



Ateni Valley, located in Southern Shida Kartli, is one of Georgia's most prestigious historical regions in which the traces of early Georgian cultures can be found. Archaeological excavations prove that Ateni Valley has already been settled in the Bronze Age times. The (administrative) name Tana Gorge appeared in the years 500-600 AC. Tana Gorge was crossed by the central road connecting Shida Kartli with Zemo Kartli and Javakheti (part of the Silk Road). Ateni Valley is also known as a place of royal properties: as it was a fortified residence of Georgian kings and bishops. Founded in the 1st century BC, Ateni remained a preferred place of Georgian rulers, in particular of King David IX, before it was destroyed by Persian troops. During the Russian Empire, Ateni was reconstructed and gradually repopulated.

It is rough but soothing beauty, with the river Tana flowing down the entire valley, invites you to forget the fast pace of everyday life. It is varied and outstanding scenery ranges from steppe land to rolling hills and meadows, from river gorges to mountain peaks. From spring to winter, nature presents itself in a multitude of forms and colours. More than 50 cultural heritage sites can be found in this region, most of them from the 7th to 10th century. Discover these places surrounded by legends! There are wonderful walking treks you can follow to find out more about these stories as well as experiencing nature and watching birds.

Vere St. Virgin's Church – VII – XI cc. village Gardateni
Vere St. Virgin's church is situated in Shida Kartli, Gori Municipality,



at 5,5 km distance from the village Gardateni, on the left bank of the river Vere, in the forest.

Vere St. Virgin's church is dated to VI century; it was renovated in XI century. It is three-party basilica (10.7 m. x 7.5 m.), interior and exterior coated with red and gray stones. The building is heavily damaged: the arches and upper parts of the walls are ruined down, South and West gates are covered with ground. The Church has three entry gates: north, south and west gates. In east and west walls there are one window in each, and in other wall there are two windows in each. There are reminders of wall painting on the east and west walls united with decorative semi-pillars and divided into five segments.

On the north-west corner the stone ornaments contain script mentioning Ateni Tsikhistavi Gardateni, who rehabilitated and furnished with stone ornaments the church in 60s of the XI century.

Vere St. Virgin's church belongs to the Gori Eparchy of Georgian Orthodox patriarchy.

Vere Castle IX – X cc. - village Gardateni
The castle complex includes the following buildings: the fence, eastern tower, western tower and water basin.

Vere Castle is situated in Shida Kartli, Gori Municipality, at 3 km distance from the village Gardateni, in the river Tana gorge, on the slope bank of the river Vere.

It is dated to IX-X centuries. The Castle and its surroundings belonged to Tbilisi emirates. Together with the Ateni castle the Vere castle was also used as a fortification facility during the struggle for Kartli. From the end of X century the castle became a property of Kldekari Eristavi - Baghuashes (Georgian nobles). From XI century to the middle of XVI century the Vere Castle surroundings were under the Georgian Royal family's patronage. In summer of 1554 Shah Tamaz conquered Vere Castle and opened the way to the Ateni Castle, where mother of Kartli King Luarsab I and other noble families were hiding themselves.

In XVII – XVIII centuries The Castle was returned by the noble Tsitsishvili who made it the main point of the family. In 1638 the Kartli nobles' leader Nodar Tsitsishvili occupied the Castle to run the struggle against the Kartli King Rostom. The King set his troops around the Castle, conquered it and ruined it down. The noble Tsitsishvili escaped from the Castle.

As for the architectural characters of the Castle they are as follows:

a) The Castle develops in length (44.6 m. to the east and 14.8 m. to the west); it is built from stones. The building is seriously damaged; only 4-5 meter high fence is remaining on the slopes.

b) The eastern and western sides of the castle end up with different size and shape towers. Only a layout is remaining from the eastern tower.

c) The western tower is of an eclipse shape; the ground floor has cylindrical roofing connected to the castle yard with a large arch.

d) There is a large water basin in the castle yard at the southern wall of the fence.

Didi Gardateni St. Virgin's Church – developed feudal era - village Gardateni

Didi Gardateni St. Virgin's Church – is situated in Shida Kartli, Gori Municipality, at 6 km distance from the village Gardateni, in the river Tana gorge.

Didi Gardateni St. Virgin's Church is dated to the developed feudal era. The church has a hall-shape (8.2 m. x 4.7 m.) and is built of sandstone square. Interior is arch with architrave entrance from the south. There are small and larger niches in the walls. The eastern wall has fragments of wall paintings and scripts made by oil paints. The interior wall paintings are fully damaged, only colored dots are present on the wall fragments. The purple script-print on the northern wall has paleographic features of XII century. On the top of the eastern window there is a simple flat-angled cross with one bird on both sides.

St. Johann Baptist's Church – Feudal era - village Didi Ateni

St. Johann Baptist's Church – is situated in Shida Kartli, Gori Municipality, on the forest slope of the small gorge nearby the village Didi Ateni.

In 1980 the special scientific restoration union repaired the building and fortified the interior paintings.

St. Johann Baptist's Church – is dated to the transition period of the developed feudal era. The church has a hall-shape (7.3 m. x 4 m.), and is built of broken stones. Major parts of the church are heavily damaged. Only smaller fragments of wall paintings remain. It had arch entrances from south and west sides. The main hall has cylindrical roofing.

The church interior was fully painted. The colored dots remain in the niches and wall fragments. The wall painting was done in three registers: In the first register the Begging composition has an extended scheme including angels along with the main characters. In the third register the figures are furnished with floristic ornaments. The hall walls still remain fragments of subjective compositions: holy annunciation, angel's figure, and etc. the compositions are divided by tiny ornament lines. In colors blue, terracotta and gold prevail.

Ateni Sioni Church – VI c. - village Didi Ateni

The walls of Ateni Sioni still remain Old Georgian scripts mentioning historical and prominent names; they also give information regarding different historical matters and the dates along with the old Georgian poetry examples that are interesting in terms of both: content and technical execution.

Ateni Sioni Church is situated in Georgia, in Shida Kartli region, in Gori Municipality, 12 km. further from the village Ateni, on the bank of the river Tana.

The Church is a cross-domed building (24 x 19 m.; height 22 m.) repeating the type of "tetracon" (same as Mtskheta "Djvari" monastery), built of greenish and gray sandstone squares. Other color stones are also used on the southern and northern entrances. The main architectural composition is focused on the under-the-dome-square creating main pillar for the eightangled spheric dome based upon the curved arches. The dome itself is large, massive and low.

In the South-East and South-West corners of the roof there are stone curved ornaments of sheep heads, and in the north-east corner – there is a miniature of the church dome. The Dome and the whole building creates an effect of a large and massive and heavy building, especially, the eastern and southern facades coated with curved stones.

In front of the eastern façade there is a narrow path left that impedes to have a full vision of the ornaments and sculptural relief above the windows.

The main entrance into the church is furnished with dual round capitals with bases and decorative semi-rods. The southern façade is furnished with relief figures, the northern façade is furnished with the figures of two deer, under the upside – the Saints and in the left niche – two relief sacral scenes with scripts.

The relieves except the eastern one are almost displaced and the exterior coating is mainly replaced.

In the interior, after breaking the wall plasters the oldest décor fragments were found executed with red paint. The same paint is used for drawing the cross in the dome.

The church interior was fully painted in the second half of the XI century. According to the painting and writing manners we can assume that several painters worked simultaneously. Despite, the iconographic and artistic concept is the same. The iconographic scheme of the wall painting is dedicated to the ST. Virgin as the church is dedicated to her. The second layer compositions are rather strict and Monumental. The color is built on different tones of blue color – from light gray to pure cobalt combined with silver green, red and purple colors. The faces are modeled with light, slightly brownish tones. Ateni Sioni church wall painting is the significant example of Georgian monumental painting.

Kviratskhoveli Church – developed and late feudal era, cemetery of the village Didi Ateni

Didi Ateni Kviratskhoveli church is situated in Georgia, in Shida Kartli region, in Gori Municipality, on the cemetery in the western part of the village Ateni.

Didi Ateni Kviratskhoveli church is dated to developed and late feudal era. In 1980 the special scientific restoration union renovated the building.

Didi Ateni Kviratskhoveli church has a hall-type architecture (7x5 m.) and is built of irregular shape stones, in some fragments bricks are also used. It has two entrances: from north and west. Both entrances are flat-angled from outside and arch from inside. There are also smaller and rather larger square niches in the walls. The church is roofed with clay tiles. There are the fragments of the fencing around the church as well.

Orbeliani church - VIII – IX cc. village Didi Ateni

Orbeliani church - VIII – IX cc. in the village Didi Ateni is named after St. Virgin. It is situated in Georgia, Shida Kartli region, Gori Municipality, in the center of the village Didi Ateni.

On a façade, above the western entrance of the church there is a relief composition with the script: "Jesus Christ, bless in both worlds the noble Rat Eristavi, son of Liparit Eristavi, who built this church as a house of Lord and a Gate to the heaven. Bless their soils." We can assume that Rat Eristavi renovated the church in X century and announced himself as a builder of the "House of the Lord". The left wing of the building (5.7 x 3.9 m.) seems to be built by the priest David Davidov in 1870 as the script of the southern entrance informs.

The cross-domed church of Didi Ateni (7.2 x 7.9 m.) is a simple cross shape building built of regular stones in some fragments furnished with green tuff.

Tsero church complex, St. Virgin's church – beginning of XI c. - village Tseros Khevi

The complex includes the following buildings: the church, hall-church and ruins of several buildings thereto.

Tsero church complex is situated in Shida Kartli region, Gori Municipality, on the top of the Tseroskhevi 10 km. from the village Ateni and 2 km to north-west from Ateni Sioni.

As mentioned above the complex consists of different buildings. They can be described as follows:

a) St. Virgin's Church – cross-domed building (10.4 x 9.3 m.) built of shaped stone square. The building is seriously damaged: the northern and western walls are fully ruined down. Each wall has windows. On the southern wall of the building one can find old Georgian script mentioning the name "Rostevan" (builder of the church).

b) Hall type church (10x5 m.) presumably dated to feudal era. It is built of Shirimi stone. The building is damaged: the roofing and upper parts of the walls are ruined down.

c) Nearby the church, there are artificial terraces for agricultural use and a water basin.



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Public Transportation

city - Tbilisi.

Ateni Valley is located about 100 km from the capital

GETTING AROUND

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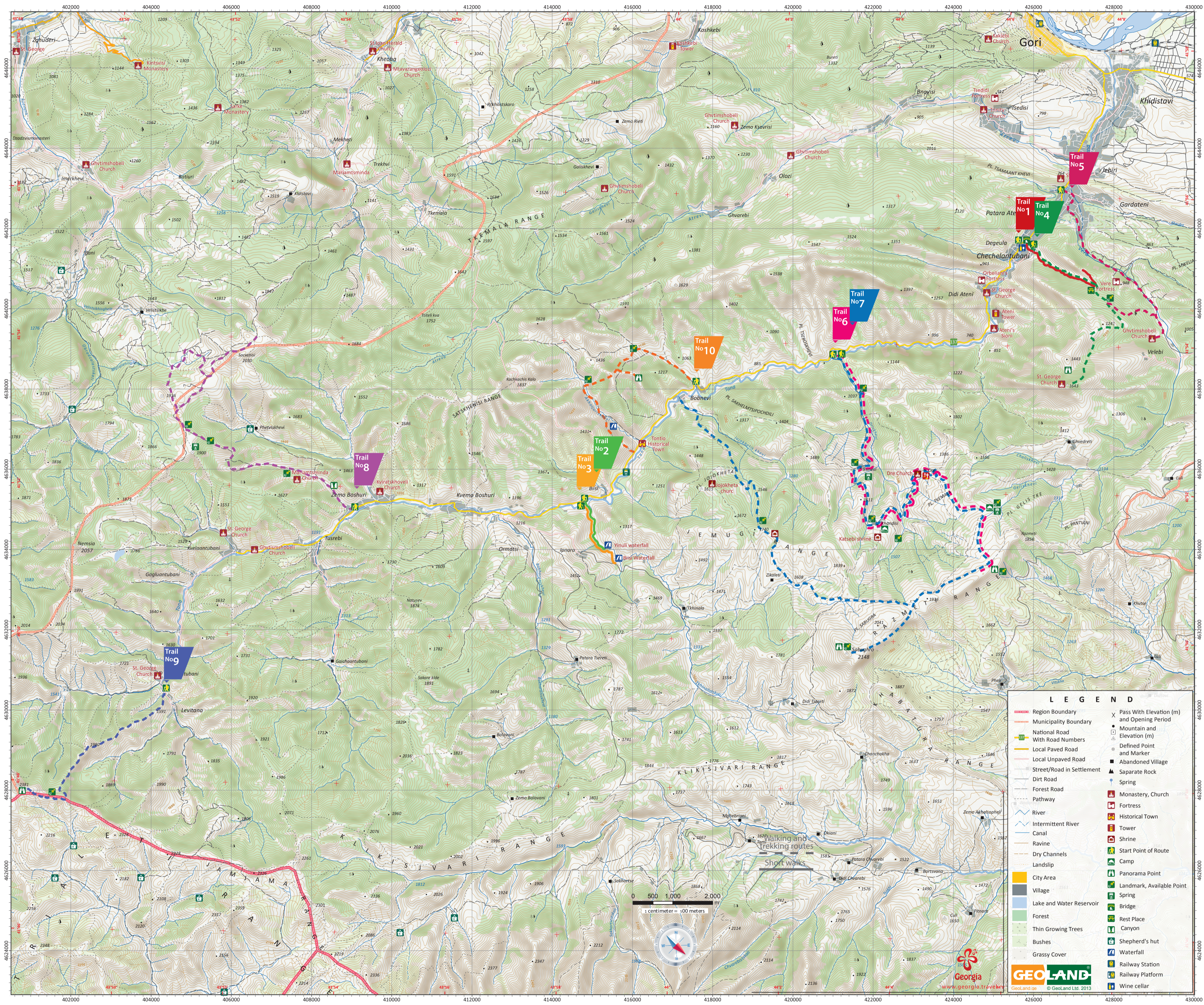
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HIKING ROUTES

- Vere Fortress - Cultural Walk
- Ice Climbing at Yinulis - Nature Walk in Winter
- Biisi Waterfall - Nature Walk in Summer

TREKKING ROUTES

- - - Danakhvisi
- - - Vere Monastery
- - - Razmiti - 1 day
- - - Razmiti - 2 day
- - - Satskhenisi
- - - Gvirgvina
- - - Akhaldjvari

BASIC GEORGIAN PHRASES

Hello	gamarjoba
Goodbye	nakhvamdis
Yes	ki, diakh
No	ara
Please	gthkovt
Thank you	gmadlob
Good	kargia
Bad	tsudia
My name is	me mqvia
Where is?	sad aris?
Water	tskali
Wine	g'wino
Toilet	tualeti



LEGEND

— Region Boundary	— Pass With Elevation (m) and Opening Period
— Municipality Boundary	● Mountain and Elevation (m)
— National Road With Road Numbers	○ Defined Point and Marker
— Local Paved Road	■ Abandoned Village
— Local Unpaved Road	▲ Separate Rock
— Street/Road in Settlement	▲ Spring
— Dirt Road	■ Monastery, Church
— Forest Road	■ Fortress
— Pathway	■ Historical Town
— River	■ Tower
— Intermittent River	■ Shrine
— Canal	■ Start Point of Route
— Ravine	■ Camp
— Dry Channels	■ Panorama Point
■ Landslip	■ Landmark, Available Point
■ City Area	■ Spring
■ Village	■ Bridge
■ Lake and Water Reservoir	■ Rest Place
■ Forest	■ Canyon
■ Thin Growing Trees	■ Shepherd's hut
■ Bushes	■ Waterfall
■ Grassy Cover	■ Railway Station
	■ Railway Platform
	■ Wine cellar

Scale: 0 500 1,000 2,000 centimeter = 100 meters

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