



THE LEGACY OF SACRED ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF GEORGIA JUNE 3-15, 2024

Day 1. Monday, June 3, 2024

Arrival in **Tbilisi**, Republic of Georgia.

Group or a private transfer to the hotel. Check-in. Welcome dinner and orientation (TTBA).

Day 2. Tuesday, June 4, 2024

Today we will explore some of the sites of the Georgian capital, **Tbilisi**. Our first stop will be at the **Anchiskhati church**. The church was built by the King Dachi of Iberia who had appointed Tbilisi as his capital in the 6th century. Originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary, it was renamed Anchiskhati (i.e., icon of Ancha). The icon itself is preserved at the Art Museum of Georgia. The **Tbilisi Sioni Cathedral** was initially built in the 6th or 7th century, but was destroyed in the subsequent centuries by invading armies. The current church is based on a 13th century version with some changes that occurred in the 17th-19th centuries. The focal point of the church is the **cross** believed to be



that of St. Nino, the enlightener of Iberia. One of the newest and largest Orthodox cathedrals is the **Holy Trinity Cathedral of Tbilisi**, commonly known as **Sameba**. Currently it is the primary cathedral of the Georgian Orthodox Church. It was finished in 2004 and built in the traditional Georgian style. In the afternoon we will visit the **National Art Museum**, where we will see the collection of Medieval ecclesiastical artifacts, miraculously preserved through the perils of the twentieth century. Dinner and folklore show. Overnight stay in **Tbilisi**.



Day 3. Wednesday, June 5, 2024



After breakfast we will check out from the hotel and depart toward **Kakheti**, the eastern region of Georgia. During the many years of this mountainous area's turbulent history, this beautiful land was ravaged many times by countless invaders, and yet some monuments of importance still survive. Our first stop will be at the monastery dedicated to the Virgin Mary, known as **New Shuamta**. The monastery was founded in the mid 16th century by the Georgian King Levan. His wife, Queen Tenatin, eventually became a nun and is buried here. Then we will continue to the **Nekresi Monastic complex**. Traditionally, St.

Abibos, one of the 13 Assyrian missionary fathers, is considered to be the founder of the monastery. Although little remains from that time period in the monastery itself, an archeological search discovered the remnants of a Zoroastrian Temple, as well as the remnants of early Christian basilicas dated to late Antiquity. After lunch we will visit the **church of the Archangels in Gremi**. Just like the monastery of New Shuamta, the church was built and the frescoes were painted in the second half of the 16 century. Our last visit of the day will be at the **Alaverdi Monastery**. The foundation of this monastery is also associated with the mission work of the 13 Assyrian Fathers of the 6th century, but the current cathedral itself was built in the 11th century by Kvirike III of Kakheti. The Cathedral of Alaverdi is counted among the four Great Cathedrals of Georgia. Overnight in Signaghi/area

Day 4. Thursday, June 6, 2024

In the morning we will visit the **Signaghi Ethnographical Museum**, established in 2007. Among the various exhibits there are 16 paintings by Niko Pirosmani, a native of Kakheti and one of the most prominent Georgian painters. Fame had found him posthumously when his "naïve" paintings gained international recognition. Near Signaghi there is the **Bodbe Monastery**, one of the most important shrines of Georgia. According to Georgian tradition, **St. Nino**, a





female Apostle of the Georgian nation, settled toward the end of her life near Bodbe and died there ca. 340. A chapel over her grave was incorporated in a larger basilica built in the 9-11th centuries, but greatly altered during subsequent centuries. The monastery grew in its provenance, and although it was pillaged on a number of occasions, most recently in the 20th century by the Soviets, monastic life always resumed there, making the shrine of the Enlightener of Georgia accessible to the faithful. Time permitting, we will stop to visit at the former house, now a museum, of the famous Georgian poet **Aleksandre Chavchavadze in Tsinandali**. Transfer to Mtskheta for an overnight stay.

Day 5. Friday, June 7, 2024

Our first stop will be at the **Jvari Monastery**, built on the mountain outcrop above the confluence of the Aragvi and Mtkvari rivers. The history of this place dates back to ancient times and tradition links it to Saint Nino, the enlightener of the Iberians. The church was built at the very end of the 6th century, adjacent to a much smaller earlier structure erected to commemorate the wooden cross that St. Nino placed on the spot during her missionary labors. After our visit to Jvari, we will return to Mtskheta to explore the **Cathedral of the Living Pillar** (the **Svetitskhoveli Cathedral**).



This cathedral was added to the UNESCO list of the World Heritage Sites, and up until the Holy Trinity Cathedral was built in Tbilisi in early 2000, the Svetitskhoveli was the largest cathedral of the Georgian Orthodox Church. The cathedral was built in the early 11th century on the site associated with the earliest Georgian hagiographical tradition related to deposition of the tunic of the Lord. Next stop in Mtskheta will be at the **Samtavro Monastery**. Tradition dates it back to the 4th century, but the current complex is attributed to the 11th century and the patronage of King George I and Catholicos-Patriarch Melchizedek I. The original frescoes have been partially preserved in the interior of the church. Our last stop of the day will be at the **Samtavisi church** that has a traditional founding date in the 6th century and is likewise associated with the mission work of the Assyrian Fathers. The current structure dates back to the first half of the 11th century. Some of the original frescoes from that century were

discovered under plaster and survive only in fragments. Parts of the better-preserved murals are from the 17th century. An overnight stay in **Mtskheta**.

Day 6. Saturday, June 8, 2024

After breakfast we will start our day with a visit to **Uplistsikhe** - an ancient rock-hewn town. The earliest traces of human habitation here date back to the 2nd millennium BC. Eventually cave settlement grew in prominence and the area remained an important urban center till about the 4th century AD. But



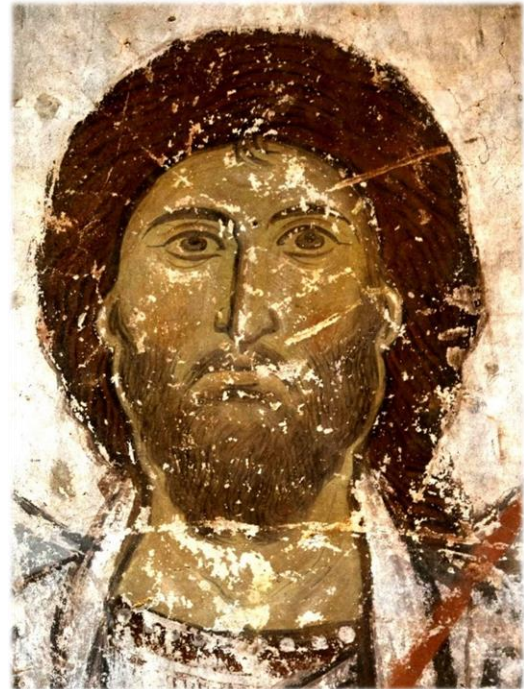
even with the shift of the centers of power to Mtskheta, Uplistsikhe retained its position, with the first rock cut basilica being built in the 6th century and then a free standing basilica built in the 8th century. Our next stop will be at the **Ateni Sioni Church**. This remarkable structure was built in the 7th century in the



gorge formed by the Tana River. The church in Ateni is a tetraconch. The walls of the original building were presumably largely barren, but frescoes were added in the 11th century by a group of a very talented iconographers. Many of the surviving frescoes are nearly intact and, just few years ago, local restorers completed the cleaning and the restoration of the ancient murals. After Ateni Sioni we will visit the **Kintsvisi Monastery**, known for its wonderful **frescoes** and special architecture. The church dedicated to the Mother of God is the oldest church of the monastery, dating back to the 10th century.

Frescoes of the interior are preserved only in part, but the most famous composition that still survives is that of the

Virgin Mary in the Communion of the Apostles. The St. Nicholas Church of the Kintsvisi Monastery was built and frescoed in the 13th century during what is considered to be the Georgian Golden Age. Next we will visit the church at the **Dirbi Monastery**. This ecclesiastical edifice was built in the middle of the 10th century. Some four hundred years later, the church was beautified with Palaiologan style frescoes, similar to those at the Ubisi Monastery. Our last stop of the day will be at the **Timotesubani** medieval monastic complex, located in the Borjomi Gorge. The most interesting church of the monastery is that of the Dormition of the Mother of God, built in the 12th century under the Georgian Queen Tamar. Most notable are the beautiful frescoes of the interior painted in the first quarter of the 13th century. We will arrive in **Borjomi** for an overnight stay.





Day 7. Sunday, June 9, 2024

Today we will do a bit of driving in the gorges of the Kura River, exploring two important medieval complexes. The first one is the **Sapara Monastery**, whose foundation dates back prior to the 9th century. It was a home to many significant figures within the Georgian Church. Through its long history, a number of churches were built at the monastery - the largest and, likely, most interesting of them all is dedicated to St. Saba, built in the 13th century. **Frescoes** that survive in the interior are rather well preserved and known for their high quality. Our next stop will be at the **Vardzia Cave complex**. The

building of this cave city is also attributed to Queen Tamar. The massive complex consists of living quarters, cisterns, a service area, and a large church dedicated to the Dormition of the Mother of God. The murals of the interior date back to the 1180s. For an overnight stay we will return back to **Borjomi**.

Day 8. Monday, June 10, 2024

This morning we will check out of our hotel in Borjomi and start our journey to **Kutaisi**. Our first stop will be at a small ecclesiastical complex of the **Ubisa monastery**. The original church dates back to the 9th century, with well-preserved interior frescoes from the 14th century done in Paleologian style, executed by the local iconographer Damiane. From Ubisa we will travel to see a natural wonder, the **Prometheus Cave**. There are six "halls" filled with stalagmites and stalactites that are open for tourists.



The Prometheus Cave is considered, by many, to be an emblem of Georgia. From here we will travel to the city of Kutaisi, with a stop on the way at the **Monastery of Gelati**, one of the most important and imposing medieval Georgian monasteries. The entire complex is certainly a masterpiece of an example of the Golden Age of Medieval Georgia that lasted from the 11th to the 13th centuries. The Gelati monastery was not only one of the largest medieval Georgian monasteries, but also a center of science and education. Several of its churches and chapels contain frescoes from different time periods and the altar apse holds a beautiful **mosaic** of the Mother of God and Angels, the only surviving example of medieval mosaics in Georgia. An overnight stay will be in **Kutaisi**.



Day 9. Tuesday, June 11, 2024

Today we will visit two important sites in the ancient Iberian capital of Kutaisi. The first stop will be at the **Cathedral of the Dormition**, also known as **Bagrati Cathedral**. At one time it was a mighty building, a sight of wonder for both local citizens and foreigners. However, it suffered greatly throughout its turbulent history and now remains as a precious ruin. The grandeur of the Cathedral was such that it was listed on

the UNESCO World heritage list. However, controversial restoration destroyed much of the ambience of the cathedral and was the cause for eventual removal from the UNESCO list. Nevertheless, the site remains an important historical and architectural landmark, well worthy of a visit. The second stop will be at the **Kutaisi State Historical Museum**. The exhibits of this special museum contain precious artifacts that specifically illustrate the history of Georgia, and among the collections there are some ecclesiastical articles - exceedingly rare artifacts of the ancient Georgian church. After crossing the Narekala pass we will arrive to **Nikortsminda Cathedral**. The cathedral, built in the early 11th century and currently on the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage sites, is located in the eponymous town of the Racha region of Georgia. The interior frescoes, well preserved, are from the 17th century, but certainly not without particular interest. Our last stop of the day will be at the village church of **Bugeuli**. This 15th century monument is a simple, single-nave church, but the interior frescoes present great interest as they demonstrate the talent of the local iconographers. For an overnight stay we will return to Kutaisi.



Day 10. Wednesday, June 12, 2024

Today we will explore the monuments of Western Georgia. Our first stop will be at the **Martvili Monastery**. The site upon the hill was previously occupied by a pagan sacred site. The original church was constructed sometime in the 7th century, and some fragments and carved lentils of the original church are still well preserved. The main monastic church was reconstructed in the 10th century and its beautiful interior frescoes from the 14th to 17th centuries are well preserved. After Martvili Monastery we will visit the **Martvili canyon**, filled with waterfalls. The views in the Canyon are simply

breathtaking. Most visitors state that the visit to the canyon is a must! It does not take long to walk through the canyon, and if the water pressure is not too high, a small boat tour on rubber rafts will be offered. Our next stop will be at the church in **Tsalendjiha** which known for its murals. A bilingual Greco-Georgian inscription indicated that the church was frescoed by Cyrus Emanuel Eugenicus, a Byzantine artist from Constantinople. **Eugenicus's murals** are regarded as one of the best examples of the late Paleologian art. The church of the **Khobi Monastery** was built using the spoils of war and includes marble





columns, capital, and other architectural elements brought in by the local noble, Vameq I Dadiani, after his victorious campaign. The Paleologian style frescoes are among the earliest surviving. The later frescoes that decorate the interior are from the 17th century. Our last stop will be a local church at the village of **Sepieti**, where we will see some fascinating frescoes from the 16th century. For overnight stay we will return to **Kutaisi**.

Day 11. Thursday, June 13, 2024

This morning we will leave Kutaisi and start our travel eastward, back to **Tbilisi**. The first stop along the way

will be at the **monastery of the Nativity of Christ**, or simply known as the **Katskhi Monastery**. It is a rather iconic building in an octagonal shape that was conceived at the end of the 9th century, and finished by 1014. Barren of any interior paintings, this wondrous church has interesting stone-carved ornamentation. A short drive away is the **Mghvimevi monastery**, partly carved into rock. The main church is a two-nave basilica, constructed in the 13th century. The Mghvimevi monastery is known for its stone carvings that richly decorate the façades of the buildings. The interior of the church contains 16th century frescoes. Further down the road we will visit the church in **Koreti**, famous for its 16th-17th century frescoes, and then the church in **Savane**. This later edifice does not have any surviving murals, but it is famous for its stone carvings. Toward the evening we will arrive in Tbilisi for an overnight stay.



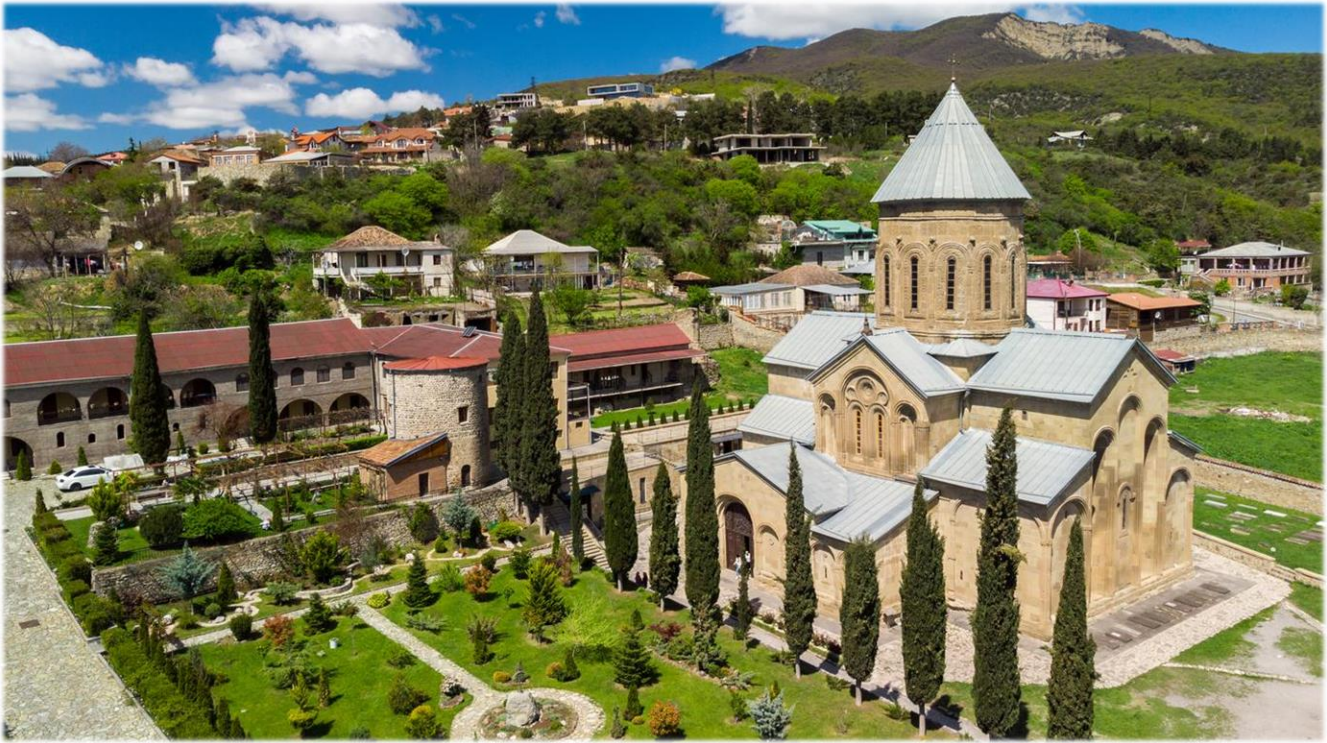
Day 12. Friday, June 14, 2024



Similar to our first day in Tbilisi, we will continue the exploration of the capital's attractions and holy sites. Time permitting, we could offer an out-of-town trip to the **Betania Monastery** that is famous for some of the best frescoes in Georgia executed at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries. Sadly, the frescoes are not in the best state of preservation, but still worthy of a visit if the site is accessible. Farewell dinner. Overnight in **Tbilisi**.

Day 13. Saturday, June 15, 2024

After breakfast, transfer to the airport.



TECHNICAL INFORMATION:

Price includes:

- Accommodation in good Tourist-Class Hotels with breakfasts daily
- Second meal daily (lunch or dinner)
- City hospitality taxes
- Deluxe air-conditioned motorcoach for the transfers all along the tour according to the program;
- Road, local and city taxes for the tourist bus
- English-speaking tour escort for the whole pilgrimage
- City tours as per the above itinerary, accompanied by local guides
- All entry and skip the line fees to the museums and churches as per itinerary
- Whisper sets

Price does NOT include:

- Flights
- Meals other than specified
- Beverages during meals (other than water)
- Optional/additional tours and associated entrance fees
- Portage, gratuities* and extras
- Optional extensions
- Entrance to temporary exhibits ... or to any exhibits that cost extra to the general museum fee

- Anything that is not specifically mentioned in “Price includes”

* It is customary for the tour participants to tip, on a personal basis, the tour escort, driver and local guides based on the satisfaction of the services received. Please use the following as a guideline: Driver/Tour Escort: 3USD and 5USD per person/per day each respectively

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

The current cost of the trip is \$2700 per person, based on double occupancy in a group of at least 25+ paying members. Single accommodations: extra \$400 and subject to availability. Please factor that the final price may fluctuate due to the actual number of participants or due to a significant change in exchange rate of local currency vs. the US dollar at the time of the final payment. In case of unlikely need for financial adjustment you'll be informed right away.

All payments should be made by check to: “Palomnik, LLC”, and mailed to: 1613 Campus Drive, Vestal, NY 13850. Any returned checks are subject to \$25 fee. Please contact us directly for information on payment via Zelle, credit card and for domestic or international bank wires.

REGISTRATION:

A \$600 deposit is required when you sign up for the trip. The deposit is non-refundable, unless it is cancelled by the organizers due to lack of participation. The deadline for signing up for the trip is March 1, 2024. The entire amount is due on March 1, 2024. Failure to pay in full by March 1, 2024, without written notice of explanation may lead to the cancellation of your participation, with no refund of any previously committed funds. To avoid any money loss, emergency/travel cancellation insurance is strongly recommended. If you decide to join the pilgrimage after the deadline, please contact tour coordinator regarding the availability.

CANCELLATION POLICY:

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

- 25% of the tour cost, 91 to 60 days prior to the departure
- 50% of the tour cost, 60 to 30 days prior to the departure
- 100% of the tour cost 30 or fewer days prior to the departure

SPECIAL REQUESTS:

All special requests, concerns and suggestions must be submitted in writing to Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky no later than the date of the final payment (March 1, 2024).

All cancellations must be done in writing as well and sent directly to agent/coordinator - Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky, and must be received for reimbursement by the dates shown in the cancellation schedule. We also have to add that should cancellation or alteration of the program occur due to Covid and associated emergencies, civil disturbances, acts of terrorism, war, natural disaster, and other events of force majeure or acts of God (including threat or fear of same), refunds will be made only to the extent that they are recoverable, and that such cancellation or alteration may result in the total loss of funds paid by participants. It is assumed each participant has reviewed the same with respect to their own comfort level of risk and personal safety. A decision to withdraw from the trip for these reasons or any others will be bound by the same terms of cancellation.

ALTERATIONS TO THE ITINERARY:

Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky reserves the right to alter, modify or withdraw the itinerary if air schedules and/or events beyond his control, including those of Covid and associated emergencies deem it necessary. In the event it becomes necessary for the comfort or well-being of the travelers to alter or modify the itinerary or arrangements, such alterations may be made without penalty to the tour operator and are not

grounds for cancellation with refund. Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky assumes no responsibility over any consequences of Covid associated emergencies or anything that is a result of any participant deviating from the group tour. 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. Tour 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 necessary.

REQUIRED TRAVEL DOCUMENTS:

A passport with validity for at least six months
The US citizens do not need entry visa to travel to the Republic of Georgia

IT IS STRONGLY SUGGESTED THAT YOU:

- Obtain insurance covering medical needs and coverage of personal property, possible Covid quarantine and/or hospitalization and treatment
- Be aware that financial coverage for all emergency medical and other emergency needs (including those related to COVID hospitalization, treatment, or quarantine) 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 some areas may be limited.

This agreement becomes effective upon acceptance into the tour by Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky

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Member of the International Association of Travel Agents Network (IATAN)

Tour Leader: Andrew Gould



Andrew Gould is a prominent designer of Eastern Orthodox Churches, with degrees in art history and architecture. He writes extensively on liturgical art, and founded the Orthodox Arts Journal. His firm is New World Byzantine. Contact: Andrew@newworldbyzantine.com

Local Guide and Co-Leader: Giorgi Meshi



Giorgi Meshi, graduate of Tbilisi State University (Specialization of the Eastern and Germanic Studies); University of Saarland (Culturology). Lecturer at the Tbilisi University of languages and culture. Free lance guide and translator

Tour Organizer: Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky



Fr. Ilya Gotlinsky is an Orthodox Priest based in Binghamton, NY. He has decades of experience organizing tours of artistic and holy sites around the world.

**REGISTRATION FORM:
ORTHODOX PILGRIMAGE TO GEORGIA
June 3-15, 2024**

*To register: please complete this registration form and return it along with
your deposit check (\$600.00) made to PALOMNIK, LLC to the following address:
Palomnik, LLC, 1613 Campus Drive, Vestal, NY 13850.
Please write "Georgia 2024" on the memo line.*

Full Name (exactly as in your passport):

Date of Birth (day/month/year):

Nationality, Passport # :

Issue and expirations date (day/month/year):

Address:

City, State, Zip/Postal Code

Home phone:

Alt. phone and Email:

Emergency Contact Information (Name, Phone, Relation):

Medical restrictions:

Dietary restrictions:

Would you prefer single accommodations at additional costs specified in the itinerary?

Please let us know if there is anything else that we should know in order to make your travel experience more comfortable and pleasant:

*Your signature below confirms that you have read the itinerary and agree to abide by Terms and
Conditions that accompany the itinerary.*

NAME/SIGNATURE:

DATE: