



Eating Georgia - *The country not the state*

One of the best ways to get to know any country is through its food. The word for a Georgian meal is *supra*, which is best translated as “feast”. Hospitality in Georgia is generous and food wildly abundant.

Let us take you on a journey to discover the food, wine, culture, and history of this remarkable country.

There are breads filled with cheese, beans and meat, chicken with pomegranate, grilled trout and kebabs, and juicy dumplings stuffed with all manner of tasty things. And there is always more. Tart tkemali plum sauce, khachapuri, vegetable pkhali, blue fenugreek, marigold - it's a whole new culinary vocabulary.

Georgia is also one of the world's oldest wine regions dating back over 8000 years. The tradition fermenting of grape juice in clay vessels, known as qvevris, has made it onto UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. There are said to be over 500 indigenous grape varieties.

Food and wine are the main draws for Georgia, but hardly the only one. The Greater Caucasus are stunning, dotted with picturesque villages and ancient churches. The country was also one of the world's first to adopt Christianity, in 337 A.D.

And then there's Tbilisi, a city that has been sacked 27 times but emerged as a distinctively cosmopolitan place with contemporary architecture mixed in with the historic buildings, a rich café culture and a mushrooming wine bar scene.

The late Anthony Bourdain visited Georgia with his Parts Unknown series and had this to say about the food:

"I'm quickly finding that the cuisine here is really good, really complex with sweet-sour notes that are reminiscent of — I don't know. I just know it feels hauntingly familiar yet utterly new and delicious."

We start in the capital Tbilisi then venture throughout the country stopping at the markets and vineyards along with a side of history and culture. Each evening Janice and Sue will take you to a carefully selected restaurant for dinner and lively conversation.

Eating Georgia is a 10 day/9 night tour for 8 guests.

TOUR DATES 2027

9 – 18 May - 2 spots left

23 May – 1 June

5 – 14 September

Double occupancy from \$NZ6595.00 per person

Single occupancy from \$NZ6995.00 per person – Studio room with balcony

Single occupancy from \$NZ7495.00 per person – Double room with terrace

*final pricing confirmed September 2026

HIGHLIGHTS

- Visit a local food market
- Take a walking tour through old Tbilisi
- Eat khinkali dumplings, khachapuri bread and phkali
- Dine at a 9th century monastery with award winning wines
- Masterclass making Tenili cheese and Kada bread at a family Oda
- Wine tasting and dinner with the winemaker at a well-known Kartli vineyard
- Dine at Pheasant's Tears restaurant in Sighnaghi
- Visit the Stalin museum in his home town of Gori
- Explore Gori in a Lada
- Dine under the stars in courtyard restaurants
- See beautiful frescoes at Bodbe Monastery
- Wine tasting at Iago Vineyard

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Hosts Janice Kirkwood and Sue Dempsey
- Airport transfers
- Transport throughout Georgia
- 9 nights hotel accommodation
- 9 breakfasts, 7 lunches and 7 dinners
- Events, visits and tastings as per itinerary
- Local Georgian speaking guides

Eating Georgia Itinerary

Day 1 Sunday

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

Join us for a welcome drink in the early evening and meet your fellow travellers.

*Optional: following drinks you are welcome to come with us for an informal dinner.
(dinner not included)*

Day 2 Monday

Gamarjoba, Tbilisi! After breakfast we take a walking tour around Old Tbilisi with our local guide to see how the past and present live side by side in the medieval, oriental centre of the Georgian capital. We cross the Peace Bridge to Rike Park and take the cable car to the Mother of Georgia statue that overlooks the city. The view from the top is magnificent.

Lunch is hidden away in a basement restaurant on Shota Rustaveli, the main street in Tbilisi. Here we will experience the first of Georgia's many famous breads alongside delicious salads and lobio beans, for which the restaurant is known.

Following lunch, we attend a wine tasting hosted by Daria, a Georgian Wine Ambassador and our local partner, for an introduction to the wine regions of Georgia and the main grape varieties. Georgia is known for its amphora made wines and we will use this knowledge in the days ahead as we delve into some of the 500 different grape varieties.

We continue our introduction to Georgian wine with dinner at a specialist wine bar. They offer a fabulous menu of Georgian inspired dishes where it's the vegetable dishes that are the main stars. Let the sommelier select the perfect wine to match the meal.

breakfast, lunch, wine tasting, dinner

Day 3 Tuesday

Today we start early and venture out to the regions!

Kakheti, to the east, is the foremost winemaking region of Georgia producing nearly three quarters of the country's grapes. At least 80 different grape varieties are found here with the most well-known being Rkatsiteli, Saperavi, Kisi and Khikhvi.

We journey to Signaghi, the city of love. Our first stop is at The Bodbe Monastery, a Georgian Orthodox complex originally built in the 9th Century which houses the relics of St Nino, a 4th Century female evangelist. It is now a nunnery and a major pilgrimage site.

Before lunch we take a wander through the streets of Signaghi and admire the views over the Alazani Valley.

We sit down to lunch at John Wurdeman's restaurant Pheasant's Tears. John has been part of the renaissance of Georgian wine and his label is known around the world. The kitchen cooks with organic produce grown on their farm. This has to be one of our favourite restaurant menus in Georgia.

Enjoy some free time in Signaghi. Perhaps stop by the museum to see original artworks by national treasure Niko Pirosmiani.

We arrive back in Tbilisi in the late afternoon.

We have had a big day and a hearty lunch so a light dinner is in order. Join us at our favourite subterranean canteen for a simple dinner. The wine comes in two varieties, red or amber; and two sizes, a litre or half litre jug. We love this place for its original Soviet-era charm and indifferent service.

breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 4 Wednesday

This morning we visit the biggest agricultural farmer's market in Tbilisi, the Dezerter Bazaar. Fresh vegetables, herbs and fruits, milky cheeses, walnuts, spices, and shots of homemade chacha for the intrepid!

For lunch we head to a specialist khinkali restaurant, those delicious herby meat or vegetable filled dumplings for which Georgia is known. How many can you eat?

After lunch we pop into a local bread shop and see the baker produce shoti bread, a traditional canoe-shaped bread, baked in a tone oven. This bread is the mainstay of the Georgian diet.

The afternoon is free to explore. The Dry Bridge market is full of treasures from Soviet times and is definitely worth a poke around; or hunt out one of Tbilisi's excellent ice cream stalls.

Dinner tonight is at the Wine Factory N1 complex built at the end of the 19th century. It is now home to several restaurants and bars in beautifully restored buildings. The cellar was originally said to house up to 40,000 bottles of wine, some of which were said to belong to Napoleon Bonaparte and Josef Stalin.

breakfast, lunch, dinner

Day 5 Thursday

Today we pack our bags and journey to southwestern Georgia and the region of Samtskhe-Javakheti.

First stop is Borjomi, a spa town famous for its mineral waters and home to eponymous Borjomi bottled mineral water.

After a light lunch, our local guide will take us on a walking tour of the town, taking in its most well-known sights. It is a very pretty town with interesting architecture both old and new. We will stop in Central Park where you can fill your water bottle from a naturally effervescent mineral spring.

From Borjomi we drive on to Akhaltsikhe where we check into our hotel for the night.

Our very special dinner tonight is at a 9th century monastery, a short drive from town, where a community of around a dozen nuns and monks are self-sufficient, growing their own produce and raising animals for meat. They produce award-winning wines which Deda (Sister) Tamari, the winemaker, will serve with the meal. The menu consists of Meskhetian regional dishes.

breakfast, lunch, dinner with wine

Day 6 Friday

Akhaltsikhe town is mainly known for the medieval Rabati Castle, one of the most impressive fortresses in Georgia. Originally home to local rulers it was later taken over by the Ottomans and then Russians. All left their

mark resulting in a hodgepodge of architectural styles from the gilded mosque to the Imperial-style Garden pavilions and Moorish-inspired, Alhambra-like pools.

In the morning, prior to leaving Akhaltsikhe there is the option to tour Rabati Castle with our local guide.

We then drive close to the Armenian border to the small village of Chobareti, where a local family will invite us into their 300-year-old Oda farmhouse to have a masterclass making Tenili cheese. Tenili cheese is listed as part of Georgia's Intangible Cultural Heritage and only made in a few nearby villages. This delicious string cheese will be served as part of our lunch at the Oda, stuffed into buns fresh from their wood-fired oven. Far from the usual tourist trail, we are privileged to be able to offer this event.

Following lunch, sit back and relax as we drive to our next destination, the Ateni Valley, where we will stay on a working vineyard. This simple guesthouse will be our base for the next two nights. Our host is Nika Vacheishvili, a former art historian, university professor and Minister for Culture, Monument Protection and Sport from 2004-2008. He opened his Marani to preserve the winemaking traditions of the Tana Valley that date back to the 7th century.

A light dinner is served al fresco using produce grown at the vineyard. Nika's family is also known for their fabulous cheese, jams and honey.

breakfast, lunch with wine, dinner

Day 7 Saturday

Late morning, we drive into Gori and jump into vintage Ladas to enjoy a tour of the city's street art and architecture hosted by Zhana, a local expert. This is a fascinating insight into the recent history of Gori town and Georgia's relationship with its bordering neighbour.

Lunch is at a rustic restaurant nearby which is known for the local dish Gori Kutleti. A fittingly Soviet era meal.

After lunch we return to the Ateni Valley where we have free time to relax before dinner.

Take a walk among the medieval wine terraces, or stroll to the nearby Ateni Sioni church with frescos dating back to the 11th century.

Our dinner tonight is hosted by Andro Barnovi, the former Chief of Staff to the outgoing President Saakashvili, Governor of the Shida Kartli region, Dean of Social and Political Sciences at Tbilisi State University and a lot more besides; and now owner and winemaker at the vineyard, Wine Artisans. Andro will personally show us through his cellar and join us for dinner as we sample his wines and enjoy his lively conversation.

breakfast, lunch, dinner with wine

Day 8 Sunday

We depart back to Tbilisi stopping again in Gori, the town where Stalin was born and home to The Stalin Museum. We tour the museum with Janice as your guide to point out the highlights. The official commentary of Stalin's life and deeds is from the museum's perspective. The movie The Death of Stalin is well worth watching before leaving for Georgia for an irreverent look at Stalin's last days.

Our next stop is at a 60 year old Kartli vineyard which was the first to be certified organic in Georgia. We continue our education into Georgian wine with a cellar visit and tasting of their famous Chinuri grape. We are lucky to have the winemaker hosting us himself.

From here it is just a 30 minute drive back to Tbilisi and the Blue Fox Hotel.

It has been a busy few days on the road and so tonight you are free to relax at the hotel or venture out on your own to one of the many restaurants or wine bars in the Old Town. We highly recommend Dadi Wine Bar for a light meal.

breakfast, wine tasting with snacks (dinner is not included)

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. A ride on the metro is quite an experience; or perhaps take a trip up the funicular for views across Tbilisi.

We also highly recommend joining our local friend Baia for an optional Art Nouveau walking tour in Sololaki. Baia has access to some unique buildings and regales you with stories from their pasts as you poke your nose into entranceways and courtyards of some magnificent old buildings.

Join us for cocktails this evening before our farewell dinner at a superb courtyard restaurant with a menu by Chef Meriko Gubeladze. Her reinvention of local Georgian makes it one of Tbilisi's top food destinations and a great place to end our Georgian wine and food adventure.

Let's raise our glasses one last time as we sit under the stars. Gaumarjos!

*breakfast, pre-dinner drink, dinner
(lunch is not included)*

Day 10 Tuesday

Today we say goodbye to Tbilisi and transfer back to the airport.

breakfast