

You really must see...



... Katskhi Pillar...



...Gelati Monastery Complex...



... Prometheus Carst Cave

Imereti

WELCOME TO IMERETI

The region of Imereti was originally part of the ancient Colchis kingdom. A legendary place, well known for its abundance of gold, it was here that the Argonauts were said to have travelled to find the Golden Fleece.

Archaeological digs have revealed the remains of a massively rich and thriving Hellenistic culture. Bronze and gold statues of incredible workmanship, jewelry and glassware confirm that, since the Bronze Age at least, Imereti has been a place of highly sophisticated culture.

Some of Imereti's cultural and historical monuments date back to as early as the Neolithic (late Stone Age) era, however many modern architectural accomplishments can also be found in the region. During the 10-12th centuries Imereti had a renaissance period in which a number of masterpieces of Georgian architecture were created, including the Bagrati Cathedral and Gelati Monastery Complex – both UNESCO world heritages sites.



FOOD AND WINE

Imereti is best known for its spicy, delicious food, its crisp white wine and the friendliness of its inhabitants. Much of Imereti food is cooked in clay pots with plenty of locally grown herbs and walnuts. Above all its famous hospitality means it is literally impossible to travel to Imereti without being welcome into somebody's home to share a delicious Georgian Supra (feast) to be fed, toasted and generally treated like visiting royalty.

This area of Georgia grows some unique wine varieties (over 500 grape varieties are grown all over Georgia) and there is evidence that wine production here dates back over eight thousand years.

ADVENTURE

Wild canyons, roaring waterfalls and spectacular caves make this region impossible for any adventure seeking tourists to miss. In many of the caves you can find underground lakes and even original dinosaur footprints, preserved untouched for millions of years.

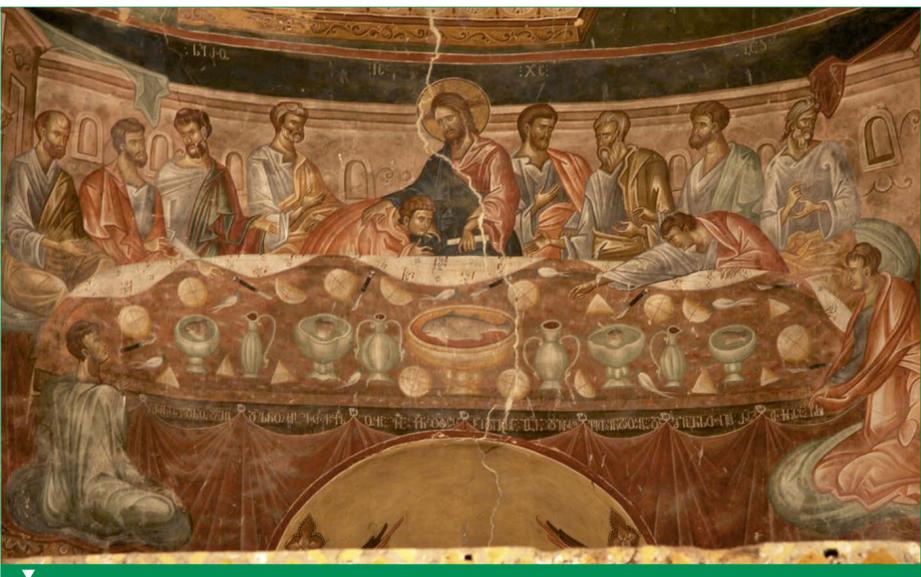


GENERAL INFORMATION

Kutaisi

Kutaisi, Imereti's main city, is Georgia's second largest city after Tbilisi. The elegant, tree lined streets of the 19th century houses stretching down to the banks of the Rioni River, along with several attractive parks, make Kutaisi a very beautiful place to stroll around and to take in some of the many sights.

In the Jewish Quarter a number of Synagogues demonstrate the long history of the Georgian Jewish community. The town's largest synagogue, built in 1866 can seat 500 worshippers and the magnificent churches of Bagrati and Gelati – both UNESCO world heritages sites – testify to the importance of the region.



CULTURAL HERITAGE

Ubisa

The Ubisa Monastery is one of the most important examples of Georgian monument paintings. The complex consists of a basilica, a tower and the ruins of monastery buildings. The Saint George Basilica was built in the 9th century and houses a unique collection of murals, from the late 14th century painter Damiane, influenced by art from the Byzantine period (1261-1453).

Gelati Monastery Complex

The Gelati Academy and Monastery were founded by King David Aghmashenebeli, in 1106 and you can see his grave at the southern end of the cathedral at the main entrance. The popular and revered King David wanted to be buried in a place where everyone coming to the monastery would step on his grave and according to legend the gravestone is the same height as the King himself. During the 12-13th centuries Gelati was one of the biggest religious, educational, scientific and philosophical centres of Georgia. The complex includes the main cathedral of the Virgin, the church of Saint George, a belfry and the academy building. In 1510 the Monastery was set on fire by Turkish invaders, but it was quickly repaired and re-built. To commemorate the re-opening, a group portrait of rulers was painted which includes an image of David Aghmashenebeli himself.

Bagrati Cathedral

Bagrati Cathedral proudly watches over Kutaisi and the Rioni River and has been the home of the Colchis Kings since ancient times. The cathedral, is regarded as a masterpiece in the history of medieval Georgian architecture. Since 1994 the Cathedral has been under the protection of UNESCO and there are regular religious services held in the cathedral. It's been renovated recently.



Geguti Palace

Geguti is a ruined Georgian medieval royal palace, 7km south of the city of Kutaisi. The ruins occupy an area of over 2,000 square metres alongside the Rioni River. The earliest structure dates back to the 8-9th centuries and the main complex was constructed during what is considered to be medieval Georgia's "golden age". The Geguti palace is frequently featured in Georgian annals as the beloved place of rest of Georgian royalty.

Motsameta Monastery

The name of the Motsameta Church (meaning "the place of martyrs") is tied to two noble brothers of Argveti, David and Constantine Mkheidze, who organised a revolt against the Arabs. The revolt was unsuccessful and the Arabs captured both brothers, proposing forgiveness if the brothers converted to Islam. The brothers refused and were tortured, their bodies thrown down the cliff into the river, known as Tskaltsitela ("The Red Water") ever since. The bodies of David and Constantine were buried on a nearby hill and the church declared both of them

saints. Later, during the 11th century, King Bagrat IV built a temple over their graves. Motsameta was a naturally unreachable place due to its location: it is surrounded by the Tskaltsitela River from three sides and the large wall on the fourth. According to a legend, there used to be a secret tunnel between Motsameta and Gelati Monasteries.

Mgvimevi Monastery Complex

Mgvimevi Monastery is located in the village of the same name. The monastery is partly carved into the side of a cliff and is difficult to access. The facade of the main temple is decorated with crosses and engravings. Painted frescos from the 13th century are still visible on the northern wall of the temple, while the paintings on the southern side date back to the 16th century. The front door is a unique masterpiece of wood carving.

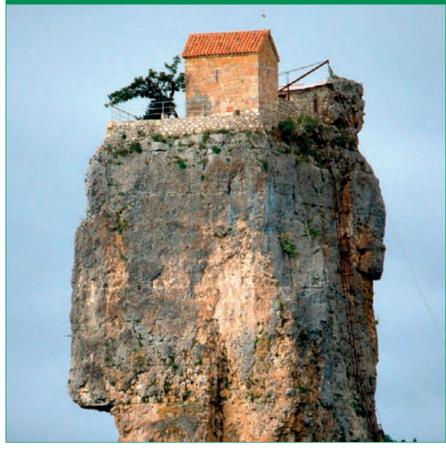
Vani Nakalakari

Vani is situated in West Georgia and used to be one of the most important cities of Old Kolkheti, reaching its peak of development in the 3-1 centuries B.C. During the 6th-4th centuries B.C. Vani used to be one of the most important political centres and the royal residence of the Kolkheti Kingdom.

The first stage was represented with wooden buildings, rock altars, various ceramic layers and rich burials (diadems with beautiful handcrafting, sculptured images of animals, bracelets, cups, heraldic images and necklaces), also silver jewellery, bronze and ceramic pottery. Imported ceramic and steal pottery have been found in tombs and cultural layers. This proves that there used to be trade-economic and cultural relationship with Greek world.

Katskhi Pillar

Katskhis Pillar (Sveti) is located near the town of Chiatura. The two churches found here are some of the earliest surviving churches in the world, and are an incredible monument to Christianity, located in a spectacular setting. The first church dates back to the 5th century and the second one was built around a century later. They are built at the top of a 40 metre high cliff, which can only be reached by climbing a metal ladder. This is not a typical location for churches in Georgia and we now believe that Katskhi was the home of hermit monks who came from the Middle East.



Prometheus Cave

Prometheus cave is one of the most beautiful and interesting caves of Europe, rich with various stalagmites and stalactites. It is

characterized by the variety of underground rivers and picturesque landscapes. Tourists can follow a 1200m path within the cave.

Sataplia Karst Cave

Sataplia karst cave (600m long) is located near Kutaisi, in Tskhaltubo municipality. It was discovered in 1925 and 10 years later, in 1935, the Sataplia Nature Reserve was established to help protect the cave and the dinosaur's foot-prints discovered nearby.

SPA RESORTS

There are a number of spas in Imereti region which are known for their healing properties.

Tskaltubo

The resort of Tskaltubo is located in the western part of Georgia, 7km from Kutaisi and is famous for its unique thermal mineral waters. The natural temperature of the water is 33-35 °C, Tourists have been coming here for centuries to bathe their weary bodies in its lovely warm and therapeutic waters.

Sairme

The mineral springs of Sairme are located in Khanistskali river gorge at the altitude of 880-1000 metres above sea level. Sairme attracts numerous guests due to the well-known medical properties of its mineral and thermal waters.

Nunisi

Between Khashuri and Kharagauli on the northern edge of the National Park, deeply hidden in the subtropical forests, lies the health resort of Nunisi. This resort is famous for its mineral water springs, however the church of the virgin built in the end of the 6th century is too charming not to visit. There is a Spa Hotel in Nunisi and a camp site at the resort.

PROTECTED AREAS

The Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park

The Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park is one of the largest in Europe – it covers more than 76,000 hectares of native forest and sub-alpine and alpine meadows, and is home to rare species of flora and fauna. The forests of the Kharagauli are a combination of dark coniferous, deciduous and mixed forests.

Rare and endemic species noted in Georgia's Red Book (a list of endangered and protected species) can be found here and it is possible to find grey wolves, lynx, and brown bears as well as roe deer and wild boar. The golden eagle, griffon vulture, black vulture, and Caucasian black grouse can also be seen in the area.



Sataplia Strict Nature

Sataplia (the place of honey) is located very close to Kutaisi, on Sataplia Mountain. Its mountainous landscape is almost fully covered by the Colchis Forest. Apart from the bee colonies found here, there are numerous caves including the famous Sataplia cave. This cave has been carved out by a stream over the past 30 million years and over 200 dinosaur footprints have been discovered here.

Ajarneti Protected Area

The Ajarneti Reserve is located in the Baghdati municipality and consists of three districts almost entirely covered with virgin forest. Many of the trees are over 250 years old.

Although less animal and bird species inhabit here, it's still possible to see jackals, the Leisler's bat, Caucasian squirrel, Caucasian otter and its largest mammal the roe-deer. It is incredibly popular with migrating birds. Over 60 species have been registered here.



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Taxis can be hired from the city.
Address: Kopitar Settlement
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GETTING AROUND
Imereti is divided into Zemo (up-
per) and Kvemo (lower) Imereti.
Central Railway Station
(2, Station Square).

Imereti

ENGLISH