

2008 Monastery Tour June 26 – July 6, 2008

Thursday, June 26, 2008

Tbilisi - Signaghi

- 10:30 am Departure for two hour drive to Signaghi.
- 12 noon Stop at Ninotsminda Monastery, 6th century enroute to Signaghi
- 1 pm lunch
- 3 pm unload luggage at local homestays, where we will stay three days.
- 3:30 pm 40 minute drive to Ghirsa Monastery, 12th century
- 6:30 pm Reservation: Signaghi Restaurant in “The City Wall”

Friday, June 27, 2008

Signaghi – Bodbe Convent

- 8:00 am Breakfast at host families
- 9:00 am Tour of Signaghi
- 11 am Visit to local weavery with Dato the Carpetman, all of your Caucasian rug questions answered on the spot!
- 12:30 pm Lunch at local Mexican restaurant.
- 2 pm Walk 30 minutes (very flat road) to the Bodbe Monastery. Optional trip to the holy spring of St. Nino
- 7 pm Free time before a traditional feast (*supra*) with the Zedashe Ensemble
<http://www.zedashe.org>

Saturday, June 28, 2008

Signaghi – Davit Garegi Cave Monastery

- 9:00 am After breakfast, depart for the St. David of Garegi cave monasteries, 9th-16th century frescoes and cave complex (see website photos). Two and half hour drive through spectacular high steppe landscapes. Some hiking required to see the caves, others may remain in the main 12th century monastery complex for a more extensive tour.
- 1 pm picnic lunch
- 7 pm dinner at the Manavi Restaurant on the way back to Signaghi

Sunday, June 29, 2008

Telavi – Alaverdi

- 9 am Depart Signaghi with luggage. One hour drive through the wine growing region of the Alezani Valley, destination the 12th century Alaverdi Cathedral. Optional attendance of Orthodox Divine Liturgy served by Metropolitan David (eminent proponent for the preservation of Georgian traditional church chant). Guided tour of the brand new wine production facility inside the ancient monastery grounds.
- 1 pm After Liturgy, restaurant lunch in the three hundred year old Shuamta forests

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- 2:30 pm Tour of the New Shuamta convent, 16th century
- 4 pm Tour of the Iqalto Monastery, 12th century, said to be the site of an ancient academy where Shota Rustaveli, author of the great epic poem, *Knight in the Panther's Skin*, is said to have studied.
- 6:30 Dinner in Telavi with singing friends
- 8 pm Meet homestay families in the Telavi region where we will stay for two nights

Monday, June 30, 2008 Telavi

- 9 am Gremi Church and Basilica, 16th century
- 12 noon picnic lunch
- 2 pm Tsinandali Castle museum, gardens, and winery, 19th century
- 5 pm free time in Telavi, dinner at homestays

Tuesday, July 1, 2008 Tbilisi

- 9 am Depart for Tbilisi with luggage, three hour drive.
- 10 am Brief stop to see an architectural anomaly, the double cupola Kvelatsminda Church, 14th century
- 1 pm Tbilisi hotel check-in, lunch, and rest time. (staying two nights)
- 5 pm Walking tour of Tbilisi's Old Town. Visits to the Metekhi Church, Narikala Fortress, and Bethlehem Churches.
- 7 pm Dinner in the city

Wednesday, July 2, 2008 Tbilisi -- Mtskheta

- 9 am Tour of Sameba Cathedral, opened in November 2004
- 10 am Depart for the ancient capital of Georgia, Mtskheta (40 minute drive)
- 11 am Tour of Jvari Monastery, 6th century
- 12:30 pm Lunch at the famous Mtskheta restaurant, "House of Beans" (they serve other food too!)
- 2 pm Tour of the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, 12th century (burial place of Kings and legendary resting place of Christ's tunic), Samtavro Convent, 12th century, and the Antiochan Chapel, 6th century. Gift shopping available.
- 6 pm Return to Tbilisi for dinner

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Thursday, July 3, 2008

Kazbegi – High Caucasus

- 9:00 am Depart from Tbilisi for excursion into the high Caucasus, four hour drive
- 11 am Tour of the Ananuri Castle.
- 1 pm Traditional *khinkali* dumpling lunch in Pasanauri
- 4 pm Check-in to our homestays in the village of St. Stevens (elevation approx. 7500 feet), where we will stay for two nights.
- 5 pm Depart by foot (one hour easy climb) or hired jeep to visit the Gergeti-Holy Trinity Monastery, 13th century.
- 8:30 pm Dinner in St. Stevens

Friday, July 4, 2008

Kazbegi

- 10 am After breakfast, depart for Daryal Gorge (half hour drive)
- 1 pm lunch in St. Stevens
- 2 pm Afternoon TBA. There are many beautiful villages, nature walks, and medieval towers to visit for our afternoon activities.
- 7 pm Traditional feast in St. Stevens

Saturday, July 5, 2008

Tbilisi

- 9 am Return to Tbilisi with luggage, four hour drive.
- 12 noon picnic lunch
- 2 pm Check into hotels and rest time (staying only one night unless one plans to stay in Georgia after the official end of the tour on Sunday).
- 5 pm Visits to the Vespers services at the Anchiskhati Church, 6th century, Sioni Cathedral, 14th century, and Jvris Mama Church, 19th century
- 7 pm Dinner in the city with singing friends

Sunday, July 6, 2008

Tbilisi

- 9 am Free morning.
Optional visits to Divine Liturgy services of choice (9:30-12:30) including Sameba Cathedral which is served by His Beatitude Patriarch Ilia II
- 2 pm Final lunch with tour group members, sharing of photos, stories, and reminiscences.
Coordinating airport taxis, etc.

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3:30 pm

Optional visit to flea market