

# Walking in the Georgian Caucasus

**Trip style:** Small group holidays

**Destination:**  Georgia

**Trip code:** GKS10-LCL09

**Grades:** 1, 4

**Carbon Footprint:**  1690kg CO2



## HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

A landscape of alpine flower-filled meadows, towering mountains, and glaciers make the Greater Caucasus mountains a thrilling walking destination. Explore Tbilisi and the Svaneti region, where you'll come across ancient stone defensive towers known as koshki as you hike its heart-achingly beautiful trails. From the thundering Ushba waterfalls to Georgia's highest peak, Shkhara (5,068m), this holiday introduces you to Georgia's most jaw-dropping sights.

## WHAT YOU'LL LOVE

- Walking in the stunning Svaneti region of the Greater Caucasus mountains
- Soaking up views of meadows, lakes, glaciers, and waterfalls
- Sightseeing in Georgia's eclectic capital, Tbilisi
- Staying in locally run guesthouses in traditional villages
- Exploring the Motsameta Monastery and Academy
- Visiting UNESCO sites in Mtskheta – Jvari Monastery and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral
- A more personalised experience thanks to small group sizes (maximum 16 people)
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## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Local Tour Manager leading walks and sightseeing
- 10 nights' touring accommodation across Georgia including family-run guest houses
- 11 breakfasts, 6 lunches & 9 dinners
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- All in-destination transport
- Return flights from London including baggage and transfers

## TRIP SUITABILITY

This trip is graded level 4 with walks between 6 miles (10km) and 9 miles (15km) and ascents between 1050 feet (320m) and 3100 feet (950m). Descents are between 1050 feet (320m) and 3300 feet (1000m). We do not go high enough for altitude sickness. We are walking in remote areas and so there will be rough terrain. There may be sections of scree and steep ground. We highly recommend bringing collapsible walking poles.

## ITINERARY

### **Day 1:** Overnight Flight

Depart the UK on an overnight flight to Tbilisi.

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### **Day 2:** Arrive Tbilisi

Arrive at Tbilisi airport in the early hours and transfer to the hotel. Unpack, settle in and get some rest. After breakfast, you're free to relax around the hotel or explore the city. In the evening there'll be a welcome dinner with fellow group members and your local guide.

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### **Day 3:** Tbilisi Sightseeing

Today, we will explore the Georgian capital, Tbilisi. We'll begin at the 13th century Metekhi church which enjoys magnificent views over old Tbilisi. Stroll along winding little streets admiring the colourful houses and patterned balconies as we tick off all the top sights of the city. Following the tour, we'll take a scenic cable car ride up to the ancient Narikala fortress and soak up to panoramic views over Tbilisi's cityscape before walking down to the historical domed sulphur bath area. We'll round off with a visit to the Georgian State Museum.

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### **Day 4:** Travel to Svaneti Region

This morning we'll take a train to the charming city of Zugdidi. The capital of the Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region, it was once a powerful principality, and its faded grandeur can be seen in landmarks like the Dadiani Palace. In the afternoon, we'll drive to Becho village, where we'll spend the night.

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### **Day 5:** Ushba Waterfall walk

Distance: 6.2 miles (10km) Ascent/Descent: 1800 feet (550m) Today begins with a drive to Shikhra village. From there, we will set out on foot for a walk towards the twin peaked Ushba Glacier. After crossing a deep forest, we stop to admire the waterfalls and the impressive mount Ushba, which rises to 4700 metres. Afterwards, we will head back to our base in Becho for dinner.

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### **Day 6:** Walk Etseri village to Mazeri Pass

Distance: 9 miles (15km) Ascent: 3100 feet (950m) Descent: 3300 feet (1000m) Nestled in the mountains like a swallow's nest, the village of Esteri makes a great starting point for our hike today. Arriving to the village by road, we'll set off on foot accompanied by views of the snowy peak of Laila – one of the highest points of Georgia's Svaneti Range at 4,008m. Upon reaching the top of Mazeri Pass we are treated to views of Ushba glacier. Descending through green meadows, we'll meet up with our transport and return to the guesthouse.

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### **Day 7:** Mulakhi visit: Walk to Mestia

Distance: 8 miles (13km) Ascent: 1700 feet (520m) Descent: 2100 feet (650m) Mulakhi is our destination today. This

remote village is famous for its centuries-old towers that stand watch over the surrounding landscape of wildflower meadows and mountains. We'll walk through a variety of forested paths and open trails before finally returning to our guesthouse.

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### **Day 8:** Koruldi Lakes walk

Distance: 5 miles (8km) Ascent/Descent: 2000 feet (600m) This morning sees us set off in a fleet of 4x4s for a drive up to Jvari point (2170m) where we'll begin our walk through the Koruldi lakes. On the way, we will see countless summits and glaciers including Tetnuldi (4800m), Laila (4008m), Chatini (4012m), and Banguriani (3838m). Passing by a collection of small mountain lakes, we'll be rewarded with impressive 360-degree panoramas of the Greater Caucasus. After lunch in a scenic picnic spot, we'll descend back to Jvari and drive to the village Ushguli where we'll spend the night.

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### **Day 9:** Shkhara Glacier walk

Distance: 11 miles (18km) Ascent/Descent: 1050 feet (320m) Today's route takes us to the base of Georgia's highest mountain, Shkhara (5068m). A huge glacier, it's the source of the Svaneti region's main river, the Enguri. After reaching the edge of the glacier (2500m) we return to Ushguli and continue to Mestia, where we'll overnight in a guesthouse.

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### **Day 10:** Visit Zugdidi: travel to Kutaisi

Today we leave the Svaneti region and drive to Kutaisi. But before we go, there's time to visit Dadiani's Palace in Zugdidi. In the afternoon, we'll arrive at our hotel in Kutaisi.

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### **Day 11:** Mtskheta visit: return to Tbilisi

Our final day includes a visit to Motsameta Monastery which sits on a spectacular clifftop above the Tskaltsitela River – plus a stop in Georgia's ancient religious centre, Mtskheta. We'll explore Jvari Monastery and Svetitskhoveli cathedral, both of which are also listed by UNESCO. Afterwards, we'll drive to Tbilisi where we'll check in to our hotel for the final night of our trip. Together we'll enjoy a farewell dinner at a traditional Georgian restaurant.

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### **Day 12:** Departure Day

Transfer to Tbilisi airport for your return flight to the UK.

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## **Museum Hotel, Tbilisi - Georgia**

What was once the home of Georgian nobility is now a boutique hotel with bags of character. Each air-conditioned room has individually designed décor, marble bathrooms, and tea and coffee making facilities. The hotel's on-site restaurant serves local and international cuisine throughout the day while guests can enjoy cocktails and French pastries at Museum Café.

## **Family-run guesthouses - Georgia**

In Becho and Ushguli, we'll stay in traditional family-run guest houses. These small and friendly properties are a great way to experience authentic Georgian hospitality and local food, where group meals are taken in a cosy dining room. Guest rooms are simple but comfortable and come with private bathrooms.

## **Chalet Mestia, Mestia - Georgia**

Located in Mestia, just an 8-minute walk from the Museum of History and Ethnography in the regional centre of the Svaneti mountain region, the hotel features a bar and traditional Georgian restaurant with mountain views. Rooms feature WiFi, TV and private facilities.

## **Hotel Grand Opera, Kutaisi - Georgia**

Located by the Opera House in central Kutaisi, this 19th century former hotel palace was renovated into a boutique hotel in 2021, with stylish décor, featuring a bar, terrace and rooms with a desk, coffee machine, fridge, minibar, and safety deposit box.