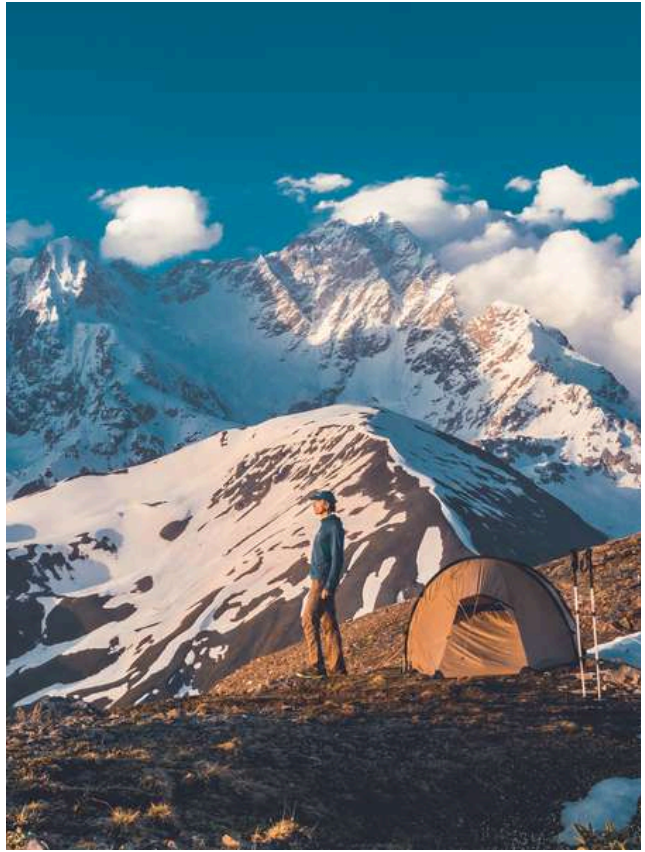




Georgia: Svanteti Trekking Expedition



Hello team!

Welcome aboard this Epic adventure!

This trip through the Caucasus Mountains in Georgia has a bit of everything, so settle in and get ready to experience one of our favorite countries in the world.

Good choice for signing up! We are beyond excited to welcome you to Georgia for a new adventure.

This information pack is LOADED with everything you need to start preparing yourself for the journey ahead.

Please read this entire document thoroughly as there are many important details to take note of. This information pack will be your primary trip resource and one you can keep circling back to in preparation for this expedition during the months ahead.

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Visas for Entry

- MOST nationalities can visit Georgia without needing to get a visa in advance (Visa on arrival/VOA). Be sure to check the [official immigration website](#) to see if your nationality qualifies. Not every country can receive a visa upon arrival. As such, it is a good idea to double-check.
- All guests coming on the Georgia Expedition trip MUST confirm their country's visa agreement with Georgia well in advance of the start of the tour.
- Visa fees are NOT included in the tour price and it is your responsibility to obtain the correct visa promptly from Georgia Immigration if needed.
- If you do not qualify for a visa upon arrival, then you will need to visit the nearest Georgian embassy to apply for one in person.

Flights

Arrival/Start Point: Kutaisi, Georgia | **Departure/End Point:** Tbilisi, Georgia

- This trip begins in Georgia's second-largest city, Kutaisi. Kutaisi Airport is conveniently served by direct low-cost Wizzair flights from numerous European cities, including Vienna, Prague, Paris, Rome, Barcelona, Memmingen, Brussels, Warsaw, Berlin, and Frankfurt.
- The trip ends in the capital Tbilisi, which is nice for those who have a few extra days at the end of the tour to stay and explore the city.
- If you arrive in Tbilisi, we can arrange a transfer between cities for roughly at \$150 per private car. A public minibus is \$15-20. The transfer takes 4-5 hours.

AIRLINE COMPANIES WE RECOMMEND:

- Wizzair
- Turkish Airlines
- Pegasus Airlines

When do you need to be here?

- To experience the full itinerary, you need to be in the hotel/meeting place in Kutaisi and be rested by the afternoon of day 1 of the itinerary. We will confirm the exact time and meeting place just before the start of the tour.
- At the very latest, please try to arrive between 2 pm and 6 pm in Kutaisi so you can take part in the first team meeting and team dinner

Food in Georgia

Georgian cuisine is known for its rich flavors, diverse ingredients, and unique culinary techniques. Long story short - it is damn tasty stuff!

The food in Georgia reflects the country's cultural heritage and history, combining influences from the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. Georgian meals are often characterized by the generous use of herbs, spices, and a variety of fresh, local produce.

TYPICAL FOODS FOR BREAKFAST:

1. Khachapuri: A quintessential Georgian dish, khachapuri is a type of cheese-filled bread. There are different regional variations, but the most famous ones include Adjarian khachapuri (boat-shaped and filled with cheese, butter, and a raw egg) and Imeretian khachapuri (circular and filled with cheese).
2. Nadughi: A type of Georgian cottage cheese, often served with honey or jam for breakfast.
3. Matsoni: A traditional Georgian yogurt that is often consumed with honey and walnuts.

TYPICAL FOODS FOR LUNCH:

1. Khinkali: These are Georgian dumplings filled with minced meat (usually beef or pork) mixed with onions and spices. They are traditionally eaten by hand, and the juice inside is often sipped before consuming the dumpling.
2. Mtsvadi (Shashlik): Grilled skewers of marinated meat, typically served with vegetables and sometimes accompanied by a spicy tomato sauce called adjika.
3. Lobio: A dish made from kidney beans, often cooked with herbs, spices, and onions. There are various types of lobio, including red bean lobio and white bean lobio.

TYPICAL FOODS FOR DINNER:

1. Satsivi: A rich, walnut-based sauce typically served with chicken or turkey. The sauce is flavored with garlic, coriander, and other spices.
2. Chakapuli: A traditional Georgian stew made with lamb or beef, tarragon, and other herbs. It is a spring dish often enjoyed during the celebration of Easter.
3. Ajapsandali: A vegetarian stew made with eggplants, potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, and various spices.

FIVE MOST POPULAR GEORGIAN FOODS:

1. Khachapuri: This cheese-filled bread is a staple of Georgian cuisine and is loved both locally and internationally.
2. Khinkali: Georgian dumplings are not only delicious but also a fun and social eating experience.
3. Pkhali: A dish made from finely chopped vegetables, walnuts, and herbs, typically served cold. It can be made with various vegetables such as spinach, beetroot, or beans.
4. Satsivi: This flavorful walnut sauce, often served with poultry, is a staple in Georgian festive cuisine.
5. Tkemali Sauce: A sour plum sauce that is used as a condiment for various dishes, particularly with grilled meats.

Personal Snacks on this Trip

Snacks e.g. protein bars or energy gels are NOT provided. You should bring your favorite trekking snacks from home and/or stock up in Kutaisi with cheap and quality local dry fruits and nuts before the trek.

Travel Insurance for This Trip

Every trip participant is required to have Travel Insurance. Make sure the Insurance you have covers nature activities like trekking and being up to 3500 m in altitude, as well as helicopter evacuation.

Here are our travel insurance recommendations:

- [Safety Wing](#)
- [World Nomads](#)
- [Global Rescue](#) - staff pick

Money for the Trip

The currency used is the Georgian Lari.

The official currency of Georgia is the Georgian Lari.

ATMs are common in the larger urban areas, like Kutasi, Tbilisi, but not in rural villages. We also recommend bringing a small amount of foreign cash to have on hand in case your cards fail to work but typically your debit and credit card should work in most places.

As to how much money you should bring, here are some costs for you to take into account...

- Soft drinks and water are about \$2-3
- A meal will set you back between \$10-25.

Money Recommendation for Epic trips: If you take out the equivalent of \$300 USD in Georgian Lari, you should have more than enough to get souvenirs, buy beer, pick up snacks, and extra drinks and meals along the way. When we return to Tbilisi at the end of the tour, you will have a chance to get out more cash should you need it (for shopping, tipping staff, last-minute purchases, etc). Regardless, you should sort out your cash before departing Kutaisi as only cash is accepted in the smaller villages.

TIPS FOR STAFF

Epic staff including our ground team in Georgia go above and beyond for guests before, during, and after the trip to make sure that everyone has the best possible trekking experience imaginable. So how do you show your guides some love? Well, besides bringing some fresh coffee, tipping is the next best option.

Note: Below we have included the industry standard recommendation to offer our staff some additional compensation based on your overall experience and keeping in mind the length of the trip. Show your staff some love!

- Tipping recommendations (in USD): Lead Guide: \$100-125+ per guest
- Tipping recommendations for off-road drive to Koruldi Lakes on Day 4 (in USD): \$10-30 per guest

Safety in Georgia

Georgia is probably the safest country in its geographic region to travel in. Violent and petty crimes against foreign tourists are rare, although corruption is not unheard of. Water should be filtered before it is consumed in cities but in the mountains it is potable. People usually find the local food free of Delhi-belly-inducing symptoms. The chances of getting sick are comparable to those in a Western European nation.

You may have guessed that this adventure tour carries a certain amount of risk since we are traveling and trekking DEEP into the mountains.

Guest Safety is always Epic's #1 priority and our experienced ground team does everything within their power to set our group up for a safe adventure.

The name of the game is security and safety first and injury prevention.

Accommodation For This Trip

We will be staying at a locally owned high-standard guesthouse accommodation (twin sharing rooms). Trip prices are based on twin-sharing rooms. Room sharing for solo travelers is always done with a member of the same sex unless you are traveling with a friend or as a couple.

Note Single rooms are available upon request. The surcharge for single accommodation will be **\$550 USD** for the main itinerary. **hotel prices are subject to change from season to season.*

We try to stay at guest houses within walking distance of shops, pharmacies, ATM machines, grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, bars, etc when possible. Breakfast every morning when we are staying in town will be at the hotel.

Meeting the People

Georgian people are among the most welcoming, friendly, happy-go-lucky people you will encounter anywhere.

They have a fierce national pride in the matters of football, food, and wine - and you will usually be made aware of a Georgian's position on any of those topics.

As a former Soviet Union satellite state, Georgian people can understand/speak some Russian, but not so much English once you are outside of the major city centers.

Along this trip, we will encounter local people living in remote villages, spend a bit of time with them, and have a glimpse into their way of life. Your guide speaks fluent Russian and some Georgian so there is usually always a way to communicate!

If you want to get the most out of your experience in Georgia, consider learning a bit of the language before you arrive.

Sim Cards and Internet

There are three main mobile operators in Georgia: Silknet, Magti, and Beeline.

You can purchase a local SIM card at various shopping points in Kutasi at the start of the trip if you would like to have local data on your phone for the trip duration.

Note that in the mountain areas, there is less cell signal, though coverage is improving every year.

In case of emergencies, your guide also carries a satellite communication device so that we are never out of contact.

What To Pack for The Trip

This “What to Pack” chapter is one of the most important sections of this entire information pack. Please read it carefully to ensure you have the right gear for the trip.

For all the trekking days, you are expected to carry only your daypack. Your main bag will be transferred for you to the next campsite, etc.

Mountain Weather in Georgia

- The weather in Georgia can vary depending on where you are in the country. Tbilisi in the heart of summer can feel sweltering and humid, whereas the mountain areas feel crisp and cool.
- Tbilisi experiences warm, summers with average July temperatures around 80°F (27°C).
- Kutaisi has similar summer temperatures, while Svaneti, including Mestia and Ushguli, boasts milder conditions with average July temperatures around 65°F (18°C), though in recent years it has gotten as warm as 80°F / 26°C
- In Kazbegi, July temperatures hover around 70°F (21°C), offering a moderate climate in this Georgian city. Summer rain showers occur often.
- While trekking and camping, a bit of rain is possible at any time. Along the trek, expect the temps to be +12-20°C during the day and around +5-10°C at night.



PACKS & BAGGAGE

- Expedition Duffle Bag
- or Trekking Backpack
- Day Trekking Backpack
with rain cover

ESSENTIAL PERSONAL GEAR

- 5C / 40F Sleeping Bag
- Inflating Sleeping Pad
- Inflatable Camp Pillow
- Compression Sack

SPECIALTY EQUIPMENT

- 2 Trekking Poles
- Headlamp
- Grayl Filter Bottle
- 1L Nalgene bottle *
- Lightweight Backpacking Tent
- Mug
- Spoon
- Bowl

BOOTS & FOOTWEAR

- Waterproof Hiking Shoes or
- Trailrunners with Gore-Tex
- Sandals/Tevas/Keens

OTHER PERSONAL GEAR

- Sunglasses
- Personal First Aid Kit
- Power Bank *
- Chargers/Phone Cable
- Universal power adapter *
- Snacks
- Bum pad/camp seat *
- Ziplock plastic bag
(for passport, phone, etc)

TOILETRIES

- Toothbrush, Toothpaste
- Sun Cream (50 spf+)
- Spf Lip Balm
- Biodegradable Soap
- Deodorant
- Wet wipes
- Travel Towel

CLOTHING LAYER SYSTEMS

- Clothes for the city
- Down or synthetic down Jacket
- Hard Shell/Rain Jacket
- Waterproof Pants
- 2-3 Hiking T-shirt
- 2 Lightweight trekking Pants
- 3-4 Merinos Trekking Socks
- 1 Base layer Bottom
- 1 Base layer Top
- Hat for sun protection
- Beanie
- Buff and Bandana
- Gloves LightWeight
- Underwear / Bras
- Lightweight rain pants
- Swimsuit
- Hiking shorts
- Fleece

* Optional

Gear Notes

Bringing your own Tent: For the camping section of the trip, we can provide tents, but if you have a single/2-person tent at home or just prefer using your own, we recommend bringing your own tent since you are familiar with it. Nothing like your own tent as they say. Despite our best efforts, the quality of the tents available in Georgia are not always the best.

Mandatory Items: There are things on the packing list that you **MUST** bring with you. Bring everything on the packing list unless there is an “optional” notation. If you have any questions about gear, please email us.

Sleeping Bag: In order to save weight and because of warmer summer temps, you do not need a sub-zero rated sleeping bag. Please don't bring a sleeping bag weighing 4 kilos!

Your main bag and the porter situation: We do provide porters for you for the trekking/camping days, but that does not mean you should bring your entire book library and rock collection. We want the bags to be as light as possible, while also ensuring you have what you need to be comfortable during the trip. Any items that you do not need on the trek/camping portion of the trip can be transferred to the next guesthouse where it will be waiting for you upon completion of the trek.

Rain gear and dry bags: We are expected to have some summer rain events on this trip. We highly recommend that you bring several dry/plastic bags to keep your essentials dry. Bring a good rain jacket, rain pants, and ensure you have a pack cover for your day bag.

Personal first aid kit: You should pack the following items with you:

- Small assortment of bandaids/plasters
- Ibuprofen/paracetamol tablets
- An all-purpose anti-biotic like Ciproflaxcin
- Moleskin/blister treatment
- Alcohol pads
- Small tube of triple antibiotic ointment
- Small roll of medical tape
- Throat drops
- Electrolyte tablets

Early client departure protocol

In the event that a trip participant needs to leave the planned trip itinerary early due to illness, injury, family emergency, personal reasons, or simply because they want to, etc then there are a few things to note:

Should a trip participant choose to leave the planned itinerary early for any reason, from the moment they leave the tour, all expenses from that point onwards are the responsibility of the trip participant. This includes, but is not limited to, hotels/accommodation, transportation, emergency helicopter evacuation, internal flights (even if we have purchased you a flight for the trip you are attending), meals, airport transfer, guide services - everything that is normally covered by Epic during your tour is no longer covered once a trip participant decides to leave.

Once the decision has been made to leave the tour, the trip participant must sign an "Early Departure Waiver Form" - formally releasing Epic of any further obligations to fulfill our tour/guide/transport/logistics services.

That said, in an emergency situation or in case of severe illness, Epic staff will do everything within our means to aid the trip participant until they are in a safe/stable condition. When possible, Epic staff can also help you book new accommodation, flights, transport, etc when possible - but all of these expenses are for the trip participant to pay.

Point being, our staff will always be available to the best of our ability to facilitate the logistics of your departure, should you choose to leave the trip early.

Liability waiver

All tour participants will be required to sign an industry-standard waiver. Waivers are usually issued on day 1 of the trip at our first team briefing. If you would like to request a copy of the waiver in advance, please email us.

Paying the balance

- Final balance payments will be due approximately 3-4 months before the tour begins. If you have a balance owing we will advise you when the time comes to pay.
- Please remember that deposits are non-refundable (refundable in case of trip cancellation)
- If you are unable to attend this adventure please inform the Epic Team as soon as possible.
- If you would like to pay the balance sooner, please email us at contact@epicexpeditions.co

Again, we are very excited to get to meet you in person soon!
The Epic Team

