



If you've journeyed with us before on Eating Georgia, you already know that this country's cuisine is as unexpected and adventurous as its landscapes. But beyond the familiar tastes of khinkali and khachapuri, and the bustling Tbilisi market lies another Georgia - quieter, older, and profoundly diverse.

Shared Lands is a next-level culinary experience designed especially for our returning guests. This tour takes you into the kitchens of Georgia's minority cultures, where recipes are steeped in centuries of migration, adaptation, and identity.

From the German settlers of Bolnisi, who arrived in the 19th century with hearty food and pioneering winemaking techniques, to the Chechen-rooted Kists of the Pankisi Valley, where homemade beef noodles and fragrant herbs speak to a legacy of endurance and hospitality—we uncover stories rarely told on the tourist trail.

In Alvani, we'll dine with a Tushetian family, tasting cheeses once made in remote alpine pastures and breads made with ancient grains.

In the village of Zinobiani, the Udi people—descendants of early Caucasian Christians from Azerbaijan—will welcome us with dishes that reflect their journey and history.

We visit Gorelovka, home to the Doukhobors—a pacifist Russian sect exiled to rural Georgia in the 19th century. They have preserved a simple way of life, serving bowls of borscht, hand-folded pelmeni, and slow-cooked meats. Food, faith, and land remain closely intertwined.

Shared Lands is more than a food tour. It's a journey through living heritage - a chance to witness how communities maintain tradition through taste, and how food can maintain cultures across borders.

Over shared meals, we will sit with people whose kitchens double as cultural archives, and hear stories passed down through generations. We will see how identity is kept alive through what's grown, cooked, and celebrated.

This is Georgia as few have tasted it—raw, real, and unforgettable.

Shared Lands is a 10 day/9 night tour for 8 guests.

TOUR DATES

27 September – 6 October 2026

Double occupancy \$NZ6395.00 per person
Single occupancy \$NZ6795.00 per person – Studio room with balcony
Single occupancy \$NZ7095.00 per person – Double room with terrace

2027

23 May – 1 June 2027

Double occupancy \$NZ6695.00 per person
Single occupancy \$NZ7095.00 per person – Studio room with balcony
Single occupancy \$NZ7595.00 per person – Double room with terrace

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit a Doukhor family and try pelmeni and borscht
- Masterclass in Chechen cuisine in the Pankisi Valley
- Dine with a Tushetian family
- Wine tasting and lunch in Bolnisi
- Visit a cheese maker
- Take a walking tour through Telavi
- Lunch in a tree house with biodynamic wines
- Discover the story of the Udi people from Azerbaijan
- Dine under the stars in a courtyard restaurant

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Hosts Janice Kirkwood and Sue Dempsey
- Airport transfers
- Transport throughout Georgia
- 4 nights hotel accommodation in Tbilisi
- 1 night hotel accommodation in Kiketi
- 3 nights hotel accommodation near Telavi
- 1 night hotel cabin accommodation in Kvareli
- 9 breakfasts, 7 lunches and 7 dinners
- Wine with meals as listed
- Events, visits and tastings as per itinerary
- Local Georgian/English speaking guides

Shared Lands Itinerary

Day 1 Sunday

Arrive at Tbilisi International Airport. Transfer to your hotel, unpack and settle in.

Join us for a welcome drink and a light dinner at an underground wine bar in the Tbilisi Old Town. This cellar was perhaps the first modern wine bar in Georgia after the fall of the Soviet Union. We love their selection of natural amber wines from across the country. We will let the sommelier guide us with their excellent recommendations.

We meet our fellow travellers and discuss the week ahead. Gaumarjos!

*Welcome drink and light platter dinner
Stay at Blue Fox Hotel in Tbilisi*

Day 2 Monday

Gamarjoba, Tbilisi! It's good to be back. After breakfast we set off on our first adventure to Bolnisi. This famous PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) wine region is home to the descendants of 95 German colonist families from Swabia who settled in the area in 1818.

Named Katharinenfeld, the settlers built wooden 2-storey Fachwerk houses with stone basements and deep cellars. They introduced German winemaking techniques and used oak barrels rather than qvevris. We will take a walk through the old German quarter and hear the history from old Katerinenfeld to modern day Bolnisi. If we are lucky, we might be invited into a house. We will stop by Soviet mosaics in the main park before visiting a vineyard on the outskirts of Bolnisi.

Our host Berdia will escort us through his cellar where we will sample wines made in both qvevri and oak barrels. We will then sit down to a magnificent lunch overlooking the vineyard.

In the late afternoon we return to Tbilisi.

We will regroup in the evening for a simple dinner.

*Breakfast, wine tasting, lunch with wine, dinner
Stay at Blue Fox Hotel in Tbilisi*

Day 3 Tuesday

Pack your bags! Today we are setting off to the wind-swept region of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

First, we head due south from the hills of Tbilisi to Lake Paravani where we will stop briefly at the Poka St Nino Monastery where the local nuns craft chocolate, cheese, and other treats.

The lake is 2000 metres above sea level and in summer is an excellent escape from the heat of Tbilisi for swimming and fishing.

We continue our drive to Gorelovka where a sect of exiled Russian Doukhobors settled in the 19th century. Doukhobors are known for their pacifism, communal living, and belief that God resides within each person, making external religious institutions such as churches unnecessary. They rejected the Russian Orthodox Church and fled to Georgia.

Once a community of 3000 people the number has dwindled to just a few hundred as many have immigrated to Canada and some moved back to Russia.

We will see some beautifully painted houses then visit the simple home of Yuri, a proud Doukhobor, who will invite us inside to share a traditional meal of perhaps borscht, and pelmeni with sour cream. Yuri will tell us the story of his family and the sometimes-sad history of the Doukhobors.

We bid farewell to Yuri and his family and continue to Kiketi Farm where we will spend the night in the countryside surrounded by forest. A barbecue dinner awaits us with a chance to try award-winning Kiketi Farm wines.

*Breakfast, lunch, dinner
Stay at Kiketi Farm Hotel*

Day 4 Wednesday

We are back on the road this time via Tbilisi to Telavi in Kakheti. Sit back and relax as the wild scenery passes by.

In the village of Ruispiri, we will stop for lunch at a biodynamic winery owned by Giorgi Aladashvili. If it's a warm day, he will serve lunch in a tree house which pleasantly catches the breeze. We will sample some of Giorgi's wines alongside a selection of local cured meats and cheeses, fruits, and vegetables.

Our hotel for the next three nights is just 15 minutes away. Unpack, relax, maybe take a walk or a dip in the hotel pool.

Tonight, we will dine at and sample the wines of one of our favourite Kakheti vineyards - just a 10 minute walk from our hotel. The food here is as delicious as it is generous. If we are lucky their famous beef cheek cooked in Saperavi will be on the menu. Kakhuri Mtsvane or Tavkveri anyone?

*Breakfast, lunch with wine, dinner with wine
Stay at Agarani Estate*

Day 5 Thursday

Today we venture up the Pankisi Valley to visit a settlement of Kist people who left Chechnya at the beginning of the 19th century to escape conflicts in their homeland. The community makes up most of the population of the valley and still adhere to their Muslim traditions.

The Kist people have had a chequered history in both in Chechnya and Georgia which we will hear as we walk through the village of Jokolo with our host. We will also learn how the women of the Pankisi Valley have set about to change the perception of their people in Georgia.

We will then join Leila at her home and take part in a masterclass making typical dishes of the Kist people. We will enjoy this wonderful meal washed down with Kisturi beer, a delicious non-alcoholic Chechen drink made with herbs, spices, and honey.

We will return to Telavi in the late afternoon, and you have the evening free at the hotel.

*Breakfast, lunch, dinner is not included
Stay at Agarani Estate*

Day 6 Friday

This morning, we embark on a walking tour around Telavi, the administrative city of the Kakheti region. We take in the old fortress, see a 900-year-old plane tree and heritage homes, and visit the Telavi food market.

Appetites whetted we have lunch at a cheese bar housed in a 100-year-old former school. We will tour the aging room then sit down to sample their opulent cheese tasting boards.

After lunch we return to the hotel where the afternoon is free to sleep away or enjoy by the pool.

In the early evening, we drive to the village of Alvani now home to many Tushetian families. Tusheti is a remote, mountainous region in the north-east of Georgia bordering Dagestan and Chechnya which is only accessible by road for three months of the year. Alvani was traditionally the wintering ground for the Tush people's flocks of sheep.

Our hosts Shota and Natia will introduce us to the food of Tusheti from guda, a sheep's cheese to khinkali using lamb meat. Shota also makes bread from locally milled doli flour which is naturally low in gluten.

Shota now has a bakery in Tbilisi providing breads to both restaurants and delicious sandwiches at his café. Did we mention he is a winemaker, but then aren't most Georgians?!

*Breakfast, lunch, dinner with wine
Stay at Agarani Estate*

Day 7 Saturday

After a leisurely breakfast we are on the move again heading further east to the village of Zinobiani, home to ethnic Udis. These are the descendants of Christian Caucasian Albanians who under the leadership of Zinob Silikashvili moved to these parts in the 1920s from Azerbaijan following the conflict with Armenia.

Our host Ana has been rediscovering her roots and now has a guest house where she welcomes visitors to share a meal and talk about the history of the Udi people. Popular is a dish called Tchainhoof – a type of pilaf influenced by Muslim culture with rice, chestnuts, chicken, and raisins. Korekhe is a very tasty beverage made with seasonal sour fruits.

Following lunch it's just 20 minutes to our hotel in Shilda village where we spend the rest of the day at leisure.

We will gather together in the evening for a casual dinner at our hotel.

*Breakfast, lunch with wine, dinner
Stay at Chubini Winery and Cabins*

Day 8 Sunday

We check out at 11.30am and we can spend the morning relaxing at the hotel or maybe take a stroll through the hotel vineyard.

It is now time to make our way back to Tbilisi but first we will stop along the Gombori Pass for a farm-to-table lunch. We will poke around the family garden with our host Anna while her mother Lali prepares our lunch. This hidden farm is a real gem.

From here Tbilisi just an hour away. We check back into the Blue Fox Hotel, our home away from home.

It has been a busy few days and so tonight we leave you to your own devices. Maybe wander up to Dadi Wine Bar for a snack and a glass of wine or pop next door to Leila for a salad.

*Breakfast, lunch with wine, no dinner
Stay at Blue Fox Hotel in Tbilisi*

Day 9 Monday

The day is free for you to explore on your own. There is still so much to see and do in Tbilisi. Take a Bolt taxi to The Chronicles of Georgia, go up the new cableway at Mtatsminda, visit the Soviet car museum or do some last-minute shopping.

Join us for cocktails this evening before our farewell dinner in a beautiful courtyard setting. If you've travelled with us on Eating Georgia, you will remember Chef Meriko Gubeladze's fabulous Shavi Lomi. This time, we'll dine at another of her inspired restaurants where she combines Georgian ingredients with Middle Eastern flourishes. Be sure to save room for her exquisite desserts.

*Breakfast, cocktail, dinner
Stay at Blue Fox Hotel in Tbilisi*

Day 10 Tuesday

Today you say farewell to Tbilisi and transfer back to the airport.

breakfast