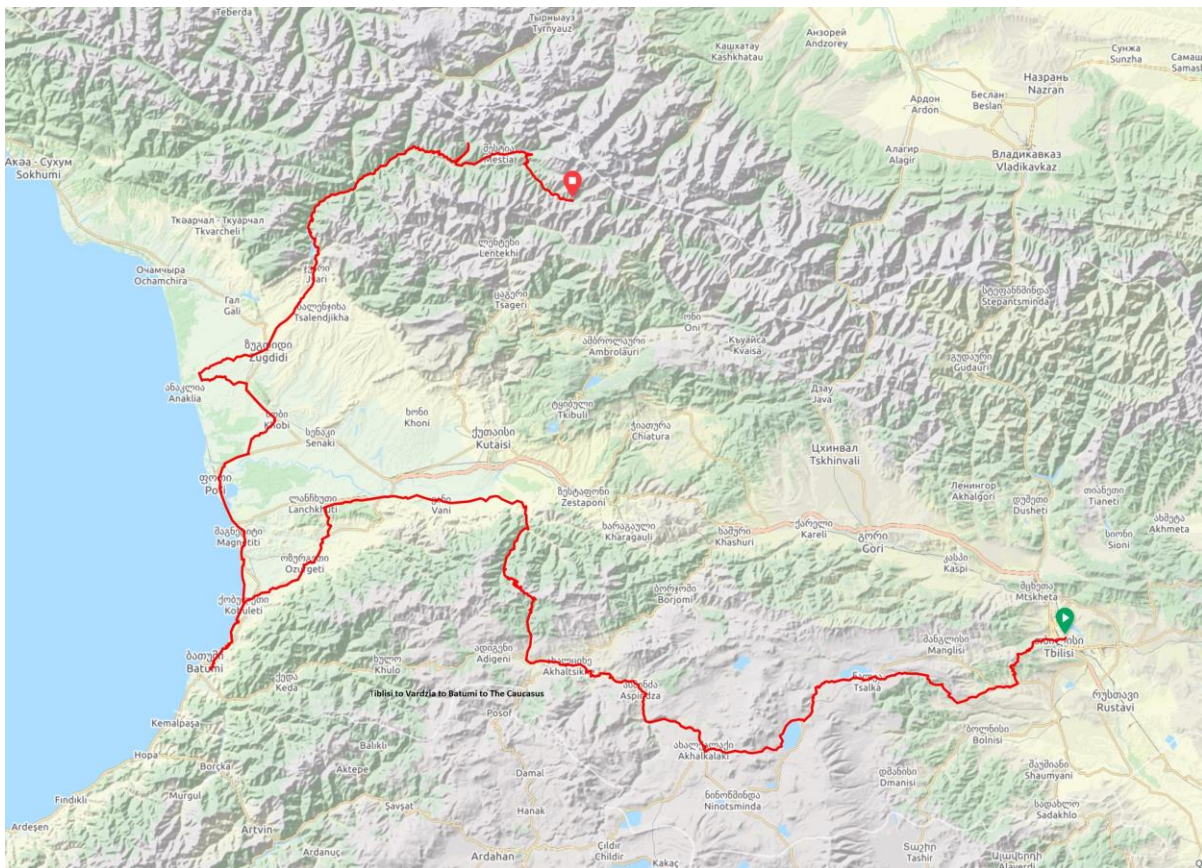


Bikexplore

Georgia: A High Mountain Adventure (GW221)

DATES
PRICE

14 to 28 May 2022
£1880



Tour Prospectus

The stunning scenery and challenging terrain of Georgia will be a revelation to all. It is an under used adventure playground, with high mountains and an ancient Christian culture. It is a land of stunning landscapes, fortified mountain villages, ancient churches, unclimbed peaks, wild natural beauty and hospitable people.

Itinerary

Key to meals: B = Breakfast, D = Dinner

Saturday 14 May 2022. Arrival at Tbilisi

Meet in Tbilisi international airport, transfer to a lovely guest house in Tbilisi. For those who arrive early enough there is a city tour walking around the old town exploring the historical sites of Tbilisi. Evening meal tasting Georgian traditional delicacies. Overnight in Tbilisi.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Guest house
- Meals: (D)

Sunday 15 May. Tbilisi to Tsalka

Minibus transfer to Betania (32kms). Cycle from Betania to Tsalka on tarmac. We ride uphill through a stunning mountain range. Overnight in Tsalka, high up in the mountains and on the edge of a lake.

- Route distance: 100 km
- Route altitude gain: 800 m
- Accommodation: Guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Monday 16 May. Tsalka to Akhalkalaki

Cycle from Tsalka to Akhalkalaki, we will climb to over 2700m in altitude in the Trialeti mountains, where the views are amazing. We stay at this height for nearly 40km, before descending to Akhalkalaki for our overnight. Akhalkalaki is still high up at over 1700m. Overnight in a nice guest house in Akhalkalaki.

- Route distance: 110 km
- Route altitude gain: 900 m
- Accommodation: Guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 17 May. Akhalkalaki to Akhaltsikhe

Ride from Akhalkalaki to Akhaltsikhe. On the way we will visit Vardzia, an ancient cave monastery built in the 11th century by Queen Tamar. It is carved out of the solid rock. Overnight in guest house in Akhaltsikhe.

- Route distance: 100 km
- Route altitude gain: 1700 m
- Accommodation: Guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)



Wednesday 18 May. Akhaltsikhe to Batumi

Today begins with a minibus transfer to the top of the Goderzi pass (100kms). The highest point of the pass is 2050m. Ride to Batumi on the shores of the Black Sea. The first 20 km is gravel road,

(option of transfer), ride to Khulo village. From Khulo we descend to Batumi. Overnight in Batumi in a nice guesthouse.

- Route distance: 90 km
- Route altitude gain: 800 m
- Accommodation: guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 19 May. Rest day at Batumi.

Free day to spend at the beach on the Black Sea.

Batumi has many interesting places to visit including a cable car ride that provides tremendous views of the city.

- Accommodation: guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 20 May. Batumi to Anaklia.

Ride from Batumi to Anaklia. The route is long, but largely flat along the Black Sea coast.

- Route distance: 140 km
- Route altitude gain: 600 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Saturday 21 May. Anaklia to Kaishi and Mazeri

Ride from Anaklia to Kaishi, the road goes through the Caucasus Mountains with stunning views of the highest peaks. Unfortunately, the guesthouse in Kaishi has closed so we need to transfer to Mazeri.

- Route distance: 100 km
- Transfer: 50 km
- Route altitude gain: 1000 m
- Accommodation: Guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Sunday 22 May. Mazeri to Mestia

Ride from Mazeri guest house to Shdugra where we will walk the last 2 km into the beautiful mountains where we visit a high waterfall. After coming back to the bikes, we ride to Mestia.

- Riding distance: 35 km
- Walking distance: 4 km
- Route altitude gain: 700 m
- Accommodation: guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Monday 23 May. Mestia, Free day

Free day. Option of treks to Koruldi lakes or the Chalati glacier. There is also a skilift up Hatsvali mountain. Overnight in Mestia.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 24 May. Mestia to Ushguli

Ride from Mestia to the highest village in Europe, Ushguli at 2100m. Stunning views of the Caucasus mountains and the ancient towers of Ushguli.

The cycling distance is 50 km, but the final 10 km is a gravel road, option of transfer.

- Route distance: 50 km



- Route altitude gain: 1400 m
- Accommodation: guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 25 May. Ushguli to Ushguli

Morning walk to the ancient part of the village of Ushguli and then continue to the Shkhara glacier. Return to Ushguli. Overnight in Ushguli guest house.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 26 May. Ushguli to Lentekhi

Ride from Ushguli to Lentekhi, through the amazing 2650m high Zagari pass. The route then takes us to the beautiful low Svaneti valley. Please be aware that there will be limited support over the pass. Some gravel roads. The route over the pass is amazing but it can be tricky. Option of transfer available.

- Route distance: 75 km
- Route altitude gain: 700 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 27 May. Lentekhi to Tskaltubo then Tbilisi

Ride to Tskaltubo for lunch, then transfer to Tbilisi. The transfer is about 300 kms. The ride will aim to end at 12.00 so the distance is variable.

- Route distance: 55 to 75 kms
- Route altitude gain: 600 m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, D)
- Transfer

Saturday 28 May. Transfer to the airport.

Transfer to airport.

- Meals: (B)
- Transfer

Prices and Key Dates

Holiday Information



This holiday is classed as Grade 8 – Athletic: carrying a light load, cycling up to 114km per day with an altitude gain of up to 1520m. Please note that on some days the distance is longer but with substantially less climbing and on one day the altitude gain is greater.

The price is based on a minimum number of 8 people taking part in the holiday (please note Booking Conditions, Clause 3). If there are insufficient bookings by 05 March 2022, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

Price: £1880

Price includes:

- Return minibus transfer from Tbilisi airport to the guesthouse in Tbilisi. Please note that if you arrive earlier or leave later, we cannot guarantee the transfer.
- 14 nights guesthouse, sharing room
- 14 breakfasts, 14 dinners
- Minibus support on cycling days
- Transfers and optional transfers as listed above
- Guiding costs
- Bikexplore costs

Price does not include:

- Travel to/from home to Tbilisi airport
- Drinks with dinner
- Lunches or refreshments during the day
- Skilift or cable car charges on rest days
- Entry fees at any attractions visited
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance
- Single occupancy supplement (£250, subject to availability)

A deposit of £180 per person must accompany the Booking Form, with the final balance of £1700 per person (plus any supplement) to be paid ten weeks prior to departure, by 5th March 2022. See booking form for ways of paying these.

Cancellations

Should you be forced to cancel your booking for any reason you must notify us in writing. Cancellation charges are as follows:

Before 05 March 2022	Deposit	(£180)
05 March 2022 through to departure	100%	(£1800) (plus any supplement)

Passports, Visas and Health

UK citizens must hold a passport that is still valid for the duration of their stay. Holders of non-EU passports are advised to check whether they require a visa.

There are no compulsory health-related requirements for UK residents, but you are strongly advised to check that your tetanus protection has not expired.

To make a booking

Complete, sign and return the Booking Form and send directly to the Tour Manager (address on Booking Form). Please pay the deposit to Bikexplore Trust account with the tour number as reference.

The area covered by the Tour

Georgia nestles between Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia. Many of the highest peaks of the magnificent Caucasus mountains run through Georgia. Its western flank borders the Black Sea and some amazing beaches.

At 2100m the World Heritage site, Ushguli, is the highest settlement in Europe. The village of about 200 people is located in the Upper Svaneti region, at the foot of Mt. Shkhara (5068m) – one of the highest summits of the Caucasus. Ushguli is dotted with medieval Svanetian watchtowers.

Grapevines have been cultivated in the fertile valleys of Georgia for about 8000 years. With over 500 varieties of endemic grapes and the world’s first cultivated grapevines, the traditions of viticulture are entwined with the country’s national identity. It is also believed that the word “wine” is of Georgian origin (“gvino” in Georgian).



Georgia has an old Christian culture with many ancient churches, monasteries and traditions; we will visit some churches. About 20% of the population is Muslim.



Accommodation

Accommodation will be in local guest houses or hotels with local speciality food and drink on offer. Vegetarians can be catered for, but please put this down on your booking form as a special request.

The guesthouses are mostly of a high standard but some of the villages we are travelling to are quite small and the accommodation will reflect that.

Rides and rest days

The tour is fully supported, some days will be quite long, but there will be an option to have a lift in the support vehicle. On two days part of the journey will be by minibus, this is because we have a lot of distance to cover.



Although most roads are tarmacked there are two lengthy stretches of gravel road, both of which have the option of transfer.

There are three rest days mid-tour. The first one is at the Black Sea, the second two have options of a guided treks into the Caucasus mountains.

Lunches are usually down to you, though if there are no cafes open, we will provide a picnic.

Travel

This tour is land only, thus it is very important that you note that neither your Tour Manager nor Bikexplore are responsible for you in any way until the appointed time at the designated meeting point. Should you fail to arrive at the appointed time for whatever reason, we will not be responsible for any additional expenses you may incur in order to meet up with the tour group. Before booking on the tour, you should ensure that you have read and understood our booking conditions. Should this tour not attract sufficient bookings to reach the minimum operating size, we may cancel the tour at any time up to 10 weeks before departure. It is therefore recommended that you book fully flexible and refundable transport and accommodation, or wait until you have been told the tour will go ahead, as in the event of the tour being cancelled we will not be responsible for any losses incurred.

There are not many flights from the UK to Tbilisi; however, Ukraine International Air, Polish Air (LOT), Air Baltic and Pegasus Air all fly to Tbilisi, all with a stopover. The length of time varies from 7 to 15 hours. Skyscanner suggests part Lufthansa and part Ukraine International Air as the most cost-effective option. However, be wary of mixing airlines in case the earlier flight is subject to lengthy delays.

Group information

The maximum group size will be 20, plus the Tour Managers and guides.

Weather and clothing

The last two weeks of May are amazingly beautiful in Georgia, with plenty of green landscapes and flowers. The tops of the mountains are covered in white snow, which makes the views unforgettable. The daytime temperature is around 25-30 degrees but when the sun goes down the temperature can drop down to 12 degrees in the mountains. Remember we will be travelling to the high mountains, some of which will be above 2000m so bring appropriate clothing.

Cycles/equipment

We recommend a good audax/touring cycle or gravel/cyclo-cross bike as there are some gravel tracks incorporated. As no luggage needs to be carried you can bring your lightweight road-bike. However, try and put larger than usual tyres on it to cope with the road surfaces and be prepared to opt for the transfer on the gravel stretches.

You should ensure your cycle is well maintained, paying particular attention to wheels, tyres and brakes. Some climbs are long so a low bottom gear (i.e., small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest sprocket on your rear wheel) is recommended. If you are unsure about gears, please discuss with the Tour Manager. New tyres and tubes are recommended. Participants will be expected to carry sufficient spares and tools each day to deal with punctures and minor repairs. The

support vehicle will not be far away in case of dramatic changes in the weather or serious mechanical failure.

You will not need to carry luggage, but a rack top pack or bar bag may be useful for carrying wet weather gear, spare clothing needed for the day, camera, snacks and your map. Each participant is expected to bring and carry their personal items and spares. Helmets are your personal choice as there is no legal requirement in Georgia.

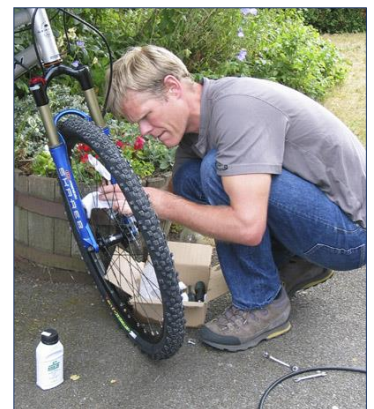
Maps, guides and tour information

You will be provided with route notes (but not a map or GPX files) and there will be a support vehicle and a local guide as well as the Tour Manager. However, please be prepared and bring a map with you in case you get separated from the group.

Travel Insurance and advice

Georgia is geographically in Europe, but like the UK, it is not in the EU. The UK government has been negotiating a Global Health card, but at the time of writing this does not yet exist. Currently Britain does not have a reciprocal health agreement with Georgia, therefore travel insurance which includes medical care and repatriation is essential.

Georgia is a peaceful and safe country with very hospitable people, but before booking you should check the Foreign Office 'Travel Advice by Country' at www.fco.gov.uk or on 0845 850 2829.



About the Tour Manager

I am a passionate cyclist, trained cycle instructor, ride leader and mechanic and able to support members of the group. I have led numerous tours and toured myself extensively in Europe and further afield. I speak Italian and have lived in Italy for a number of years.

Greg Woodford

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Additional Georgian information

The time is 4 hours ahead of the UK.

Currency is the Georgian Lari, it works out about 4.5 to the pound.

Language is Georgian, it is a member of the South Caucasian group of languages. Many people, especially those connected with the tourist industry speak English.

Public transport is largely buses. They run round the main towns and longer distance ones go between the principal population centres.

The country is divided into regions, with greater or less autonomy. Tbilisi is in Eastern Georgia and we will be travelling westwards towards the Black Sea and then into the Svaneti region.

Covid 19

At the time of writing, Georgia operates a Green Pass system. Green status will be granted if you are:
Fully vaccinated

- With 72-hour validity negative PCR test
- With 24-hour validity negative antigen-fast test (Lateral Flow)

- Have had a documented Covid-19 infection during the previous 100 days.

Georgia will accept the UK's proof of COVID-19 recovery and vaccination record and proof of COVID-19 vaccination issued in the Crown Dependencies. Your NHS appointment card from vaccination centres is not designed to be used as proof of vaccination and should not be used to demonstrate your vaccine status.

It is mandatory to wear masks in public places indoors (shops, hotels etc.) and outdoors. Failing to do so can result in a 20 Lari (approx. £5) fine for an individual or 500 Lari (approx. £112) for a legal entity.

However, details can change, so please check before travelling.