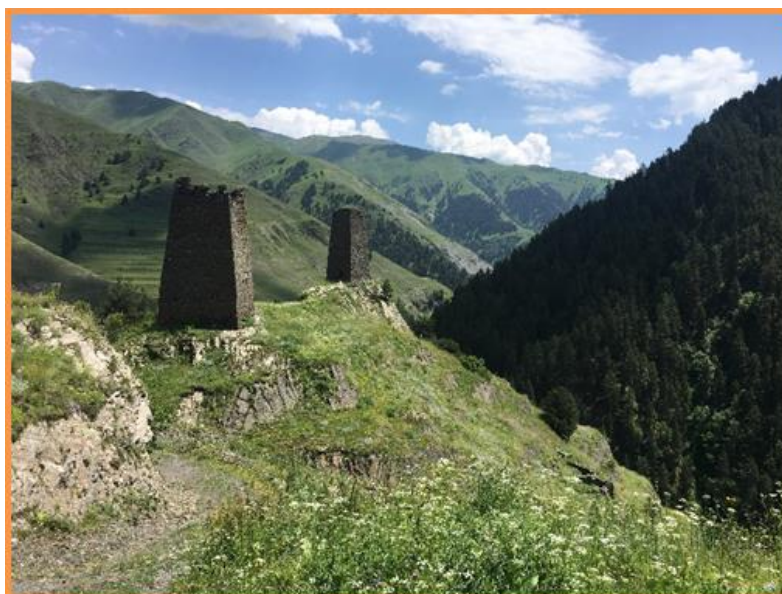
Day 4 OMALO – SHENAKO - OMALO

Our first trekking day leads us to the village of Shenako. You will begin to understand the old Tush way of life, the difference between the summer and winter village, the premise of the Christianity in Tusheti. After a picnic here we shall decide if we continue to a deserted village where we can see some of Tusheti’s historic towers. Return on foot to our guesthouse in Omalo.

Accommodation : Guesthouse with shared bathroom facilities. Relax here enjoying the view on the valley.

Walk 13km 4 hours

Difference in altitude : +/- 600m



DAY 5 OMALO - GOMETSARI

A car leads us directly to a pass from where we will start our trekking day. We will spend a big part of the day on the top offering amazing panoramas on the Great Caucasus range. We then walk down to the beautiful Gometsari valley.

Our guesthouse is dominating the valley above the river. We have dinner on the terrace.

Accommodation: Guesthouse, double and triple rooms (respect. 3 and 4), shared bathroom (3 in total to be shared)

Difference in altitude : +700m /- 1000m

Day 6 GOMETSARI - SECLUDED VILLAGES - GOMETSARI

Our walking day leads us in the direction of the villages of Iliurta, Vestomta and Gogrulta. The paganism in the Caucasus Region was still present until the middle of the 20th century. Many altars remain in Tusheti and some of their divinities like Otchopintre (God of Nature) or Elia (God of Weather) are still honoured. We shall discover these villages and their paganism especially in Gogrulta! We shall walk up through the forest to a high plateau. Iliurta is the last village of the pathway, the next ones remain secluded without road access. We shall come back through Dotchu. We must cross a river on foot as there is no bridge. The water level can be quite high! Vehicle pick up to bring us back to the guesthouse (15 mn).

Accommodation : Guesthouse, double and triple rooms (respect. 3 and 4), shared bathroom (3 in total to be shared).



Day 7 GOMETSARI – NARAICHO - PIRIKITI VALLEY/DARTLO

We hike up to Naraicho pass which offers another incredible panorama over the Caucasus range. While going up we see a village where only 2 houses are still inhabited. We plunge into the very deep and narrow valley of Pirikiti. A long walk down leads us to the village of Checho. We walk further on to the remote Dartlo village, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Accommodation : Guesthouse, double room, shared bathroom

Walk : 12km 5 hours

Difference in altitude : +1100m /- 1000m

Day 8 : DARTLO PIRIKITI VALLEY - OMALO or Shenako

We walk up in the valley in the direction of the villages of Tchiro and Lachari. Lachari is a pagan sanctuary, one of the most important for the Tush and Xesuv people. Still active, once a year the ethnic groups come to honour their God. Some rituals and sacrifice take place in the beginning of July. We reach Diklo and walk to Shenako where we will stay our last night.

Accommodation : Guesthouse, double room, shared bathroom

Walk : 14km 6 hours

Difference in altitude : +1100m /- 1000m



DAY 9 : OMALO/SHENAKO -TBILISI

Departure in the morning to drive back to the Abano Pass and on down to the Alazani plain and on to Tbilisi stopping for lunch on the way. We arrive in Tbilisi for a wonderful 'Turkish' bath experience just outside the hotel. Back to the Roman days of bathing luxury! What better way to finish a week of hard walking? We then visit the puppet theatre for a remarkable show in the Rezo Gabriadze theatre and then our farewell dinner. Accommodation : Khokhobi Hote, Tbilisi.

DAY 10 : TBILISI – HOME

After breakfast we head for the airport.

NOTE: This tour starts and ends at Tbilisi airport. The itinerary is subject to change according to local conditions. All mileages shown are approximate. Our operator in Georgia, Audrey, suggests the following:

- 1. The luggage will be carried in some precarious conditions. We are not responsible for damages which can occur. Please bring soft luggage.*
- 2. Logistic is by car.*
- 3. During the trek we have to be self-sufficient as once the Kakheti region has been left we cannot find any provisions.*
- 4. We will enjoy typical Georgian food and Tush specialities.*
- 5. We will go in a very secluded area. Some good physical and mental conditions are required. **You have to take out an insurance to cover any accident, medical assistance and mountain rescue.***
- 6. Mountain experiences are also recommended as some trails could sometimes be difficult.*
- 7. We reserve the right to modify the itinerary if we judge for any reasons that the way is not safe enough. This decision will be taken by the main guide and should not be contradicted or discussed.*
- 8. **ATTENTION : all products derived from Codeine molecules are strictly forbidden in Georgia. Please consult <http://www.rs.ge/en/5982> as well as [http://www.incb.org/documents/Psychotropics/guidelines/travel-regulations/2013-travellers-update/GEO 26 August 2014 Original travellers II - LTR - table.pdf](http://www.incb.org/documents/Psychotropics/guidelines/travel-regulations/2013-travellers-update/GEO_26_August_2014_Original_travellers_II_-_LTR_-_table.pdf)***