



Kakheti Gastronomic and Wine Tour

2014



Tamada, a toast master

Bronze statue from the 7th century BC discovered during archaeological excavations in the city of Vani.

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INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

Kakheti Wine Tour

Georgia is the oldest wine region in the world. The fertile valleys of the South Caucasus, which Georgia straddles, are believed by many archaeologists to be the source of the world's first cultivated grapevines and neolithic wine production, over 8,000 years ago. The roots of Georgian viticulture have been traced back by archeology to at least 6000-8000 BC, when peoples of South Caucasus discovered that wild grape juice turned into wine when it was left buried through the winter in a shallow pit. This knowledge was nourished by experience, and from 4000 BC inhabitants of the current Georgia were cultivating grapes and burying clay vessels, kvevris, in which to store their wine ready for serving at ground temperature. When filled with the fermented juice of the harvest, the kvevris are topped with a wooden lid and then covered and sealed with earth. Some may remain entombed for up to 50 years.

UNESCO added the ancient traditional Georgian winemaking method using the Kvevri clay jars to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists.

In Georgia, written statements on the existence of the wine are kept in Greek, Persian and Georgian sources. Xenophon (BC. V c.) writes that the Colchian wine was "fragrant and pleasant. Strabo (BC. I c.) reported that in Iberia vine was widely spread and the crop was so rich that people were not able to use it completely. Procopius Caesarea (VI) said: "The Meskhs are hard working, they have many vineyards and their wine was taken in various countries for sale." Among the best-known regions of Georgia where wine is produced are Kakheti, Kartli, Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, and Abkhazia.

In Georgia of wine-lovers, everyone agrees that the very best wines come from the fertile easternmost part of Georgia, called by Dumas "the garden province of Kakheti."

Kakheti is a historical province in Eastern Georgia. It is known as a wine homeland and is bordered by the small mountainous of Gombori from the south and the Greater Caucasus mountain range to the north. There is extended well famous Alazani valley in between the above mentioned Mountains. This region is reach of the ancient cultural places and most of them are under UNESCO protection.

Due to the many millennia of wine in Georgian history, and its key economical role, the traditions of its viticulture are entwined and inseparable with the country's national identity.



ITINERARY



The sculpture of a man holding a horn in Tbilisi is modeled on an ancient Colchian statuette and is affectionately known as „**Tamada**” – toastmaster at Georgian feasts. The sculpture can be found at the beginning of Bambis Rigi Street near Shardeni Street (named after a French explorer Jan Chardin, who visited Tbilisi in 1863).

ITINERARY

Tour starts from TBILISI

Day 1. Tbilisi-Sighnaghi.

Visit the monastery Ninotsminda (VI); the Convent of St. Nino the Enlightener of Georgia in Bodbe; After breakfast guests'll visit the ancient wine cellar which is a museum also (300 years old) , tasting wine directly from clay jugs buried in the ground and get acquainted with the technology of production of Georgian wine, guests will have the opportunity to taste locally produced vodka –"Chacha". After that, going to the medieval city of love - Sighnaghi (XVIII). In the evening we'll visit a traditional Georgian family, where the guests will have possibility to familiarize with manufacturing of Georgian wine technologies and they will take part in process of preparation of "Chacha"(Georgian vodka). Here you will be treated traditional Georgian dishes and wine. The supper will be accompanied by Georgian folk music.

Overnight in Sighnaghi

Day 2. Sighnaghi – Lagodekhi

Visit the village in the Lagodekhi district Gurgeniani, where guests walking route (7 cells. In one direction) to the waterfall Gurgeniani Ninoskhevi too. Visit Lagodekhi Preserve. If desired, visitors have the opportunity, to move horses to spend the night in tents and rent the equipment.

Overnight in Lagodekhi.

Day 3. Lagodekhi – Kvareli

Drive to Kvareli where visit of house museum of famous public figure Ilia Chavchavadze . Then, go to the winery and taste the unique Georgian wine from the vineyards of microclimatic zones "Kindzmarauli." Have a close look how the bread of Kakheti (shoti), churchkhelas and Georgian kebab is made.

After that, will head to the medieval fortress city of Gremi (XVI) the capital of Kakheti kingdom,. After this, departure to the direction of the monastery complex Nekresi (IV).

Visit the "Twins wine cellar" in village Napareuli. Have a close look how the bread of Kakheti (shoti), churchkhelas ,Georgian " kebab" and "mtsvadi" are made. Then taste this delicious food and wine.

Overnight in Telavi.

Day 4. Telavi - Tbilisi

Visit the Cathedral Church of Alaverdi (VI -XI) which is located on Alazani Valley; The old (V) and new Shuamta (XVI) Monasteries. Then throw Gombori pass through return to Tbilisi. On the way back visit the fortress Ujarma (III -IV). Return to Tbilisi, visit a unique shop-museum "Sarcho" situated in the city center. There guests can see how the real Georgian wine is stored in clay jars, taste and buy your favorite one. Departure from Tbilisi Airport



MAP



Monument of Erekle II in Telavi



The Alazani River Plain, with the Caucasus Mountains, view from Telavi

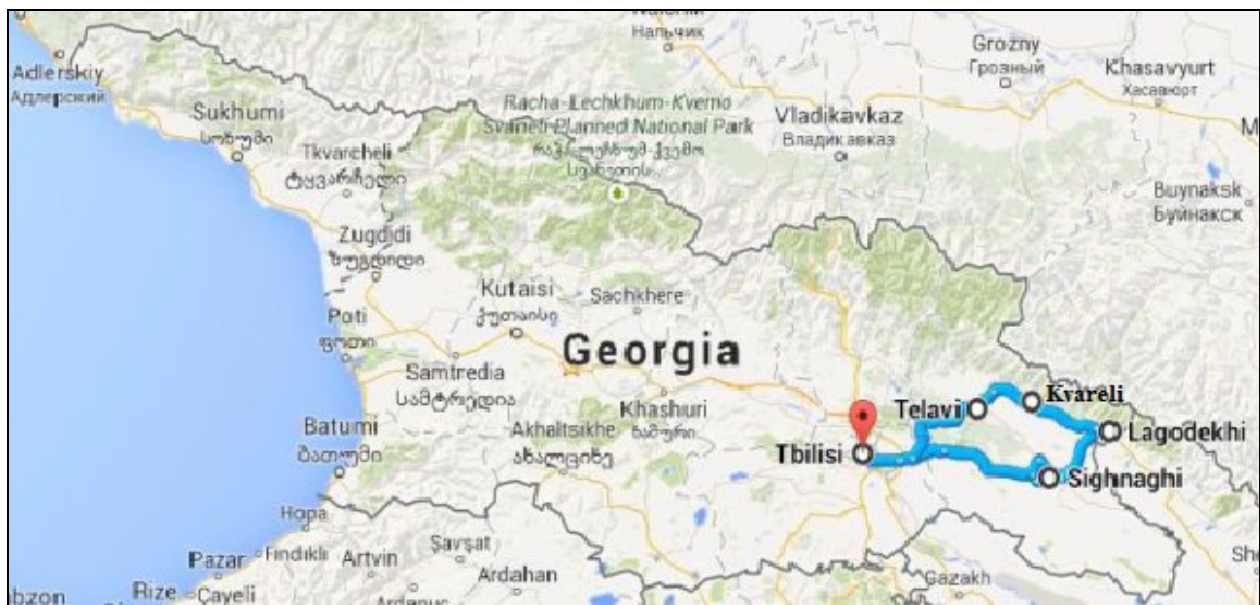


Telavi is the main city and administrative center of Kakheti. Its population consists of some 20,8 inhabitants (as of the year 2014). The city is located on foot-hills of Tsiv-Gombori Range at 500–800 meters above the sea level.

First archaeological findings from Telavi date back to Bronze Age. One of the earliest surviving accounts of Telavi is from the 2nd century AD, by Greek geographer Claudius Ptolemaeus, who mentions the name *Teleda*. Telavi began to transform into a fairly important and large political and administrative center in the 8th century AD. Interesting information on Telavi is provided in the records by an Arab geographer Al-Muqaddasi of the 10th century, who mentions Telavi along with important cities of that time's Caucasus. From the 10th until the 12th century AD, Telavi served as the capital of the Kingdom of Kakheti and later Kingdom of Kakhet-Hereti. During the so-called Golden Era of the Georgian State (12th-13th centuries), Telavi turned into one of the most important political and economic centers of the Georgian State. By 1762, it turned into the second capital (after Tbilisi) of the united Eastern Georgian Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti. The reign of King Erekle II, who was born and died in this city, was a special epoch in the history of Telavi.

Telavi at Night

MAP



1. Tbilisi
2. Sighnaghi
3. Lagodekhi
4. Kvareli
5. Telavi



SIGHT DESCRIPTION 1/4



St. Nino Nunnery



Bodbe Monastery where
St. Nino is buried



Signaghi

SIGHTS DESCRIPTION

St. Nino Nunnery

St. Nino Nunnery (VI), represents the earliest architectural monument of Christian architecture. According to legend, St. Nino vacationed here, and the monastery is named in honor of her name.

There are other interesting buildings in the complex as well. One of them is a four-story bell tower that dates back to XVI c. The palace of Ninotsminda metropolitan was constructed in XVIII c.

The church complex is special because of its brick architecture that is very typical for Kakheti region.

Bodbe Monastery

Monastery, 4-9th centuries; Signaghi District

History ascribes building and decorating the temple to the first Christian King of Georgia Mirian and his son Bakar. This is where St. Nino, enlightener of all Georgians, died and was buried. The church acquired its current shape in the 9th century. In 1823 it was restored and painted. Bodbe has always been an important monastic and educational center and had a significant role in the political life of the country. It managed to retain its importance as a spiritual center in the Caucasus throughout the years when Georgia was part of the Russian Empire (19th century).

Near the monastery there is also a spring. According to legend St. Nino has healing properties. After breakfast guests'll visit the ancient wine cellar which is a museum also (300 years old) , where they can taste wine directly from clay jugs buried in the ground and get acquainted with the technology of production of Georgian wine, and guests we'll have the opportunity to taste locally produced vodka - „Chacha”

Signaghi

The territory of the modern-day town has been settled since the Paleolithic period and was known as Hereti in the Middle Ages, and as Kiziqi after the 15th century. Signaghi (literally, "shelter" in Azeri) as a settlement is first recorded in the early 18th century. In 1762, King Heraclius II of Georgia sponsored the construction of the town and erected a fortress to defend the area from marauding attacks by Dagestan tribesmen.

As of the 1770 census, Signaghi was settled by 100 families, chiefly craftsmen and merchants. When Georgia was annexed by Imperial Russia in 1801, Signaghi was officially granted town status. In 1812, Signaghi joined the rebellion with the rest of Kakheti against the Russian rule. During the Caucasian War, the town was considered an important point on account of its proximity to Dagestan.

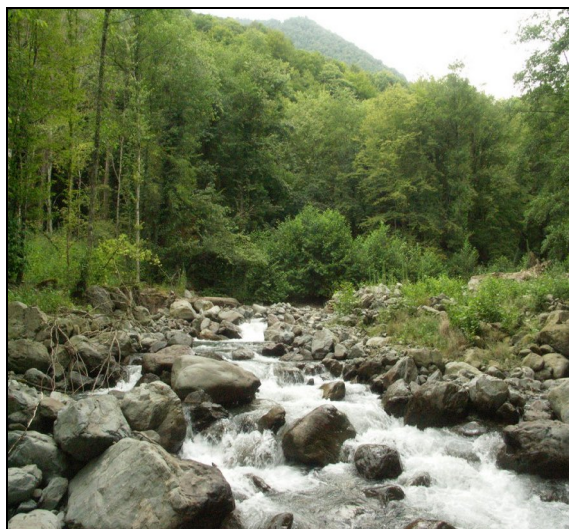
Signaghi is known as a "Love City" in Georgia.



SIGHTS DESCRIPTION 2/4



Gurgeniani Waterfall



Lagodekhi Preserve

Gurgeniani Waterfall

The route starts at the Administration of Lagodekhi Protected Areas by driving from the village of Zemo Gurgenianito the beginning of the gorge of Ninoskhevi, further it stretches along the gorge as a narrow foot-path as far as the waterfall. The route ends at the "Gurgeniani Waterfall" (40m height), which is bigger than "Shromiskhevi Waterfall". Visitors can see the centuries old lime tree, springs coming out of rocks and several natural compositions along the rivers. Visitors can also take a rest at the waterfall, take a bath and have a picnic.

Lagodekhi Preserve

Lagodekhi Reserve is the oldest nature reserve in the Caucasus region. It is situated in Eastern Georgia, in Kakheti; established in 1912 on the southern side of the Greater Caucasus ridge in eastern Georgia. The area covers a wide range of elevations and landscapes, from primary deciduous mountain forest dominated by Chestnut and Oriental Beech, to spectacular alpine lakes and landscapes. The Lagodekhi Preserve was established in 2003, holding a 1970 hectare area. This is an isolated plot of the west-Caucasian type humid mountain landscape in the eastern Caucasus.

It is a unique natural monument for its distinguished flora and fauna. The reserve is noted for its beech broadleaf woods, alpine zone inviolable meadows, ice-age lakes, abundance of endemic and ancient relict varieties zones. In addition, there is a beautiful waterfall of Lagodekhi Forest.



SIGHTS DESCRIPTION 2/4



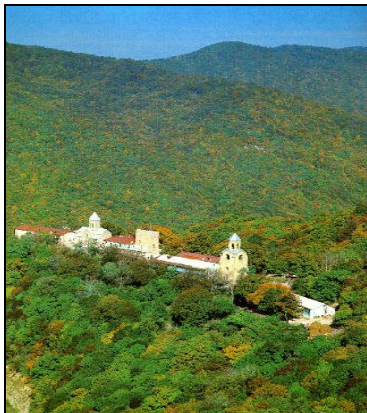
Prince I. Chavchavadze



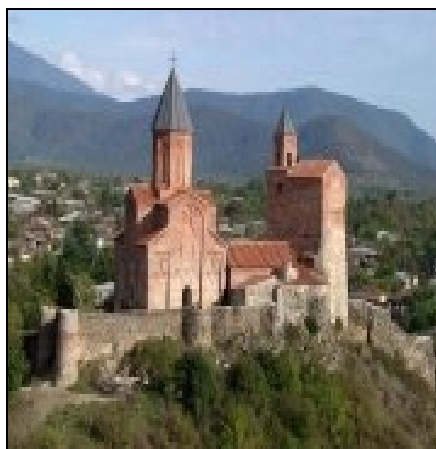
Kvareli Lake



Wine Cellar in Kvareli



Nekresi Monastery
Complex



Gremi



Twins wine cellar

SIGHTS DESCRIPTION

Kvareli Ilia Chavchavadze State Museum

Prince Ilia Chavchavadze (1837–1907) was a Georgian writer, poet, journalist and lawyer who spearheaded the revival of the Georgian national movement in the second half of the 19th century, during the Russian rule of Georgia. Today he is widely regarded as one of the founding fathers of modern Georgia.

In 1987 he was canonized as Saint Ilia the Righteous by the Georgian Orthodox Church. Today, Georgians revere Chavchavadze as The Uncrowned King and the *Pater Patriae* (Father of the Fatherland) of Georgia.

The museum encompasses the family tower and the residential house of the Chavchavadze family, also an exhibition hall, a lecture hall, an archive fund and the works displaying Chavchavadze's life (1837-1907). The museum is surrounded by a picturesque garden formerly owned by Chavchavadze family.

Kvareli Lake

is located east of the town of Kvareli, at the foothills of the southern slopes of Caucasian mountains. Surrounded by a forest of centuries-old trees, the hotel grounds open to the lake feeding on the Bursa and Chagurgula rivers, and overlook the boundless Alazani valley.

Nekresi Monastery Complex

Nekresi Monastery is one of the largest monastery complexes in the Kakheti region of Georgia and was founded by St. Abibos Nekreseli, one of the famous thirteen Syrian fathers.

Situated on top of a steep hill overlooking the Alazani valley, the complex contains various ecclesiastical buildings built at different times, including: the Blessed Virgin Church (VI-VII century); a basilica-type church that dates to the IV century (one of the earliest surviving Christian churches); a two-storey bishop's palace (IX century); a four-storey tower (XVI century); and a wine cellar (marani).

Gremi

Gremi is a 16th-century architectural monument – the royal citadel and the Church of the Archangels – in Kakheti. Gremi was the capital of the Kingdom of Kakheti in the 16th and 17th centuries. The Archangels' Church complex is located on a hill and composed of the Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel itself, a three-story castle, a bell tower and a wine cellar.

Twins wine cellar

Twins Wine Cellar in Napareuli is a delightful agritourism winery and vineyard site. The winery is named for the twin brothers who own the winery. Twins Wine Cellar welcomes large groups and provides many activities for visitors.



SIGHTS DESCRIPTION 4/4



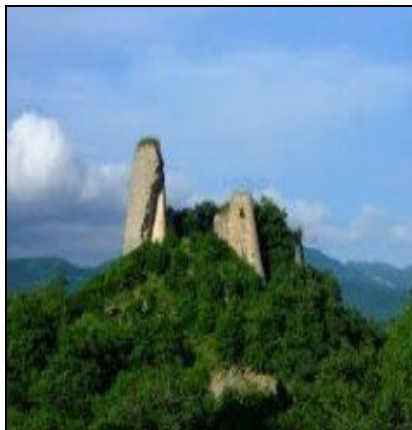
Alaverdi Monastery



Old Shuamta Monastery



New Shuamta
Monastery



Ujarma Fortress



Shop-Museum „Sarcho”

Alaverdi Monastery

Alaverdi Monastery was founded in the second half of the 6th century by Assyrian Father Josef from Alaverdi who is buried in the Monastery. Alaverdi St. George Cathedral was built by Kakhetian King Kvirike in the 11th century. It is 50 m high. The cathedral has retained remains of artwork of the 11th and 15-16th centuries. In the past Alaverdi was a significant spiritual and educational center.

Old Shuamta Monastery

Dzveli Shuamta still has one of the oldest Christian churches of Georgia – the triple-nave basilica that dates back to the 5th century. Two other cross-domed churches were built in the 7th century. The walls of these churches still have fragments of frescos and inscriptions made in the old Georgian Asomtavruli alphabet. The monastery is situated in a hollow between forest-covered mountains so that it has natural protection from three sides. The fourth side used to be fortified by a thick wall. A tradition has it St. King Tamar once spent 40 days fasting in solitude on Shuamta hill.

New Shuamta Monastery

The monastery was founded in the XVI century by the king of Kakheti Leon and his wife Tinatin. Queen Tinatin was tonsured a nun in the same Monastery and is Buried there. The Monastery got its name because of its site – it is surrounded from three sides by the mountains. „Shuamta“ means – among the mountains.

There legend about the founding of the Monastery. king leon and Queen Tinatin were returning from Guria. The retinue of king was carrying The icon which the queen never parted with. The Holy Icon of Queen TinaTin was placed under cornel-tree. Next day, when they decide to continue the way, they could not move the Icon until the Queen vowed to erect the church to this place.

Ujarma Fortress

Established by King Vakhtang Gorgasali in the 5th century. Ujarma was the second capital of Georgia until the 8th century. King Vakhtang Gorgasali is believed to have died there after he was wounded in battle against the Persians.

The fortress consisted of two parts: the Upper Fortress (the Citadel) located on the plateau of the rocky hill and the Lower City on the slope. A royal palace, consisting of a two-storey building, was located in the eastern part of the Citadel. The Upper Fortress was destroyed in the 10th century by the Arabian conqueror Abul Kassim but was restored in the 12th century by King George III who used it as a treasury. The fortress was originally surrounded by powerful protective walls with nine towers. Parts of the walls remain, together with several ruined towers that originally had tiled roofs.

Shop-Museum „Sarcho“

in the shop-museum "Sarcho" guests can see how the real Georgian wine is stored in clay jars, taste and buy your favorite one, also get a great variety of handmade souvenirs.