



PILGRIMAGE TOUR OF GEORGIA WITH FR. ANDREW CUNEO

SEPTEMBER 8-20, 2025

Day 1. Monday, September 8, 2025

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

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

Day 2. Tuesday, September 9, 2025

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 (Kartli, Eastern Georgia) 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



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cross believed to be that of **St. Nina** (St. Nino is the Georgian form), **the enlightener of Iberia** (Eastern Georgia). 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. Overnight stay in Tbilisi.

Day 3. Wednesday, September 10, 2025

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 the deposition of the **tunic of the Lord**. Next stop in Mtskheta will be at the **Samtavro Monastery**, the resting place of **modern-day saint Archimandrite Gabriel (Urgebadze)**. Tradition dates 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. In the afternoon we will return to Tbilisi. Overnight in Tbilisi.

Day 4. Thursday, September 11, 2025

This morning we will visit one of the newest and largest Orthodox cathedrals, 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. **The Cathedral of the Iveron Icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary** is the second largest church in Georgia, and it is located on Mt Mahata in Tbilisi. Construction began on April 17, 2012, on the initiative of Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II, and was completed by the end of 2018. The Cathedral is dedicated to the Iveron Icon, kept in the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos. After visiting these two splendid churches we will depart toward Kakheti, the eastern region of Georgia. During her long and 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.



Day 5. Friday, September 12, 2025

Today will be dedicated to the exploration of the Holy Sites in Kakheti. Our first 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. From here 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 16th century. Our last stop of the day will be at the **Bodbe St. Nino' Convent**. Originally built in the 9th century, it has been significantly remodeled, especially in the 17th century. The monastery is one of the major pilgrimage sites in Georgia, due

to its association with St. Nino, the 4th-century enlightener of the Georgians, whose relics are believed to be shined there. Return to the hotel. Free time for dinner.

Day 6. Saturday, September 13, 2025

After breakfast we will start our day with a lengthy transfer to Borjomi. On the way we will stop 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. 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 a few years ago, local restorers completed the cleaning and the restoration of the ancient murals. For dinner and overnight we will arrive in **Borjomi**





Day 6. Sunday, September 14, 2025

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 dinner and an overnight stay we will return to **Borjomi**.

Day 8. Monday, September 15, 2025

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 **Paleo-Georgian style**, executed by the local iconographer Damiane. From Ubisa we will travel to a local restaurant for lunch. After lunch, we will visit the **Motsameta Monastery**. The meaning of the Motsameta is the "Place of the Martyrs". Such a name was given to the place in honor of the two brothers of a **noble family of Argveti, David and Constantine**, who organized a rebellion against the occupying Arabs in the 8th century. As the rebellion failed, and the brothers refused to convert to Islam, both of them were tortured and killed. Later, both of them were recognized as saints by the Georgian Church and in the 11th century, king Bagrat IV of Georgia founded a monastery in honor of the martyrs. For dinner and overnight we will arrive in Kutaisi.



Day 9. Tuesday, September 16, 2025

Our 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. For an overnight stay we will return to Kutaisi.



Day 10. Wednesday, September 17, 2025

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 lintels 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 lunch we will visit the church built on the tomb of **St. Maximos the Confessor**, on the border of Svaneti and Lechkhumi, on the top of a rocky ridge. The grave and holy relics of Saint Maximus the Confessor were discovered in the monastery in 2003. Along with them, the relics that belonged to his students were found as well. St. Maximos the Confessor lived in the 7th century and actively fought against the heresy of monothelitism. Due to his popularity among the population, the heresy-stricken emperor, accompanied by some clergy



tried to silence the holy Father. Once all of their attempts failed, venerable Father's hand and tongue were cut off and he, along with two of his disciples, was sent into exile to Lazika where he died in 662. For an overnight stay we will return to Kutaisi.

Day 11. Thursday, September 18, 2025

Our first visit of the day will be 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. 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. For an overnight stay we will return to Kutaisi.

Day 12. Friday, September 19, 2025

Today we will visit two important sites in 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 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. Around lunch time we will start our transfer back to the capital city of Tbilisi, where we are going to have a farewell dinner and an overnight.

Day 13. Saturday, September 20, 2025

After breakfast, transfer to the airport



TECHNICAL INFORMATION:

Price includes:

- Accommodation in good Tourist-Class Hotels with breakfasts daily.
- Extra meals (all lunches and four dinners)
- City hospitality taxes
- 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
- Tours and visits as per the above itinerary, accompanied by local guides.
- Dinner and folk show in Tbilisi
- Whisper sets
- Water on the bus (a bottle per day/per traveler)

Price does NOT include:

- Flights
- Meals other than specified
- Beverages during meals (other than water)
- Optional/additional tours and associated entrance fees
- Porterage, 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: \$10USD per day/per traveler will cover tips for the bus driver and the support staff along the way.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

The current cost of the trip is \$2800 per person, based on double occupancy in a group of at least 25+ paying members. Single accommodation: extra \$500 and subject to availability.

All payments should be made by check to: "Palomnik, LLC", and mailed to: 668 Pittsburg Road, Butler, PA 16002. Any returned checks are subject to \$25 fee. If you'd like to register and to pay via the credit card, you can do so via this link: <https://tri.ps/aXynH> . Please beware of the extra credit card fees that are charged by the banking institution. If you'd like to pay by Zelle, please use ortours@gmail.com e-mail address. If you'd like to make a bank deposit or need info for a banking wire, please contact us directly.

REGISTRATION:

A \$800 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 June 8, 2025. The entire amount is due on June 8, 2025. Failure to pay in full by June 8, 2025 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 (June 8, 2025).

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 beyond end of stay. The U.S. citizens may enter, reside, work or study in Georgia without a visa for up to 365 days.

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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1613 Campus Drive,

Vestal, NY 13850

Telephone: 001-607-797-1058

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**REGISTRATION FORM:
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SEPTEMBER 8-20, 2025**

*To register: please complete this registration form and return it along with
your deposit check (\$800.00) made to PALOMNIK, LLC to the following address:
Palomnik, LLC, 668 Pittsburg Road, Butler, PA 16002.
Please write "Georgia 2025" on the memo line.*

Full Name (exactly as in your passport):

Date of Birth (day/month/year):

Passport # and Nationality

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?

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: