

You really must see...



...the hilltop Drez Castle...



...the fortress town of Samtsevisi...



...Joseph Stalin Museum

Shida Kartli

WELCOME TO SHIDA KARTLI

In many ways Shida Kartli is Georgia's heartland, filled with hidden valleys and secret treasures. Spreading out across both sides of the Mtkvari valley, Shida Kartli lies at the foothills of Greater Caucasus and the forested Trialeti Range, offering visitors a diverse range of cultural, educational, and archaeological tours, including walking tours to one of the main tourist attractions of the region.

The continental climate in Shida Kartli region is very distinct from the rest of Western Georgia, however, the mountain peaks are covered with snow all year around.

CULTURE

Shida Kartli region offers a diverse range of cultural sights including Uplistsikhe cave town, a variety of archeological sites and a lot of churches, monasteries, fortresses, and a Cathedral.



ADVENTURE/ ECO TOURISM

For visitors seeking adventure, this region offers many unforgettable opportunities. Magnificent gorges and trekking trails, connecting Shida Kartli to the Samtskhe-Javakheti region, are some of the best in Georgia. You can also enjoy biking, trekking, and walking trails at the Tedzami, Ateni (Tana) and Dzama gorges. Nature treks, horse rides, and bike tours can all be organised by expert local guides.

During winter, visitors have an unique opportunity to climb a frozen waterfall.

WHAT TO SEE AND DO IN SHIDA KARTLI

Gori
The original fortress, constructed on a hilltop was named Gori (meaning hill in Georgian) and was mentioned in Georgian annals as early as the 7th century. Some historians believe that the fortress was built by Byzantine Caesar Heraclius to store ammunition when he fought against Persians.

However, it wasn't until the 11th century that the area became an active centre for trade which is why some historians believe that David Agmashenebeli founded the town.

Because of its geographical location, enemies frequently targeted the fortress, as conquering it meant controlling the whole Shida Kartli region. As such the fortress has been invaded many times and controlled by Ossetians, Iranians and Persians, amongst others. The stronghold has been destroyed and rebuilt many times. The fortress was restored in 1774, during the reign of Erekle II, but it was significantly damaged during an earthquake in 1920.

Joseph Stalin Museum

The Stalin Museum includes the memorial house where Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) was born, a museum building with a tower, and Stalin's personal carriage he used to visit Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam. There are many unique exhibits displayed there, including Stalin's personal belongings and collections of paintings, photos, films, and other important historical works and items.

Ateni Sioni Church

The Ateni Sioni domed church is an early 7th century monument. It stands on the bank of the River Tana on the hilltop, like the Jvari monastery. Its façades are revented with carved quadrangle greenish-gray stones and is richly decorated with ornaments. The walls of the church contain inscriptions using the early Georgian alphabet dating back to the 9th-11th centuries.

Kintvisi Monastery

The cross-domed monastery of Kintvisi, dedicated to St. Nicholas is a 12-13th century monument about 10 kilometres from the town of Kareli. The monastery is famous for its frescoes particularly the fresco of the Archangel from the Resurrection composition.

Uplistsikhe

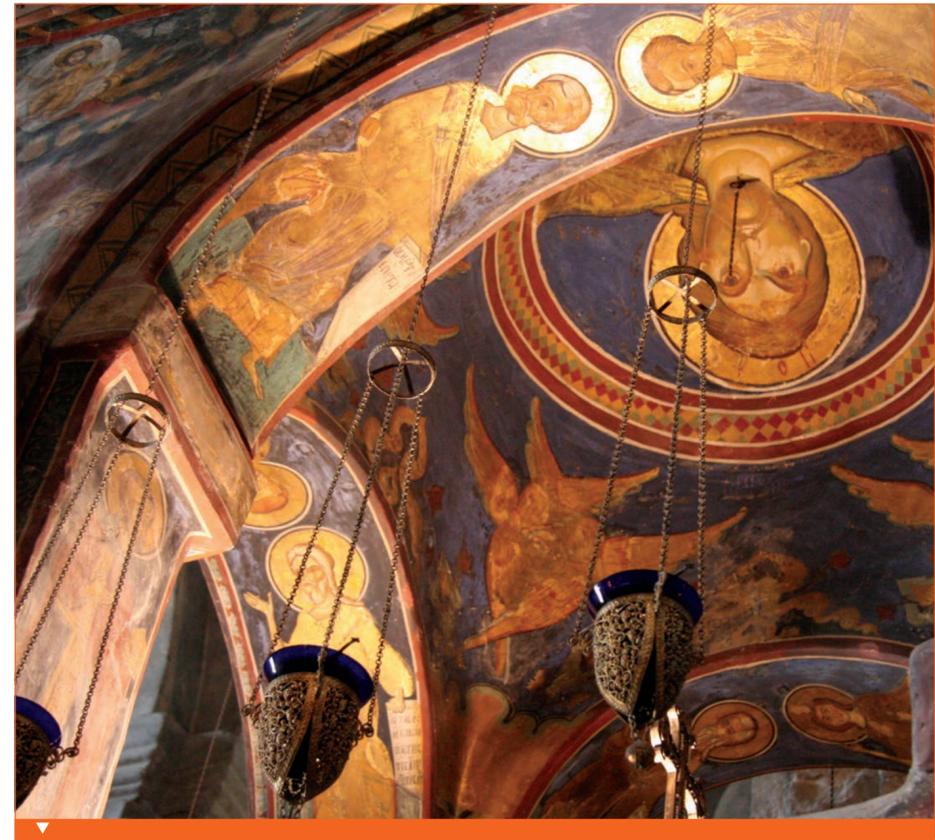
Uplistsikhe, one of the most significant tourist attractions in Shida

Kartli is an ancient cave town, dating back to the 1st millennium BC. It's where the foreman of Shida Kartli lived which is how the town got its name which means 'the Lord's fortress'. In 4th-3rd centuries BC the settlement grew into an important strategic town, with two parts: the 'inner' town, located in the caves which were used as shelter during invasions, and the 'outer' town where settlements were located around the caves.

At the summit of the complex is a Christian basilica and there are many caves of different sizes and types to explore. You can also see fragments of roads carved in stone, ditches and secret tunnels.

Skhvil Complex

The Skhvil Complex is located on the high mountain slopes of the Kaspi borough. It was first mentioned in 10th century annals and the complex includes: a wall, main tower, church, and residential and operational buildings with their own water reservoir. The church has been invaded many times and it was significantly damaged in the 17th century.



Tsromi Cathedral

The Tsromi Cathedral is located in the Khashuri borough in a village called Tsromi. Tsromi used to be one of the main cathedrals in 4th century. The present church was built in 626-634, but has been destroyed and restored several times. The cathedral was also severely damaged by an earthquake in 1940.

Khtsisi – St. John the baptist Cathedral

The Khtsisi – St. John the baptist Cathedral is located in the Khashuri borough, deep in the forest. According to an inscription found on the Eastern façade the church was built in 1002 and is still a functioning monastery today.



Surami Mountain Resort

The mountain resort of Surami, located on the southern slopes of the Likhi range, has been operating since 1928. Besides its healthy climate, Surami also has natural mineral springs which can help to treat patients suffering from respiratory diseases.

Kvatakhevi

Kvatakhevi is a medieval Georgian Orthodox monastery. Dating back to the 12-13th centuries its architectural form and decoration reflects the contemporary canon of a Georgian domed church. The monastery complex is covered with finely hewn white stone squares. The Eastern façade is adorned with a large ornate cross. The bell tower is a two-storey building and to the West side there are residences dating back to the 19th century.

Uplistsikhe Historical & Architectural Museum-Reserve

The museum includes many artefacts and exhibits from the 1st Millennium BC including ceramic objects, and the wheel of an early iron carriage, many adornments, and jewellery and household objects.



9th-10th centuries and later by Queen Mariam in 17th century. One of the most significant events in the history of the Georgian church happened in Urbnisi – the Ruisi-Urnbisi ecclesiastic council was assembled here by David Agmashenebeli to deal with the problems within the church hierarchy.

Rkoni Monastery Complex

The Rkoni monastery complex is located in Kaspi district, near the town of Rkoni. The complex is divided into several layers: the Church of the Virgin Mary – dating back to the 7th century; the gate of the complex – dating from the 13th century; and a chapel, a church of John the Baptist, and a bell tower dating from the 17th-18th centuries; and housing for the monks. The Rkoni fortress is situated near the church and was used as a residence for Georgian feudal lords. Near the Rkoni monastery there is a bridge (King Tamara Bridge) over the river Tedzami and crossing this and climbing the hill brings you to another small church and cave carved in the rocks that was once used by monks.

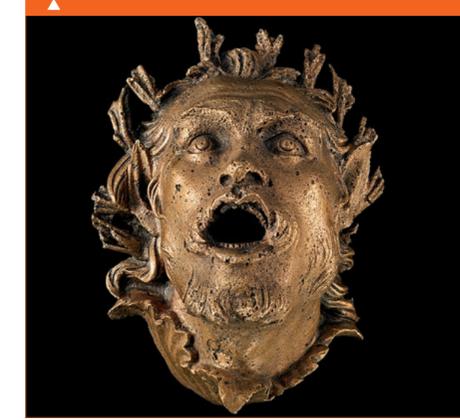
Surami fortress

The Surami Fortress overlooks the town of Surami. The exact date of construction is not known, though the town itself has existed since the 12th century. During his fight against Iran, Giorgi Saakadze defended the stronghold. Later the castle was conquered by the Osmans and during the 18th century it was held by Georgian and Russian soldiers. Besides the castle, there are 9 Christian churches and one synagogue in the area.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Dvani

In 1944-1945 fourteen graves, dating back to 7th-6th century BC were discovered, some of them covered by cobble-stones. Later, high quality black and red-burnt earthenware, silver, and bronze materials were also discovered.



Khizaant Gora

Khizaant Gora, an archaeological monument of Shida Kartli, is located on the left bank of the river Mtkvari in a village called Urbnisi.

In an area of 8 metres wide, no less than twelve antique cultural strata have been found. One grave site discovered at this site belongs to the Bronze Age, and nineteen residences dating back to the 3rd-1st century BC have also been excavated here. In the 6th century a fortress also stood here which included a huge tower with six separate storage areas.

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Shida Kartli

GETTING AROUND
Shida Kartli, the central region of Georgia, is located between Likhi Range and river Aragi.
E-Mail: tigor@goriturism.com
Working Days: Everyday
Working Hours: 10:00 - 18:00
Minibuses run regularly to Shida Kartli from Tbilisi: "Didube" Bus Station (4, Karaldi str.).
Taxi can be hired from the city. You can also take the train from Tbilisi Central Railway Station (Station Square 2).

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION
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ENGLISH