



A journey through the seasons

Winter, spring, summer and autumn in 10 days. It is only in Georgia that you can immerse yourself in all seasons during just one trip. Such a wealth of climatic zones comes from a complex relief of a small country. More than two thirds of the territory is occupied by mountains, height of many of which exceeds 5 kilometers. If we move from west to east, subtropical climate of the Black Sea coastline will be replaced by continental Mediterranean climate. And traveling up along roads into mountainous regions will reveal harsh beauty of wooded cliffs and emerald alpine fields. During this tour Exotour will give you a chance to try ripe fruits in the valleys and to immediately see blossoming trees of the same fruits in the gorges, to mould snowballs among glaciers, and the same day to have a swim in warm Black Sea...

Day 1. Arrival in Georgia
Day 2. Tour: Tbilisi - Mtskheta - Tbilisi
Day 3. Tour: Tbilisi - Signagi - Telavi
Day 4. Tour: Telavi - Kvareli - Tbilisi
Day 5. Tour: Tbilisi - Kutaisi - Tskaltubo
Day 6. Tour: Tskaltubo - Mestia
Day 7. Tour: Mestia - Ushguli - Mestia
Day 8. Tour: Mestia - Batumi
Day 9. Tour: Batumi - Bakuriani
Day 10. Tour: Bakuriani - Borjomi - Tbilisi

Duration: 10 days / 9 nights
Distance: 2 000 kilometers
Overnight places:
Tbilisi - 4 nights
Telavi - 1 night
Tskaltubo - 1 night
Mestia - 2 nights
Batumi - 1 night
Bakuriani - 1 night

Fresh experiences on the very first day! Shortly after arriving in Tbilisi and having settled in our hotel "Georgian House" a walk through winding streets of the historic part of the capital of Georgia await you. You will see beautifully illuminated old town and feel the charm of the tourist center near the Chardin Street. A wonderful panorama of night Tbilisi opens up from the observation deck on the Mtatsminda Mountain where an extensive park with a huge Ferris wheel, attractions, cafés and an excellent restaurant are situated.

Day 2. Tour: Tbilisi - Mtskheta - Tbilisi

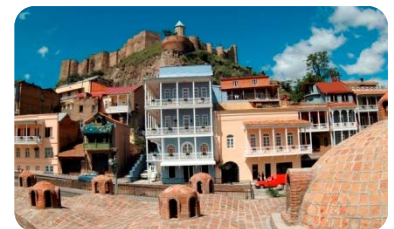
In the morning you will learn about the history of Tbilisi and its attractions. The first stop of the tour - beautiful Metekhi Church, situated on a steep cliff above the river Mtkvari. There is a monument to King Vakhtang Gorgasali who founded Tbilisi in the V century. A little square at the Metekhi Church offers a beautiful view of the Old Town and Narikala Fortress. It will be your next stop after a breathtaking ascent by a cable way.

Tbilisi Botanical Garden stretches along a narrow gorge just outside the Narikala fortress - place where for centuries royal gardens have been erupting into bloom. Flora from all over the world grows in this picturesque corner. After this it seems logical to proceed to Open-Air Ethnographic Museum, where you will see dwellings and traditional way of life of different regions of Georgia. By the way, the museum is located near Turtle Lake with lovely bungalows and cafes. It is a convenient place for making a short break before traveling to the town of Mtskheta.

The Narikala Fortress tops Sololaki ridge towering above the Old Tbilisi. Its towers have been silent witnesses of city life for fifteen hundred years. And the walls of the ancient fortress offer a convenient place to take a photograph of the panorama of the Georgian capital with a huge cathedral of the Holy Trinity in the foreground. After that you can go down to the area of sulfur baths named Abanotubani.

Ancient capital of Georgia is near Tbilisi and its monuments are among those on the UNESCO World Heritage List. You will not be left indifferent by strict classicism of Jvari Church which blends into the mountainous terrain of the area since the VI century. Also, the splendor of Svetitskhoveli Cathedral of Mtskheta, which keeps the treasures of Christian World's sacred places, will make an unforgettable impression. We conclude the day with a visit to monasteries in Zedazeni and Shiomghvime founded by fathers of the Georgian monasticism.

The complex of ancient baths is built over hot springs to which Tbilisi owes its name. Here, in the heart of the Old Town, you will feel unique flavor of Tbilisi, will walk along a narrow Fig gorge, in the deep end of which a beautiful waterfall shows up before your eyes. You are advised to remember this place - in the evening you can go back to take a dip in the healing waters and enjoy a massage from a real Georgian bath attendant "mekise".



Day 3. Tour: Tbilisi - David Gareja - Signagi – Telavi

Today you will simultaneously visit two countries. We will travel to the cave city - David Gareja Monastery - a huge complex that lies in semi-desert on both sides of the border between Georgia and Azerbaijan. You will see the Lavra, founded in the VI century by hermit David. You will visit cells carved into the rock by generations of his followers. You will be able to hear an impressive story of the life of St. David and Garedja monks.



After leaving the desert you will find yourself among mountains covered with dense forest that hides the convent of Bodbe. The vaults of the medieval church preserved magnificent paintings on biblical themes perfectly. Near the altar rests Equal to the Apostles Nino of Cappadocia, who preached Christianity in Georgia in the early IV century. The territory of the monastery offers spectacular views of the land of the best Georgian wines - Alazani Valley with peaks of the Greater Caucasus towering behind it.

The same view, but from a different angle is waiting for us in the town of Signagi which is surrounded with a wall with 28 watch towers. Here, it is convenient to buy souvenirs, especially garments with traditional Georgian embroidery and handmade jewelry. At the local history museum you can acquaint yourself with the specifics of the Kakheti region, which for quite a long period of time was a separate kingdom. Romantically disposed guests will not be disappointed either. There is an acting registry, where citizens of any country will be able to register a marriage and receive help to mark this event with the real Georgian celebration.

Next stop will be a fashionable salon of the XIX century, which still remains one of the cultural centers of Georgia. This is Tsinandali - House-Museum of Prince Alexander Chavchavadze, who combined outstanding qualities of an officer, poet and public figure in one person. The manor house is surrounded by a beautiful park with a bamboo love labyrinth. It served as a summer residence for the Russian imperial dynasty of the Romanov. The estate features art salon and a wine cellar with a bar. This is a convenient opportunity to taste different varieties of Georgian wines, including the famous "Tsinandali" before an overnight stay in Telavi.

Day 4. Tour: Telavi - Kvareli – Tbilisi

Today we take a closer look at Kakheti - the most fertile corner of Georgia, where they make the best wine and grape harvest is transformed into a national holiday. Wealth of this land can be seen and tried at the main market of Telavi, where there is a large selection of national Georgian sweets made from fruit juices, as well as a variety of spices. Having haggled to your heart's content at the market, you can start sightseeing.

Shuamta Monastery that is tucked in the thick mountain forest will be remembered for the silence and solitude of the place. Alaverdi Cathedral impresses one with its grandeur, rising high into the sky amidst the Alazani valley. The road passes the town of Kvareli situated along the foot of the Caucasus Mountains. Along the way we will make two stops.

The first stop will be at the ruins of the town of Gremi destroyed by Shah Abbas of Iran in the early XVII century. A citadel with the original church of the Archangels and a high royal castle still remain there. And the next stop is the monastery complex of Nekresi. It consists of buildings of different ages, located high on a hillside. On the territory of the Monastery, you will see an interesting building which, at first glance, does not resemble a church. It was built in the IV century and is the oldest Christian church in Georgia. While the maze of ruins even more ancient - that of a Zoroastrian temple are visible from the heights of the monastery walls, at the foot of the mountain.

The first thing to do in Kvareli will be to visit the memorial house of great Georgian writer, poet and public figure Ilia Chavchavadze. Residential house, family tower, wine cellar, bakery, water mill will offer you a glance at traditional Georgian lifestyle on a rich estate. A little later you will learn about the difference between Georgian and European art of winemaking. It will be explained at the largest wine storage in the country, which is housed in an 8-kilometer tunnel that once was a bomb shelter. Here you can taste fine wines from different parts of Georgia, and later enjoy views of Kvareli Lake before leaving for Tbilisi.



Day 5. Tour: Tbilisi - Kutaisi – Tskaltubo

A long road to western Georgia will not be boring. You will see witness how nature varies from region to region. First already familiar landscape of eastern Georgia will be dramatically replaced by serpentine roads of the Rikoti pass. Along this segment of the winding road there are real masterpieces of folk art. The locals are famous for their pottery, and you can see the entire exhibition of diverse handmade pottery, which will make excellent souvenirs.

Immediately after the pass you will be met by subtropical climate of Colchis lowland. Kutaisi is the second largest city in Georgia and the parliamentary capital of the country. The historical part of the city attracts with its interesting architecture and unique charm. While Bagrat Church that towers over the city impresses with its facades of the XI century. You will become even more impressed with the historical and architectural Gelati Complex. Here, a famous academy existed in the monastery in the XII century and its founder - King David the Builder, the greatest monarch in the history of Georgia is buried there.

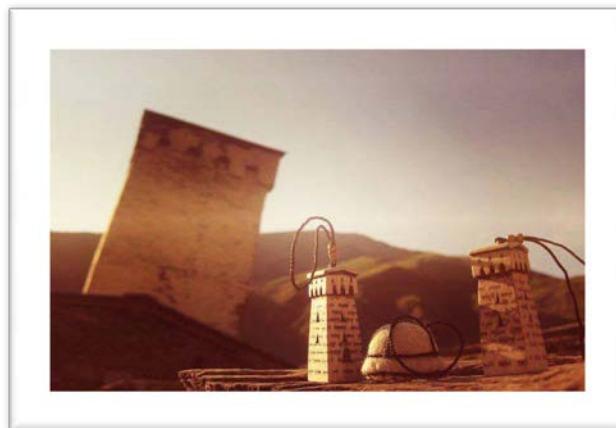
Next stop is Georgian "Jurassic Park". It lies among relict forest which grows luxuriantly in the crater of an extinct volcano. This is Sataplia National Park. A tourist trail passes along rocks that preserved dinosaur footprints. Among the trees one can see models of ancient reptiles. The pavilion of the museum displays finds that are millions of years old, and - a cafe. The most fascinating part of the program is a deep dive into the long cave with beautifully illuminated stalactites and stalagmites.

Day 6. Tour: Tskaltubo – Mestia

Get ready to experience the adrenaline rush! Today we are going to embark on a winding road to get to the most hard-to-reach place of the Caucasus! Mountainous, mysterious, patriarchal Svaneti will appear before your eyes as it was many centuries ago. A land of thousand towers - a veritable goldmine of architectural treasures, ancient relics and mind-blowing landscapes - is waiting for you!

Enguri Hess - the largest water-power plant in the Caucasus. The dam is 270 meters. It is surrounded by high mountains and forested gorges. The view is difficult to describe, it must be seen. Mestia – the old capital of Svaneti and young ski resort in the subalpine zone. During a walk through the city you will take a first look at the famous defense towers of the Svan. They have been standing around the area for several centuries now, forming a unique landscape of Svaneti villages.

A visit to the Museum of History and Ethnography of Svaneti will help you understand this land and its people better, and dinner is not complete without a delicious local specialty - meat pie "Kubdari"!



Day 7. Tour: Mestia - Ushguli – Mestia

Upper Svaneti is a naturally - formed Museum of alpine meadows, wild glaciers, towering mountains and monuments of the middle-ages. Thus it was the entire region and not its separate monuments that were included in the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Fortified village of Ushguli has been keeping the essence of Svaneti for a thousand year. It is the highest mountain settlement in Europe, upon arrival to where you will be immersed in the archaic world of ancient homes, old towers and strict, centuries-old customs.

A local museum will reveal secrets of the patriarchal life of the Svan, while the church of Lamaria of the XII century will enrich your experience with abundance of legends associated with this church. This day will certainly be the most memorable adventure of our tour.

Day 8. Tour: Mestia - Batumi

From the Middle Ages to the antiquity! From cold mountain glaciers to warm Black Sea! We are descending from Alpine Svaneti directly into subtropics of Adjara. Favorable climate and an incredible wealth of nature overwhelm you in the Batumi Botanical Gardens. The 113 acres of the green cape houses more than 5000 species of plants from all continents. You will walk through nine floristic sections accompanied by our guide-botanist, surrounded by the kingdom of luxuriant vegetation and with a magnificent view of the sea!

Adjara has just started to show us its charms. We will continue our tour towards the south and in the village of Gonio, near the Turkish border. We will stop at the easternmost outpost of the Roman Empire. The Apsaro Fortress had a theater and a racecourse, garrisons of Romans, Byzantines, Genoese and Ottoman were once deployed here. Just outside the city walls there are remains of Roman baths and the tomb of the Apostle Matthew, who came here in the wake of two more of Christ's disciples – Andrew the First - called and Simon the Zealot.

Batumi - Adjarian capital and the beautiful seaside resort. Free evening before going to the night rest in this city will be devoted to rest on the beach listening to the sound of gentle waves of the sea and surrounded by cozy bungalows. The Batumi Boulevard offers you numerous cafes, discos, bike rental, Ferris wheel, singing fountains and souvenir shops.



Day 9. Tour: Batumi – Bakuriani

And here comes the mountains again! But this time, these belong to the Lesser Caucasus Mountains. After the coastline jungles it is mountainous Adjara that awaits us. The road runs past the settlement of Khulo, past Keda that is famous for its waterfalls, until we climb to the alpine meadows of the mountain again resort Beshumi with its never-frizzing Green Lake. The last effort - Goderdzi pass or "the four seasons resort ". You should be watching carefully – this will be the most dramatic contrast of nature for the time of the entire travel. Subtropics of Adjara and alpine zone of the pass are very quickly replaced by the lunar landscape of South Georgia with deep gorges and heaps of rocks!

Steep slope of Erusheti Mountain keeps one of the most important monuments of Georgia, the country most prominent centre on the world tourist map. Vardzia Cave Complex – the outstanding monument of the Georgian architecture of the XII-XIII centuries that started as a fortress and grown as the monastery town. Hundreds of rooms carved into the rock stretching for nearly one kilometer and reaching the height of 13 storeys. Secret passages, remains of plumbing and irrigation systems are preserved. Vardzia will astonish you with the scale of the project, historical facts and legend about Queen Tamar...

Some more traveling and another climate zone! Before you lies Central Georgia with continental climate and deciduous-coniferous forests of the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park. Europe's largest nature reserve stretches in the mountains across 700 square kilometers. Cool climate and charm of local nature have long been particularly appreciated by residents of Georgia. Beauty of Borjomi Gorge captivated monarchs of the Russian Empire and supreme rulers of the Soviet Union. It is now open to you! Small walking in protected forest ensures pleasant tiredness and sound sleep upon arrival to the resort of Bakuriani.

Day 10. Tour: Bakuriani - Borjomi – Tbilisi



We suggest waking up early. One should not miss the sunrise in the mountains. Bright light and morning mist around the mountains covered with pine trees ensure colorful pictures for lovers of beautiful scenery. Having seen this view, breathe pure mountain air and tasted healing jam made from pine cones or pollen, you will understand why the ski resort of Bakuriani is not empty in the summer.

20 minutes-drive away, at the bottom of the gorge of the river Mtkvari, spa resort of Borjomi stretches. This name is known worldwide for its mineral water from local sources. 130 years of laboratory test and consistent level of enrichment with 60 different minerals, specific taste and unique medicinal properties – the nature has been presenting us with this gift for 2000 years. Mineral water-tasting straight from the source, in its most natural form, will be a good conclusion of the tour before the transfer to the airport!