



Wine and culinary tour in Georgia

"There is no other country in the world where people drink so much high-quality wine", - traveler Jean Chardin wrote about Georgia. Long before the French traveler such authorities of antiquity, as Strabo, Herodotus and Plutarch, successfully treated themselves to Georgian wine of "Saperavi" varieties. The origin of the word "wine" is thought to derive from Georgian "Gvino". A Georgian food is rightly counted among the best cuisines in the world, with abundance of original flavors and unusual combinations. This tour is for food-lovers! By coming with us you get to know a country rife with sunlight, saturated with bouquets of freshly-baked Lavash bread and fermenting wines. Sit back and enjoy, we are embarking on a voyage across wine seas and culinary shores!

Day 1. Arrival in Georgia
Day 2. Tour: Tbilisi - Mtskheta
Day 3. Tour: Tbilisi - Signagi - Kvareli - Telavi
Day 4. Tour: Telavi - Tbilisi
Day 5. Tour: Tbilisi - Kutaisi - Tskaltubo
Day 6. Tour: Tskaltubo - Nikortsminda - Batumi
Day 7. Tour: Batumi - Khulo - Batumi
Day 8. Tour: Batumi - Tbilisi
Day 9. Farewell to Georgia

Duration: 9 days / 8 nights
Distance: 1 600 kilometers
Stay:
Tbilisi – 4 nights
Telavi – 1 night
Tskaltubo – 1 night
Batumi – 2 nights

Day 1. Arrival in Georgia

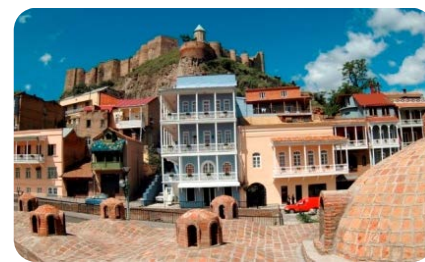
Meeting at the airport and transfer to Tbilisi hotel. Settling at the hotel, introduction to the tour program and a free evening. It can be devoted to your first meeting with Georgian wine and cuisine in a restaurant where they will be ready to show you the wealth of Georgian folklore, fiery national dances and famous Georgian polyphonic singing.

Day 2. Tour: Tbilisi - Mtskheta - Tbilisi

Sightseeing tour of Tbilisi - the eclectic city of contrasts, combining architecture of different eras, the spirit of freedom and unique flavour. The next stop - Georgia in miniature! At the ethnographic museum we will get acquainted with diverse lifestyles of various regions of the world's most hospitable country. A glass of the best Georgian brandy "Sarajishvili" spreads around the body with velvety warmth and prepares for impressive moments that will follow. Tasting session at the old brandy factory will be followed by a visit to a wine shop in the heart of the Georgian capital. Before buying alcoholic treasures from the best Georgian producers' spirits can be tried to fully appreciate the bouquet and strength of the drink.

Mtskheta - the ancient capital of ancient Iberia and religious center of the country. Today it is a city-museum protected by UNESCO. Jvari is a masterpiece of the architectural art of the VI century. Style, form and perfect proportions of the church continue to captivate architects to this day. Svetitskhoveli - Living Pillar is the main religious monument in Georgia. Surrounded by a stone wall the cathedral served as a fortress during wars, while it was a repository of books and church treasures in peace times. Amazing frescoes of the XI century and legends that are so interwoven with historical facts will not leave anyone uninterested! Nunnery of Samtavro preserves artifacts related to work of Equal to the Apostles Saint Nino. Within the walls of the church there are tombs of King Mirian and Queen Nana, who declared Christianity as the state religion of Georgia.

The feast of the spirit gradually gives way to the feast of the body. Chateau Mukhrani will surprise with its huge wine cellar and upscale atmosphere of the ancient aristocratic estate. And tasting of products of this winery will prepare us for the real Georgian feast - "supra". Dinner at the restaurant "Mravaljamieri" offers ethnic cuisine, homemade wine, folk dances and songs. All this - under watchful supervision of table and toast master "tamada" without whom a Georgian feast is unthinkable.



Day 3. Tour: Tbilisi - Signagi - Kvareli - Telavi

Do not get carried away with breakfast in the hotel as today we will travel to the most delicious region of Georgia. It is the region where traditions of feast are most honored, where they have been preserving unique Georgian methods of wine-making for centuries, where only organic and natural products are used to prepare food and guests are never let to leave hungry or sober. Our "ship" is on its way to Kakheti!

First we are met by the city of love - love of the vine, of open, good people and, of course, the most valuable thing for a Georgian - fertile Georgian land. Signagi is a medieval town surrounded by a stone wall. You will not be deceived by the Southern- Italian-inspired architecture; after all unique Georgian spirit prevails everywhere and in everything. At the wine house "Pheasant Tears" you can see a real Georgian wine cellar "marani". Here you will learn about technology of wine-making in clay amphoras "kvevri" that are usually buried in the ground. At the place you can also taste the fruits of the traditional Kakhetian winemaking.



Then we "drop the anchor" in Kvareli, one of the largest wine storages of the world. Eight kilometers of tunnels, once breached into the solid rock as a bomb shelter, now serve as a wine cellar for a well-known brand "Khareba". On top of the facility there are cozy balconies with tables. To make stunning views of the fertile Alazani Valley even better you will need a cup of coffee or a glass of noble wines.

Not far away, high on the hillside stands the Nekresi Monastery. It's not just lovers of beautiful panoramas that will be interested in the monument. An inquisitive visitor will learn about the ancient Georgian inscriptions on the wall of Nekresi Church and see the monastery wine cellar preserved from the Middle Ages. Next stop is Gremi, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Kakheti. This is one of those places where archaeologists have found traces of winemaking from the period some 8000 years ago.

Culinary culmination of the day awaits us in Telavi. A table laden with food and drinks is laid in the main city of Kakheti, right in the cellar. But do not rush! First try your hand at baking a real Georgian bread "shoti" in a real Georgian furnace "tone", make a traditional Georgian sweet "churchkhela" that is made of nuts and grape juice, roast "mtsvidi" on a charcoal barbecue... And then - you will be welcomed at the table with homecooked meals and the best house wines. Bon appétit!

Day 4. Tour: Telavi - Tbilisi

Care to visit a bazaar? Witness a variety of fruits, vegetables, fragrant herbs and fragrant spices? You are on the right track! A new day will begin with a walk through Telavi outdoor market. From there we go right on the modern winery "Badagoni". Shuamta Monastery will dilute the wine day with its cool dense forests and stories from the ancient past. Old legends continue to excite our imagination at the medieval academy of Ikalto. Educational center in Eastern Georgia raised the greatest Georgian Poet of the XII century Shota Rustaveli and had the largest winery in those days.

We will land to the cradle of the Georgian wine-making when arriving at the Alaverdi Cathedral. This great cathedral houses the most ancient wine cellar in Georgia. Here, back in the VIII century they had large-scale production of wine, which was believed to be curative. Traditions die hard, so you will have a unique opportunity to taste the wine in the millennial monastic "Marani"!

Not long after that, we will find ourselves in house-museum Tsinandali. At this point begins the second, European life of the Georgian wine. Prominent figure of the XIX century, Prince Chavchavadze was first to produce bottled wine in his estate by European technology and export it abroad.

Famous "Tsinandali" can be enjoyed immediately after inspection of the Georgian manor house of the representative of the Georgian nobility. Then comes the main event of the day: you will take part in annual "rtveli" - a festive harvesting of grapes! Kakhetian feast will again delight us with abundance of traditional supper before we return to Tbilisi by traveling through a scenic road across the Gombori pass.

Our odyssey continues. Let us steer towards Western Georgia, in the footsteps of the legendary Argonauts! But first we go to the ancient city of Uplistsike carved in rock. Its history goes back to 3000 years! Uplistsikhe was a pagan centre in the pre-Christian era. And here, too, were found amphoras "kvevri" with petrified grape seeds! These amphoras and various handmade potteries for cooking of Georgian dishes, after all this dishes that indeed give its special flavor to this very Georgian food, is sold on the way along the Rikoti pass.



But here we are in Kutaisi - the second largest and importance city in Georgia. It lies on the banks of the Rioni River - the same one on which Jason and his companions sailed on in search of the Golden Fleece. Then it's time for a walk through the old town and visit to places that our "ship" too cannot ignore! Gelati Monastery Complex – the legacy of the great King David the Builder. Gelati Academy has given the world various well-known philosophers, theologians, speakers, and translators. The most valuable frescoes and unique mosaic can be found within the walls of the main church. The next stop - near the Motsameta Church. Here lies an ark with holy remains of two brothers- princes in this Martyrs 'abode. A legend says that if one passes around this ark several times while making a wish this wish will come true...

New region and a new cuisine again! Since we are now in Imereti region, it's time to get acquainted with local wines. Elegant glasses of wine of the best brands and light meal awaits us at the winery "Khareba". Wine tasting smoothly flows into an Imeretian - style feast, which has its own characteristics and special dishes original to this land. After dinner, we go to digest impressions at the resort town of Tskaltubo.

Day 6. Tour: Tskaltubo - Nikortsminda - Batumi

And we "sail" to the north, to the region of Racha. First stop is Nikortsminda. One of the most beautiful and original ornate churches across Georgia. Abundance and diversity of bas-reliefs on the facade of the cathedral indeed astonishes and captivates! Scientists continue their research and exploration to this day as Nikortsminda still hides even more interesting puzzles...

Who has not heard of fragrant, semi-sweet wine of saturated bouquet "Khvanchkara"? Our odyssey will take us to the village with the same name –that is the home of this famous wine, which became one of the most recognizable Georgian brands! Inspection of the vineyards and wine tasting will put you in a decisive mood - after all now we are heading from wooded mountains of Racha region to the shores of the warm Black Sea!



You're in Adjara - the seaside region of Georgia, which was once, part of the legendary Colchis. Batumi – the port and resort town that is full of entertainment for people of all ages and tastes. You will learn its history at the local history museum. You will be amazed at the nature's beauty and climate features of the region in the Batumi Botanical Gardens. Species of this paradise will be remembered forever!

A few kilometers from Batumi, in the Gonio village, stands the famous Apsaross fortress. Here, at the Roman outpost in the Caucasus you will find remains of a theatre, hippodrome, ancient Baths - Roman "footprints" are everywhere. At the dawn of Christianity, it was visited by the three apostles, one of whom - Evangelist Matthew - rests within these walls.

Well, now it's time to get acquainted with the specialties of the Black Sea cuisine! A festive meal with unforgettable Adjara "khachapuri" and freshly caught trout awaits you at the mountainous settlement of Khulo. But this is not the only surprise dinner tonight... But let's not jump the gun - just taste Adjara flavor!

Day 8. Tour: Batumi - Tbilisi

There is nothing better after a rich gastronomic exercise than to lie on the Batumi beach and walk along the seaside park. The morning before heading back to Tbilisi will be spent at this enjoyable past time. In the Georgian capital, you will have a free evening to summarize the experience and find your own way to explore delights of the old town. You can visit the famous sulfur baths with healing thermal water. Do not forget to look into a shop called "Marani" to take home impressive collection of Georgian wines.

A farewell dinner at the local restaurant. But first we have to consolidate the culinary skills received during the tour! So now we again bake lavash bread, make churchkhela, brew Georgian vodka "chacha" and sit at the table with a sense of accomplishment! "Supra" has begun. Let us toast to our dear guests and their prompt return to Georgia!



Day 9. Farewell to Georgia

Before transfer to the airport we should combat a hangover with traditional Georgian method - some chacha, mineral water "Borjomi" and invigorating broth "khashi"... Now your body is again ready for any culinary tests and will endure the longest of the longest roads. Georgia says goodbye to you and surely sees not the last of her guests!