

Georgia, High Mountain Adventure

13 June to 26 June 2021

Georgia is the new adventure playground, a wonderful land of high mountains and an amazing ancient Christian culture. We will be exploring the culture, staying in guest houses in the mountains savoring their local delicacies and wine.



Itinerary

Sunday 13 June, Tbilisi arrival day

Meet in Tbilisi international airport, transfer to a lovely guest house in Tbilisi. City tour walking around the old town exploring the historical sites of Tbilisi.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Evening meal tasting Georgian traditional delicacies. Overnight in Tbilisi
- Meals: (D)

Monday 14 June, 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: 100.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 800.0 m
- Accommodation: Overnight in a guest house
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 15 June, 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 1,700m. Overnight in guest house in Akhalkalaki.

- Route distance: 100 km
- Route altitude gain: 900 m
- Accommodation: Overnight in a guest house
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 16 June 2021, Akhalkalaki to Akhaltsikhe

Ride from Akhalkalaki to Akhaltsikhe. On the way we will visit Vardzia, an ancient cave monastery built in XI century by Queen Tamar. It is carved out of the living rock.

- Route distance: 100.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 500.0 m
- Accommodation: Overnight in a guest house
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 17 June 2021. Akhaltsikhe to Batumi

Today begins with a minibus transfer to the top of the Goderzi pass. (100kms). 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 (1700m) to Batumi.

- Route distance: 90 km
- Route altitude gain: 300 m
- Accommodation: Overnight in a hotel in Batumi
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 18 June 2021. Batumi, free day

Free day to spend at the beach on the Black Sea. Sub tropical Batumi has great beaches and many interesting places to visit including Botanical Gardens and a cable car that provides tremendous views of the city.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Overnight in a hotel in Batumi.
- Meals: (B, D)

Saturday 19 June 2021. Batumi to Anaklia

Ride from Batumi to Anaklia. The route is long, but largely flat along the Black Sea coast. We pass through Kobuletti where Tsar Alexander II built his summer palace and Grigoletti where people still come for the healing sands.

- Route distance: 140.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 600.0 m
- Accommodation: Overnight in an Anaklia guesthouse
- Meals: (B, D)

Sunday 20 June 2021. Anaklia to Khaishi

Ride from Anaklia to Khaishi, the road goes through the Caucasus Mountains with stunning views of the highest peaks.

- Route distance: 100.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1000.0 m
- Accommodation: Overnight in a guest house
- Meals: (B, D)

Monday 21 June 2021. Khaishi to Mazeri, then Mazeri to Mestia

This is a day of two halves.

Ride one; Khaishi to Mazeri

Option of walk to a waterfall at Mount Ushba.

Ride two; Mazeri to Mestia. Mestia is a delightful place to walk around and enjoy the restaurants. Stay 2 nights.

- Route distance: 85.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1500.0 m
- Accommodation: Overnight in Mestia guest house.
- Meals: (B, D)

Tuesday 22 June 2021. Free day at Mestia

Free day. Option of treks to:

1. Koruldi lakes and
2. Chalaidi glacier

Chairlift up Hatsvali mountain.

Overnight in Mestia.

- No cycling
- Accommodation: Overnight in Mestia guest house.
- Meals: (B, D)

Wednesday 23 June 2021. Mestia to Ushguli

Ride from Mestia to the highest village in Europe, Ushguli. Ushguli is at 2100m. We climb over a 2000m pass prior to climbing up to Ushguli. Stunning views of the Caucasus mountains.

The cycling distance is 50 km but the final 10 km is a gravel road, option of transfer. Stay overnight in guest house.

- Route distance: 60.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 1400.0 m
- Accommodation: Overnight in Ushguli guest house.
- Meals: (B, D)

Thursday 24 June 2021. Ushglui to mestia

Morning walk to the very interesting old village Ushguli and then continue on to the Shkhara glacier. On return we ride back to Mestia, largely downhill.

- Route distance: 60.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 200.0 m
- Accommodation: Overnight in Mestia guest house.
- Meals: (B, D)

Friday 25 June 2021. Mestia to Zugdidi

Cycle from Mestia to Zugdidi. 2000m descent.

Transfer to Tbilisi.

Overnight in Tbilisi

- Route distance: 130.0 km
- Route altitude gain: 200.0 m
- Accommodation: Hotel in Tbilisi
- Meals: (B, D)

Saturday 26 June 2021. Tbilisi

Free day in Tbilisi to pack and see some old parts of the city. Transfer back to the airport.

- No cycling
- Meals: (B)



Dates and Prices

Cost

- Land only price: £1580.0

Payment Schedule

A deposit of £160 per person must accompany the Booking Form, with the final balance of £1420 per person (plus any supplement) to be paid ten weeks prior to departure, by 03 April 2021.

Price includes:

- Return transfer from Tbilisi airport to Tbilisi hotel
- 13 nights guesthouse, sharing room
- 13 breakfasts, 13 dinners
- Vehicle support on cycling days
- Guided walks and tours
- Bikexplore costs

Price does not include:

- Travel to and from Tbilisi airport from your home

- Drinks with dinner
- Lunches or refreshments during the day
- Entry fees at any attractions visited
- Chair lifts and cable cars
- Other internal travel
- Any other personal expenses
- Travel Insurance
- Single occupancy supplement (£200, subject to availability).

Cancellations

Written Notice Received: Cancellation Charge

- 3rd April 2021: £160 (deposit)
 - 4th April to departure: £1580 (full amount plus any supplement).



Holiday Information

Tour overview

- 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 and monasteries, unclimbed peaks, wild natural beauty and hospitable people.

We will be stopping in small villages and staying in locally owned guesthouses with breakfast and dinner included. There are two rest days giving the opportunity to explore the area on foot. Georgia is also the home of wine and we will be tasting local varieties alongside the local delicacies. The tour is fully supported by experienced Georgian guides. There will be some walking in the more remote areas and there is the option of bike hire.

Accommodation

- Accommodation is generally quite good, but sometimes we may have to adapt as some of the villages we are travelling to are quite small. In the villages we will be staying in locally run guest houses. Vegetarians can be catered for, please put this down on your booking form.

Rooms

- Sharing

The nature of the holiday

- Cycling over mountainous terrain. Some long rides.

Rest Day

- There are two rest days mid tour. The first one is at Batumi on the shores of the Black Sea and the second one is at Mestia. There are options of treks at Mestia. Lunches are generally down to you; café stops or picnics.

Roads used

- Mainly quiet roads, some of them will be non-metalled. Some roads in Georgia are not as smooth as we would expect in western Europe.

Route Sheets

- These will be provided.

The area covered by the holiday

- Georgia nestles between Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan. and Russia, some of the highest peaks of the magnificent Caucasus mountains run through Georgia, its western flanks border the Black Sea and some amazing beaches.

At 2200m 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 is an ancient Christian culture with many ancient churches, monasteries and traditions, we will visit some churches and a monastery.

Group information

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

Weather and Clothing

- The weather is usually good in Georgia in June but we will be travelling to the high mountains some of which will be above 2000m. So, bring appropriate clothing. If you intend to do join in with the treks then bring appropriate clothing and footwear, we may even be walking up to the snowline.

Cycles / Equipment

- We recommend a good audax or gravel bike, any bike that can accommodate wide tyres. As some of the days will have lengthy gravel stretches it may cause problems to lightweight tyres. I recommend wider tyres than usual for 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 (e.g. small chainring the same size or smaller than the largest cog 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. You will not need to carry luggage, but a saddle, rack top, 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.

Travel

- There is no travel to Georgia included in this tour 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 to meet the tour, you should ensure that the tour is actually running, especially now during the pandemic. Georgia is aiming to start vaccinating their population in March. 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, although Georgian Airways seems to be the most convenient as far as I can see they are not actually operating at the moment. Please feel free to discuss flights with the Tour Manager before booking.

Maps

- Although you will be provided with route notes and GPX files and there will be a support vehicle, local guide as well as the Tour Manager. Please be prepared. Take a map with you in case you get separated from the group.

Additional holiday information

- Georgian 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; there is a main train line from the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea that runs through Tbilisi. there are a few branch lines too, you can travel by train from Batumi to Tbilisi. Alternatively there are the buses. They run round the main towns and longer distance ones go between the principal population centres.
The county is divided into regions, with greater or less autonomy. Tbilisi is in Eastern Georgia and we will be travelling towards the autonomous region of Adjara on the Black Sea and then into the Svaneti region.

Travel insurance and advice

- As Britain is not in the EU now your EHIC card is only valid until its expiry date, it will not be replaced. (It is not useful in Georgia anyway). Currently the government is looking at a GHIC card, but no further information is extant at the moment. In 2021 Britain does not have a reciprocal health agreement with Georgia. Please be aware that travel insurance is vital, and part of Bikexplore Ts and Cs. Please check with your provider to see if they cover the revised conditions of travel in Europe and elsewhere. Check also that Georgia is considered part of Europe, this may change from provider to provider. Georgia is 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.

Tour leader

- Greg Woodford. I am an experienced tour leader having run tours though Europe and further afield. I have cycled in many countries throughout Europe and in the Americas and Africa. I can speak Italian fluently and some Spanish and French. I am also an experienced cycle trainer and tutor and coach. I run ride leader courses for Cycling UK and ride leader workshops for my cycle training company, Avanti Cycling.