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DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISTIC ROUTES IN THE SOUTH-EAST REGION

Project “Development of Sustainable Cultural Tourism
in the Black Sea Basin - CULTOUR-BSB”, eMS code BSB -117 From

Common borders. Common solutions.



05

**Georgia's historic
defenses -**

A visit to the past

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Georgia's historic defenses – A visit to the past

Introduction



Traces of humanity from the Stone Age can be traced within geographical borders of modern Georgia in. Here, at the crossroads of Asia and Europe, such great powers and empires clashed as: the Christian and Islamic and worlds of Persia and ancient Greece collided in fierce battles. Russians and Ottoman empires had large scale ground wars as well. There were also civil wars.

There are also small castle-towers, just 10-15 meters long and wide. The feudal lord lived there and the castle was rebuilt. Initially, the forts were built on the top of mountains, in inaccessible places, the fort was naturally protected from both sides by harsh terrain and natural highground gave advantage to archers.

Castles were built in strategic places, particularly on roads with high strategic importance such as supply routes.

The building material was mainly stone, rarely wood. For example, during the Arab rule, Tbilisi had a wooden defensive wall.

Before the invention of firearms, the thickness of the wall was important. For example, the wall of Samshvildi was six meters wide.

Obviously, many castles were built here, both large castle towns to small, road blocking ones and signal towers. Many have survived with their majesty and today, are already attracting tourists; Many have been forgotten and lost in the bosom of wildlife or in city buildings. Finding and discovering their traces is interesting and a unique experience to some.

The tour will tell you about them, their epoch, their strategic purpose, their relationship, their rich history and kings who ruled over them.

Technical Characteristics

Administrative Geography

route includes: different parts of Georgia / region: Central (Kartli), East (Kakheti), South (Samtskhe), West (Imereti, Samegrelo)

Seasonal duration: April to November

Types of transport: walking, automotive (sometimes cars with high ground clearance), sometimes Trekking

Types of Tourists: Gen X + Gen Y + Gen Z

Target Types of Tourists: Everyone

Group Structure: Any: individual travelers, couples, groups, etc.

Tourist profile: cultural-educational, sports

Duration of the route: 8 days (can be changed according to the wishes of the travelers)

Main goals: to

- Get acquainted with the ancient cultural heritage of Georgia
- Learning about history and social situation of the country
- Improvement of tourism and popularity of Georgia.

The tour is divided into 4 parts:

1. Historical Defensive Architecture of Eastern Georgia (3 days)
2. Russian-Georgian Military Road and Defensive Architecture (1 day)
3. Khevsureti. Defensive Architecture of the mountainous region (2 days)
4. Defensive Architecture of Mtkvari gorge (2 days)

Useful information:

- Necessary documents: passport and travel insurance, if required a valid visa.
- Free WIFI is provided at the hotels, bars, and restaurants, even in the streets of Tbilisi (Tbilisi Loves You).
- The currency of the country is the GEL, Georgian Lari. Exchange rate for 2020: 3.00 GEL=\$1.00 (needs to be double-checked, since the rates often change)
- Exchange: at the airports, border checkpoints, banks, and in the cities, at the exchange points.
- WC Stops - at the petrol stations (approximately in every 50 km)

Transport: Travel and car rental companies, as well as private offers.

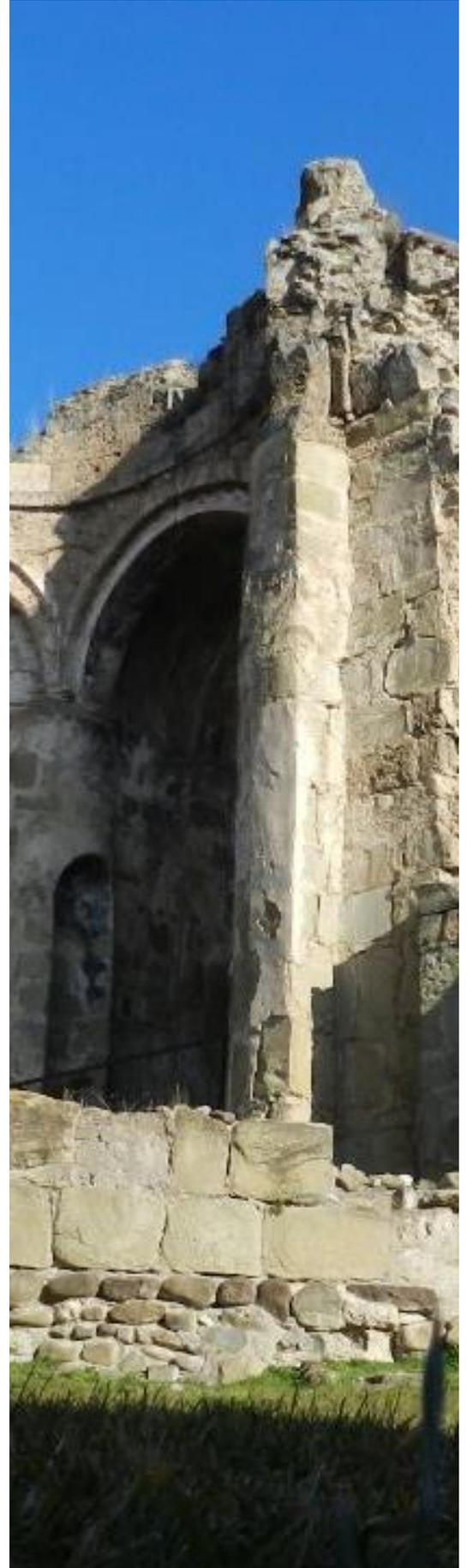
Hotels

- 1-5 * Hotels, Family Hotels, Hostels.
- Family guest houses are recommended in the provinces. Information can be found on the following websites: www.booking.com www.tripadvisor.com

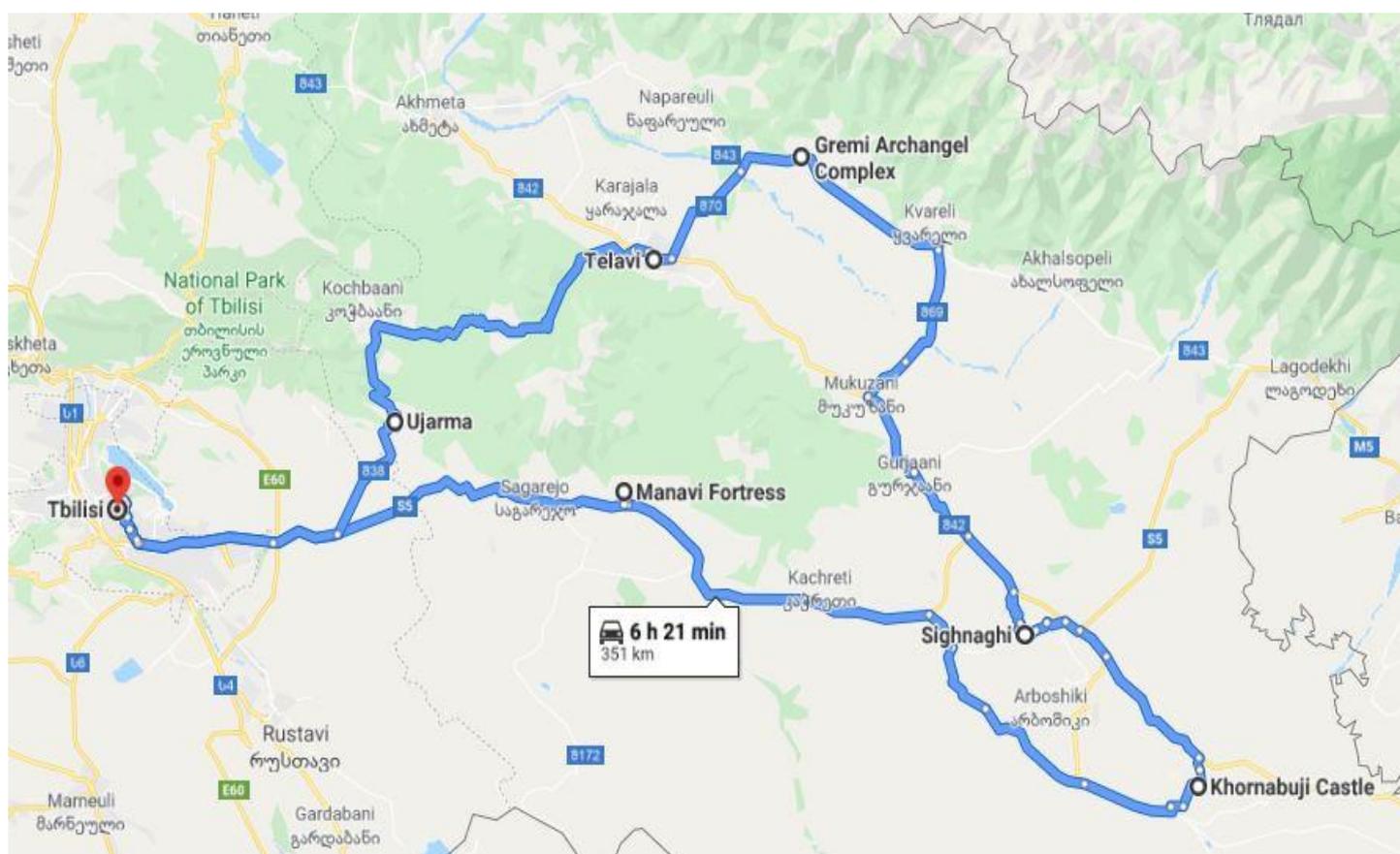
Part I

Historical Defensive Architecture of Eastern Georgia

Kakheti is a historical region in eastern Georgia, rich in monuments of various periods and diverse nature. Here you will find ancient settlements, unique temples, castle towers, mesmerizing forests, waterfalls, alpine lakes, vast fields of green and even a colorful desert. Ancient history, interesting culture, breathtaking nature and resorts make Kakheti very attractive for those who want to have a pleasant vacation and travel.



Map of Kakheti route



In eastern Georgia the main castles are: Erekle Castle, Sighnaghi Fortress, Gremi. There are many other castles in the forest on the Caucasus ridge, there are many signal towers. Similarly, in the forest massif of Gombori ridge. Some of them are lost in the forest where they slumber untouched by man.

Kakheti is also an interesting region because of its culture and customs. The Kakhetian folklore is noteworthy - the world got acquainted with the famous "Chakrulo" - this important specimen of folklore was sent into space. Many public or religious holidays are celebrated in Kakheti, such as Alaverdoba, Ilioba, Gremkalakoba, Erekleoba, Pirosmanoba and others.

50-60 km east of Tbilisi, on the left side of the road, on the slope of the mountain, there is a fortress. This is Manavi Fortress-Complex.

Manavi Fortress-Complex



East of Tbilisi, 50-60 km to the left of the road, on the mountain slope, there is a fortress - called Manavi.

The old building layer of the castle dates back to the X-XI centuries, the new one is from the XVI-XVII century. It consists of two parts: the elevated place stands the citadel with the reservoir, the ruins of a large tower house, a small tower, an medium sized tower house; The ruins of a two-story building; The entrance was located from the north. From the fortress you can clearly see the surrounding environment. Currently, there are three churches on the territory of the fortress.

Manavi Fortress was one of the centers of feudal Kakheti in recent centuries. The castle was distinguished by its strategic importance. It was erected on the top of a mountain, where it overlooks the valley and you can see up to almost 10-15 km.

From the beginning of the XVIII century, King David II of Kakheti made Manavi a residence and he ruled the country from there. Apparently, the buildings that used to be there were not enough for the security of the land so he started building a palace there. King Teimuraz II was married here in 1712 and resided here in the following years. The last historical source that mentions Manavi Fortress appears in 1772: "The village of Manavi is almost destroyed; A small number of survivors have taken refuge in a narrow wall just north of a steep hill." Nothing is heard of the fortress after that.

Useful information:

Address: Sagarejo
Municipality Village Manavi

Castle-town Khornabuji



Castle-town Khornabuji was built in a strategically important place and controlled the fields of Iori and Alazani at the same time. Khornabuji means "support of the sun" in ancient Iranian. There is an opinion that the name of the ancient Georgian tribe is implied in this name. People call it Tamar Fortress.

King Vakhtang Gorgasali founded the Episcopal Cathedral in the 5th century and declared it a princely estate. After the formation of the United Feudal Monarchy of Georgia (early 11th century), Khornabuji became the center of the region. On the outskirts of the country, where important trade routes passed, making it a strategic, cultural and military center.



Useful information:

Address: Located near the town of Dedoplistskaro..

Overnight stay in Signaghi

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Sighnaghi fortress-defensive wall



Four kilometers long fortress-defensive wall in the town of Sighnaghi was built in 1762 by King Erekle. Cylindrical towers are located along the entire length of the wall. There is a total of 23 towers, the distances between them are different. The entrances are cut into the fortress walls. Most are wide real gates; some are narrow and their designation is a spare door.

In the middle of the 18th century and the second half of the 19th century, large forts were built so that not only the locals but also the inhabitants of the nearby villages could take refuge there.

The defense to the entrance was meticulously arranged. If the gate had towers, then the protection was from the towers, and if the entrance was cut directly into the wall, then special artillery was arranged in the walls.

The wall and towers of Sighnaghi Fortress are built of cobblestone. Insignificant amount of brick is used in the construction.

In the second half of the 18th century, Sighnaghi Fortress was considered to be one of the most reliable strongholds in Kakheti. As a fortress, it did not lose its significance in the early 19th century.



It is possible to walk on the wall.

Tourists can also walk on the Sighnaghi wall. There are cafes with the gorgeous views of the Alazani Valley. After Sighnaghi, tourists can head to Gremi. It is 60 km from Sighnaghi and is located on the other side of Alazani Valley. On the way you can visit wine distilleries and wine cellars.

The Gremi Complex



History of Gremi as a city dates back to the 15th century, when King George I of Kakheti (1466-1476) made it the capital of the Kingdom of Kakheti. Gremi retained this status for two centuries. There were active literary activities and caravan routes. That is why it has become the center of political, economic and cultural life in Kakheti.

The whole history of Gremi is connected with the names of the kings of Kakheti. It is probable that there was a small settlement here, which was turned into a city in the XV century. Like Kartli-Kakheti, Shah Abbas's expeditions in the 17th century proved to be the most difficult period for Gremi, which turned the majestic fortress into a ruin.

The Gremi Architecture Complex consists of a variety of buildings. There is a domed church of the Archangels, a three-storey palace-bell tower, agricultural buildings, a wall, a secret exit to the river Intsobi. There are baths, a market and a caravanserai.

The most eye catching part of the Gremi is the Archangel complex, which stands at the end of a rocky ridge and consists of a high walled domed church and palace-bell tower, however, the south-west corner of the church borders the palace-bell tower, which is cut down to leave a passage in between the buildings.

The complex has been a museum-reserve since 1975, where 2,056 exhibits are preserved and a series of paintings - portraits of kings - are presented.

Useful information:

Address: The village of Kvareli
Municipality Gremi in

is open: 08.00 - 20.00 everyday

Entrance fee - 10 GEL;

Foreign language **guide** - 30 GEL.



Departure to Telavi after Gremi

King Erekle's Fortress in Telavi



King Erekle II's Castle - Palace is located in the Kakheti region, in the city of Telavi. The architectural complex is the only royal palace in Georgia that has survived fully intact to this day. The complex, with its architectural and historical features, is a remarkable monument of cultural heritage.

The famous palace "Lords Castle" was the residence of the kings of Kakheti. The palace door church, the east door and the bath were built during the reign of King Archil. In the second half of the 18th century, Erekle II built a large wall around the palace, which reaches a height of five meters. In addition to the main large door, the castle wall had other spare entrances, one to the south and one to the north. The church of King Erekle was built in 1758. In addition to the church, it also had defensive functions, it had artillery/gunman post under the roof. Ten meters away from the church stood a large tower, 14 meters, the likes of which is nowhere to be found in Georgia. This tower was built by Queen Darejan and until the 1840s, there was an 8-meter-long artillery cannon here, which was always ready to repel the enemies. In 1927, King Erekle II's palace-museum with unique exhibits was established here.

Useful Information:

Adr.: Erekle II pr. 1

Tel: +995 99 925954

Open: Every day except Monday
10:00 - 17:00

Entry fee - 2 gel

Points of interest:

City streets,
Nadikvari Park,
Restaurants and diners,
Wine cellars.

Overnight stay in Telavi.

Telavi-Tbilisi route passes through Gombori mountain pass (1600 meters above the sea level), tourists will encounter a huge fortress Ujarma

Ujarma Fortress-town



The city of Ujarma was founded in the era of feudalism in the III-IV century. From the 4th century, Ujarma was one of the main cities of Kakheti. The city experienced a rise in importance and size in the second half of the 5th century, when Vakhtang Gorgasali turned it into one of his residences, built numerous buildings and strengthened the defense of the city. He was severely wounded in a battle with the Persians and died here. Later, Vakhtang's heirs ruled Kakheti from Ujarma. In 914, the Ujarma was conquered by Arabs and was raided and ransacked.

Nevertheless, it was soon rebuilt and continued to exist as a small settlement. Remains of the castle's main citadel's wall and towers, a small crusader's door church, the ruins of a two-story royal palace, a reservoir and other ancillary buildings are preserved in the ruins today. The fortress wall stretches to the bank of the river Iori, it is possible that the city had its own water supply system. Overall the castle is built with a rare and captivating architecture.



Useful Information:

The present ruins of the Ujarma fortress-town are located in outer Kakheti, on the banks of the Iori River.

Entry fee - 5 Gel

Open: Everyday 10:00 - 19:00

Overnight stay in Tbilisi

Part II

Georgian Military Road and Defensive Architecture

Georgia's military route from Tbilisi runs north of the right bank of the Mtkvari River, ascends to Zhinvali, and ends at Jvari Pass. The road from the pass runs to the town of Stepantsminda, from where the road will be crossed by a bridge on the left side of the river Tergi. Dariali gorge starts at the confluence of the river Chkheri. This is the Georgian-Russian state border, where checkpoints are located: Zemo Larsi and Kazbegi.

From the 1st century onwards, the Aragvi and Tergi valleys have been crossed by the narrow and difficult road connecting the North Caucasus countries and the Middle East, the inaccessible walls of which ended at the door of Dariali. The Georgians had fortified this valley with a wall. The control of the road and the Dariali Gate has long been of interest to the great powers of the former Asia. After the establishment of Arab domination in the South Caucasus (VII century), the Arabs and Khazars avoided the door of Dariali. In order to prevent the invasions of the Alan-Khazars, the Arabs fortified the Dariali Valley. That is why this road is a strategic and politically important object and there are many protective historical fortresses on it.

Georgian military road is currently one of the sections of the European highway E117.



Georgian Military Route Map



Road length 172 km Pass: Cross Height: 2379 m Road: Mountainous, Serpentine. It is often closed in winter.

Tourist activities on the road: nature panoramas, Gudauri cable car "Gudauri Memorial", Paragliding, Jvari Pass, Travertines near the road

Toilet: Ananuri, Gudauri and Kazbegi entrance - at gas stations

Departure from Tbilisi. The road first leads to the west highway. It then turns north and heads along the Aragvi River. Then the valley narrows, the ascent becomes noticeable, and the Zhinvali Reservoir appears.

Zhinvali fortress



The keen-eyed tourists will notice towers on both sides of the lake. These are the watchtowers of the city of Zhinvali. The city of Zhinvali itself is underwater, flooded by Zhinvali reservoir.

In the place where the Zhinvali Reservoir is today, the rich medieval, Georgian city of Zhinvali was located with its castles, towers, roads and palaces. The Zhinvali dam flooded, the city gates and the city gates and the 12th-century "Jvaripatiosani" temple, when the water level in the reservoir drops, the dome of this temple appears above water. Which is immersed in water for 6 months and visible in other 6.



The next fortress is Ananuri, right on the road.

Ananuri fortress



Ananuri Architectural Ensemble is one of the most important monuments of the late feudal period of Georgia. It houses cult, military and cultural monuments. Although the monuments of this epoch can be found on the territory of Georgia, only a few of them are gathered together and relatively well preserved.

In the past, this place was the main key point of the Aragvi government, where it gathered the main roads coming through the region.

The ensemble was built in the XVI-XVII centuries. It includes towers, 3 churches, a bell tower, a cell and a reservoir. It is built of crushed stone and bricks. In 1960-1968, the monument was restored.

The ensemble is built on a slope from west to east and is surrounded by a strong defensive wall. The towers had residential, defensive, and offensive purposes. On the inside of the wall there is a reservoir, which consists of two water tanks and a drinking water storage room - "source". The castle has endured many battles, and kings have often taken refuge with their families and entourage.

In addition to an interesting designation, the ensemble stands in a picturesque nature landscape.



Useful Information:

Adr.: Dusheti municipality, village Ananuri

Open: 08.00 - 20.00 everyday

The road leads to the river Aragvi. It will pass the ski resort of Gudauri, cross the Jvari Pass and heads down. Near the village of Kob, on the left, there is a gorge.

Truso Valley



An off-road/high ground clearance vehicle is required to enter here. At one time, the Georgian military road passed through this route, there are castles and signal towers in surrounding area.



Truso Valley is also rich in mineral waters. There are colorful travertines which have been awarded the status of a natural monument.



Zakagori Fortress



In the Middle Ages, it played an important role in the defense system of the Truso Valley. The residential part of the village belongs to the XIII-XIV centuries, and the towers date back to the XVII century. Zakagori became a village in the 50s of the XX century. It consists of five residential districts, one tower house and two defensive towers. Between the second, third and fourth districts there is a large square, in its north-eastern part there is a tower house, and in the south and north there are towers. Defensive structures, unlike residential houses, are built of crushed stone.

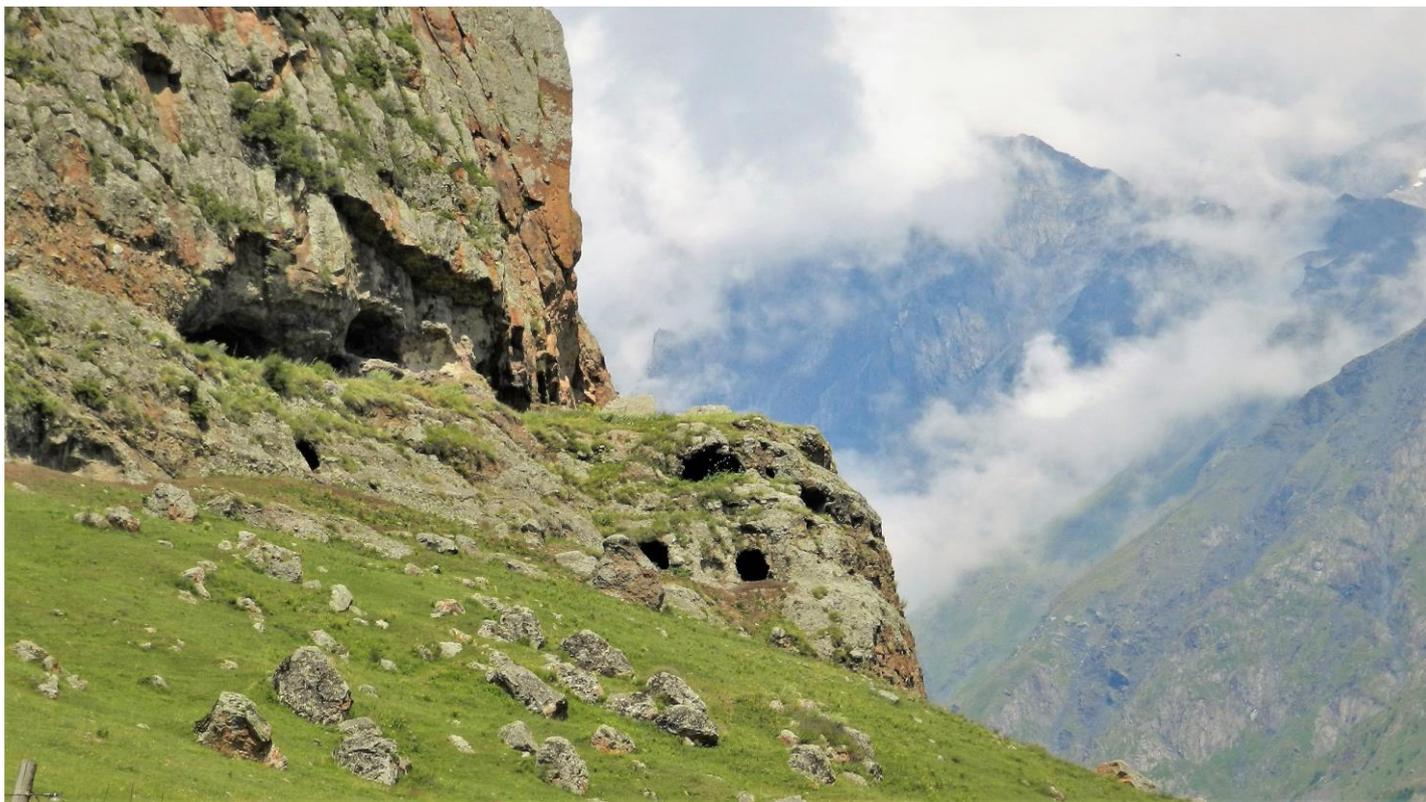
The houses are mostly two-storey, built of crushed stone. The roofs have been destroyed almost everywhere. The first floor is for agricultural purposes, relatively low and less lit with sunlight. The entrances are narrow and low. The small windows are evenly spaced from the outside. The second floor is residential, the doors here are relatively large and spacious compared to the first floor. Almost all storages have two or three rectangular windows. On the outside of the houses there is a massive stone staircase leading to the second floor.

It takes an SUV to get here. Because the castle is close to the border, border patrol can request a passport.



After getting back to the main road, tourists will come across flowing locations on the way to Stephantsminda:

Arsha Cliffs



The cliff to the left of the road is clearly visible. Tourists can also see the caves if they look closely enough. In some of them, there were human living quarters. During the invasions, the population sheltered themselves in the caves so it became a makeshift fortress.



Towers can be found in the valleys, they served as a defensive and as time signaling purposes.



Nearby about in 20 minutes on foot tourists can find Arsha waterfall.

Stepantsminda



From here there is a magnificent and breathtaking view of Mount Kazbegi and at its foothill the Holy Trinity Cathedral, also known as Gergeti. There are many hotels in Stepantsminda to spend the night.

Stepantsminda is the administrative center of Kazbegi municipality, there are administrative, cultural, educational and healthcare institutions, small enterprises, many hotel houses and hotels in the area; There are many springs and mineral waters here as well.

From here, the road goes up to Gergeti. Gergeti Trinity Church of the 14th century (2200 m above sea level) is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Georgia. With its history and location, this face of Georgia is a Christian island immersed in beautiful nature, overlooking a magnificent glacier (5054 m above sea level).



Dariali Gorge (The Natural Castle)

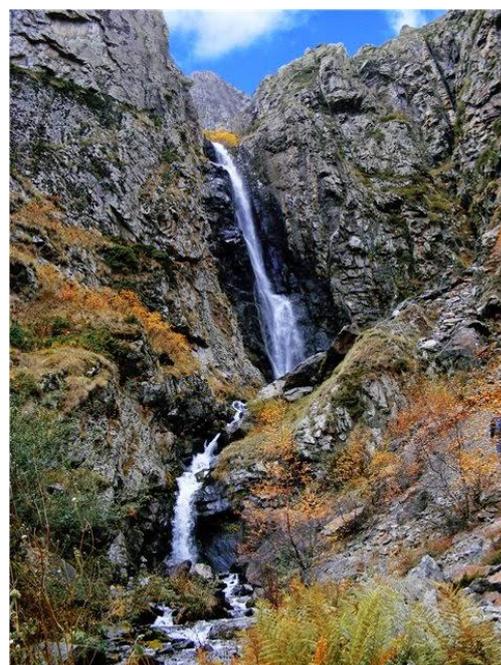


After Stepantsminda, the road continues and leads to the Russian-Georgian border. This section of the road runs through the valley of the river Tergi, which is known as the Dariali Valley. The valley is quite narrow, surrounded by high mountains, and due to its natural condition, it was a fortress in itself, defensively enclosing the north, which from ancient times gave it great strategic importance.

This path is the muse of many poets and artists, and there are many stories and poems written about it.

Today, the paved road runs through many sections of the tunnel. However, if desired, the old road can also be explored.

There is a beautiful temple of the XXI century directly on the Russian border.



From Dariali gorge you can get to Gveleti waterfalls. 40 minutes' walk from the road

Part III

Khevsureti. Defensive Architecture of the mountainous region

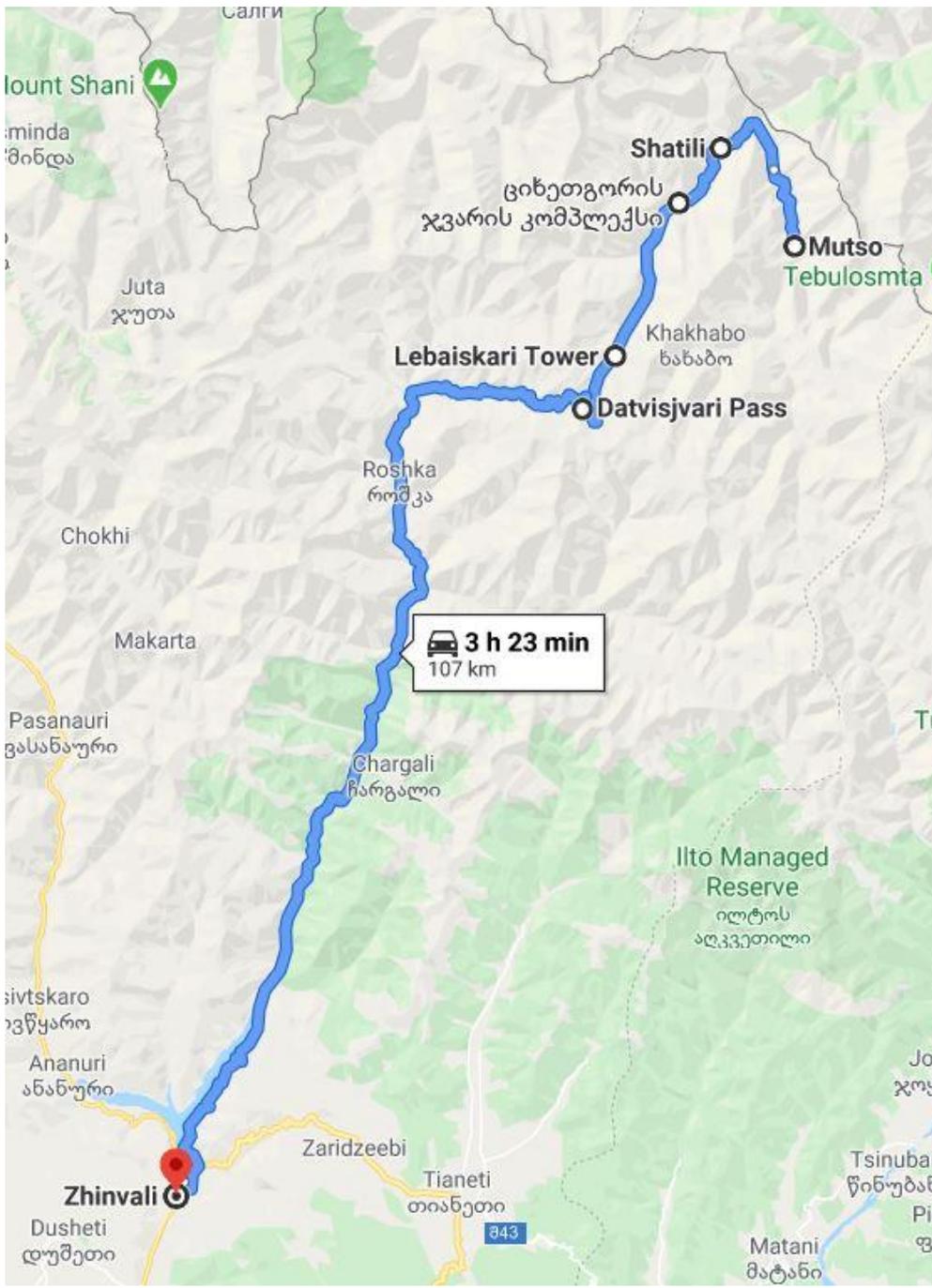
Near the Zhinvali Reservoir, there is a turn from the Russian-Georgian military road, which leads to Khevsureti. Khevsureti is a historical part of Georgia on the southern and northern slopes of the main watershed of the Eastern Caucasus.

The road crosses Datvijvari Pass. An off-road/high ground clearance vehicle is needed to navigate here. The road is very beautiful, with its breathtaking nature and stunning scenery. There are small villages on the mountainous landscape, the villages used to be independent castles, traces of which are still preserved today.

For example, with the Kistani towers. They are both defensive and signaling structures. They also covered the northern roads.



Khevsureti route map



Distance: Tbilisi-Shatili - 165 km.

Road condition: A off-road/high ground clearance vehicle is required.

Datvijvari mountain pass height 2676 m above sea level

Road infrastructure has not been developed as of 2020.

There are guest houses in the roadside villages

Kistani village-fortress



Kistani is a historic village in remote Khevsureti that is currently abandoned and uninhabited. There are the ruins of the towers, and on the neighboring mountain two more towers - in better condition. They can also be seen from Shatili Road, from the village of Lebaiskari. The towers were used for defense and barns. The road sign "Kistan" is shown on the road, but the village itself is abandoned due to difficult living conditions.

The Khevsureti people are warriors and in times of hardship they often appeared as the savior of the Georgians. This happened in 1659, when the Khevsureti army attacked the Persians like an avalanche, and in one day the whole of Kakheti was cleared of invaders. This corner is truly a paradise for ethnographers or anthropologists.



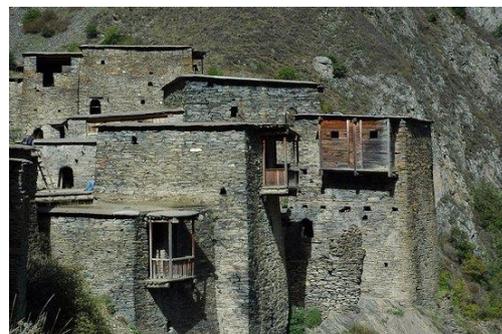
Shatili village-fortress



Shatili - is one of the brilliant, unique monuments of Georgian construction art. The rock-cut village was both a residence and a fortress, guarding Georgia's northern crossings for centuries (now restored).

The edges of the village are joined by a series of fortified houses, and a single, impenetrable defensive wall is formed, which locks down the village. Shatili is connected to the outside world by the only narrow road leading to the Arghunis gorge. Shatili is terraced, the main type of buildings are flat-roofed houses and tower dwellings. Local clay-slate is used as a building material. A narrow stone staircase leads to the whole height of the village between the buildings, here and there are planks made of wood - passages, in case of enemy invasion people could maneuver around the village without going into the street.

Since 2007, Shatili has been included in the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Shatili Towers are a unique monument of Georgian construction art, which are almost completely preserved. It is a place full of myths, legends, history and traditions, which is a subject of constant interest for both Georgian and foreign tourists.



Useful information: There are several hostels in Shatili - some in the house and some in the tower and the number of places where tourists can stay are increasing.

Village-fortress Muco



Mutso is another historical fortress-village of Khevsureti (height 1880 m above sea level), which is 12-15 kilometers from the village of Shatili. It has been one of the most complete fortifications, defensive systems since ancient times, and a stronghold for the roads coming to Georgia from the north. Mutso is one of the oldest settlements in Khevsureti. In 1769 it was burnt down and demolished, and after the invasion of Shamil's company in 1820, life in the fortress-village was virtually extinguished.

Mutso is located on three terraces of difficult terrain. Local slate is used as a building material, the gap between the slates is filled with fermentation for thermal insulation. The buildings stand side by side and their outer walls form a battlefield. Most of the buildings have four floors, although there also have been six floor buildings. Barns are mostly arranged on the first floor of the fortress-houses, On the second floor - the bakery, the third and fourth floors are residential. The 5th floor was used to store food supplies, labor tools and weapons. On the third, lower terrace of the castle-village, there is the village cemetery. Here are chapels, which were used by the population for burials and worship.

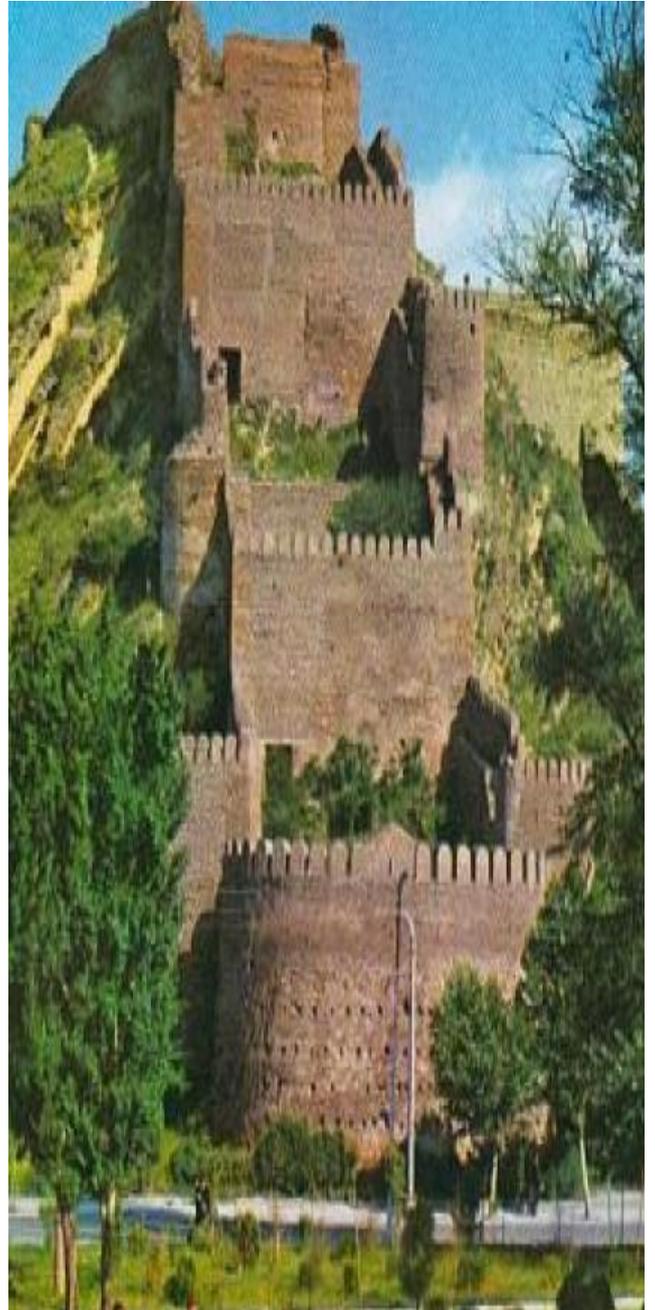


Mutso is a historical fortress-village in Khevsureti, located in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, on the right bank of the Ardoti River in Dusheti Municipality

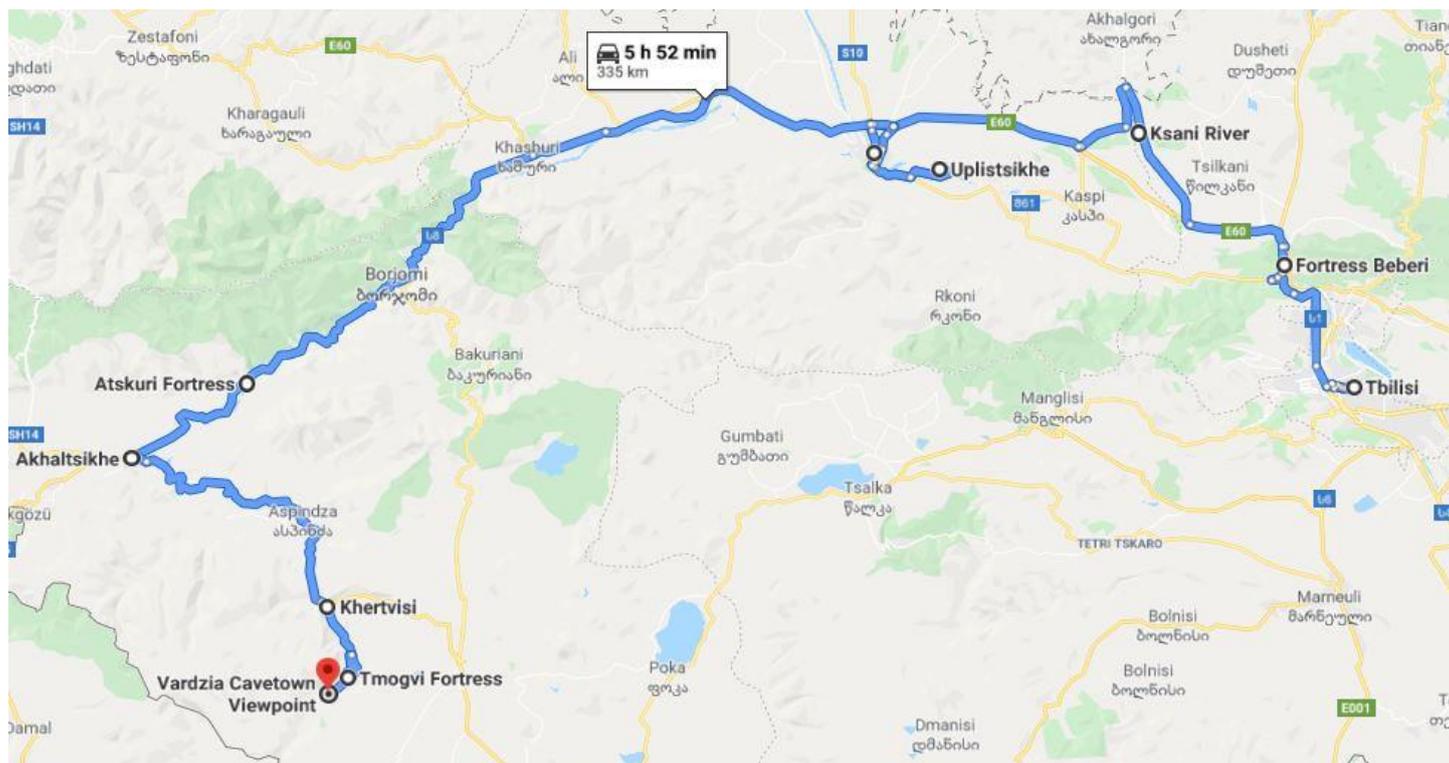
Part IV

Defensive Architecture of Mtkvari gorge

The main trade route passed through the Mtkvari gorge. This, in turn, created the conditions for settlement and urban development. Large fortresses have been built in the area.



Mtkvari Gorge Route Map



Distance: Tbilisi-Vardzia - 335 km.

Road condition: part - by highway, part - asphalted in municipalities.

There are many **hotels** in the city of Akhaltsikhe and Borjomi, there are **hotel houses** in the roadside villages.

Toilets at gas stations.

Narikala Fortress



Narikala Fortress is located in the historical district of Tbilisi. It is one of the fortresses that surround the whole Tbilisi. The date of its construction is considered to be IV century AD, but recent archeological excavations have revealed that the castle existed here much longer. During its existence, the castle has been damaged, destroyed and rebuilt many times. Which was caused by the ongoing wars. Because of this, many of its buildings have been altered or completely destroyed.

During the Arab rule in Georgia in the 7th century, Narikala was owned by the Arabs. The castle was later liberated by David the Builder in 1122. The castle was also raided by the Mongols. Temur-Leng also leveled it to the ground. It was captured by the Persians in the 17th century, and in 1747 King Erekle II liberated Narikala from the Persians, but this freedom ended in 1795 during the invasion of Agha-Muhammad Khan.

In 1827, much of the castle wall was damaged and destroyed by an earthquake.

In the 19th century, when external attacks ceased, the wall lost its function. They were given flats and balconies.

In 2012, archaeologists discovered a part of the Tbilisi wall, which was 110 meters long, on Pushkin Street in Tbilisi. Historians date the fence to the 11th-13th centuries. Five towers were also found, including two large ones. At one time, this fence covered the whole of Tbilisi at that time.



Coexistence of Old and New Tbilisi.

Departure from Tbilisi, 27 km from Mtskheta exit, Bebris Castle is on the side of the road.

Bebris Castle



Bebris Castle is located in the northern part of the city of Mtskheta. From the 4th to the 18th century, Bebris Castle was a functioning fortress. Once upon a time, he closed the gates of Mtskheta from the Aragvi gorge and defended the city. The castle is built of pieces of cut stone all equal in size. It consists of a citadel and a lower courtyard. The shape of the citadel is triangular. The tower stood in all three corners. Three floors of the largest south-west tower remain, and they have not only defensive but also residential purposes.

There is one interesting detail left in the towers - the combat holes (bow and arrow were used as a primary ranged weapon during fortresses prime), which is probably made for arrows to pass through.

According to historical sources, in the 12th century, King Demetrius died in Bebris Fortress and was transferred to Gelati in Kutaisi.

The total area of the fortress is about 1500 square meters, and the inner yard is 600 square meters. The floor covering in the towers was made of wood. Near the Bebris castle there is an important archeological monument - Samtavro cemetery and settlement.

Useful information:

Bebris Castle is located in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, Mtskheta municipality, in the northern part of Mtskheta city, on the right bank of the river Aragvi. Bebris Castle is closed due to restoration work. Places to visit: Svetitskhoveli, Samtavro, Jvari

Gori Castle



Gori Fortress stands on a high rocky hill. The ruins and archeological data on the northern slope testify that here in the last centuries of the first millennium (BC), there was a strong fortress, and around it there was a village. "Gori Fortress" is first mentioned in historical sources in the 13th century.

Gori Fortress was an important strategic point; Its conquest meant political domination over the whole of Shida Kartli. Over the centuries, Gori Fortress has been repeatedly renovated and remodeled. The main part was restored in the 1730s by King Rostom.

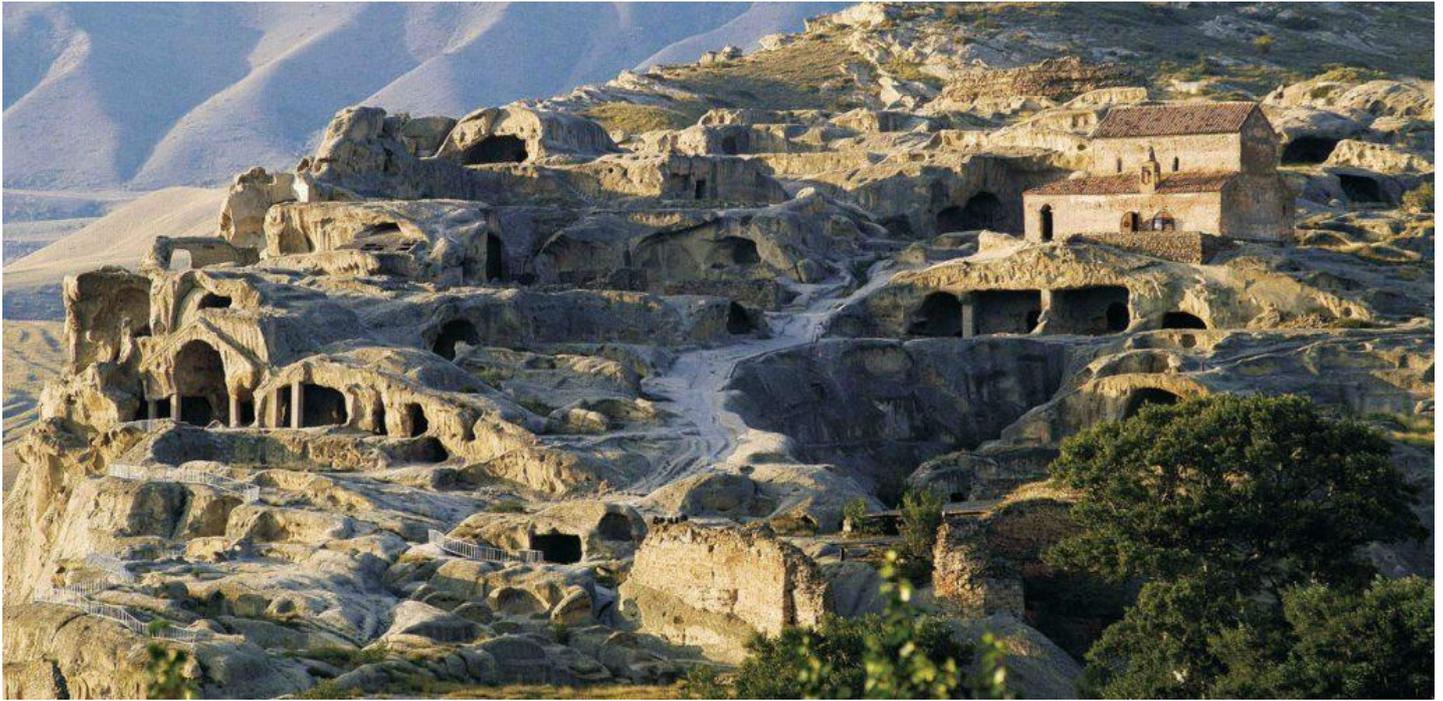
The present-day look to the castle was given to it in 1774 by King Erekle II. The castle is built of cobblestone; The cut stone is found in the earlier layers. The oval citadel is surrounded with auxiliary fences to the south and east. The original entrance to the castle is no longer visible; In the middle of the south wall is a vaulted gate from the late period. In the south-eastern section tourists will find the ruins of a small church. The castle had a tunnel to draw water and a reservoir. Gori Fortress was significantly damaged by the 1920 earthquake.



Useful information: Gori Fortress - a historical fortress in Kartli, in the center of Gori

Places to visit: Stalin Museum in Gori 12 km - Uplistsikhe, Zion of Athens, cellars of private winemakers.

Uplistsikhe



Uplistsikhe is a rock-cut town, one of the oldest settlements in the Caucasus, and a city center. It is located in Shida Kartli, 10 km east of the city of Gori, on the left bank of the river Mtkvari.

Uplistsikhe - today is an open-air historical-architectural museum-reserve. The name Uplistsikhe was still called during the time of idolatry (VI-IV centuries BC), so the lordship of the tribal chief, lord is a term denoting power and not religion. It is highlighted in an easily processed sandstone massif with an area of 9.5 ha. The city has streets, squares, a sewage system, four gates, a 41-meter-long secret tunnel that led to the Mtkvari River, and during the siege the city was fortified with water and sanitation, a fence, and so on. Written sources first mention it in the 7th century.

During the struggle for the unification of Georgia (IX-X centuries), the weakened fortress-town of Uplistsikhe passed from hand to hand. Georgian kings, Kakheti princes and Armenian kings fought selflessly for domination of Uplistsikhe in the IX-X centuries. Uplistsikhe gradually lost its significance after the political unification of Georgia (1070s). This process was crowned by the liberation of Tbilisi in 1122 by David the Builder.

Useful information:

Address: 10 km east of Gori:

Open: 10.00 - 17.00 Every day

Tel: 595 52-07-78; 595 52 07-79

Entrance fee to the museum-reserve - 15

GEL Excursion (guide) service in a

foreign language - 45 GEL. Minibus

service (1 viewer) - 2 GEL. Church

Status: Active



Atskuri Castle



Atskuri Castle, one of the most important large-scale complexes among the Georgian fortifications, and has a long history and functioned from the 10th to the 19th centuries.

Atskuri Fortress, built on an inaccessible rocky cape, protected and controlled the Mtkvari gorge and the road connecting South Georgia with an important strategic location. The high walls of the fortress, which encloses a large area on the slope, leading to a difficult terrain where the lower and upper castles are separated. The wall includes piers and oval and elongated towers of imperfect geometric shape in the plan.

Also noteworthy is the arched tunnel connecting the castle, which starts from the west side of the road on the banks of the Mtkvari and climbs to the lower terrace of the yard. The project was developed in 2015,

Useful information:

Atskuri Castle is located in the village of Atskuri, Akhaltsikhe Municipality, on the right bank of the Mtkvari River.



Rabati Castle

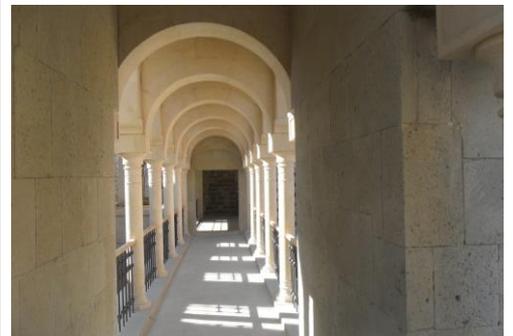


Rabati Historical Castle is located in the administrative center of Samtskhe-Javakheti region, in the historical district of Rabati.

Rabat Castle-Complex has been restored today; it consists of buildings from different periods of the Middle Ages. The castle-complex was the most important defensive structure in the region, its walls remember many hard battles and brutal sieges. For centuries, it has been the residence of Akhaltsikhes owners. The fortress was surrounded by three mighty walls and the surrounding area was connected by an underground tunnel.

The history of the castle dates back to the 9th century. In the XII-XIII centuries the castle became the residence of the Jakeli clan, it was rebuilt and expanded. It is from this time that the toponym "Akhaltsikhe" appears.

As a result of the ongoing restoration in 2011-2012, the wall, citadel, IX-X century Orthodox Church, mosque, madrasa, minaret and Jakeli Palace were renovated on the territory of the fortress-complex.



Open: 09.00 - 19.00 everyday
Entrance Fee: 6 GEL

Khertvisi Castle



Khertvisi Fortress - a medieval castle located in Javakheti, in the village of Khertvisi, at the confluence of the rivers Paravani and Mtkvari, on a high rocky mountain (now Aspindza municipality). Khertvisi was a stronghold throughout the feudal era.

Khertvisi was located on an important highway, subject to the settlements of the surrounding region. In the 16th century, along with other castles in Javakheti, the Ottomans conquered Khertvisi and. It later became the center of the Ottoman administrative unit. It was taken over by King Erekle II in the 1770 s.

Khertvisi has been rebuilt many times, with an early medieval construction layer observed. The castle consists of a citadel and a robust wall. The citadel is perched on a narrow, rocky ridge of the mountain, inaccessible from the northeast. Water was supplied through a tunnel from the north-west.

Since 2007, Khertvisi along with the Vardzia Monastery has been included in the preliminary list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



Useful information:

Address: Javakheti, Khertvisi village

Ticket price - 10 GEL Open: 10.00 - 19.00

Tmogvi Castle



Tmogvi Castle - a historic castle-town in Georgia is first mentioned in sources in the X century. It controlled the road that entered Georgia from the former Asia through the Mtkvari gorge. The advancement in importance of Tmogvi Fortress must have begun in the IX-X centuries. In the 10th century, the Arabs tried to take it, but to no avail.

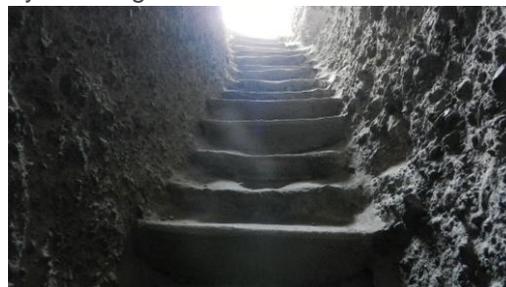
In the 16th century, the Ottomans entered Samtskhe and captured Tmogvi, after which it entered the Ottoman political-administrative unit - Akhalkalaki Liva with its surrounding area. In the XVIII century the population of Tmogvi decreased. His old glory faded.

Tmogvi Castle is built on a high rocky mountain. Due to the peculiarities of the relief, its boundaries and walls are erected at different heights. The western part of the fortress is relatively better preserved - with three steps built into the walls. To the south-east, the wall was welded to the cave, which was connected by a secret tunnel in the rock above the citadel and below the river. Mtkvari. In the middle of the castle, a small area was completely occupied by buildings. Built on a basalt plinth, built of smoothed tuff frames, the rectangular building covered with a two-ply roof seems to have been a church. The ancient layer of Tmogvi Fortress is built of equal rows of smoothed squares of tuff. A rough-hewn stone wall appears a bit later.



Useful information:

Due to the lack of tourist infrastructure, it is better to visit the prison accompanied by a local guide.



The secret tunnel of the prison.

In the village Tmogvi there are guest houses.

Vani caves



Vani Caves, Vahan Boilers - Cave Complex and Desert-Monastery, a monument of Georgian architecture and culture of VIII century defensive importance in historical Javakheti, Vani boilers were expanded in the IX-XI centuries. In the central part of St. George's Cathedral new groups of caves were excavated. In 1089, a strong earthquake destroyed the central part of the Vani caves. In the XII century the caves of Vani were in the hands of Queen Tamar and reconstruction began, the monastery was rebuilt, St. George's Cathedral, the gate of the church, the bell tower and the church were built. However, in the 16th century, it was first raided by the Persians and then by the Ottomans, after which it was abandoned.

The rock plot of Vani caves is located on 16 floors with up to 200 slopes. The monastery complex includes rock-cut stalls, agricultural storehouses, crypt, shelter, Tunnels and 6 churches. Remains of 3 waterways and reservoirs, fragments of paintings and important inscriptions of historical significance are preserved. As a result of archeological excavations, a cellar and pottery workshops were discovered, and a defensive tower was discovered on the terrace, guarding the approaches to the border.

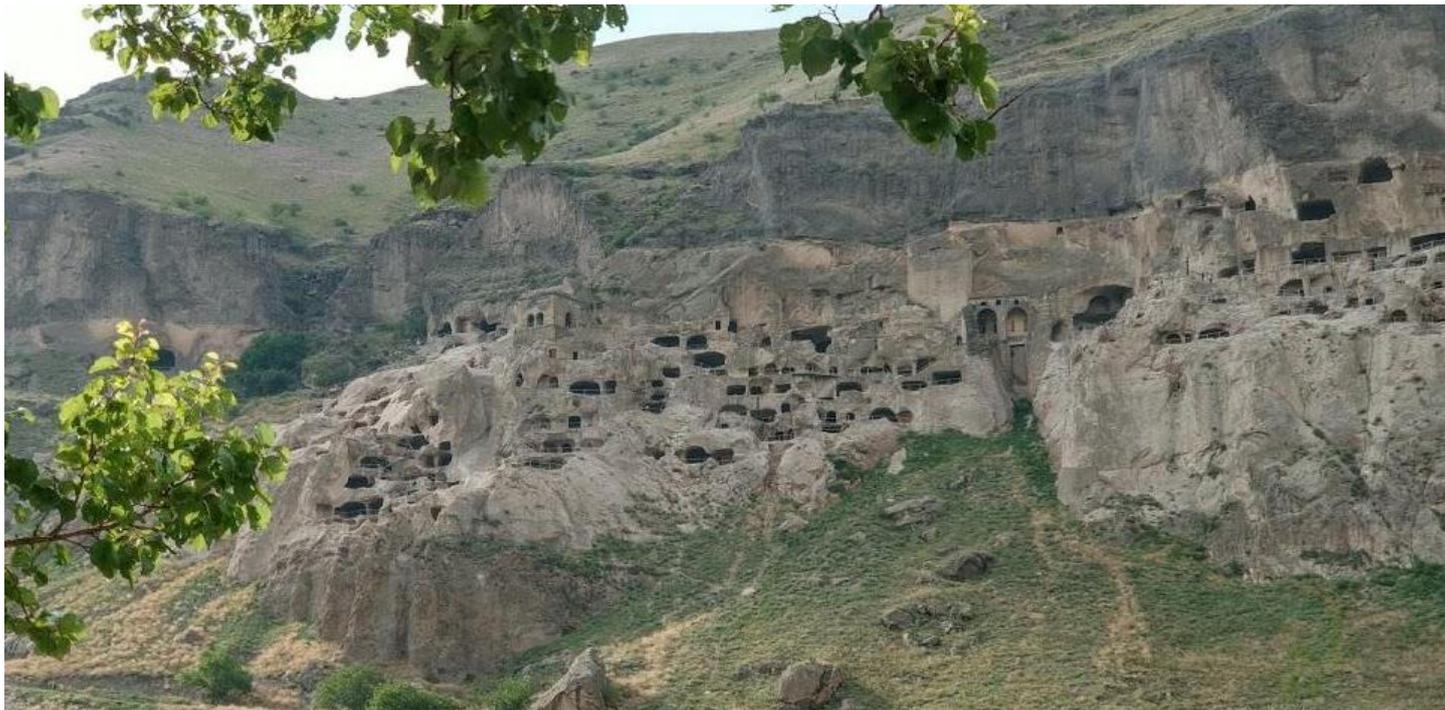
Useful information:

Address: Javakheti, Aspindza district
(27 km from Aspindza)

Open: 09.00 - 19.00 everyday



Vardzia Monastery Ensemble



Vardzia - a rock-cut monastic ensemble, a monument of Georgian artistic culture of the XII-XIII centuries is located 30 km from the historical Aspindza. On the left bank of the Mtkvari (1300-1462 m above sea level).

Vardzia Fortress-City is located in 3 to 13 tiers. It has more than 600 storerooms. There are dining rooms, sinks, pantries, auxiliary storerooms and 25 cellars with 185 pitchers.

During the reign of Queen Tamar, the purpose of the original military fortress was changed and it was converted to a huge fortified monastery. The ensemble was founded mainly in 1156-1203, with 15 churches in the complex. The most important of these is the Church of the Assumption. Excellent paintings on the wall are also preserved here.

In the 16th century, Vardzia was overthrown by the Shah of Iran. The Persians stole many famous treasures. Then Vardzia was conquered by the Turks. It was ransacked again. It was abandoned shortly thereafter.

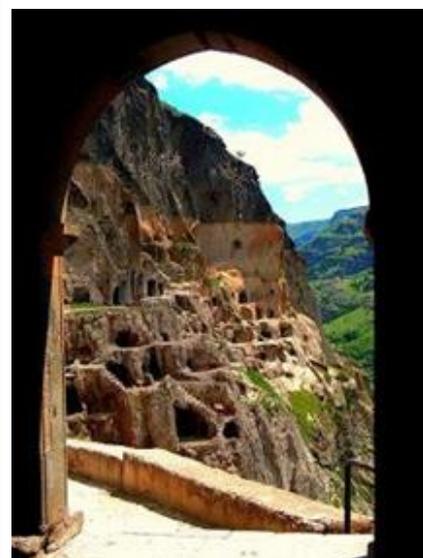
In the XX century, first a tourist base and then a museum was established here. Worship was resumed in Vardzia in 1989, and monastic life resumed in 1999.

Useful information:

Address: Javakheti, Aspindza district (30 km from Aspindza)

Open: 09.00 - 19.00

Entrance fee daily: 15 GEL



Return and overnight stay in Akhaltsikhe.

The next day can be devoted to visiting lesser-known buildings for tourists. The district is rich in historical monuments. There are also megalithic buildings. To get to them, in many cases, you need off-road transport and hiking. It should be noted that there is no tourist infrastructure here and it is better to hire an accompanying local guide.

Zanavi Castle



Zanavi Fortress is built on a steep cliff and dates back to the late Middle Ages. The castle is built of pieces of rock on lime mortar. Traces of late repairs are noticeable. The back tower of the inner castle has three floors. The arrangement of its stones is more regular than that of the defensive wall surrounding it. The tower has overlooking each side, on the second floor there is a fireplace. The arched door of the south wall runs through the inner courtyard, where a rock-cut water storage is located. Further south is the second tower, which houses the remains of a church. Below it is another tower, which is round in shape and adjacent to the defensive wall.

The magnificent views of the impregnable, steep Zanavi Fortress make this place especially attractive for visitors, its nature unsullied by technology and men make it a truly unique experience.

Useful information:

Zanavi Castle is located in Samtskhe-Javakheti region, in the village of Patara Zanavi, Adigeni Municipality

Oqros “Gold” Castle



Golden Castle - a fortress in Samtskhe-Javakheti, located at 1700 meters above sea level. The castle stands on a huge rocky massif and is difficult to access (even inaccessible from some sides). It is one of the largest castles in Georgia.

The exact date of construction is unknown. It was probably built in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, and we have no earlier written record of it. In the XV-XVI centuries, during the rise of the Turks, it played a major role in the defense of the Meskhetians. The fortified forces here controlled a very large area, monitoring the roads, and because of the location and strength of the fortress, they were able to withstand the siege for a long time. The Golden Fortress is often mentioned in the 16th century, in which the stories of the last days of the existence of the Samtskhe principality are narrated. In 1578, during the invasion of the Turkish commander Lala-Pasha, the wife of Qaikhosro Atabagi, was fortified in the Golden Fortress, trying in vain to save Samtskhe from the invaders.

Useful information:

Fortress is located in Samtskhe-Javakheti, near the village of Bolajuri, Adigeni Municipality



Of Course, there are a lot more Castles fortresses and military points which didn't end up in this tour but nevertheless are very interesting to explore and could be done so by modifying the tour

TYPES OF CLIENTS TARGETED



TRAVELLER PROFILE

- Medium and high-income
- Considerable interest in history / culture / architecture
- Considerable interest of social status, object location and national values
- Tourists who love extreme recreation
- The Typical Tourist

MARKETING STRATEGY



ONLINE

1. Promotion through social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Rambler)
2. Google ads
3. Tourist agency web pages

OFFLINE

1. Promotion via billboards, leaflets
2. Tourist agencies communication materials