



Georgia's Food, Wine and Culture

[Named one of National Geographic Traveler magazine's ninth annual "50 Tours of a Lifetime"](#)

This program is fully escorted by Max Johnson, the founder of The Great Canadian Travel Company, and a frequent visitor to Georgia. The itinerary has been designed in conjunction with Georgia-based company Living Roots, to introduce participants to a wide variety of Georgian life, landscapes, history, food and of course, their remarkable natural wines.



12 Days /11 Nights

ITINERARY

This is the fourth year that we have offered this program. Our partners in Georgia, Living Roots, look forward to introducing you to the fascinating and surprising country of Georgia this September. The group size is kept small, with the aim to take you away from the major tourist destinations, to meet and experience the unique culture of this wonderful country located in the heart of The Caucasus.

Day 1, September 25: Arrival to Tbilisi, Georgia

Arrival in Tbilisi, and transfer to our accommodation confirmed for three nights at the Citrus Hotel. Arrival times in the Georgian capital may appear slightly eccentric, with many flights arriving between 0200 and 0300. Your rooms will be available from the afternoon of September 24th, and you will be met and transferred to the hotel regardless of the arrival time.

Day 2, September 26: Tbilisi

There will be an optional walking tour at 10.00 am for those who are up and ready that will explore the quirky center of Old Tbilisi; we will see the city from each side of the River and have an introduction to the remarkable stories of the early days of this strategically important town. Lunch will be at 1.00 pm, and later in the afternoon we shall wander over to the iconic wine bar, Vino Underground for our first introduction to the glories of Georgian wine.

Day 3, September 27: Tbilisi

The morning will be free to rest and adjust to the time zone, or explore the surrounding areas on your own. In the afternoon we will head out to Tbilisi to explore the Old Capital of Mtskheta and Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. This cathedral, founded in 1010, is one of the most sacred places in the country and is a fine introduction to the importance of the Georgian Orthodox church in the Georgian soul.

Day 4, September 28: Day trip to Kartli

Today we will leave the capital behind and head west. First to the unremarkable town of Gori, made famous only because of its native son, Stalin. We shall visit the extraordinary, and rather chilling museum to his life before continuing over the Likhi mountains to Kutaisi and finally to Tskutalbo, our overnight stop. This resort was built in the 1970s as a resort exclusively for high-ranking Soviet Naval offices, and is makes a delightful and unique place to stay.

Day 5, September 29: Mountains of Svaneti

Today we climb the mountains. After a coffee stop in Zugdidi, we will drive up the Svaneti Valley to Mestia. This region



is special, even by Georgian standards! The communities that populate this valley are distinct and historically fiercely independent. We will see some dramatic scenery, gorgeous mountains and villages that have been here since the dawn of time. Finally, we will reach Mestia, the regional capital and now a center for hiking, skiing and a variety of other mountain-based activities.

Day 6, September 30: Svaneti and Ushguli

Ushguli is a UNESCO World Heritage Site; it is extremely remote and life here is redolent of the middle ages. It has a collection of dramatic medieval towers, and lying as it does at 2,300m, it is the highest populated community in Europe. We will have time to explore the village in some detail, and if the weather is clear, have a dramatic view of Georgia's highest mountain, Shkhara which towers some 5,100m over the landscape.

Day 7, October 01: Back to the Lowlands

Today we head back down the mountain to Kutaisi, Georgia's second city, and an important provincial capital. It is blessed with a two UNESCO sites, and we will visit one, the Gelati Monastery, built in the early 1100s by King David. It is not only an architectural masterpiece, but also an important center of learning for centuries, and one of the first schools in the region.

Day 8, October 02: Imereti to Kakheti province

Today is a "Driving Day"; we shall start the morning in the local market before driving east. We will stop for lunch at Iago's Winery, a charming family wine producer in the Kartli region. Iago's wine is remarkable, and his was the first winery in the country to receive a bio-certificate for his vineyard and production. Skirting Tbilisi, we will enjoy the three-hour drive toward the Azeri border, and our next stop, this time for three nights, at Signaghi,

Day 9, October 03: Signaghi and vicinity

There are many opportunities for sightseeing in this quirky town; we will spend time in the morning exploring the town itself before driving a few kilometers away to visit the 9th century monastery of Bodbe. It now functions as a nunnery, and is one of the major pilgrimage sites in Georgia.

Following a short rest, we will have our dinner, a traditional Georgian Supra, at PheasantsTears. This restaurant and winery is one of the most vibrant in the country, and an exciting place to meet some of the finest Georgian wine, cuisine and be introduced to the unique polyphonic music.

Day 10, October 04: Territories of Alazani Valley

We will spend today exploring the region of Kakheti; we will see the main town of Telavi, and later visit the unusual and quite remarkable winery of Alaverdi. Here, wine has been made by the monks continuously since the year 1011, and they have got it right! We will enjoy a tasting here before returning to our hotel in Signaghi for our final evening in the Georgian countryside. Dinner will be at a local restaurant.

Day 11, October 05: Return to Tbilisi

We will drive back to Tbilisi today and have time in the afternoon for some independent sightseeing before our farewell dinner at Azarpesha, a unique cultural restaurant in the center of Tbilisi's Old City.

Day 12, October 06: Depart Georgia

Your departure from Georgia. Once again your flight may have an early departure time, but your room will be available to rest in prior to your airport transfer.

DEPARTURES & PRICING

Group Size: Max. 18

2017 Departures:

September: 25

2017 Pricing:

US\$2,970 - twin

US\$3,620 - single

Prices are shown per person in US\$ based on two people sharing a twin room and one person in a single.

INCLUDED

- Airport transfers



- 4 nights in Tbilisi
- 3 nights in Signaghi
- 1 night in Tskaltubo
- 2 nights in Mestia
- 1 night in Kutaisi
- Daily breakfast, lunch and 10 dinners
- Five wine tastings and two folkloric performances
- All entrance fees and excursions as detailed on the itinerary
- Transportation by coach throughout, with 4WD vehicles for the day excursion to Ushguli
- Fully escorted by local Georgian guide and “Max Globetrotter”

NOT INCLUDED

- Airfare to/from Tbilisi
- Items not mentioned in the above itinerary
- Gratuities
- Travel Insurance
- Items of a personal nature

TOUR NOTES

This program is fully escorted by **Max Johnson**, the founder of The Great Canadian Travel Company, and a thirty-seven year veteran of the travel industry. During his career, Max has visited over 120 countries, but Georgia remains one of his firm favourites, and his numerous visits there over the past nine years are a testament to that affection.

“It is a country” he says, “that embodies everything a visitor could wish for; history, scenery, fine food and wine, and above all spectacular hospitality”.

Terms: A non-refundable deposit of \$750 is required to confirm your place on the tour. The balance will be due no later than 45 days prior to departure. Once paid, all monies will be non-refundable, and we highly recommend that you purchase travel insurance to cover any potential issues that might otherwise cause you to lose money.

SPECIALS

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Georgia’s Food, Wine and Culture program is one of 2015’s most authentic, most innovative, most immersive, best-guided, and most sustainable tours. “This year marks 10th years of our editors selecting the world’s best guided tours,” said Norie Quintos, acting editor in chief of National Geographic Traveler. “In that time the types of immersive and experiential trips have only multiplied; tours are going farther and deeper than ever before. The trips and operators we selected are a model for the rest of the travel industry: They open the world to travelers and at the same time leave a positive impact on the destinations and its people.”

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