

You really must see...



...the stunning Peace Bridge...



...The Bathhouses...



...the ancient fortress Narikala

Tbilisi

WELCOME TO TBILISI

Tbilisi is the capital of Georgia and lies in the Eastern part of the country in the foothills of the Trialeti mountain range. According to Georgian legends, it was founded in the 5th century by King Vakhtang Gorgasali and the superb Old Town shows off its roots as an ancient crossroad between Europe and Asia, with its narrow, winding alleys, handsome religious buildings, traditional balconied houses and caravanserais. Politically, culturally, economically and socially, Tbilisi is the centre of the country, welcoming businessmen, politicians and tourists from all over the world. Thanks to its history, location and background, Tbilisi is one of the great treasures of world cities, with so many cultures and conquests leaving their mark. Visiting is a full, sensory experience and to get the best out of your trip to Tbilisi, here are just a few of the amazing sights to see and things to do.

PLACES TO VISIT

Metekhi Church
The historical heart of the city, Metekhi is a must-see for any visitor to Tbilisi. King Vakhtang Gorgasali erected the first church here in the 5th century when he started to build this new capital city. The Metekhi Church of Assumption dates back to c.1278 but it has been damaged and restored several times since.

Narikala Fortress
An ancient citadel overlooking the capital and the Mtkvari river. In the 4th century the fortress was known as Shuris-tsikhe ("Invidious Fort") and was considerably expanded by the Umayyads in the 7th century and later, by King David the Builder. The Mongols renamed it "NarinQala" ("Little Fortress" in Persian).

Sioni Cathedral
It is situated on historic SionisKucha (Sioni Street) in downtown Tbilisi, with its eastern façade fronting the right embankment of the Mtkvari River. It was initially built in the 6th century and has been restored many times since. Sioni Cathedral was the main Georgian Orthodox Cathedral and the seat of Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia until the Holy Trinity Cathedral was consecrated in 2004.



The Kashveti Church of St. George
A Georgian Orthodox church in central Tbilisi, opposite the Parliament building on Rustaveli Avenue. The name "Kashveti" has an unusual story behind it; legend has it that the prominent 6th Century monk David of Gareja, of the Thirteen Assyrian Fathers, was accused by a woman of making her pregnant in Tbilisi. David prophesied his denial would be proved when she gave birth to a stone. She did, and the place received the name of "k(v)ashveti" derived from the Georgian 'kva' for 'stone' and 'shva' 'to give birth.'

Mamadavit Church, Mtatsminda
The history of the Mamadavit (Father David) Church started in the 6th century when Assyrian Father David of Gareja cut a small cave out of the hill and made a small chapel nearby.



The Bathhouses
No visit to Tbilisi is complete without a visit to the world famous Sulfur Baths, located in Old Tbilisi. Known for their calming, relaxing effect, a deep sulfur spring feeds the city with naturally heated mineral water, and bath houses have proliferated here for over a thousand



years, offering residents and visitors the opportunity to wash away the stresses of the day.

Tbilisi Mosque
The eight angled Minaret of the mosque draws attention from afar, but each side shows a slightly different view. Today, this mosque serves Shia as well as Sunni Muslims which is extremely rare, as it's peaceful proximity to the many churches and synagogues of Tbilisi.

Leselidze Street Synagogue
The synagogue was built in 1910 and continues to hold services today. Georgian Jews are one of the oldest communities in Georgia, tracing their migration into the country during the Babylonian captivity in 6th century BC.

Anchiskhati Basilica
The Anchiskhati Basilica of St Mary is the oldest surviving church in Tbilisi, situated in Shavteli Street of Upper Kala. Built in the 6th century the church is a three-nave basilica. Originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary, it was renamed Anchiskhati (Icon of Anchi) in 1675 when the treasured icon of the Saviour created by the twelfth-century goldsmith Beka Opizari was moved from Anchito Tbilisi to protect it from an Ottoman invasion.

Sameba Cathedral
The main Cathedral of the Georgian Orthodox Church can be seen from various points in the city and is a wonderful sight. This magnificent ensemble was built where the Church of St. Elias once stood and was consecrated on 3 March 1996.



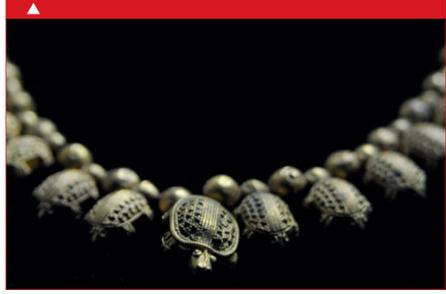
Bamba (Cotton) Row and Chardin Street
Once part of the Old Tbilisi bazaar, Chardin Street and the arched Bamba Row even now form a true 'Diagon Alley' of the Georgian Capital. The streets offer the best night-life, restaurants, cafes and bars in the city and hosts local open air festivals, concerts and galleries throughout the year.

Ethnographic Open Air Museum
Founded in 1966, Giorgi Chitaia Georgian Folk Architecture and Ethnography occupies 52 hectares of land on the road leading to Turtle Lake and houses more than 8,000 exhibits from 14 different ethnographic cultural zones within Georgia: Kartli, Samegrelo, Adjara, Abkhazia, Svaneti, Khevsureti, Kakheti, Meskheti, Javakheti, Guria, Imereti, Racha, Lechkhumi and Osetia.

Zakaria Paliashvili Opera and Ballet State Academic Theatre
Designed and built by Viktor Schreter, an architect from St. Petersburg in 1880, the building features elements of Islamic architecture, with an accentuated and richly decorated portico. The interior is decorated in pseudo-Moresque style.

Georgian National Museum
This recently renovated museum houses hundreds of thousands of Georgian and Caucasian artefacts of archaeology and cultural ethnography. Its highlight, the amazing Gold Treasure, is a unique collection of pre-Christian goldsmith pieces from between 3rd century BC to the 4th century AD. The Hall of the Soviet Occupation displays archive documents, photos and videos from the short-lived independence between 1918 and 1921 through the Soviet Occupation until the army crackdown in 1989 and finally, Georgia's

declaration of Independence in 1991. On the upper levels there is a superb collection of photos of Georgia and the Caucasian region taken in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These incredible early photos, taken by the famous photographer Dmitri Ermakovand, documents the great variety of people and places in the Caucasus and Asia Minor at the time. Finally, the National Gallery displays 20th century Georgian masterpieces.



Youth Palace
Initially Palace of the Vice Regent of the Russian Empire and later the Government House of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, this outstanding Palace was designed by Semionov and built in 1845-1847.



Rustaveli Avenue
Rustaveli Avenue is the main artery of Tbilisi and starts at Freedom Square. This elegant tree lined Avenue was built in the 19th century, when M.S. Vorontsov was the ruler of Georgia. The Avenue was divided into two parts, Palace Street and the Golovini Avenue, but in 1918 it was re-named after Shota Rustaveli, the author of Georgia's most famous poem, "The Knight in the Panther's Skin". Today, it is where the citizens and visitors to Tbilisi come to stroll at the end of the day - a throwback to the 18th century when the famous came to see and be seen on this beautiful Avenue.



Peace Bridge
Straddling the Mtkvari river in Tbilisi, Georgia, is a new pedestrian bridge, courtesy of Italian architect Michel De Lucchi and French lighting director Philippe Martinand. The 150m structure is composed of glass and steel and connects Old Tbilisi with the new district. The bridge provides a unique view of old Tbilisi. It also possesses an interactive light display system with 30,000 LEDs and 240 sensors installed within the structure able to convey specific messages, scrolled across the two parapets of the bridge every hour. According to the Georgian President, Mikheil Saakashvili the Peace Bridge is a symbol of Georgia's journey from the past to a better, brighter future.

Erekle II Square
In 1638, between the Sioni and Anchiskhati churches, King Rostom built a Palace and this square was named Royal Square. The palace was totally destroyed in the Aga-Mahomet-Khan invasion in 1795 but the locals still came here to gather and discuss the daily news. The square was later re-named "Salakbo" meaning "chattering" square.

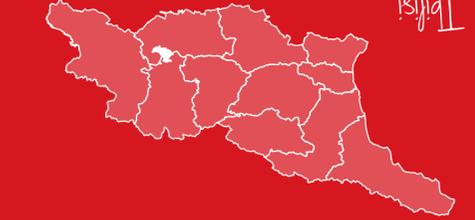


Tbilisi Botanical Garden
The Tbilisi Botanical Garden covers many hectares of the TsavkisisTskali gorge. A Garden has stood here since 1625 when it was part of the palace (fortress) garden. All year round one can see unusual and beautiful plants, a 40 metre high waterfall and a small bridge across the river. An, alternative, unusual main entrance is on Asatiani Street between house numbers 28 and 30 where you enter the garden via a tunnel.

Rike Park
The new recreation complex on Rike Square covers 10 hectares in the historic district of Tbilisi. It features a map of Georgia in which regions are connected to each other via pedestrian pathways. There is an Amphitheatre and children's square too. The park is distinguished with its dancing and musical fountains, designed by a Spanish architect.



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