

emotions are  
**Georgia**



# AH, THE HEALING **POWERS** *of* NATURE

 National Parks  
of Georgia



# A PARADISE FOR NATURE LOVERS

For centuries, philosophers have spoken of “the tonic of wildness.” The curative properties of connecting with pure, pristine nature. It brings feelings of calm and contentment. More recently, studies have shown that spending time outdoors has a vast range of health benefits, from boosting your immune system to enhancing creativity. In fact, according to one study, just seeing trees can make us feel healthier.

And should you find yourself wanting to partake of the healing powers of nature, Georgia is here for you. From the mighty Caucasus Mountains--Europe’s highest--to the whispering forests, to the placid seaside, Georgia offers a seemingly endless variety of ways to comfort the soul.

Of course, outdoor activity in Georgia can be just as stimulating as it is soothing. Trekking, mountain biking and skiing are sure ways to feel the joy of flowing endorphins. Mountaineering, horseback riding, whitewater rafting and kayaking can elevate both your heartbeat and spirits. Imagine paragliding in the Caucasus.

This is how it feels to experience the great outdoors in Georgia. Connected. Comforted. Free.

**1** The unspoiled beauty of Lagodekhi National Park







# NATURAL ATTRACTIONS

## ბუნებრივი ღირშესანიშნ

### Natural Protected Areas

- 1 Lagodekhi National Park
- 2 Vashlovani National Park
- 3 Algeti National Park
- 4 Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park
- 5 Martvili & Okatse Nature Reserves
- 6 Kolkheti National Park
- 7 Prometheus Cave & Sataplia Caves
- 8 Kazbegi National Park
- 9 Tusheti National Park
- 10 Pshav-Khevsureti National Park
- 11 Tbilisi National Park
- 12 Mtirala National Park
- 13 Javakheti National Park
- 14 Machakhela National Park
- 15 Kintrishi National Park
- 16 Kobuleti National Park
- 17 Chachuna National Park
- 18 Ajameti National Park

### Ski Resorts

- 1 Mestia
- 2 Gudauri
- 3 Bakuriani
- 4 Goderdzi

### Spa Resorts

- 1 Tbilisi
- 2 Borjomi
- 3 Tskaltubo
- 4 Sairme
- 5 Nunisi



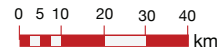


# აღმოსავლეთი საქართველო

Russian Federation  
Caucasus Mountains

## LEGEND

- 1 Natural Protected Areas
- 1 Ski Resort
- 1 Spa Resort
- River
- Main Road
- Secondary Road
- Occupied Territories
- Cities
- Town/village
- Airport



Armenia

Azerbaijan



# THE CAUCASUS MOUNTAINS

## TITANS THROUGH TIME

Majestically spanning between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, the Caucasus Mountains are Europe's tallest, reaching heights of 5,000 meters. The Greater Caucasus run west-northwest to east-southeast, The Lesser Caucasus run parallel, though approximately 100 kilometers to the south. They both run through Georgia.

In the Caucasus, the altitude is not the only thing that will take your breath away. From rugged snow-capped peaks, to gentle rolling forests, the mountains deliver feelings of delight at virtually every turn. Peaks like Ushba in Svaneti, Mount Khvamli in Racha-Lechkhumi and Mkinvartsveri peak in Mtskheta-Mtianeti, also known as Mount Kazbegi, present a daunting challenge for even the most seasoned climbers. High-altitude resorts like Gudauri offer some of Europe's finest skiing, and the mighty Rioni River is full of fish just waiting to be caught, and rapids to be run.

Inhospitable as they may seem, the Caucasus are home to a number of villages, most centuries-old. The town of Stepantsmida, or Kazbegi, is a jumping off point for skiers and mountaineers, and home of the iconic Gergeti Trinity Church. Stone towers dot Ushguli (Svaneti), one of the highest continually occupied settlements in Europe (2,000 meters) and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Situated on the south slope of the Greater Caucasus, Chiora is one of the most scenic villages in Racha.

You'll inevitably feel a flood of emotions when encountering the Caucasus Mountains. From being humbled by their towering peaks, to calmed by their verdant valleys, these Georgian giants always leave an impression.



2 Stone carvings of prominent Georgians just outside Kazbegi



3 The dramatic beauty of the Caucasus



მთაო, რად აბრე ჰბუღღოღოღ,  
უბრად ღაჰყუბრეღ ბარსაო?!  
რადგანეღს ქოჩოთ ბოხქეჩოღს  
მოთ არ უყარეღს თანსაო?



სადღეს ვღღუბეღოთ, აბაყოღ,  
თოქეღოთა, ყოჩეღოთაო,  
ჰანსაჰა, ურმან-მაროთა,  
პოჩოთ ნაქარეღი ბუღ-მპეჩეღი,  
ზინეღს აბრეღს ბარსა  
ღოღი სოღღოღეღი სოღოთა,  
ზინეღს აბრეღს ბარსა  
ღოღი სოღღოღეღი სოღოთა,

4 Up for a challenge? Ushba is often considered the most difficult climb in the Caucasus.



# YOUR MOMENT IN THE SUN

A port city on the Black Sea, Batumi was once the main port on the ancient Silk Road. Today visitors luxuriate on the beach, meander through the historic town center, and stroll the “Boulevard,” a 7 kilometer walkway that runs along the seashore.

Batumi is a city that’s easy to love with its narrow streets and colorful buildings. Cafe culture is alive and well here, especially during the warmer months when a stop at a sidewalk cafe can delight you with hours of people watching.

Other resort towns dot the shoreline, as well, offering spas and other rejuvenations for weary bodies and souls. Anaklia is home to several music festivals. Kvartati is nestled between the mountains and the shore, and a healing beach holiday can be yours in Kobuleti.

Just 9 kilometers out of town, the Batumi Botanical Garden is renowned for its spectacular portfolio of flora (over 5,000 species), and views of the Black Sea that will make you feel joyful and in the moment. And what a moment it is.

**5** A seaside sunset in Batumi





**6** The Batumi Botanical Gardens make for a placid escape



**7** Defying gravity, fittingly, in Miracle Park



**8** Savor the pleasure of a leisurely bike ride



# SPAS, WELLNESS AND CENTURIES OF HEALING

Sometimes you just want to feel at ease. Relaxed. At peace with yourself and the world. Georgia can help.

With its natural beauty, abundant thermal and mineral waters, and curative mud deposits, Georgia can easily rank among the world's leading health and wellness destinations. There are numerous spa and wellness resorts spread across the country, each with its own soothing appeal.

There are up to 2000 mineral and thermal springs found throughout the country. The naturally warm sulfur springs that run beneath the capital city of **Tbilisi** have been calming and curing visitors from around the world since the fifth century.

The town of **Borjomi** located in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region is known for its mineral water which is sourced from a 1,500-year old volcanic spring and contains over 60 different mineral compounds.

The resort town of **Tskaltubo** is located in western Georgia, and home to several spas and its unique radon-carbonate mineral springs. Located in the Imereti region, the scenic **Resort Sairme** is an ideal place to forget your daily routine, and ease your mind and body.

For centuries, visitors have flocked to picturesque **Nunisi** for its mineral waters, and forest microclimate. The resort towns of **Ureki** and **Grigoleti** are known for their warm, sunny Black Sea beaches and the healing properties of the area's magnetic sands.



9 Enjoying Borjomi water straight from the spring



10 The sulfur baths of Tbilisi use a thermal spring to soothe and relax



მთაო, რად ებრე ჰბეღეღოღოღ,  
ცხადე ღაჰეღეღეღ ბანსემო?!



11 An elegant opportunity to sip legendary spring water, the Mineral Water Pavilion in Borjomi Central Park



# PROTECTING WHAT IS PRECIOUS

Georgia boasts no less than 94 natural protected areas, covering 798,287 hectares almost 11,5% of the entire country. Here you can bathe in the natural bliss in 13 spectacular national parks that offer a variety of climate zones, settings, and wildlife.

**12** An aerial view of the badlands of Vashlovani National Park







# LAGODEKHI NATIONAL PARK: GEORGIA'S FIRST PROTECTED AREA

This is the one that started it all. Back in 1912, the government of Georgia recognized it had something worth protecting, and declared Lagodekhi (now Lagodekhi National Park) its first natural protected area. And as far as Lagodekhi is concerned, not much has changed since.

Your spirit will soar when you encounter Lagodekhi's well-preserved beech and hornbeam virgin forests, and astounding views of the Alazani valley and the Caucasus Mountains. Five well-marked nature trails will take hikers to amazing views of Grouse Waterfall, Ninoskhevi Waterfall, Matchi Fortress, Black Rock Lake and Nature Interpretation Path. Keep your eyes peeled for roe deer and wild boar.





**14** The solace of solitude



**15** Just outside of Lagodehki, the charming town of Sighnaghi is known as “The City of Love”



#### ACTIVITIES:

- hiking
- horseback riding
- picnic
- camping



#### NEARBY ATTRACTIONS:

- St. Nino Bodbe Church. A Georgian Orthodox monastic complex built in the fourth century.
- Sighnaghi. A quaint and charming town that moves at a relaxed pace.
- Gremi Archangel Monastery. An impressive three-building complex built atop a hill in 1565 by King Levan.
- Nekresi. Renowned for its ancient basilica.
- Alaverdi Monastery. The earliest structures here date back to the sixth century. The cathedral is a part the 11th century Georgian Orthodox monastery.



# VASHLOVANI NATIONAL PARK: GEORGIA'S BADLANDS

Vashlovani National Park is quite simply like nowhere else in Georgia. You'll feel a sense of wonder when you are standing in the midst of a semi-desert, yet can see the snowy peaks of the Caucasus in the distance.

Often called the "Georgian Badlands" because of its rugged and barren landscape, Vashlovani, is a bird-watcher's paradise. Griffon vultures soar against the backdrop of hanging cliffs, while swallows build virtual cities on steep clay plateaus and the rare oak trees.

Seven hiking routes showcase Vashlovani's unique landscapes: forests, floodplains, semi-arid deserts, mountains, canyons and gorges. The paths are clearly marked and offer bungalows, picnic spots, and camping sites along the way.

For a feeling of magical adventure, Vashlovani always delivers.

**16** The Goitered gazelle employs effective camouflage





**17** The perfect environment for contemplation and inspiration



**18** The rugged beauty of Vashlovani



#### ACTIVITIES:

- hiking
- birdwatching
- picnic
- camping



#### NEARBY ATTRACTIONS:

- Alazani Floodplain Forest Natural Monument. Brimming with flora native to floodplain forests: perennial walnut, ash, oak and elm,
- Artsivi (Eagle) Gorge Natural Monument. A unique complex consisting of two sites: a limestone canyon, and an adjacent forested area, where Khornabuji fortress was built.
- St. Elias Church. A fifth/sixth century church on Mount Elias.
- Niko Piroshmanashvili State Museum. In the village of Mirzaani, it's home to original works by Niko Piroshmani.



# ALGETI NATIONAL PARK: ACCESSIBLE NATURE

---

Although located just one hour from Tbilisi, Algeti National Park will make you feel like you've entered a whole new world.

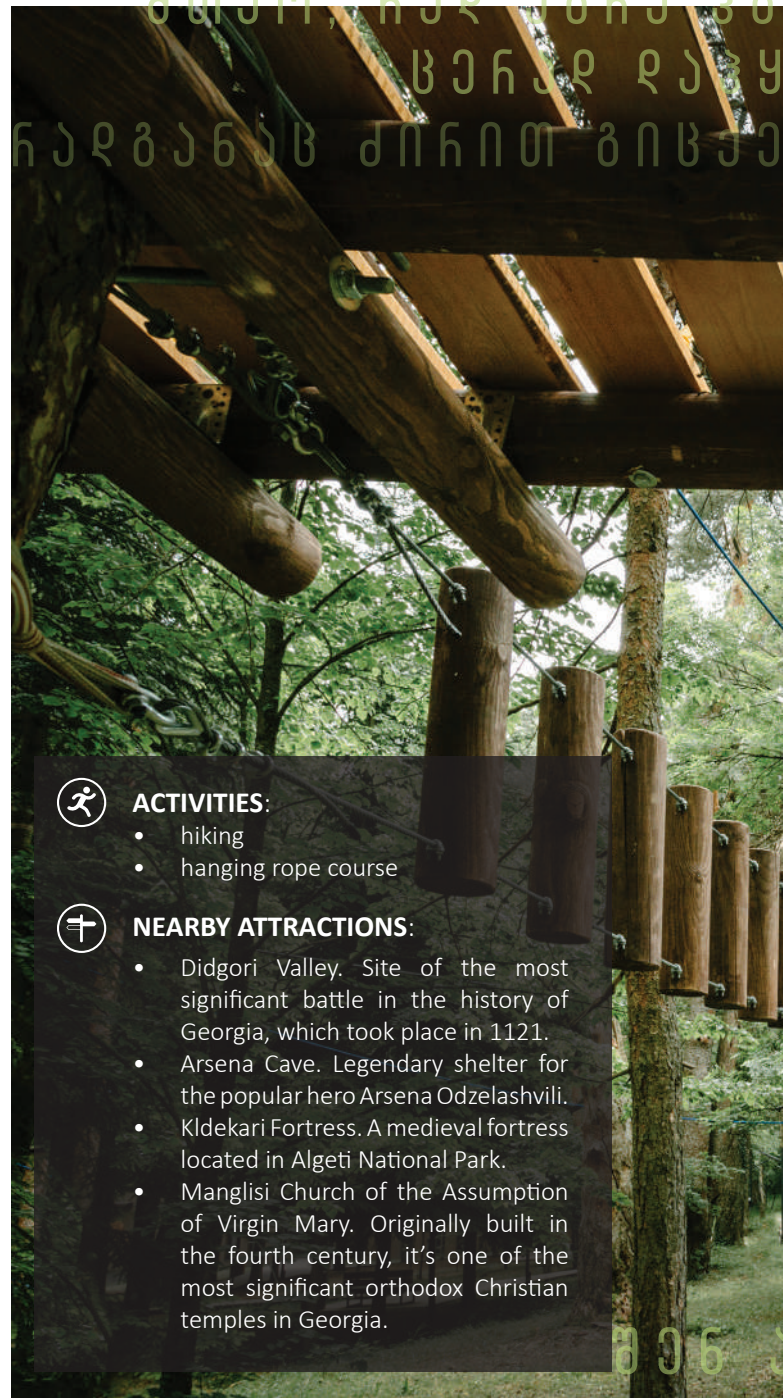
Algeti is characterized by rugged mountains and numerous small rivers and ravines. The view of the Algeti River Valley and the mountains covered with mixed forest will leave an undeniable impression, as will the medieval fortress of Birtvisi and the Georgia Samshvilde Canyon. Dashbashi Canyon is one of Europe's largest, and offers a pleasant day hike that doesn't require any special equipment.

For a unique, treetop experience, try the hanging rope park in Algeti. A series of elevated rope bridges, aerial tightropes, swinging log steps and moving platforms create a challenge that doesn't sacrifice safety. There are courses for both kids and adults.

If you're in Georgia's capital city, and feel the need for a quick escape to nature, Algeti National Park could be just what you need.

---

**19** The Algeti hanging rope park, not your everyday challenge





უღიღრმე  
უჩაბე, ბნისა  
ჩისა

ოქროს ნაქანბი ბუღ-მკანდი,

ამით ნაქანბი ბუღ-მკანდი



ღიღრმე  
ამბონს ბანი

ღიღრმე ბანი

ოქროს ნაქანბი ბუღ-მკანდი,  
ზარ მანბანიღიღრმე



# BORJOMI-KHARAGAULI NATIONAL PARK: A HIKER'S PARADISE

Explore one of the most picturesque corners of the Caucasus: Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park. Come feel energized by the fresh air, mineral waters, and spectacular mountain vistas.

Borjomi-Kharagauli is a hiker's dream. The park offers single day or multiple day hikes encompassing every degree of difficulty. Along the way, take advantage of tourist shelters, picnic and camping spots, and fire pits.

While hiking in the summer is a definite thrill, why limit your explorations to warm weather? Strap on some snowshoes and discover the unique pleasure of Borjomi-Kharagauli in the winter. Fresh snow and blue sky days lead to cozy nights in one of the park's cottages.

When you're ready to feel all the wonder the Lesser Caucasus have to offer, Borjomi-Kharagauli is here for you.





**21** Chitakhevi Ranger Shelter on the Snow Shoe Trail



**22** Like hiking through heaven



**ACTIVITIES:**

- hiking
- snowshoe hiking (winter)
- horseback riding
- mountain biking
- picnic
- camping



**NEARBY ATTRACTIONS:**

- Goderdzi Petrified Forest. Near the village of Zarzma.
- Mtsvane (Green) Monastery. An active monastery that dates back to the ninth century.
- Vardzia. A 12/13th century cave monastery carved into the side of a mountain.
- Rabat. A ninth-century fortress that is considered a symbol of tolerance.
- Sapara. A monastery from the tenth century.
- Timotesubani Church. A 12/13th century church built with the support of Shalva Akhaltsikheli.
- The domed Church of Seraphoim of Sarov. In the village Samreklo, a domed church located 3 km east of the municipality center.



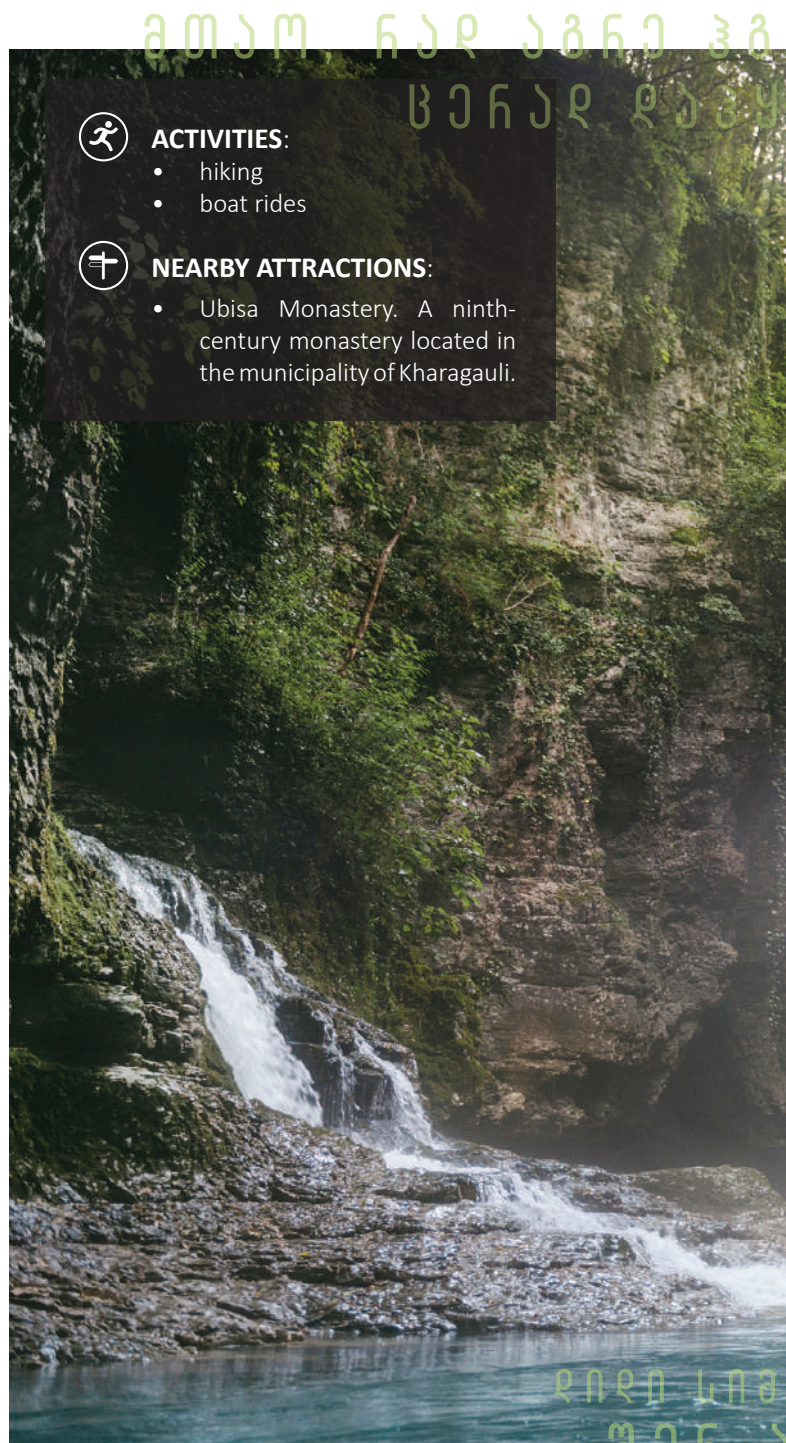
# MARTVILI NATIONAL PARK AND OKATSE CANYON: GO DEEP

One of the most popular attractions in all of Georgia, Martvili Canyon offers the stunning beauty of a dramatic landscape, and a cooling respite from the Georgian summer.

Only 45 kilometers from Kutaisi, the twisting labyrinths of the canyon can be explored by a gentle boating adventure, guaranteed to arouse feelings of peace and serenity. If, however, you prefer a little more active adventure, you can hike the 700-meter circular hiking trail that starts from the visitors' center and passes through Dadiani's historic walkway. There are two bridges, three viewing platforms, and 30-step historic staircase built from limestone.

Fans of waterfalls will feel overjoyed while exploring Okatse Canyon. The canyon is home to the Okatse River, which boasts several waterfalls, including the Kinchka waterfall, one of the tallest in all of Georgia.

The hiking here is quite dramatic, with a pathway that hugs a cliff face and offers exceptional views of the river below. This the 780-meters long, 152-meters high trail goes to the Dadiani Historic Forest Park, where you'll feel as if you walked into a landscape painting. The last part of the pathway ends with a cantilever bridge overhanging the canyon. Look down for a beautiful, if mildly frightening view.



#### ACTIVITIES:

- hiking
- boat rides



#### NEARBY ATTRACTIONS:

- Ubisa Monastery. A ninth-century monastery located in the municipality of Kharagauli.



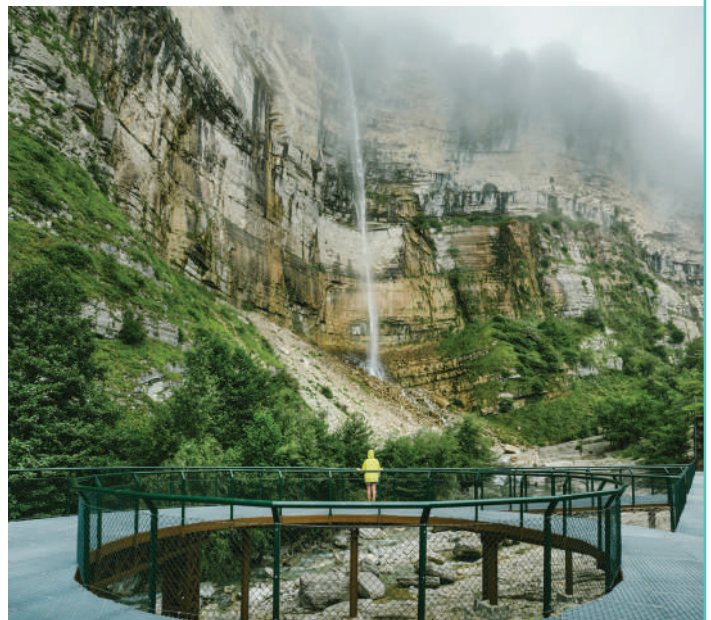
უცხო მსოფლიო,  
სადაც ბანსაო?!  
ოქროს ნაქანები ბუნების



დინების ნიღბი,  
სადაც მომხდომის ბანი



24 Rising above it all in Okatse Canyon



25 Okatse Waterfall and its natural splendor



# KOLKHETI NATIONAL PARK: THE GEORGIAN AMAZON

From the Black Sea port city of Poti, travel to a most unique section of the country, the Kolkheti National Park, known as the “Georgian Amazon” due to its ancient Colchis forests and wetlands.

Like the original Amazon, Kolkheti is rich in wildlife. It’s not unusual for visitors to feel the unique joy that comes from watching dolphins frolicking in the Black Sea. Bird watchers have plenty of species to observe here, especially during the migratory seasons of late spring and early autumn. Observation towers are arranged in the park to observe more than 100 different species of migratory birds.

Visiting Kolkheti National Park is recommended all year round. In the rivers, Churia and Pichori Valleys, as well as on Paliastomi and Golden Lake, it is possible to plan boating, pontooning and kayaking, allowing you to experience the Colchis forest and unique swamps from the water.

**26** Kolkheti is home to 100+ species of bird. Look for some on this stand in Lake Paliastomi.



## ACTIVITIES:

- hiking
- bird watching
- boat rides
- kayaking
- sport fishing
- hanging ropes park



## NEARBY ATTRACTIONS:

- Nokalakevi (also known as Tsikhegoji or Archeopolis. A small village with one of the most significant monuments of the early medieval period in Georgia.
- Dadiani Palace. A museum with relics of the Georgian royal family.





უღრმეს, უნებ ბანსაო?!  
მძროთ ნაქანბი ბურ-ბანბრი



მბ რილი სიბერიანი სიღრმე,  
ჩანდ მთბმონს ბანისა



27 Tourist cottage on the Pichori River



28 Soft adventure on the Pichori River



# IMERETI CAVES NATURAL MONUMENTS: UNDERGROUND SPECTACLE

In addition to being home to some of Georgia's oldest and most popular wineries, the region of Imereti is known for its fascinating caves.

**Sataplia Cave.** Deep below Mount Sataplia, you'll encounter labyrinths of karst caves and rare, fossilized dinosaurs tracks. Estimated to be 120 million years old, this is one of only three places on earth where such tracks can be seen.

**Prometheus Cave.** You can't help but feel awestruck walking through the wide corridors and grand halls of one of Georgia's most popular attractions. Neon lights and classical music bring a unique ambiance to stunning curtains of stalactites and stalagmites. A one-hour tour ends with a boat ride on the River Kumistavi.

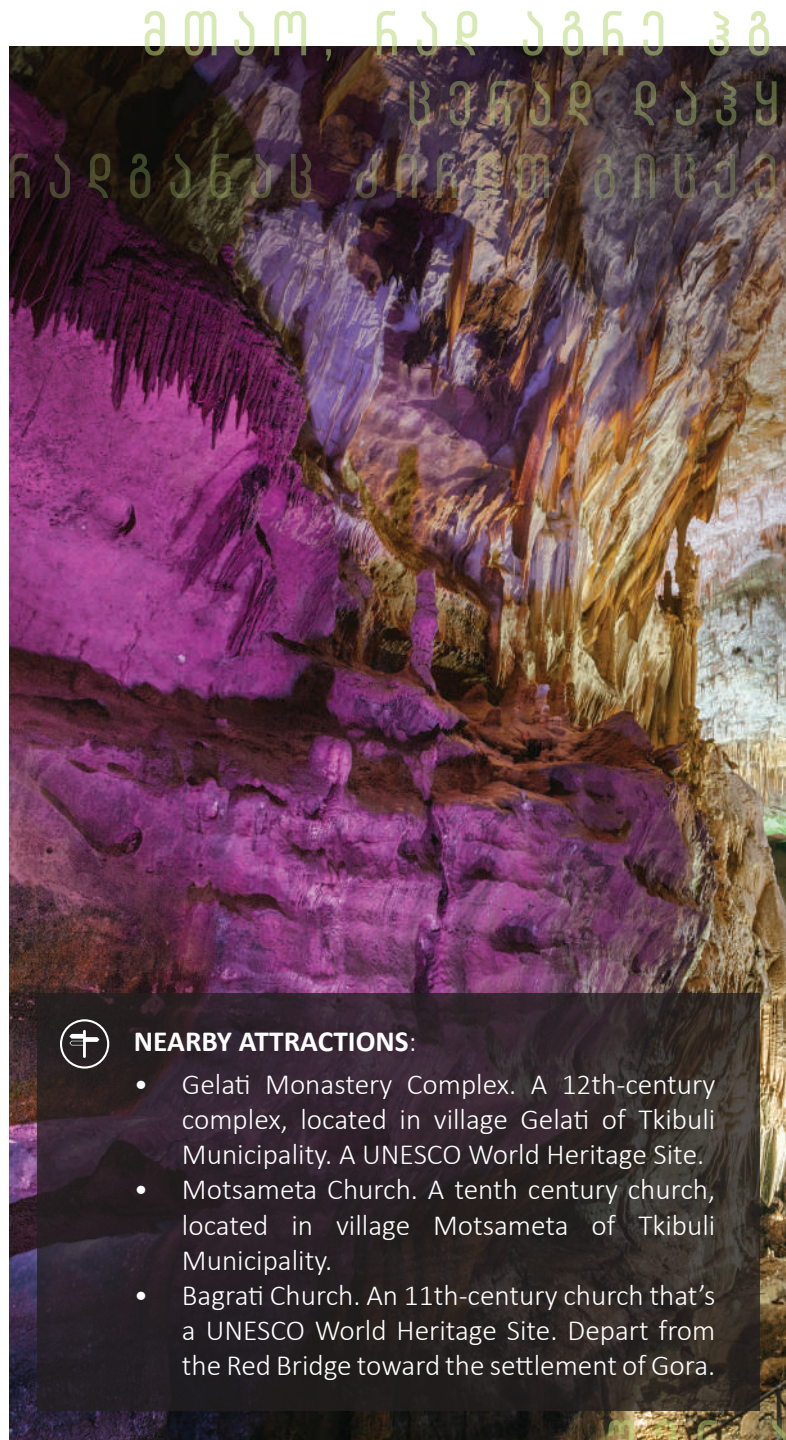
**Navenakhevi Cave.** A 250 meter-high, two-story cave comprised of four caverns.

**Mukhura Cave.** Known for its three cascading waterfalls and two lakes.

**Melouri Cave.** One of the largest caves in Georgia, a stream has carved out a canyon in the final part of the cave.

**Bgheri Cave.** This massive cave measures 1,700 meters in length, and has a total area of 14,000 square meters.

**29** Prometheus Cave, a singular subterranean experience



## NEARBY ATTRACTIONS:

- Gelati Monastery Complex. A 12th-century complex, located in village Gelati of Tkibuli Municipality. A UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Motsameta Church. A tenth century church, located in village Motsameta of Tkibuli Municipality.
- Bagrati Church. An 11th-century church that's a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Depart from the Red Bridge toward the settlement of Gora.



უღრმესი,  
უჩინესი ბუნება?  
ყველაზე ნათესავი ბუნება.



ჩინარე მოგზოვნე ბუნების



30 The observation deck at the Sataplia Nature Reserve



31 Interior of the nearby Gelati Monastery Complex



# KAZBEGI NATIONAL PARK: GEM OF THE CAUCASUS

---

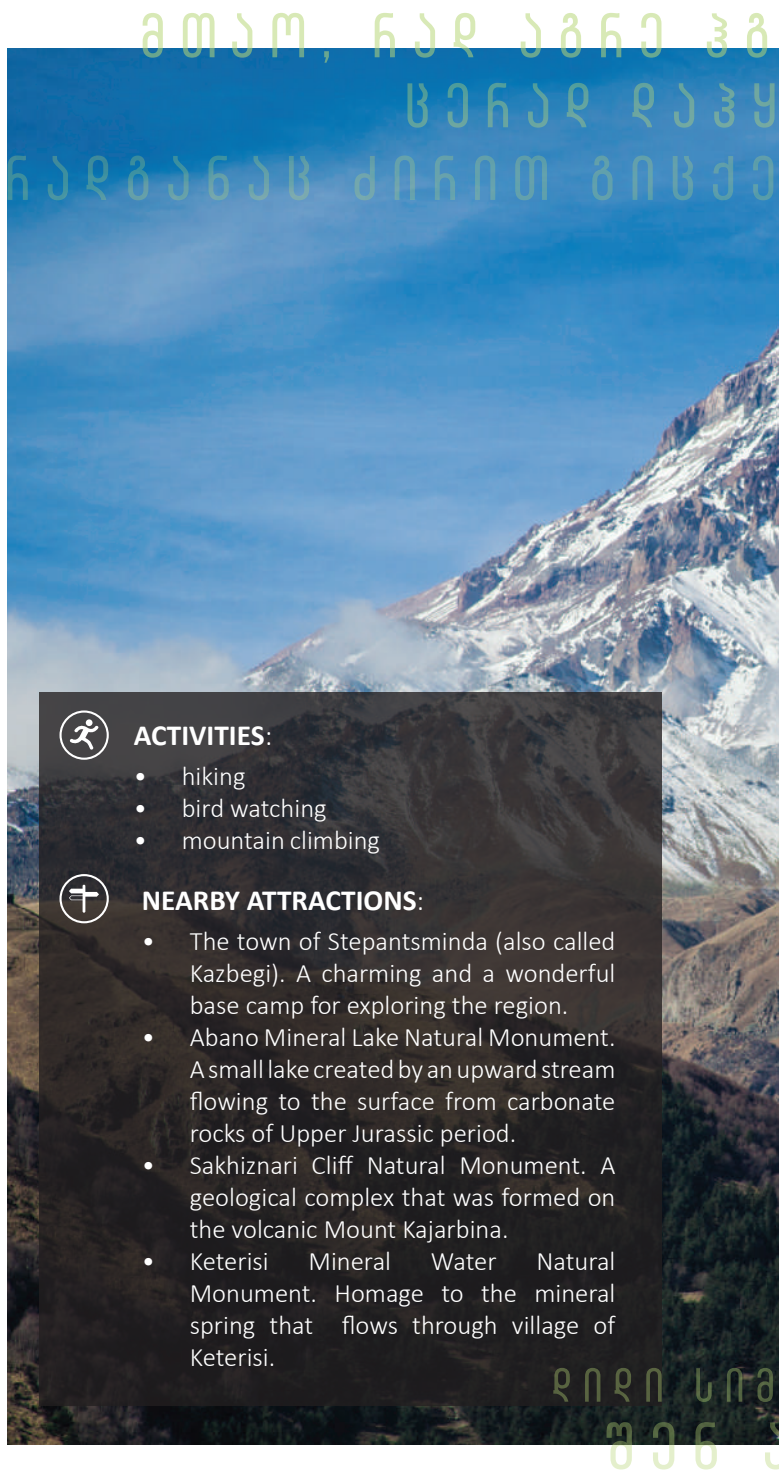
Alpine meadows, moraines, snow-covered peaks and unpaved cliffs await you in Kazbegi National Park. Located in the Greater Caucasus Mountains, the park owes its name to Georgia's highest peak, Mount Kazbegi, and is one of Georgia's most popular hiking spots.

At spots within Kazbegi, the cliff faces are more than 1,000 meters high. Medieval watchtowers, waterfalls and wildlife make this one of the most stimulating parks in the world. The steep valleys on either side of the gorge are great places for bird watching. Eagles, hawks and the massive griffon vultures all nest among the rocky outcrops.

Kazbegi is known for its scenic gorges, including Truso Gorge with its historic cultural monuments, towers and mineral springs. Dariali Gorge is famous for its waterfalls and lakes; Gveleti Waterfall descends into a heart-shaped lake, giving it the name "lake of love." Khada Gorge boasts many beautiful waterfalls, and challenging peaks for alpinists, such as Shavana, and Shani.

---

**32** Mt. Kazbegi, Georgia's highest peak



#### ACTIVITIES:

- hiking
- bird watching
- mountain climbing



#### NEARBY ATTRACTIONS:

- The town of Stepantsminda (also called Kazbegi). A charming and a wonderful base camp for exploring the region.
- Abano Mineral Lake Natural Monument. A small lake created by an upward stream flowing to the surface from carbonate rocks of Upper Jurassic period.
- Sakhznari Cliff Natural Monument. A geological complex that was formed on the volcanic Mount Kajarbina.
- Keterisi Mineral Water Natural Monument. Homage to the mineral spring that flows through village of Keterisi.



უღრმესი,  
უჩინო ბუნება?  
რის მძიმე ნაქანები ბუნებაში



ღრმა ხილვით,  
ჩვენი მთების ბუნება



**33** Riding the thermals through Kazbegi



**34** Top of the world



# AN ABUNDANCE OF WONDER

From the daunting drama of Kazbegi and the Caucasus Mountains, to the semi-desert of Vashlovani and the Black Sea “Amazon” of Kolkheti, the national parks and protected areas of Georgia deliver a full panoply of emotions. Feelings of excitement, awe, calm and connectedness are perfectly understandable.

Whether it’s getting your adrenaline pumping with a fresh-air activity, or simply kicking back and taking in the serenity of the scene, Georgia can provide you with ample doses of the “tonic of wildness.” It’s a remedy we citizens of the modern world can always use more of.

**35** The badlands of Vashlovani National Park







# TRAVEL INFORMATION SECTION

## #EmotionsAreGeorgia

### Visa Requirements

The visa policy of Georgia became comparatively liberal, allowing citizens of 98 countries to enter, reside, work and study in Georgia without the necessity to obtain either a visa or residence permit. In addition, the Georgian Government approved the list of 50 countries whose visa and/or residence permit holders may enter Georgia without a visa for an appropriate period and under appropriate conditions.

**For more information please visit the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia**

[www.mfa.gov.ge](http://www.mfa.gov.ge)

### Connectivity

Georgia, with its strategic location at the crossroad of Europe and Asia, features itself as regional logistics and transit hub offering easy access to key markets. There are modern international airports operating

in different parts of the country which accelerate the increase of tourists flows. Flights are operated by various airlines from over 50 directions from/to Georgia. [www.kutaisi.aero](http://www.kutaisi.aero); [www.tavgeorgia.com](http://www.tavgeorgia.com)

### Climate

The climate of the country is extremely diverse. Average temperatures in summer range from 19°C to 22 °C, and in winter from 1.5 °C to 3 °C.

### Electricity

Electrical current - 220 volts, 50 Hz. EU standards plugs work throughout Georgia.

### Currency

The currency in Georgia is the Georgian Lari. ATMs can be found in major towns and cities. Credit and debit cards are widely used in major cities.

### Communication

The country code is +995. Georgia's mobile operators are present in most parts of the country, and there are many Wi-Fi zones that enable visitors to use the internet for free.

### Health

For emergency services, please call 112.

For more information, please visit:

**[www.georgia.travel](http://www.georgia.travel)**

**Hotline 0 800 800 909**

The views expressed in the publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

With the financial support from the USAID Economic Security Program



**USAID**  
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THE USAID ECONOMIC  
SECURITY PROGRAM



საქართველოს დაცული ტერიტორიების აგენტი  
AGENCY OF PROTECTED AREAS