



# Medical Tour

2014



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# Introduction

Georgia is the country with great potential for the development of tourism. One can hardly find many places in the whole world that may hold such diverse landscapes within such a small area (69,7 thousand sq km) – from humid subtropics (in western Georgia) and semi deserts (in eastern part of the country) to perennial snows and glaciers of high mountains. It is remarkable that Georgia is rich both in natural and anthropological recreational resources and it is the best basis for development of different types of tourism, such as cultural, adventure, MICE, medical, gastronomical, ecological, rural, mountaineering, rafting, walking and trekking, caving and skiing as well.

Medical tourism was the traditional branch of tourism industry of Georgia. Such resorts as Borjomi, Abastumani, Tskaltubo, Tbilisi, Akhtala, Gagra, etc. were historically well known destinations. At the end of 1980s the number of organized tourists was about 2 million while total number of them was 4,5-5 million and the greatest number of them had come to Georgia for treatment of different diseases. So the medical and health improving tourism is too important branch of tourism industry of Georgia.

Healthy climate, more than 2 thousand mineral springs and curative mud, coniferous forests, speleological objects, etc. are the main resources for the development of medical tourism.

Ability of anthropological tourist resources such as fortresses, aged-old churches, palaces, gastronomical diversity, ethnographical events offer additional meaning for medical tourists. It must be mentioned that four monuments of Georgian culture were included into the prestigious list of UNESCO, as monuments of the world heritage: Mtskheta – the ancient capital of Georgia – city-museum reserve, Gelati architectural complex and Bagrati Cathedral in Kutaisi, Upper Svaneti – with its beautiful historic towers – one of the most exotic corners of Georgia.

There are 103 resorts in Georgia. 44 of them are climatic (that means that climate is the main curative factor there), 28 – balneological (with mineral water and therapeutic mud of different salinity and composition), 31 of them are of complex type (which have both climate and mineral waters suitable for treatment of tourists). Some of existing resorts are of world significance and they are very popular in lots of countries all over the world.

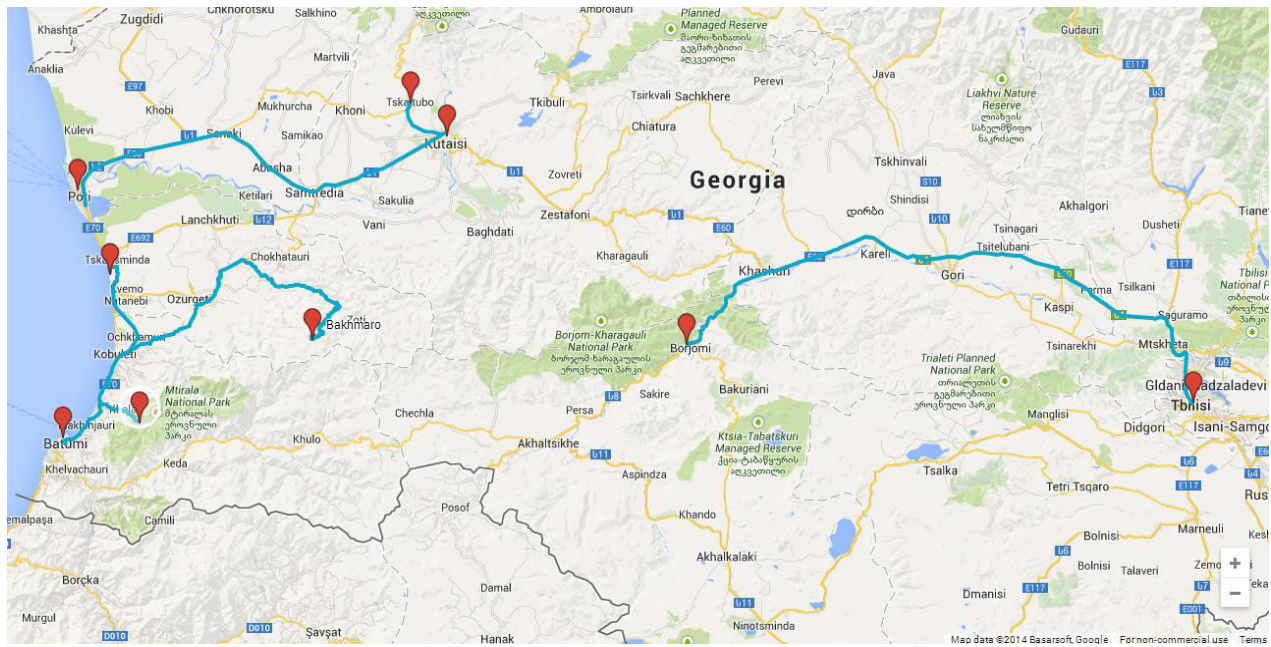


## Resorts

We will offer you four significant options for treatment of different diseases. These options are: Borjomi, Tskaltubo, Ureki, Bakhmaro and the interesting attractions around them, as persons besides some curative manipulations need cognition of natural or/and historical attractions, relaxation and entertainment as well. Duration of stay at resort depends on the type and specific of needed treatment.

It must be mentioned that tourists can get to those destinations by air: the nearest international airport for Borjomi is in Tbilisi or in Kutaisi, for Tskaltubo - in Kutaisi, for Ureki and Bakhmaro - in Batumi.

Map



## SIGHT DESCRIPTION

### OPTION 1. BORJOMI

Borjomi is a resort of international status. It is located between the evergreen slopes of the Meskheta and Trialeti Ridges (the Lesser Caucasus), in the picturesque valley of the Mtkvari-River and its tributaries - Borjomula and Gujaretistskali 800-1000 m above sea level. Vegetation is mainly represented by

coniferous (fir, pine, silver fir) and deciduous (oak, beech, hornbeam, birch) species.

Climatic particularities are determined by the location of the resort in the forest zone of the subtropical belt. Summer is warm with mostly sunny weather. Average monthly temperature of August is  $+20,1^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The first frosts are observed at the end of October. Winter is moderately mild with little snow. Stable snow cover with an average depth of 24 sm exists since late December till early March. Average monthly temperature of January is  $-2,1^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Precipitation totals up to 653 mm per annum. The Borjomi plateau totals 1900 hr of sunshine per annum. There is much less sunshine in the Park of Mineral Waters lying deeper and in the narrow canyon of the Borjomula-River. Weak mountain and valley winds are typical, favoring a good ventilation of the resort.

In addition to its salubrious climate, Borjomi is famous for its mineral waters, which are the other major curative factor. In terms of chemical composition the mineral waters are of acidulous, hydro carbonate, sodium variety. Temperature of the waters in various springs ranges from  $+17$  to  $+38^{\circ}\text{C}$ . General salinity is 5-7g/l.

Mineral waters are mainly used as a curative drink, for medical baths, inhalation, lavage of stomach and intestine. They are used as a curative-and-table drink outside the resort.



## Borjomi Mineral Water Park

The Mineral Water Park of Borjomi is marvelous in all seasons. It is difficult to say which season is the most pleasant and attractive; all of them have their own splendor and beauty. The park covering 30 ha of the gorge coated with coniferous trees is the recreation center of Borjomi.



*"Catherine's Spring" in Borjomi so named after General Golovin's daughter, 1905-15.*

The mineral springs of the Borjomi Valley were discovered over one thousand years ago. Seven large rock tubs discovered by archeologists dating back to the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century attest to the availability and use of the spring waters, most likely for bathing purposes. The springs were abandoned before being rediscovered in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. By that time, as a result of the incessant warfare, Borjomi and its environs had been depopulated and covered with impassable forests.

The Borjomi springs were rediscovered by the Imperial Russian military in the 1820s. The main spring of the Park was furnished with stone and covered with glass dome in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The surrounding countryside with many nice walks in the hills and several attractive parks is a natural reserve.

The use of Borjomi water has been suggested by the researchers for complex treatment of several digestive diseases and diabetes mellitus.

Borjomi, together with Bakuriani, was named by Georgia as an applicant city for the 2014 Winter Olympics on June 22, 2005, but it was eliminated as a candidate by the International Olympic Committee on June 22, 2006.

Borjomi mineral water has received lots of awards of international significance, here are some of them: Grand Prix (SPA, 1907), Grand Golden Medal (Kazan, 1909), Diploma of Honour (Dresden, 1911), Golden Medal (Tallinn, 1940 and St.Petersburg, 1996, 1997, 1998), Diploma of Honour of World Exhibition (Budapest, 1975). It is exported to over 40 countries.

The production of mineral water and the associated tourist economy in Borjomi and the nearby Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park make up 10 percent of Georgia's export trade.



### Romanov's Palace in Likani

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Tsar Nicholas built an elegant palace at Likani in the Borjomi gorge and developed the mineral water facilities. He also built a charming narrow-gauge railway which to this day still transports visitors up to the mountain resort of Bakuriani, a thousand meters above.



Simultaneously with curation tourist can go for sightseeing not far from resort of Borjomi.

### Botjomi-Kharagauli National Park

Botjomi-Kharagauli National Park is the first national park in Caucasus and according to its area one of the largest in Europe. It is located in the central part of Georgia. The park is included in PAN-Parks network of European Protected Area, which is a guarantee for high level defense of the protected area and development of stable tourism. There are 9 tracks of different complexity in the park.





## Bakuriani

Bakuriani is the famous ski resort (29 km south-east of Borjomi) which offers runs at all levels, suiting beginners, professional skiers and snowboarders alike. The resort is convenient for winter sports, tourism, summer recreation for families, especially with small children.



## Vardzia

Vardzia is the cave-town architectural complex, the main part of it was built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century in the period of Queen Tamar. It was excavated in the slopes of the Erusheti Mountain on the left bank of the River Mtkvari, 65 kilometers

from Borjomi. The caves stretch along the cliff for some five hundred meters and up to thirteen tiers. The caves could dwell about 50 thousand people simultaneously. The Church of the Dormition has an important series of wall paintings, where there are portraits of King George III and Queen Tamar.

The site was largely abandoned in the sixteenth century. Now part of a state heritage reserve, the extended area of Vardzia-Khertvisi has been submitted for future inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage list.





## OPTION 2. TSKALTUBO

Tskhaltubo - a resort of international status. It is situated in the valley of the Tskhaltubo-River flowing into the right-side tributary of the River Rioni 9 km north-west of the town of Kutaisi - the second largest town of Georgia and 70 km from the Black Sea. On the north-west the resort borders upon the spurs of the Samgurali Ridge (within the Greater Caucasus), southwards stretches the Colchis Lowland exposed to the Black Sea. The nearby hills are overgrown with rich subtropical vegetation, evergreen bushes and deciduous woods (oak, beech, hornbeam).

The type of climate is conditioned by the resort's location in the zone of humid subtropics, the proximity of the Black Sea and its protection from cold, northern winds afforded by the ridges of the Greater Caucasus. Average annual temperature is  $+14,6^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Winter is very mild and snowless (average monthly temperature of January is  $+5,3^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Summer is very warm, moderately humid (average monthly temperature of August is  $+23,8^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Sunny days are the typical feature, though rainy and overcast weather is not infrequent. Rainfall totals 1700 mm per annum. Sunshine amounts over 2000 hr per annum. The strongest winds blow in spring and in winter.

The resort's fame has been won by its unique mineral water well-known in Georgia since ancient times. Tskhaltubo's mineral water has rather stable physic-chemical properties. It belongs to the class of weak radon chloride-hydro carbonated-

sulphate, sodium-magnesium-calcium waters with a general salinity of 0,7-0,9 g/l. The high efficiency of health-restoring and prophylactic action of the mineral waters is accounted for by their extremely complex composition of major ingredients of their saline composition in particular. Natural temperature of the waters (+35-+37°C) makes its use possible without pre-heating.

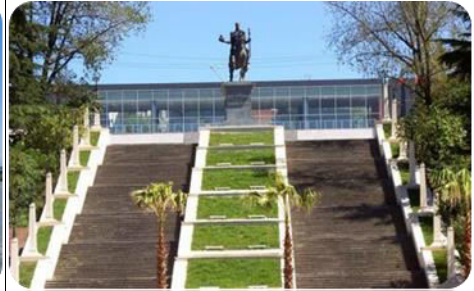
Tskaltubo operates all the year round. The resort's focus is on balneotherapy for circulatory, nervous, muscular-skeletal, gynecological, skin diseases and since the 1970s its repertoire has included "speleotherapy" in karst cave "Tetri Mgvine" - "White Cave", in which the cool dust-free environment is quite successfully used in treating hypertension, bronchial asthma, neuroses, etc.

Currently the spa receives only several hundred visitors a year, as since 1993 many of the sanatorium complexes have been devoted to housing some 9000 refugees, primarily women and children, displaced from their homes by ethnic conflict in Abkhazia.



## Kutaisi

Kutaisi is the second largest town of Georgia and the principal city of Western Georgia. There are several significant attractions in and around the town both natural and anthropological as well. Of main importance are Sataplia and Prometheus karst caves, Bagrati, Gelati and Motsameta monasteries which are functioning to the present day.



## Bagrati Cathedral

The Cathedral of the Dormition of Kutaisi, more commonly known as Bagrati Cathedral, is the 11<sup>th</sup> century cathedral church. It proudly watches over the city and the Rioni River and has been the home of Colchis kings since antiquity. The cathedral served as a masterpiece in the history of modern and medieval Georgian architecture. A distinct landmark in the scenery of central Kutaisi, the cathedral rests upon the top of Ukimerioni Hill. It was built in the early years of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of King Bagrat III, due to which it was called "Bagrati" cathedral. Since 1994 the Cathedral, together with the Gelaty Monastery, was included in UNESCO's World Heritage Site list. Recently it has been rehabilitated and re-covered.





Recovered Bagrati Cathedral

### Sataplia Nature Reserve

Complex of Imereti caves is located at a distance of 10 km from the town of Kutaisi. The area of the complex is about 354 hectares. The Sataplia Nature Reserve is the important part of the complex and is located at 500 m above sea level in the subtropical zone. 98% of its territory is covered with subtropical young forest of Colchic type.

Sataplia Nature Reserve was established in 1935 in order to protect the geological, speleological and botanical monuments. 5 karst caves can be found in the territory. One of them is very interesting tourist object. Total length of the cave is 900 meters. At the entry of the cave an extraordinary world will be opened in front of you. Your attention will be attracted by the stalactites, stalagmites and "curtains", arch ceiling, the largest dome hall in the cave with a grandiose stalagnate in the center.

The remarkable feature is that in the Sataplia Nature Reserve there were discovered numerous footprints of the extinct reptiles - dinosaurs on the ancient layers of limestone, the age of which is 120 million years.



## Prometheus cave

Prometheus cave known also as the Tskhaltubo cave is the wonderful monument of nature.

Prometheus cave located in the neighborhood of the city of Tskhaltubo, is a nature sanctuary. In the cave 17 halls are revealed for today. In the cave constant air

temperature keeps at the level of 15-17°C. Total length of a cave is about 20 km from which only 1060 m are open for visitors. At the end of the path you can see the beautiful lake. It is richly decorated with melted shapes such as stalactites, stalagmites, "stone curtains", "frozen waterfalls" and other melt forms.



## Gelaty Monastery Complex

Gelaty Academy and Monastery was founded by King David IV the Builder in 1106. During the 12-13<sup>th</sup> centuries Gelati was one of the biggest religious, educational, scientific and philosophy centers of Georgia. The founding of Gelati is tied to the cultural renaissance of Georgia. The complex includes the main cathedral of the Virgin, the church of St. George, belfry, gates and the building of the academy. In 1510 the temple was burned by the Turks, but it was repainted during the same century. The group portrait of rulers is of the same period, which also includes an image of David the Builder himself. At the southern end of the cathedral, at the main entrance, is the grave of the King who wanted to be buried in a place where all

people coming to the monastery would step on his grave. According to legend, the gravestone is the same height as the king himself was.

The Gelati monastery, built by the King David Agmashenebeli – the man who unified East and West Georgia, dates from the period of Georgia's golden age, the 12<sup>th</sup> century.



### Motsameta Monastery

The name of the church, Motsameta ("place of martyrs"), is tied to the nobles of Argveti, brothers David and Constantine Mkheidzes, who organized a revolt against the Arabs. The revolt was unsuccessful and the Arabs captured both brothers,

proposing forgiveness in return if the brothers converted to Islam. The brothers would not give up their religion, and they were tortured and their bodies were thrown into the river. The river turned red and has been known as Tskaltsitela ("The Red Water") ever since. People buried the bodies of brothers on the nearby hill and the church declared both of them as saints. Later, during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, King Bagrat IV built a temple over their graves. According to legend, there used to be a secret tunnel between Motsameta and Gelati Monasteries, used by people during wars. Motsameta was a naturally unreachable place due to its location: it is surrounded by Tskaltsitela River from three sides and walled on the fourth side.



### OPTION 3. UREKI

Ureki, a resort of the local status, is located in Ozurgeti municipality. It is situated on the Black Sea shore 4 km south of the Supsa-river mouth and 20 km

south of the important seaport of Georgia Poti. The topography of the area is flat country occupying the western part of the Colchis Lowland.

Climate is subtropical with very mild, snowless winter (average monthly temperature in January is  $+5,8^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) and with very warm summer (average monthly temperature in August is  $+23^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Rainfall totals 2000 mm per annum. Relative air humidity is 78%. Winds, mostly, western and eastern, are not infrequent. Vegetation is of subtropical variety.

Mild, coastal climate and the sea are natural curative factors. The beach sand contains about 4% of magnetic iron that acts as an additional curative factor. The sand is of dark grey color. These sands treat diseases of musculoskeletal and peripheral bodies and cardiovascular system.

The resort operates all the year round. Patients afflicted with heart, nervous and pulmonary (of non-tubercular character) diseases undergo treatment here.

Ureku is one of the best children's resorts as the magnetic sand is very useful to secure children's bones. In addition the sea at a great distance is superficial.



Poti

The ancient Greeks established trading posts on the Kolkheti Lowlands more than 3000 years ago. The famous story of Jason and his crew of Argonauts seeking a golden fleece comes from this area at that time. Poti is one of those ancient colonies which was called Phasis. The town is located at the place where the River Rioni flows into the Black Sea. Today Poti is a major seaport and industrial center of Georgia.



### Kolkheti National Park

Kolkheti National Park is located in west Georgia. Recognized as an important area, a 500 hectare portion of swampy forest and mire between the Rioni and Pichori Rivers was established as the Kolkheti national park in 1935. The world-wide significance of the region was acknowledged in 1996 when Georgia joined the international convention on wetlands, known as the Ramsar convention. The national park covers thousands of hectares of land, marine area and the Paliastomi Lake as well. Many thousands of years ago Lake Paliastomi was a lagoon opening on to the Black Sea. Later the sands moved by the waves closed off the lagoon from the sea. You can cross the Lake by pontoon and sail up the Pichori River to the swampy forests found nowhere else in Georgia.

Birds face problems of land development, pollution and other threats. Kolkheti National Park provides important natural areas essential for their survival. In spring and autumn lots of birds are resting and feeding on Paliastomi Lake, that is of great interest for birdwatchers.



Sights of Batumi and its surroundings are at the disposal of tourists as well.

#### OPTION 4. BAKHMARO

Bakhmaro is the highest alpine climatic resort of the Republican status. It is located in Chokhatauri municipality on the slopes of the Meskheta Ridge (within the Lesser Caucasus), in the valley of the river Bakhvistskali, 1913-1990 m above sea level. The landscape is extremely picturesque; the mountain sides are covered with coniferous woods comprising fir and silver fir species, which higher up are replaced by subalpine and alpine meadows.

Exposure of the resort in the west favors the penetration of sea breezes via the gorges and creates the wholesome combination of medium alpine (the upper belt) and sea climate. Winter is moderately mild (average monthly temperature of January is  $-5,5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Snow cover is very high (some years it reaches 4-5 m) and exists for about 6 months. Summer is moderately dry (average monthly temperature of August is  $+13,4^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Precipitation totals about 1600 mm per annum. Average annual relative humidity of air is 73%. There are over 2000 hours of sunshine per annum. There is a very intensive ultraviolet solar radiation. Mountain and valley winds are typical, ensuring a good natural ventilation of the resort area.

Climatic conditions exert a curative effect upon chronic diseases of respiratory organs (of non-tubercular etiology) and hypotonic disorders. The principal purpose of the resort is to provide all facilities for children's rest and health protection. There are numerous wooden one-storied summer houses. The resort of Bakhmaro operates only in summer from June 15<sup>th</sup> to mid-September. But there are good opportunities for development of winter types of tourism.



The tourist attractions of Adjara are available for holidaymakers of Bakhmaro, such as Batumi and its old part, architectural buildings, Aquarium and Dolphinarium, Botanical Garden, etc.

## Batumi

Climatic resort of Batumi and its remarkable sights are described in Batumi Sightseeing Tour.

## Botanical Garden

Batumi Botanical Garden is situated 9 km north to Batumi on the cape called Mtsvane Kontskhi (Green Cape). The garden is very interesting as the plants of completely different climatic and landscape zones co-exist here side by side. It may seem strange that the date-palm as well as Japanese Sakura grow equally well here. The garden represents thousands of plant species of astonishing beauty. Visitors are always fascinated by 1200 species of Rose.

The wealth of the garden is represented by 9 departments of East Asia, North America, New Zealand, South America, the Himalayas, Mexico, Australia, the Mediterranean Sea and Caucasian humid subtropics.

The sea view from the Botanical Garden is really impressive. Equally impressive is the view of the garden from the sea. The most appropriate period here is late spring, summer and early autumn, when exotic plants burst into colorful blossoms in turn and wrap the whole cape in passionate aroma.

