Arrival & transport

Most flights arrive in Tbilisi in the wee hours of the morning (have no fear, almost all flights arrive this early; it’s the norm). The new airport terminal is bright, clean, and easy to navigate. Passport control is quick (you’ll be photographed) and the passport control officers are unusually pleasant (your first dose of “Georgian hospitality”). It’s only a short distance to the luggage belt and then to the arrivals area. Free luggage trolleys are readily available.

For a large group of visitors (more than 4) it is better to have a pre-arranged airport pick up. This can usually be fixed by the hotel administration you will be staying at. You may also use a taxi from the airport (you can pay in US$; the fare to central locations should not be more than $15-20).

For information on the private use of taxis, see Taxis in the Worth Knowing section below.

Restaurants/Sightseeing/Museums & Galleries/Nightlife

There are plenty of restaurants featuring traditional Georgian cuisine, as well as good restaurants serving Italian, Turkish, Thai, Chinese, and American dishes. For tips, we suggest consulting the Tbilisi e-guide published by AnotherTravelGuide.com. It would not be wise to eat McDonald’s or Wendy’s when in Georgia, but just in case you can’t leave without them, both are located at the start of Rustaveli Avenue.

Shartdeni (in the Old Tbilisi) and Tabidze streets (near the Freedom Square) are full of cafes and nightlife spot places.

If you’ve located your own favorite restaurant, café, bar, or club please let us know and we’ll add it in this Guide.

**Shopping**

Plenty of supermarkets offer a large range of foodstuffs. Some of the well-known supermarket chains are: “Smart”, “Goodwill”, “Carrefour”, “Fresco”, “Spar”.

Rustaveli Avenue is Tbilisi’s “main street”, where you’ll find many cafés, book stores, souvenir shops, and almost all major international hotels.

As you walk down from Rustaveli Avenue down to Freedom Square and then further down to Leselidze street (going down to the Old Tbilisi) you will see many wine shops and Georgian sweets (Churchkhela, Tklapi) being sold at the street sides. Luca Polare – the Best ice-cream shop which is open till 1 or 2 am is also located on Leselidze str. There is a new ice creamery and café MIO Gelato at Abashidze str, that offers delicious ice-creams, sweets and atmosphere.

**Routes to walk & basic directions**

For suggestions on what to see by foot in Tbilisi, we suggest consulting the “Routes” section of the Tbilisi e-guide published by [AnotherTravelGuide.com](http://AnotherTravelGuide.com). Please note that Tbilisi is relatively hilly, so pack comfortable shoes if you intend to walk.

As you walk down (to the right) from Rustaveli Avenue you’ll come to Freedom Square (and further, into Old Tbilisi). In the opposite direction from Rustaveli Avenue, i.e. as you walk left, you’ll walk to the Tbilisi Concert Hall (called “the Philharmonic” by locals) and further, if you take the left fork in the road and keep following this street you’ll come to Chavchavadze Avenue at the start of which the 1st building of Tbilisi State University is located. Pre-Moot sessions on Feb. 21-22 will be held at this building.

**Worth knowing**

**ATM machines** – Cash machines are ubiquitous in Tbilisi, many dispensing both GEL (Georgian Lari), EUR and US Dollars. Reputable banks in Tbilisi include Bank of Georgia, Bank Republic (a branch of the French giant, Societe Generale), Liberty Bank, ProCredit, and TBC.

**Currency exchange** – Currency exchange booths are common in Tbilisi. They are used frequently by Georgians and foreigners. The rate at an exchange booth is normally a bit
better than that given by the bank. Many exchange booths are open early in the morning and late into the night, and some operate 24/7.

**Electricity** – Georgia runs on a European 220v system, with a standard European two-pin socket. If the power supply for your electronic device says “100-240v”, you do not need a power converter, only a plug adapter (US three-prong to European two-pin).

**Georgian food** – Georgian cuisine is rated among the world’s tastiest, with influences from Middle Eastern and European culinary traditions. The cuisine offers a variety of dishes using various herbs and spices. Many dishes contain tarragon (an herb with a very specific taste that improves both digestion and potency, according to the locals). Georgian cuisine offers many meat and vegetarian dishes, with bread and cheese also playing an important role (*pun intended*) in the daily diet.

AnotherTravelGuide.com recommends that while in Georgia, you should try:

- Regular *puri* bread and *khachapuri* (bread stuffed with cheese);
- *Khinkali*, or large dumplings;
- *Mtswadi*, or meat cooked on skewers (shashlik);
- *Lobiani* - bread stuffed with beans (lobio - beans);
- *Nadugi* cheese (curd-style) and a piece of tarragon wrapped in slices of suluguni cheese;
- Roast chicken hearts; and
- Vegetable stew.

- If on the previous evening you have enjoyed too much wine, then you can try *khashi* on the following day. This dish is exclusively for curing hangovers. It is a soup with tripe and pigs' trotters - ridiculously fatty and without spices. Salt, garlic and milk are added according to taste. Each ingredient fulfills a specific function. For example, the tripe improves digestion, the garlic is for vitamins, and the milk counteracts toxins. The most surprising thing is that *khashi* tastes completely different, or more precisely, tastes awful, if one attempts to eat it while sober.

**Environment, smoking and health matters** – Tbilisi is a relatively dusty city, and smoking is prevalent, both inside and outside. Not all prescription medicines are available in Georgia. Take the necessary precautions, as appropriate.

**Jogging/Walking** – Tips for runners and others who just want to walk briskly without risking broken ankles on Tbilisi sidewalks. The botanical gardens are enormous and have a number of trails winding through them, including good stair climbs. There also is a nice, paved trail
that runs from the base of the fortress wall to the west, above the Mother of Georgia statue and then below the enormous house on the ridge owned by the Georgian billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili. This path offers a fine, panoramic view of Old Tbilisi, the Mtkvari River, and the newer parts of the city.

**Language** – You will be surprised how many people, especially young people, understand and/or speak English in Tbilisi, including check-out staff at stores and the wait staff in restaurants. Particularly among older people, Russian is the second language of choice. Should you wish to learn some simple Georgian words and phrases before you arrive, there is a useful iPad and iPhone app for $9.99. You can find more information at Eurotalk.com under this link.

**Mobile communications** – Blackberry, iPhone and iPad, as well as other standard mobile services are available in Tbilisi.

**News about Georgia** – To keep up with the news and happenings in Georgia, before, during, and after your visit, www.civil.ge and www.georgiandaily.com are useful sites. While you are in Tbilisi, there are several free English-language newspapers available at hotels and restaurants frequented by foreigners.

**Safety** – While generally safe, Tbilisi is like any other major city in the world. Criminal rate in the city is very low, but it is always and everywhere advisable to be aware of your surroundings and personal belongings at all times. The city can become much more active as the evening progresses.

**Taxis** – The manner of driving in Tbilisi can be a shock to a Westerner. Should you choose to use a taxi for personal travel, the cost to travel within the central part of the city should not exceed 3-5 GEL, with travel to the outlying areas of the city costing 5-10 GEL. There is also service of the small minibuses available, but using taxi is more convenient and affordable for not Georgian speaking travelers. Taxi service can be ordered by telephone (+995 322 200 200, +995 322 911 414), though you may need a Georgian speaking person to speak to the service provider; you may arrange a taxi on the street, but we advise you negotiate the price before the trip begins.

**Tipping** – The Georgian popular culture has been heavily influenced by America, and the practice of tipping is no exception. At restaurants, a 10-15% service charge is often included in the bill, you may or may not add up to an additional 10%. There is also a practice by some Georgians to provide coins to the older people and children asking for money on the street. Please use your own discretion in responding to these requests.

**Water** – Georgia generally is well known by its water resources, nearly about 27,000 rivers are in the territory of country and as country of water Georgians have a quality water even
from the tap. However, it may be comfortable to stick to bottled water during a short visit to Tbilisi. Still water (non-carbonated) is available in almost all stores and restaurants in Tbilisi. If you are interested in natural mineral waters (carbonated), there are two famous brands—Borjomi, Nabeghlavi, Likani & Sairme— available everywhere.

**Important telephone numbers**

**Emergency**

For any emergency, including matters related to the fire department, Emergency Medical help or police call **112**.

**AIG Pre-Moot contact numbers:**

Liana Kartsivadze – +995 595 070 595 l.kartsivadze@arbitration.ge

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