

# ABOUT GEORGIA

## VIDEO about Georgia

Georgia, a small country, spread below the Caucasian range between the Black and the Caspian Seas, occupies 70 000 square kilometers with a population of 4 mln people.

The country is located at the crossroads of Western Asia and Eastern Europe.

The landscape within the nation's boundaries is quite varied. Deserts and subtropical areas, swamps and temperate rainforests, eternal snows and glaciers, forests, and semi-arid plains diversify Georgia's natural scenery.

The **Georgian language**, the official language of Georgia, belongs to the Kartvelian language family. **The Kartvelian languages**, also known as **Iberian** and **South Caucasian**, include Georgian, Svan, Mingrelian, and Laz languages, represent a language family indigenous to the Caucasus and are spoken primarily in Georgia, with large groups of native speakers in Russia, the United States, the European Union, Israel, and northeastern parts of Turkey.

Georgian has a rich **literary tradition** with written records dating back from the 5th century AD. The Georgian national epic, "**The Man in the Panther's Skin**" by **Shota Rustaveli**, dates from the 12th – 13th century and is translated into many languages of the world.

Georgian is written in its own unique writing system, **the Georgian script**. The alphabet consists of 33 letters for 33 sounds. The Georgian script is the writing system used by all Kartvelian languages.

**Mtskheta** is the ancient capital of Georgia. The strategic location of Mtskheta at the crossroad of ancient trade routs and the confluence of Aragvi and Mtkvari rivers, its mild climate and its fertile soil contributed to early human settlement in the area from the third millennium BC.

Since the adoption of **Christianity** as the state religion in the early 4th century A.D., Mtskheta has been the religious centre of Georgia. The conversion of the country to Christianity gave great impetus to the development of Georgian literature, architecture... The group of churches at Mtskheta represent outstanding examples of mediaeval ecclesiastical architecture in the Caucasus and testify to the high level of art and culture in the Kingdom of Georgia, which played an important role in the mediaeval history of its region.

Georgia is a traditional country of **viticulture and wine-making**. This fact is reflected in many ways in the history, traditions, folklore, architecture, and religion of the Georgian people. According to the legend, St. Nino, a Cappadocian woman, who brought Christianity to Georgia, fashioned her cross from branches of the vine and tied it with her own hair, an amazing symbol of vine and faith...

Over 500 local varieties of the vine have been grown in Georgia through natural and folk selection. The flawless Georgian wines, handed down to us through millennia of painstaking cultivation, were mentioned with praise by Classical authors and foreign travelers. The tradition continues. Kakheti is the main wine-producing region of Georgia. Fine national dry, semi-dry and semi-sweet natural wines are gaining a foothold on the world market.

In the 5th century A.D., on the banks of the river Mtkvari, a new capital was founded by the king Vakhtang Gorgasali – **Tbilisi, Tiflis**. Located on the southeastern edge of Europe, Tbilisi's proximity to lucrative east-west trade routes often made the city a point of contention between various rival empires throughout history. Despite the multiple invasions and destructions, the construction of the city has never stopped. Tbilisi's varied history is reflected in its architecture, which is a mix of medieval, classical, and Soviet structures.

### Local trips and tourist information

There are many day and overnight trips available to travel around Georgia. They can be easily arranged through local tour agencies.

