

ACTIVE

Travel



Georgia on my mind

Grab your walking boots and spend a weekend wandering the ancient streets of Georgia's capital, Tbilisi

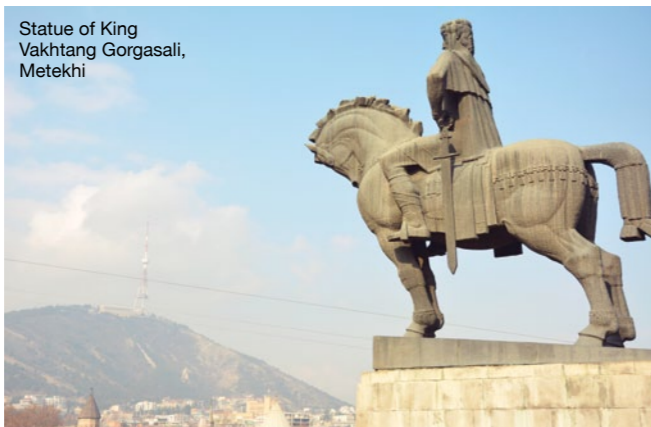


A weekend in Tbilisi, the intriguing capital of Georgia, can be summed up in three words: history, bread and cheese. What more could you want from a weekend getaway?

The sparkling modernity of Dubai feels a million light years away in comparison to the Georgian capital's gruff exterior, potholed roads and ramshackle cars. But within hours you'll have fallen in love with this alluring and ancient city.

From the charming houses leaning at precarious angles, to its many forts and ruins – not to mention its seriously delicious cuisine – Tbilisi is an ancient city with a backstory almost as impressive as the grapes produced in the vineyards around it.

Statue of King Vakhtang Gorgasali, Metekhi



TO-DO LIST: TIME TRAVEL

✓ Metekhi

Tbilisi packs both history and modernity into a smallish valley that's flanked by dramatic hillsides on either side of the Mtkvari River. Head up the

which, legends say, came after the king's beloved hunting falcon fought a pheasant and they both fell into natural hot springs. The main attraction, however, is Metekhi, the first church to be built in the city. Much like a lot of Tbilisi's structures, Metekhi has been rebuilt repeatedly over the centuries, but step inside and you'll see its walls are adorned in murals and gold.

✓ Mount Mtatsminda

If there's one thing Tbilisi does well it's a view. For the very best head to the top of Mount Mtatsminda via the funicular, a cliff railway that was built back in 1905. Fortunately it's been updated since then. At the top you can grab a bite to eat at the Funicular Complex

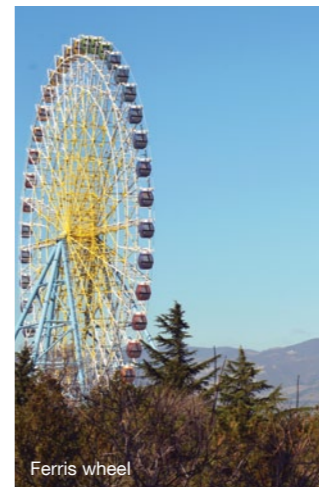


or, like us, explore the rather surprising amusement park complete with a Ferris wheel, roller coaster, haunted house and a log flume ride. If you need a pit stop, head to the small outdoor café, which serves up delicious cheese pies and stews.

📍 funicular.ge

✓ Narikala Fortress

On a hill overlooking the old town is Narikala Fortress. Originally built as a



Persian fortress in the fourth century, sadly only the walls remain. But hop on a nifty cable car (or face the thigh-burning stair climb), and scramble around the ruins for some stunning city views.

Only the nearby St Nicholas Church remains intact, but it's only 20 years old – the original 13th century structure was blown up during the Soviet occupation.

While you're up there, pay a visit

DON'T LEAVE GEORGIA WITHOUT EATING...

01

Khachapuri

This national delicacy comes in different forms, but the most famous is adjarian khachapuri – a fluffy bread boat filled with cheese butter topped with a couple of fried eggs. It's not one for the health conscious, but it's undeniably delicious.

📍 1 Leonidze, Giorgi Leonidze Street, off Freedom Square, Tbilisi, Georgia

02

Churchkhela

No, they're not sausages. They're actually strings of nuts coated in a sweet fruit casing – described by one man as a Georgian Snickers bar – and they're very tasty. You'll see rows and rows of them being sold all over the city.

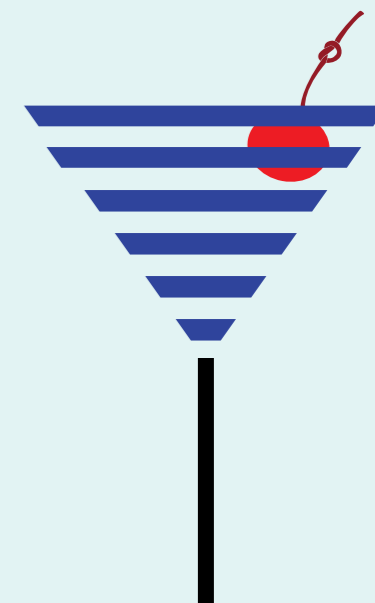


03

Khinkali

They look like hefty Asian soup dumplings, but these popular parcels are strictly Georgian (and remnants of the Mongol empire). You can find them everywhere but Samikitno has every filling available.

📍 Samikitno-Machakhela, Freedom Square, 5-7 Aleksandr Pushkin St, Tbilisi, Georgia



NAUTIQUE...BUT NICE

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Narikala Fortress

to Kartlis Deda or Mother Georgia. Residents have mixed feelings about the huge, gleaming aluminium statue, but as she stands with a cup of wine in one hand and a sword in the other, she makes the perfect symbol for Georgia – proudly welcoming guests but passionately defending its land.

☑ Museum Of Georgia

You'll find some of the city's grandest buildings along the central Shota Rustaveli Avenue, including the Museum Of Georgia. Apart from the odd school group, the museum is often very quiet, allowing visitors the opportunity to explore some fascinating and sometimes obscure exhibitions, from ancient Egyptian artefacts to historic weaponry. To get to the heart of Georgia's people and understand their recent



Funicular Mtatsminda Park

history, head straight up to the top floor to its Soviet Occupation exhibition. The country's history tends to get lost in the noise of the Cold War, but this exhibit covers the 70 years of occupation up to their independence in 1991. museum.ge



The National Gallery



The National Gallery

GET ME THERE

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flydubai.com



STAY

Hotel River Side

A quirky budget hotel, with clean rooms that might be on the small side, but make up for in character and a tasty breakfast spread in their Tiffany Bar.

🏠 Tel: +995 322242244. riverside.ge



Courtyard By Marriott

Be at the heart of the action at this luxury hotel, with rooms overlooking Freedom Square and the glistening statue of St George.

🏠 Tel: +995 322779100. marriott.com

No12 Boutique Hotel

This small hotel is located in a quiet neighbourhood in the old town. The balconies offer magnificent rooms out towards the river.

🏠 Tel: +995 322552212. No12hotel.com