Bikexplore

Georgia: A High Mountain Adventure

Tour Organiser: Greg Woodford

Saturday 02nd to Saturday 16th October 2027

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 beauty of nature and the hospitable people.

We will be exploring the remote countryside, visiting churches and monasteries that make up the history of Georgia. Georgia is the home of wine, and we will sample a number of different varieties, as well as visiting a vineyard.

The tour is fully supported by experienced local guides. There will be some walking in the Caucasus, and there is the option of bike hire, including electric bikes.

Itinerary

Saturday 02nd October 2027 Arrival and overnight at Tbilisi

Arrival at Tbilisi airport, transfer to the Hotel.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (D)

Sunday 03rd October 2027 Tbilisi day

We will be exploring the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi. Wander in the old districts of the city which are structured like terraces, as well as take a walk in the narrow streets to enjoy colourful houses, patterned balconies and wonderful examples of modern architecture. We will start the tour from the Metekhi church (13th century) with magnificent views over old Tbilisi. A stroll along the winding little streets takes us to the main sights of the city. We enjoy the panoramic views of the whole town and the iconic statue “Mother of Georgia”. We then go to the historical domed sulphur bath area- connected with the name of our city. Afterwards, we will explore rest of the old town, including the Sioni cathedral and Gabridze clock tower.Those of us who have hired bikes will be fitted today.

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

Monday 04th October 2027 Tbilisi-Mtskheta-Uplistsikhe-Tskaltubo

Today, we visit Mtskheta, a delightful town and the ancient capital and religious centre of Georgia, with its many historical sites, including Jvari Monastery (6th century) and the impressive Svetitskhoveli Cathedral (11th century) where the Robe of Christ is buried. Both Jvari and Svetitskhoveli are UNESCO World Heritage sites. Then, we drive towards Gori; the heart of Kartli region, where we visit the Uplistsikhe Cave Town (1st millennium BC). The Silk Road used to pass through here. This is an ancient monumental complex with living quarters, wine-cellars, bakeries, a three-nave cave church and an ancient theatre. We finish the tour in Tskaltubo, Georgia`s most famous spa resort, known for its distinctive Soviet-era architecture and geothermal springs.

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

Tuesday 05th October 2027 Tskaltubo-Prometheus Cave-Martvili Canyon-Martvili

After breakfast at the hotel, we begin our first cycling day. A few kilometres further on we visit the impressive Prometheus Cave stretching 1,420 metres underground. Its striking stalactites and stalagmites are enhanced by subtle lighting and classical music and create a truly memorable atmosphere. We stop for lunch at a local restaurant before continuing towards Martvili, where we explore the beautiful Martvili Canyon, with the option of taking a short boat ride deep into the canyon. After the visit, we cycle on to our hotel. In the evening, we drive to a local family winery to taste natural Georgian wine made using traditional methods, the traditional method includes huge clay containers, followed by a homemade West Georgian dinner. Afterwards, we return to the hotel.

- Route distance: 55.0km
- Route altitude gain: 500m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Wednesday 06th October 2027 Martvili-Chkhorotsku-Zugdidi

Another great day is ahead of us. After breakfast, we get on our bikes and ride towards Chkhorotsku though the Megrelian region enjoying the changing scenery along the way. We stop for lunch with a local family where warm Georgian hospitality and tasty Megrelian cuisine await. In the afternoon we continue cycling to Zugdidi, followed by dinner at a local restaurant.

- Route distance: 66.0km

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- Route altitude gain: 900m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Thursday 07th October 2027 Zugdidi-Chuberi Guest House

After breakfast we cycle to the Enguri Hydroelectric Dam, the world`s second-highest concrete arch dam. Seeing the massive dam surrounded by mountains is an unforgettable experience. From there, we cycle towards Svaneti, one of Georgia's most beautiful regions. The scenery changes with every kilometre, green valleys giving way to towering mountains, glaciers, waterfalls, sparkling lakes, and old stone towers in the villages. The final 7km is an uphill gravel road. Certain stretches are steep. There is a short dark tunnel before the Chuberi turn off.Picnic lunch provided.

- Route distance: 82.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1450m
- Accommodation: Guest House
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Friday 08th October 2027 Chuberi-Becho

We cycle from Chuberi to Becho, passing mountain trails, rivers and traditional villages. Along the way, the scenery changes constantly, snow-capped peaks, sparkling streams and medieval stone towers appearing around every corner. It's a day full of adventure and stunning views. Picnic lunch provided.

- Route distance: 56.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1400m
- Accommodation: Guest House
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Saturday 09th October 2027 Becho-Ushba Waterfall-Mestia

Today, we start by driving in the morning and then we walk towards the twin peaked Ushba glacier. Our aim is to get close to Mount Ushba (4710 m.) that overlooks the Svaneti region. After walking through deep forest we continue on to the waterfalls. The beauty of the waterfalls and the twin peaked Mount Ushba will make you feel like a character in a fairy tale. We walk back to Becho and then cycle to Mestia - the centre of Upper Svaneti region. Mestia is a small vibrant ski resort in the heart of the Caucasus. Please be aware that treks are weather dependent.Hiking Details: • Walking time: 4-5 hrs. • Walking distance: 10 km • ↑↓ 550m

Picnic lunch provided.

- Route distance: 21.0km
- Route altitude gain: 350m
- Accommodation: Guesthouse

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- Meals: (B, L, D)

Sunday 10th October 2027 Mestia-Jvari-Koruldi

In the morning we drive in 4WD vehicles to Jvari point. We walk up to the beautiful high-mountain lakes of Koruldi located at the foot of the giant Mount Ushba (4710 m). En-route we enjoy tremendously beautiful views of the surrounding mountains and snow-covered glaciers. From the top we can see Mt. Tetnuldi (4800 m), Mt. Laila (4008 m), Mt. Chatini (4012 m), Mt. Banguriani (3838 m) and many other summits. This place is a real paradise for photographers and nature lovers. Please be aware that the trek depends on the weather, there are alternative wet weather treks.We walk back to Jvari point and then drive back to Mestia. For lunch we visit a local family and later explore a traditional Svanetian house and tower.
Driving Details: • From Mestia to Jvari Point: • 50 min. driving time, • 9 km. Hiking Details: • Walking time: 3-4 hrs. • Walking distance: 8 km • ↑↓ 600 m

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Guesthouse
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Monday 11th October 2027 Mestia-Shkhara Glacier-Ushguli

Today; we cycle to Ushguli, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, situated at 2200 metres and the highest continuously inhabited village in Europe. The village is famous for its numerous watchtowers and offers stunning views of Georgia`s tallest peak Mount Shkhara (5203 m). We enjoy lunch at a local family's house

- Route distance: 43.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1300m
- Accommodation: Guest House
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Monday 11th October 2027 Mestia-Shkhara Glacier-Ushguli Alternate Route

Today; we cycle to Ushguli, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, situated at 2200 metres and the highest continuously inhabited village in Europe. The village is famous for its numerous watchtowers and offers stunning views of Georgia`s tallest peak Mount Shkhara (5203 m). We enjoy lunch at a local family's houseFrom Ushguli, we continue along the Enguri River towards the Shkhara Glacier. Along the way we pass fields filled with unique endemic plants and flowers and the full height of Shkhara comes into view. The glacier is a vast permanent ice formation from which the Enguri River flows and is an impressive sight. After exploring the glacier, we cycle back to Ushguli.Optional trip:• 14 Kms cycling gravel• 5kms walking

- Route distance: 58.0km
- Route altitude gain: 1300m
- Accommodation: Guest House

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- Meals: (B, L, D)

Tuesday 12th October 2027 Ushguli-Mele/ Lentekhi

After breakfast, we go on a short trek to Gorvashi Pass viewpoint. Then we set off on a scenic bike ride over the breathtaking Zagaro Pass (2642 m) then a descent to Mele. The winding road takes us past rugged mountains and remote villages following much of the Korildashi river valley. Please be aware that the pass is very high and maybe cold. Whether we stop at Mele or proceed to Lentekhi depends on the accommodation options, both Mele and Lentekhi are small with limited accommodation.

Hiking Details: • Walking time: 3-4 hrs. • Walking distance: 8 km • ↑↓ 600 m.

- Route distance: 40.0km
- Route altitude gain: 450m
- Accommodation: Guest House
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Tuesday 12th October 2027 Ushguli-Mele/ Lentekhi Alternate Route

After breakfast, we go on a short trek to Gorvashi Pass viewpoint. We then set off on a scenic bike ride over the breathtaking Zagaro Pass (2642 m) then a descent to Lentekhi. The winding road takes us past rugged mountains and remote villages largely following the Korildashi river valley. Please be aware that the pass is very high and maybe cold. Whether we stop at Mele or proceed to Lentekhi depends on the accommodation options, both Mele and Lentekhi are small with limited accommodation.

Hiking Details: • Walking time: 3-4 hrs. • Walking distance: 8 km • ↑↓ 600 m.

- Route distance: 72.0km
- Route altitude gain: 450m
- Accommodation: Guest House
- Meals: Self-Catering

Wednesday 13th October 2027 Mele/ Lentekhi-Tskaltubo

Today is our last day of cycling. After breakfast, we cycle back to Tskaltubo, after the ride we will have a short tour of the village and visit a ruined sanatorium. Along the way we enjoy the changing landscapes and the final moments of our cycling journey. The route from Mele is 112kms, but largely in descent and flat.

- Route distance: 90.0km
- Route altitude gain: 900m
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Thursday 14th October 2027 Tskaltubo-Kutaisi-Tbilisi

After breakfast, we drive to Kutaisi first and visit the local farmers market and the ancient Bagrati Cathedral. Later we drive to Kaspi and visit a local wine cellar. This place is a great example of how the younger generation continues the tradition left by their ancestors. Here we will learn about the history of wine making and will taste the natural wines made from the endemic grape varieties that were on the verge of extinction, just a few years ago. (This method of wine making is inscribed in UNESCO intangible heritage list). Afterwards we drive back to Tbilisi and have a farewell dinner at a local restaurant celebrating our journey and reflecting on the unforgettable experiences of our time in Georgia.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Hotel
- Meals: (B, L, D)

Friday 15th October 2027 Tbilisi-Airport(Tbilisi)

Pick up from the hotel and transfer to the airport for your departure flight.No meals as the flights leave too early

- No cycling
- Accommodation: None
- Meals: Self-Catering

Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £2420

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £250 per person is required as soon as possible once the Tour Manager has processed your Booking Form (see below), with the final balance of £2170 per person to be paid no later than ten weeks prior to departure, by 24 July 2027

Price includes:

- 14 nights hotel on half board basis, sharing room.
- Vehicle support on cycling days
- 13 evening meals, 12 breakfasts and 11 lunches, some of which are picnic lunches
- Museum entry fees, as mentioned above.
- English speaking guide
- Walk guide
- Transfer to and from the airport in Tbilisi
- Bikexplore costs

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from Georgia
- Drinks with evening meals.
- Lunches or refreshments during the day, unless mentioned above.
- Entry fees at any other attraction, not listed above.
- Any personal expenses
- Travel insurance
- Single occupancy supplement (£300, pro rata as not available in every location).
- Boat trip in Martvili canyon

Cancellations

Written Notice Received	Cancellation Charge
up to 24/06/27	250
24/07/27 to departure	2420

The price of £2420 (land only) is based on a minimum number of 8 people taking part in the holiday. If there are insufficient bookings by Saturday 24th July 2027, we will contact you and return all monies paid.

Holiday Information

Accommodation and meals

Accommodation is of a reasonable standard; we will usually be in lovely family-owned hotels or local guest houses, sharing rooms. Single occupancy is limited and subject to availability. It is not available in every location as most of the mountain guest houses are small and may not have single room availability.

Most of the hotels and guesthouses have local specialities on offer. Vegetarians, vegans and special diets can be catered for, please put this down as a 'special request' on your booking form. Food is lovely in Georgia and they have a variety of vegetarian dishes. Fruit juices are plentiful; you will be offered fresh pomegranate juice in tourist spots. Aubergine wrapping a walnut and garlic paste is common. Tomato, cucumber and walnut salad is ubiquitous and the bread is amazing.

The wine is excellent and everywhere, in the mountains try their local hooch, Chacha, a stronger version of grappa.

Lunches are usually provided, see details. During most riding days lunches will be in the form of picnics.

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The nature of the holiday

Most of the holiday will be 60 to 80 km days. However Georgia is mountainous, we ride through the Caucasus mountains, the highest range in Europe. So, there will be quite a bit of climbing. A couple of the days are longer, and there is substantial climbing on a couple of days.

Rest days

There are two easier days mid tour, both have walking, please bring suitable footwear and clothing. As well as walking, day eight has some cycling, 21 km.

There are two days travelling and seeing sites at the start of the tour and one day at the end with no cycling.

Roads used

Most of the roads we use will be either tarmacked or concreted. There are plenty of ruts and holes though. On some stretches the surface has completely washed away, sometimes to up to a kilometre in distance. There are also a few dark tunnels.

There are some gravel stretches, these are rideable with a gravel type bike, there is no need for a mountain bike. Notably the 7km to the guest house at Chuberi. and the optional ride from Ushguli are gravel. The weather may also change surfaces, rain or even snow on the Zagaro pass will make things tougher on riders and equipment.

Once away from the bigger towns the roads are generally very quiet. Be aware, however, that sometimes cars are on the wrong side of the road avoiding the broken sections.

Drivers can be a little erratic, but no worse than Italy, if you have previously toured in Italy, you should be used to this. There are plenty of animals on the roads, cows and horses and even stray dogs, so pay attention descending through blind corners.

The area covered by the holiday

Georgia nestles between Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia, the highest peaks of the magnificent Caucasus mountains run through Russia, but Georgia has some pretty high peaks. Georgia's western flanks border the Black Sea.

Grapevines have been cultivated in the fertile valleys of Georgia for about 8000 years. With plenty of 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). The traditional method of making wine, that is now making a comeback, is maturing the grape juice in giant clay containers, buried in the ground.

Georgia has an ancient Christian culture, they claim to be the third country in the world to be Christianised, after Armenia and Ethiopia. It adheres to the Orthodox creed and has many ancient churches and traditions. Many of the churches are very ancient, it is common

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to visit an 11th century building. St George and the dragon is everywhere, on the flags, paintings and frescos. It is assumed that the western name for Georgia is derived from St George.

Route maps and information

Although you will be provided with route notes and GPX files and there will be a support vehicle as well as the Tour Manager, please bring a map with you in case you get separated from the group. Stanfords provide a good 1:500,000 road map of Georgia.

Additional Georgian information

The time is 4 hours ahead of the UK.

Currency is the Georgian Lari, (GEL), it works out about 3.5 GEL to the pound.

The language is Georgian; it is a member of the South Caucasian group of languages. The writing is beautiful and different to anything you have seen previously, luckily most notices are transliterated. Many people, especially those connected with the tourist industry, speak English. The people are incredibly welcoming and extremely hospitable; you may find drinks and even food offered to you.

Rabies is present, we do not recommend you touch any stray animals. Dogs are ever present, we had no problems with them, but we were not cycling.

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

Currently you do not need a visa to travel to Georgia but you do need insurance. You may need to bring your insurance policy in a printed form. Codiene is not permitted, and any meds will need to be bagged separately. I would recommend that you bring your prescription.

Most phone services will not be available in Georgia, but you can easily buy an e-Sim, so that you can WhatsApp. This is HIGHLY recommended otherwise we will not be able to contact you in an emergency.

Travel to and from Georgia

Travel to the start and from the finish is not included in this holiday. 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 finalising travel arrangements, you should ensure that the tour is definitely going ahead. Should there be insufficient bookings or pandemic travel restrictions are re-imposed, we reserve the right to cancel the tour at any time. 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. In the event of the tour being cancelled we will not be responsible for any losses incurred outside what you pay us.

The airport you should travel to is Tbilisi, with BA flying there direct from London Heathrow and EasyJet direct from London Luton. Easyjet also offer a stopover flight, I chose to stop at Milan on my recce visit. British Airways offer the best return route as it is direct and leaves early in the morning. Direct flight times are around 5 and a half hours. Alternative flights are by Pegasus airways, a low-cost Turkish airline whose services also call at Istanbul.

Travel insurance and other travel advice

Neither Georgia nor the UK is in Europe, but you should bring your Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) with you. (See https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/ if you need to renew or sign up for the first time). However, at present Britain does not have a reciprocal health agreement with Georgia, though this might change before the start of the tour. Appropriate travel insurance is therefore essential; please check with your provider to ensure that they cover the revised conditions in Europe and that your policy covers Georgia. Please note that your travel insurance MUST CLEARLY STATE GEORGIA, also, as Georgia now mandates travel insurance, take a paper copy with you.

Although most travel insurance policies do not cover cancellation due to pandemic restrictions, the money you pay to us for the holiday is fully protected until we depart.

UK residents do not, currently, require a visa, this may change.

Georgia is largely peaceful and very safe 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

Before booking, please contact the tour organiser for the latest advice.

Bikes and equipment

We recommend a good gravel type bike or touring bike. However, be aware that although Georgia has been busy tarmacking its roads, some of the roads are very small and can be rough, I recommend larger tyres than usual to avoid any problems. Good Specialized gravel and e-bikes can be hired from the local contact, I recommend hiring these bikes though you may wish to bring your own pedals and saddle. If you do decide to hire a bike, you will also need to bring your own saddlebag or bar bag to carry your day equipment.

If you are bringing your own bike, please ensure you can fit at least 40mm tyres on it, please note, a road bike is not suitable. 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 cog on your rear wheel) is

recommended, you may want a lower gear even than that. If you are unsure about gears, please discuss with the Tour Manager. New tyres and inner tubes are recommended, tubeless may be too complex to be repaired in Georgia. 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. You will not need to carry luggage, but a saddlebag, rack pack or bar bag will 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 for these to be worn in Georgia. Lights are recommended for the few tunnels.

Weather and clothing

The weather should be good in Georgia in October; it is a lot further south than here. However, much of our riding will be in high mountains, please be prepared. Sturdy shoes/ boots will need to be used for the treks. We get up to nearly 3000m, the weather may be cold, when we were there, it rained steadily, and snowed on the Zagaro pass, be prepared.

Bike hire

I recommend hiring a bike, the agent has a good relationship with the hire company, they have good Specialised Gravel bikes and e-bikes for hire.

The gravel bike is an aluminium Specialised Diverge and the e-bike is a Specialised hard tail.

Costs vary from $650 for non assisted to $850 for an e-Bike. (dollars). Please contact the tour leader for further information.

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