

# **PILGRIMAGE TO GEORGIA:**

**October 17-29, 2016**



## **Monday, October 17, 2016**

Arrival to Tbilisi. Transfer to the Hotel. Rest. Welcome Dinner. Hotel for overnight: VIP Boutique, Tbilisi

## **Tuesday, October 18, 2016**

9 am Depart for Telavi, capital of King Erekle II in the late 18th century (3 hour drive)

12 pm Tour of the 16th c. New Shuamta convent, founded by Queen Tinatin, followed by lunch at Nikala Restaurant

2:30 pm Tour of the 11th c. Alaverdi Cathedral Complex, founded by the sixth century Syrian father St. Joseph

Hotel for overnight: Rusiko's Hotel, Telavi

## **Wednesday, October 19, 2016**

9 am Drive to Nekresi Monastery (4th - 9th centuries), founded by the sixth century Syrian father Abibos

12:00 16th c. Gremi Church and Basilica, founded by King Levan

1:30 pm Lunch at Gremi cafe

4 pm 19th c. Tsinandali Castle museum/gardens/winery, summer palace of the poet and diplomat Alexander Chavchavadze and family.

5:30 pm Wine tasting at the Davdariani Family organic qvevri winery

6:30 pm Free time before dinner at 7:30

Hotel for overnight: Rusiko's Hotel, Telavi

## **Thursday, October 20, 2016**

9 am Walking tour of Telavi

10 am National Museum tour (opens at 10am)

11 am Depart Telavi for Kvelatsminda (All Saints) double-domed church, 9th c.

1 pm Lunch in Gurjaani

2:30 pm Continue to Ghirsa Monastery (12th c.), founded by the sixth c. Syrian father St. Stephen (1 hour)

5 pm Depart for Signaghi, check in to hotel

6:30 pm Walk to Pheasants' Tears organic wine bar for a wine-tasting, followed by a feast with toasting and singing

Hotel for overnight: Pirosmeni, Signaghi

## **Friday, October 21, 2016**

9 am Walk to Bodbe Convent (9th c), final resting place of the 4th century saint, St. Nino Enlightener of Georgians (30 minutes). Russians built a large monastery complex, which has been renovated. A new large church is almost completed, which is intended to accommodate the large crowds that gather for the feast of St. Nino on January 27th each year.

11 am Option to walk down to the well of St. Nino (600 steps, 30 minutes)

12:30 Lunch at Pilgrim's Cafe, outside Bodbe Convent

2:30 pm Walking tour of Signaghi a medieval fortified hilltop town. Includes lookout from the towers, 19th c. church of St. Georgia, National museum of Signaghi

4 pm Free afternoon, further hiking options

7 pm Dinner in the Galovani Restaurant (spectacular view of the Alazani valley)

Hotel for overnight: Pirosmeni, Signaghi

## **Saturday, October 22, 2016**



8:00 am Depart Signaghi for the Davit Gareji Cave Complex, founded by the sixth century

Syrian father St. Davit Garajeli (2.5 hour drive).

10:30 am tour of the Lavra Monastery, + optional hike to the Udabno Monastery frescoed caves (2 hours)

1:30 pm Lunch at the Oasis Club

3:30 pm Depart for Tbilisi, King Vakhtang

Gorgasali's capital city, founded in the 5th century at the site of hot springs on the banks of the Mtkvari River (2 hour drive)

5:30 pm Visit the Trinity Cathedral of Tbilisi (consecrated 2004) for Vespers service

6:30 pm check-in to hotel, free time

7:30 pm dinner in Tbilisi

Hotel for overnight: VIP Boutique, Tbilisi

### **Sunday, October 23, 2016**

9 am Liturgy at the Sioni Cathedral, 14th c. Other options within walking distance include Anchiskhati Church, Jvris Mama Church, Kashveti Church, and Sameba Cathedral to hear different styles of Georgian chanting.

1 pm Lunch

2:30 Walk to National Museum

4 pm Walk to nearby Icon museum

5 pm The walking tour resumes through the streets of Old Town Tbilisi including: the 6th c. Anchiskhati basilica, carpet shops, mosque, Persian baths (17th c.), and souvenir shops.

7:30 dinner in Tbilisi

Hotel for overnight: VIP Boutique, Tbilisi

### **Monday, October 24, 2016**

9 am Depart Tbilisi for ancient capital of Mtskheta (40 minute drive). Visit the 6th c. Jvari Monastery, one of the earliest surviving examples of the "cross-and-dome" architectural style that flourished in the 6th century.

11 am Visit the 11th c. Sveti-tskhoveli Cathedral, burial ground of Georgian kings and queens and the sanctuary where Christ's robe is an important relic

12 pm Visit the nearby Samtavro Convent, built on the site where St. Nino (4th century) prayed, lived, and converted King Mirian and Queen Nana in 337 AD. All are designated as UNESCO world heritage sites.

1 pm Lunch in Mtskheta

2:30 pm Depart for Kazbegi highlands (3 hours), stopping at lookouts along the way

6 pm Check-in to hotel in St. Stevens, elevation 7000 ft., (staying two nights)

7 pm Dinner at the hotel

Hotel for overnight: Stepantsminda, Kazbegi

### **Tuesday, October 25, 2016**

9 am Hike to the 13th c. Gergeti-Sameba Monastery (2 hour leisurely round-trip hike, option to take bumpy 4x4 rental jeep)

1 pm Traditional khinkali dumplings for lunch, a specialty of this mountain region

3 pm Drive through the Daryal Gorge to the Russian border, visit the new Monastery of the Archangels, still under construction. Option to hike across the river and up to the ruin of St. Tamar's fortress.

5:30 pm Return to the hotel





7 pm traditional dinner hosted by local family  
Hotel for overnight: Stepantsminda, Kazbegi

### **Wednesday, October 26, 2016**

9 am Depart for the lowlands  
11 am Visit to the Ananuri fortress complex (9th-17th c.), home of the Eristavi aristocratic family  
1 pm Lunch near city of Gori  
2:30 pm Visit the Uplis-tsikhe cave complex (1500 BC - 1500 AD)  
4 pm Visit Ateni Sioni monastery (7th c.)  
5 pm Depart for Akhaltsikhe (2 hours)  
7 pm Check in, and dinner at hotel  
Hotel for overnight: Lomsia, Akhaltsikhe

### **Thursday, October 27, 2016**

9 am Drive to the 10-14th c. Sapara Monastery complex (30 minutes)  
11am Tour of the Akhaltsikhe Fortress and National Museum, followed by lunch in the fortress cafe  
2 pm Depart for Abastumani Observatory and spa  
4 pm Visit the Zarzma monastery, 12th c. with impressive frescoes  
5:30 pm Return to Akhaltsikhe  
7 pm dinner at the hotel  
Hotel for overnight: Lomsia, Akhaltsikhe

### **Friday, October 28, 2016**

8:00 am Depart for Vardzia Cave Complex (2 hour drive). Built in Queen Tamar's reign in the 12th century, the monastic and village complex was a major pilgrimage site between Cappadocia and the Bodbe Convent in East Georgia, and

once housed more than 700 residents before a 14th c. earthquake devastated the site. Hiking shoes recommended.

12:30 pm Lunch at Vardzia Cafe

2 pm Depart for Lake Parvan, where St. Nino lived while traveling towards Mtskheta (2 hours)

5pm Continue over the pass to Tbilisi (1.5 hours)

6:30 pm Check into hotel in Tbilisi

7:30 pm Final banquet with the group, end of tour, goodbyes

Hotel for overnight: VIP Hotel, Tbilisi

### **Saturday, October 29, 2016**

Breakfast at the hotel. Transfer to the airport.

Departures.

***Important:*** the itinerary may be adjusted to satisfy the interests of the group to the degree possible; i.e. services, rest, additional time spent in the places of particular interest or importance. Accessibility of some of the sites is subject to weather conditions and restoration works. In time when every effort will be put to follow the schedule as it is presented, some minor changes are possible. We thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

## GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE TOUR:

### **Financial arrangements:**

Group size 20+ pax: 2800USD

Group size 25+ pax: 2650USD

Single occupancy: 400USD

### **Fees include:**

Transportation:

- chauffeured coach
- Airport transfers
- extra taxis and 4x4 jeeps as necessary

Meals:

- delicious full meals, three per day (total of 35 meals)
- all house wines and beers
- includes desserts, coffee, tea, extras

Hotels:

- boutique hotel rooms with private bath and shower

Entrances and Tips:

- includes all museum entrance fees
- includes all restaurant and hotel tips

Special Events:

- the tour includes access to special events such as meetings with local monastics, contact with local musicians and artisans, viewings of traditional bread baking and wine making

Guides:

- John A. Graham – lead guide and organizer. John holds a Ph.D. in Musicology from Princeton University. He has lectured at Princeton, Wesleyan, and Yale, and is fluent in the Georgian language.

- John is flanked by two English--speaking Georgian co-leaders who are semi-professional singers of the unique polyphonic Georgian traditional song and chant repertory.

*(Special feature: In a tasteful way, these three singers will test the acoustics of each medieval Orthodox Church we visit; while enlivening our meal times with folksong and instrumentals)*

### **Fees Exclude:**

- Airfare\*
- Hotel nights and meals outside of those designated on the itinerary
- Tips for driver and guides (suggested \$20 per person for each of the four Georgian staff (guide, 2 chanters, and driver)
- Anything that is not specifically mentioned in "Price includes"

*\* We could offer a compatible individual or round-trip group airfare (15+ people) from any major US airport for your consideration. For details please contact Father Ilya Gotlinsky at 607-797-1058 or Gotlinsky@msn.com*

Preferred method of payment is by check made to: "Palomnik, LLC" and mailed to: 53 Baxter Street, Binghamton, NY 13905. Any returned checks are subject to \$25 fee. For payment with a Credit Card and for domestic or international bank wires, please contact Fr. Ilya directly.

A deposit of \$800 is required when you sign up for the trip. ***Your deposit is non-refundable, unless pilgrimage is cancelled by the organizers due to lack of participation or for some other valid or unforeseen circumstance. In order to avoid any money loss, emergency/travel cancellation insurance strongly recommended.***

The deadline for signing up for the trip is September 15, 2016. The entire amount is due by the deadline. Failure to pay in full by September 15, 2016 without written notice of explanation may lead to the cancellation of your participation, with no refund of any previously committed funds. If you decide to join the pilgrimage after the deadline, please contact tour coordinator regarding the availability.

If you need to cancel after you signed up, please note the schedule of charges in addition to the amount of non-refundable deposit:

- 50% of the tour cost, 61 to 45 days prior to the departure
- 100% of the tour cost 45 or fewer days prior to the departure

All cancellations must be in writing and sent directly to agent/coordinator - Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky and must be received for reimbursement by the dates shown in the cancellation schedule.

### ***Passport and Visa:***

A valid passport is necessary for travel to Georgia. No visa required for the US citizens if you do not plan to stay for more than 365 days.

### ***Rules on the road:***

It is strongly suggested that you

- Obtain insurance covering medical needs and coverage of personal property
- Be aware that financial coverage for all emergency medical and other emergency needs will be your sole responsibility. We will provide all possible logistical and personal assistance, but the financial aspect is your responsibility.
- Act in a manner consistent with the surrounding environment
- Make arrangements to have access to sufficient funds to cover personal needs and unexpected events

Be aware that the places that we will be visiting may not have the same amenities that you are accustomed to. Medical facilities in most areas are limited. Because of the difference in language and customs, it is expected that the traveler will follow the directions of the Tour Director at all times.

The Director reserves the right to restrict a person's participation in the group's activities, including exclusion from the group, when, in the opinion of the Director, such action is appropriate.

**Please note:** The Director of the trip, Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky, does not hold any legal responsibilities concerning any of the arrangements, but acts only as an agent/coordinator.

### **HELPFUL TIPS:**

**LUGGAGE** — Take only as many pieces of luggage as you can manage yourself.

**MEDICATION** — Bring any prescription medications you need, as well as over the counter treatments for common ailments such as colds, upset stomach, and the like.

**BE SURE TO BRING** - comfortable shoes (we will be walking on an uneven terrain); rain coat, something warm as to wear in the evening, as it gets frisk very quickly after the sunset; electric outlet adapters, extra batteries, and memory cards for your camera, phone, and other gadgets; an alarm clock; Kleenex. Some travelers also recommend bringing hand sanitizer or wipes, a wash cloth (not typically provided in hotels). **DRESS** -- We are going to visit a lot of churches and monasteries.

Women should wear head-coverings and [preferably] skirts when visiting churches and monasteries. Men should wear regular shirts and trousers. The weather during this time of the year will be changing, please be prepared accordingly.

GEORGIAN CUISINE – considered to be one of the best in the World. Lots of grilled meats, oven baked breads, lots of herbs (not very spicy), lots of local greens and vegetables. Wine is absolutely delicious.

WATER – It is advisable to drink bottled water, which is not expensive and is widely available.

SECURITY - Don't keep all of your cash in one place, and carry important documents (like your passport and visa) with you in a hidden pocket or secure bag. Expensive jewelry and fancy electronic devices are best left at home.

CURRENCY – Most places take only local currency: Georgian lari. In time when you could exchange cash upon your arrival to Tbilisi, it is advisable to use credit card whenever credit cards are accepted (Visa, MasterCard, don't count on American Express as much). For cash you always could withdraw necessary funds from the ATMs.

If you are interested in joining the tour, please contact

Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky for more information at:

53 Baxter Street, Binghamton, NY 13905

**(607)-797-1058 & [ortours@gmail.com](mailto:ortours@gmail.com)**

**[www.orthodoxtours.com](http://www.orthodoxtours.com)**