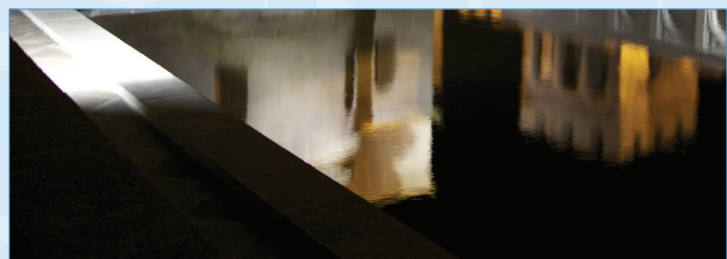


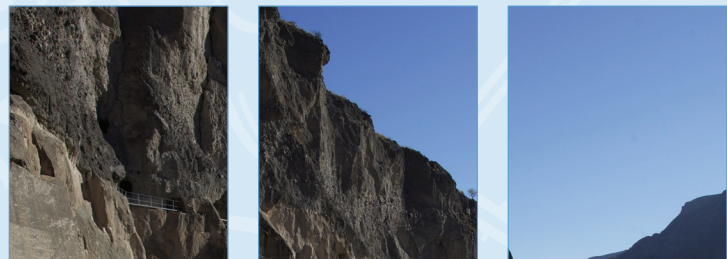
You really must see...



...the cave paintings of Vardzia...



...Akhaltzikhe Fortress...



...the amazing cave town of Vardzia

Samtskhe-Javakheti

WELCOME TO SAMTSKHE-JAVAKHETI

Samtskhe-Javakheti is a region that never stops surprising visitors, from the mineral springs of Borjomi to the ancient cave city of Vardzia. Historically one of the most important cultural centres in Georgia, much of the region today is virtually unknown to tourists, but this ancient land of cave cities and hilltop monasteries is once again opening its doors to the outside world – especially now that a new road means you can get here in just two hours from Tbilisi.

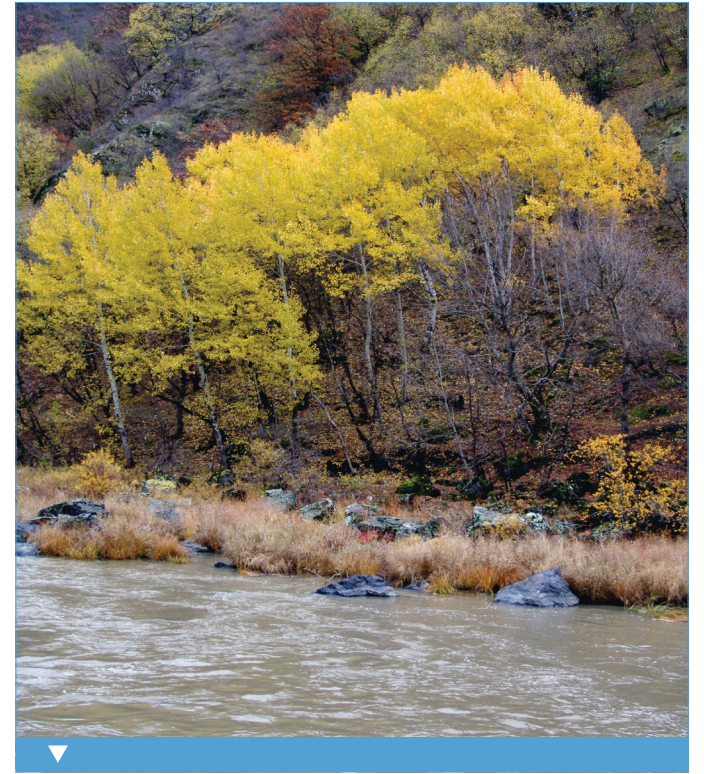
AGRO-TOURISM

It is a mountainous, volcanic region, traversed by ravines, springs and lakes, as well as large and fast moving rivers. But this diverse landscape provides a perfect cultivation area for the production of some of Georgia's most famous and best known traditional foods and cheeses. In many villages you can see the locals making their own cheese, and at Poka Monastery they make an incredible 18 different types of cheese, including their famous blue cheese. The region is also well known for its wheat which allows a unique type of delicious Georgian bread to be made: "Meskhuri Puri". You can see, smell and taste the result of thousands of years of cheese and bread making at the many guesthouses and restaurants throughout the region.



CULTURE

Samtskhe-Javakheti's location at the crossroads of three civilizations contributed to an intense development of relations between the ancient cultures of Georgia, Asia Minor, and the Middle East. Archaeological remains show that the area was particularly advanced by the Bronze Age and developed further through the medieval period. Today many monuments still stand to tell their remarkable stories and no modern traveller's journey to Georgia is complete without a visit to one or more of the Saro and Abuli castles, or Akhaltzikhe fortress, Safara and Zarzma Monastery complexes, Vardzia cave town, or the incredible mineral springs in Borjomi.



ADVENTURE

The only limit to the amount of adventure you can get here is the amount that you can take. Ski-jumping, on and off-piste skiing and snowboarding, cross country skiing, horse-riding, horse-drawn sleighs and snow-mobile tours to adjacent territories can all be found in or near the mountain resort of Bakuriani. And if you don't like the snowy mountains, try Aspindza district and hike or mountain-bike through the beautiful trails. Water enthusiasts can find tranquility in the regions' lakes which also offer amazing fishing possibilities, but if you are not afraid of a fast flowing mountain river and you like to feel a true adrenaline rush, go white water rafting on the river Mtkvari. This is also one of the best areas in Georgia to take a scenic mountain flight to take in all the stunning beauty of the rugged landscape.



RESORTS, SPAS AND MINERAL SPRINGS

The Park of Mineral Waters

The Mineral Water Park of Borjomi is a fascinating year round experience. Everyone has their own favorite season here, and they all have their own splendor and beauty. The park covers 30 hectares of the gorge and is the recreation center of Borjomi.

Borjomi Mineral Waters

The most famous and incredible thing about Borjomi is its unique mineral waters that are at least the equal of the world's best. Its natural high purity and healthy chemical components make it not only pleasant to drink but also a perfect preventive and curative against a number of diseases. The water is rich in the most important and necessary micro-elements for life and each spring in the region is characterized by the effect these various properties have on the wildlife. There are hundreds of different springs and each one has its own unique taste and temperature. The water's curative effects were well known to the locals since ancient times and a stone bathing tub dating back to the 1st century BC was recently found here.

Bakuriani

Bakuriani, the great mountain resort of Georgia, is a feast for snow-lovers and skiers. It is an internationally known winter sports centre, built to Olympic standards and Novices and children equally enjoy their first winter sports steps in this winter paradise.

Off the slopes, one of the most interesting places to visit in Bakuriani is the Botanical Garden, which opened in 1910. Over 1,500 species of plants provide a rich collection of Alpine and Sub-Alpine vegetation.

Abastumani

About 30km from Akhaltzikhe you reach the famous resort of Abastumani. The village is situated along the river Otskhe, which is crossed by numerous bridges. Its impressive old buildings have witnessed its glorious past, which reached its peak at the end of the 19th century. Today, two of the sanatoria have been restored and reopened to allow a new generation to enjoy the spa and its natural spring waters. Abastumani is also a starting point for hikes into the National Park; the Zekari Pass can be either climbed on foot, horse or mountain bike, from where you will be rewarded with a superb and unspoilt 360° panorama of high mountain peaks.

Atskuri Fortress

Atskuri is a former feudal fortress located on the river Mtkvari which dates back to at least the 10th century. The only entrance is a narrow tunnel cut into the cliff, which made the fortress so difficult to access that even once inside enemies were foiled by the guards.



Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park

The Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park is one of the largest in Europe and covers more than 76,000 hectares of native forest and sub-alpine and alpine meadows. It is the first National Park in the Caucasus to meet international standards and officially opened in 2001.

The flora and fauna found here is very diverse. Rare and endemic species listed in Georgia's Red Data Book (a list of endangered and protected species) can be found including a wonderful array of mammals. Among large carnivores it is possible to find gray wolves, lynx, and brown bears while roe deer and wild boar can frequently be seen. Among its native birds, the bird enthusiasts will easily spot rare species such as the golden eagle, griffon vulture, black vulture and the Caucasian black grouse.



Akhaltzikhe Fortress

18th century Akhaltzikhe Fortress is often called the symbol of tolerance, occupies around 7 hectares and was returned to its original appearance. A church, mosque, minaret, synagogue, as well as Jaqelebi Palace, a historic museum, old baths and a citadel, have been restored on the territory of Rabat Castle.

Saphara Monastery

Saphara Monastery is one of the most interesting monuments of Georgian architecture, located just 15 kilometres South-East of Akhaltzikhe. The first records of Saphara date back to the 10th century and in the 13-14th centuries the monastery included 12 churches and chapels. The monastery is surrounded by a wall equipped with an observation tower and even has a fortress where people from neighboring villages used to hide during times of war.

While the monastery was turned into a Pioneer youth camp in the Soviet age, its monastic status was re-claimed in 1988 and is still functioning today.

Golden Fortress (Okros Tsikhe)

The fortress was built in late 13th and early 14th centuries and is one of the largest fortresses in Georgia offering picturesque views from its highest towers.

Chule Monastery

Chule St. George Monastery, dating back to 1308, is located in the foothills in the vicinity of Adigeni. Its access road passes through a narrow rocky ravine covered by coniferous forests and a tight passage through the hills, a spectacular experience.



Zarzma Monastery

Zarzma Monastery, located on top of a hill, includes a church bell tower, a chapel, ruins of two churches and a spring. The oldest records mentioning a monastery in the same area are contained in a book describing the life of Serapion of Zarzma, who came from Tao-Klarjeti together with his brother in the 9th century. Presently Zarzma is an acting monastery.

Khertvisi Fortress

The Khertvisi Fortress was built on a rocky mountain at the junction of the Artaani Mtkvari and Javakheti Mtkvari rivers. The first record of Khertvisi is part of a legend, in which it was one of the first fortresses that Alexander the Great came across in Georgia.

An inscription on a damaged stone reads "The King of the Kings" and is dated from 985. A small church located in the central part of the fortress had been ruined but was reconstructed in 2000. Khertvisi was built by Georgians to protect the country, but in the second half of the 16th century Osmons (a Turkish tribe) started to fortify it into a stronghold, making it easy for them to conquer Georgia. Part of the fortress has remained unharmed and still has a tunnel leading to the river. Another part of the original fortress – a twenty metre high tower

- is still in good condition

Vani Caverns

This noteworthy Georgian architectural and cultural monument consists of about 200 caves built into the rocky cliffs and rises over 16 levels. The Vani Cavern complex included a monastery in the 8-16th centuries and the small church built here still bears an inscription in the original Mkhedruli alphabet which dates back to the late 15th century.



Tmogvi Fortress

In 630-660 AD Sargis Tmogveli, an honorable political figure and philosopher, worked and lived here. Tmogvi fortress later became one of the most important fortress-cities in Georgia, and is located on a rocky hill overlooking the Mtkvari river. First mentioned in the historic chronicles of the 10th century, the upper and lower sides of the fortress are connected by a secret tunnel. The ruins of an old village, located on both banks of a river, can still be seen.

Vardzia

The cave town of Vardzia is one of the most important and impressive historic monuments in Georgia. At an altitude of 1300 metres above sea level, and starting 100 metres above the valley floor, the caves continue up for half a kilometre and had 13 floors, connected by a complex system of tunnels.

Vardzia was built by King George III in 1156-1184 and this incredible town quickly grew to consist of over 3,000 caves that could accommodate 50,000 people at a time. The Vardzia complex had living quarters, refectories, barns, wine cellars (marani), stables, drugstores and even libraries. The town had a potable water supply and a sewerage system. A monastery still exists and practices in the caves today.

Poka Monastery

The establishment of Poka Monastery is credited to St. Nino of Cappadocia who is said to have brought Christianity into Georgia. Saint Nino came to Georgia through Javakheti and stopped near Pharavani Lake where she had a vision of an angel who gave her a letter addressed to the pagan King. In the 11th century a cathedral was built at this very spot.

As a result of invasions in the 17th century, Javakheti, and the cathedral were destroyed but you can still see the remains of the original stone church, including fragments of the original frescos. In the early 19th century Georgia re-gained the territory and two Orthodox Christian monasteries were founded in Poka in the end of the 20th. century. The St. Nino Nunnery and a monastery located one and a half kilometres from the village. Both monasteries are still open and in use.

Kumurdo

The village of Kumurdo and Bishop of Kumurdo are first mentioned in the historic chronicles of the 6th century. A cathedral dating back to the 10th century still exists in the village and it is a fine and high-quality example of Georgian architecture. The inscriptions remaining on the walls tell us it was built during the reign of Abkhazian King Leon in 964.

Samtskhe-Javakheti Historical Museum

The Museum is located in the old castle, the Rabat. Here you will find and see rare and preserved archeological and ethnographical materials, old manuscripts detailing the stories of the region including a fragment of the manuscript of "The Knight in the Panther's Skin," Georgia's most famous poem, consisting of over 1600 verses and written in the 12th century at the Royal Court of Queen Tamar of Georgia.

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Georgian National Tourism Administration
 Tbilisi, Georgia
 4, Samtskhe St., 0105, Tbilisi, Georgia
 www.georgia.travel

Samtskhe-Javakheti

ENGLISH

Georgia

Country of life

Samtskhe-Javakheti

GETTING AROUND

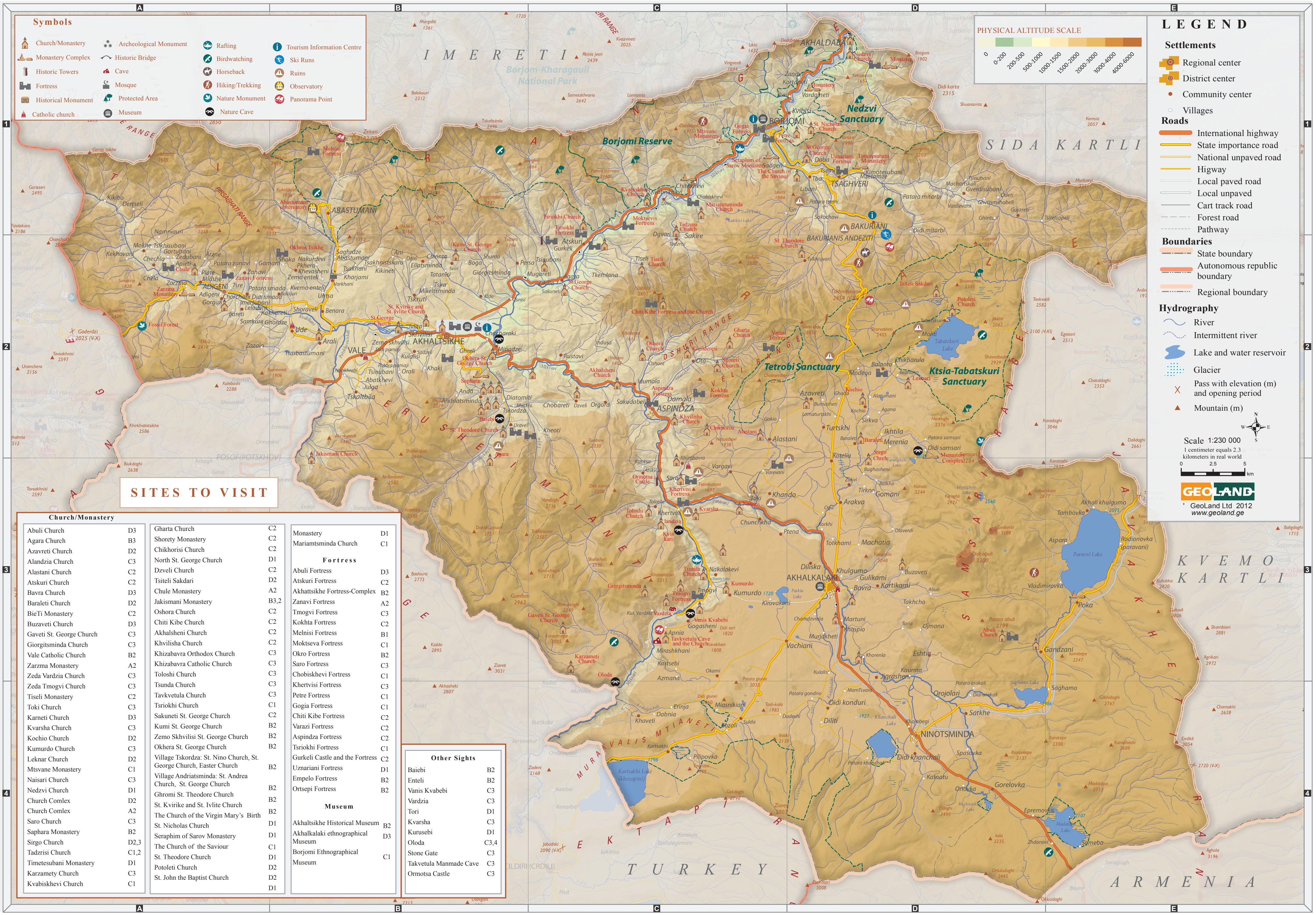
Samtskhe-Javakheti is bordered by the regions of Adjara to the west, Guria and Imereti to the north, Shida Kartli and Kvemo Kartli to the north-east and to the east, and by Armenia and Turkey to the south and southwest. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the South Caucasus natural gas pipeline, and the Kars-Tbilisi-Baku railway pass through the region.

7 Borjomi Tourism
 Information Center
 Address: 17, Agmashenebeli Str.,
 Phone: (+995 367) 22 13 97
 E-Mail: tchborjomi@gmail.com
 Working Hours: 10:00 - 18:00

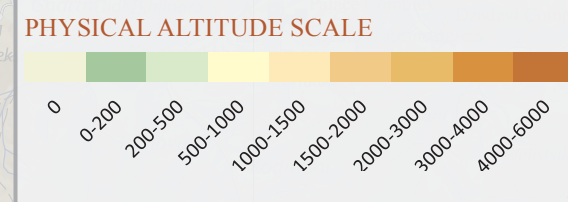
7 Bakuriani Tourism
 Information Center
 Address: 17, Agmashenebeli Str.,
 Phone: (+995 365) 22 50 28
 E-Mail: tchbakuriani@gmail.com
 Working Hours: 10:00 - 18:00

7 Akhaltzikhe Tourism
 Information Center
 Address: 1, Khartachirashvili Str.,
 Phone: (+995 365) 22 50 28
 E-Mail: tchakhaltzikhe@gmail.com
 Working Hours: 09:00 - 18:00
 (Summer - 09:00 - 19:00)

You can also take the train from Tbilisi's Central Railway Station at Station Square 2. Minibuses run regularly to Samtskhe-Javakheti from Tbilisi "Djude" Bus Station (4, Karalistsr). Taxis can be hired from the city. You can also take the train from Tbilisi's Central Railway Station at Station Square 2.



- ### Symbols
- Church/Monastery
 - Monastery Complex
 - Historic Towers
 - Fortress
 - Historical Monument
 - Catholic church
 - Archeological Monument
 - Historic Bridge
 - Cave
 - Mosque
 - Protected Area
 - Museum
 - Rafting
 - Birdwatching
 - Horseback
 - Hiking/Trekking
 - Nature Monument
 - Nature Cave
 - Tourism Information Centre
 - Ski Runs
 - Ruins
 - Observatory
 - Panorama Point



- ### LEGEND
- #### Settlements
- Regional center
 - District center
 - Community center
 - Villages
- #### Roads
- International highway
 - State importance road
 - National unpaved road
 - Highway
 - Local paved road
 - Local unpaved
 - Cart track road
 - Forest road
 - Pathway
- #### Boundaries
- State boundary
 - Autonomous republic boundary
 - Regional boundary
- #### Hydrography
- River
 - Intermittent river
 - Lake and water reservoir
 - Glacier
 - Pass with elevation (m) and opening period
 - Mountain (m)
- Scale 1:230 000
1 centimeter equals 2.3 kilometers in real world
- GEOLAND**
Geoland Ltd 2012
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SITES TO VISIT

Church/Monastery		
Abuli Church	D3	
Agara Church	B3	
Azavreti Church	D2	
Alandzia Church	C3	
Alastani Church	C2	
Atskuri Church	C2	
Bavra Church	D3	
Baraleti Church	D2	
BieTi Monastery	C2	
Buzaveti Church	D3	
Gaveti St. George Church	C3	
Giorgitsminda Church	C3	
Vale Catholic Church	B2	
Zarzma Monastery	A2	
Zeda Vardzia Church	C3	
Zeda Tmogvi Church	C3	
Tseli Monastery	C2	
Toki Church	C3	
Karneti Church	D3	
Kvarsha Church	C3	
Kochi Church	D2	
Kumurdo Church	C3	
Leknar Church	D2	
Mtsvane Monastery	C1	
Naisari Church	C3	
Nedzvi Church	D1	
Church Complex	D2	
Church Complex	A2	
Saro Church	C3	
Saphara Monastery	B2	
Sirgo Church	D2,3	
Tadzrisi Church	C1,2	
Timetesubani Monastery	D1	
Karzamety Church	C3	
Kvabiskhevi Church	C1	
Gharta Church	C2	
Shoretly Monastery	C2	
Chikhorski Church	C2	
North St. George Church	D1	
Dzveli Church	C2	
Tsiteli Sakdari	D2	
Chule Monastery	A2	
Jakismani Monastery	B3,2	
Oshora Church	C2	
Chiti Kibe Church	C2	
Akhalshevi Church	C3	
Khvilisha Church	C2	
Khizabavra Orthodox Church	C3	
Khizabavra Catholic Church	C3	
Toloshi Church	C3	
Tsunda Church	C3	
Tavkvetula Church	C3	
Tsriokhi Church	C1	
Sakuneti St. George Church	C2	
Kumi St. George Church	B2	
Zemo Skhvilisi St. George Church	B2	
Okhera St. George Church	B2	
Village Tskordza: St. Nino Church, St. George Church, Easter Church	B2	
Village Andriatsminda: St. Andrea Church, St. George Church	B2	
Ghromi St. Theodore Church	B2	
St. Kvirike and St. Ivli Church	B2	
The Church of the Virgin Mary's Birth	B2	
St. Nicholas Church	D1	
Seraphim of Sarov Monastery	D1	
The Church of the Saviour	C1	
St. Theodore Church	D1	
Potolei Church	D2	
St. John the Baptist Church	D2	
Monastery	D1	
Mariamsminda Church	C1	

Fortress

Abuli Fortress	D3
Atskuri Fortress	C2
Akhatsikhe Fortress-Complex	B2
Zanavi Fortress	A2
Tmogvi Fortress	C3
Kokhta Fortress	C2
Melisi Fortress	B1
Moktseva Fortress	C1
Okro Fortress	B2
Saro Fortress	C3
Chobiskhevi Fortress	C1
Khertvisi Fortress	C3
Petre Fortress	C3
Gogia Fortress	C1
Chiti Kibe Fortress	C2
Varazi Fortress	C2
Aspindza Fortress	C2
Tsriokhi Fortress	C1
Gurkeli Castle and the Fortress	C2
Uznariani Fortress	D1
Empelo Fortress	B2
Ortsepi Fortress	B2

Other Sights

Baiebi	B2
Enteli	B2
Vanis Kvabebi	C3
Vardzia	C3
Tori	D1
Kvarsha	C3
Kurusebi	D1
Oloda	C3,4
Stone Gate	C3
Takvetula Manmade Cave	C3
Ormotsa Castle	C3
Akhalsikhe Historical Museum	B2
Akhalkalaki ethnographical Museum	D3
Borjomi Ethnographical Museum	C1