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*Outside* magazine's 2005  
Eastern Europe and the  
Caucasus trip of the year!  
[http://outside.away.com/outside/destinations/200502/best-trips\\_5.html](http://outside.away.com/outside/destinations/200502/best-trips_5.html)

# TREKKING THE GEORGIAN CAUCASUS

*With Trip Leader Rob Smurr*

## TRIP DETAILS

*14 days ~ Georgia*

*8 days strenuous hiking (max. elev. 11,253'), easy touring*

*7 nights camping,  
3 nights hotels,  
3 nights village homes*

## 2007 DATES

*Aug 21–Sep 3*

*Sep 4–Sep 17*

## LAND COST

*\$3590 per person  
(7-12 members)*

*\$3890 per person  
(6 members)*

*\$4090 per person  
(5 members)*

TRIP LEVEL  
STRENUOUS



## HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ *Enjoy a challenging trek through the most beautiful and remote area of the Caucasus Mountains—and have it all to yourself!*
- ◆ *A unique off-the-beaten-path adventure that includes fantastic trekking and in-depth cultural explorations with an expert guide—not offered by any other company*

*Revised February 5, 2007*



# TREKKING THE GEORGIAN CAUCASUS

*With Trip Leader Rob Smurr*

Few mountain ranges of the world are as steeped in history and legend as the Caucasus. Join us and discover a seldom explored corner of Europe, sometimes referred to as “The Alps of the East.”

From the bustling cosmopolitan Georgian capital of Tbilisi—a UNESCO World Heritage Site—you’ll head to Tusheti Province where you’ll begin your eight-day trek among the Caucasus’s highest peaks, with distant views of Mount Kazbek, the spectacular mountain on which Prometheus met his fate. Along the way you’ll discover Georgia’s rich Eastern Orthodox culture, sample unforgettable wines, and take occasional meals with families, all of which is certain to make you enamored of Georgia’s people and culture. Leading this special expedition is Rob Smurr, who has led many of our past treks in this part of the world with great acclaim. We can’t think of anyone better qualified to head up this expedition!



## ITINERARY

☞ This trip begins with a rendezvous at the airport in Tbilisi, Georgia, at 12:00 noon on Day 1.

### **DAY 1 ~ Tbilisi**

Arrive in Tbilisi by 12:00 noon. A Mountain Travel Sobek representative will meet you outside the customs and immigration area at the airport. He or she will answer questions, brief you on the immediate arrangements, and escort you to your hotel.

We’ll spend the rest of the day exploring the capital city of Georgia, getting a taste of its fascinating cultural and political history. Archaeological evidence shows that the area was first settled as far back as the fourth millennium B.C. In the last two millennia, Tbilisi has fallen under the rule of the Persians, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols, and the Russians; fascinating architectural and historic remnants of all of the diverse cultures can still be found in the modern city. We’ll visit the Old Town, with its many churches, monuments, sulfur bathhouses, Oriental markets, and wooden houses with open, carved balconies. We’ll also visit the 4th-century Narikala Fortress, a walled battlement on a hillside providing panoramic views of the city. After lunch we’ll visit the Metekhi Temple, a cross-cupola church that was used by several successive regimes, including a period during the Soviet regime when it was pressed into service as a prison. There will also be a chance to visit the famous sulfur baths—Tbilisi means “warm location” in Georgian—as well as the Sioni Cathedral before returning to our four-star hotel.  
*L.D...Hotel Varazi*

### **DAY 2 ~ David Gareji Monastery – Telavi**

We’ll travel to the Gareji semi-desert, located about 45 miles southeast of the capital, where we will find the David Gareji Monastery. Founded in the 6th century by the Christian Father St. David, the Monastery is home to well-preserved frescoes and cave paintings dating from the 8th to 13th centuries. This is a pristine and remote area, with

homes and worship areas carved into the stone hillside. Though the monks of David Gareji were slaughtered during the Persian period, and the monastery was shuttered during Soviet rule, recently the monument has undergone extensive renovation and is once again a sight to behold. In the afternoon, time permitting, we'll visit the museum at Tsinandali and also a local winery where you'll have an opportunity to sample several fine Georgian vintages.

*B,L,D...Private house in Telavi*

### **DAY 3 ~ Tusheti Province**

In the morning we'll board four-wheel-drive vehicles for a four-hour journey over rough mountain roads. Crossing the Main Caucasian Ridge over the Abano Pass (9,613'), we'll come upon the mountainous Tusheti Region of Georgia, a sheep-herding area famous for its wool and Gouda cheese. This is one of the most ecologically unspoiled areas in the Caucasus, and we'll be staying in Omalo, a small mountain village that is isolated from the rest of Georgia for much of the year. Before dinner we'll visit the 12th-century fortress of Kesalo.

*B,L,D...Village House*

### **DAY 4 ~ Omalo – Diklo**

Our first walking day will be a short one, beginning with a crossing of the Pirikita Alazani River via a hanging wooden bridge. We'll follow a trail through the forest and on to the settlement of Shenako (6,726'), which rests on a gentle slope and is famous for its ancient architecture and 13th-century Christian church. Following a ridgeline through this highland region will bring us to the town of Diklo (6,890'), the last inhabited point in the gorge. From here a mountain path leads off into Dagestan, but we'll camp not far from the village. (4 hours hiking.)

*B,L,D...Camp near Diklo*

### **DAY 5 ~ Diklo – Dartlo**

Crossing a pass at 8,400' we'll descend back down to the Pirikita Alazani Gorge. The right-hand slopes of the gorge are carpeted in grass, whereas the left side is covered by rich pine forest. Passing the sloping village of Chigo, we'll have lunch in the gorge, then continue trekking to the village of Dartlo, where the ancient towers make for a magnificent view. Our camp is along the bank of the river at 6,069'. Those in the mood for more hiking can follow the guide uphill to visit the small village of Kvavlo (6,890'). (7 hours hiking.)

*B,L,D...Dartlo camp*

### **DAY 6 ~ Dartlo – Parsma/Girevi**

We'll trek to the village of Parsma (6,430'), a fascinating and remote mountain town. The houses and towers here were built with stone and have stood for centuries. Depending on the mood of the group we can continue our walk to Girevi (6,562'), a small settlement of just a few families and the last inhabited point of the gorge. (6 hours hiking.)

*B,L,D...Camp*

### **DAY 7 ~ Girevi – Atsunta Pass Base**

A solid day of pristine hiking will take us deeper into the remote mountains of the Caucasus. As we hike along the Pirikita Alazani Gorge we'll pass a series of abandoned villages, then cross a truly uninhabited alpine valley before crossing the river to reach our campsite. Our camp will be at approximately 8,200' at the foot of the Atsunta Pass. (6 hours hiking)

*B,L,D...Camp*

### **DAY 8 ~ Cross the Atsunta Pass**

We'll begin our trek in the early morning to get a good start on the pass. The trail follows alpine meadows along the river, then turns upward through grassy slopes and finally a scree section before we summit Atsunta Pass (11,253').

The view from here is spectacular, as we are surrounded by other summits and looking down on Khevsureti province where we will be trekking for the next few days. From this high point we'll make our way down more scree slopes until we reach our campsite. (7-8 hours walking.)

*B,L,D...Camp*

### **DAY 9 ~ Ardoti**

We'll trek downwards from our camp as we wend our way into Khevsureti province. To the north of us we'll be met with the commanding view of Mount Tebulo (14,763'). Passing through the village of Bakhao we'll reach the Andaki River, surrounded by grassy slopes with thickets of Caucasian rhododendron. We'll camp near the 10th-century village of Ardoti (6,070'), dating back to the 10th and 11th centuries and harboring a few remaining families. (5 hours hiking.)

*B,L,D...Camp*

### **DAY 10 ~ Chanchakhi Gorge**

Today we'll take a side trip to explore the Chanchakhi Gorge, through which the Chanchakhi River flows turbulently with many rapids and waterfalls. After passing through the settlement of Lower Khakhabo, we'll reach Upper Khakhabo, a mysterious medieval village that is one of the most remote anywhere in Georgia. The picturesque tower-type houses are built entirely from local rock. After lunch among the ruins we'll return to our camp of the night before. (5-6 hours hiking.)

*B,L,D...Camp*

### **DAY 11 ~ Ardoti – Shatili**

Today we'll hike about 12 miles to Shatili village. Along the way we'll pass a number of villages and architectural monuments, chief among them the fortress of Mutso. Only a portion of the fortress remains, but the rock towers clinging to the edge of a grassy hillside are quite impressive. Afterwards we'll thread our way through the narrow Andaki Valley until we reach Shatili (4,593'), the last destination of our trekking tour and one of the highlights of Georgia. Shatili is village-citadel made up of a series of four- and five-story houses, all intricately connected and overlapping. Built as early as the 9th century, and still largely untouched by the outside world, these mighty towers make a fitting end to our journey into the remote Caucasus Mountains. The people who live here have largely preserved an ancient shepherding way of life and we're fortunate to be able to stop a while and visit. Our accommodations will be at a local village house. (6 hours hiking.)

*B,L,D...Village House*

### **DAY 12 ~ Shatili – Tbilisi**

We'll drive to Tbilisi by way of the Datvis Jvari Pass (8,780') along the main range of the Caucasus. Passing through the Aragvi River Gorge, we'll eventually join the Georgian Military Highway that will take us to Mtskheta. During the Georgian Kingdom of Iberia (500 B.C.—500 A.D.) Mtskheta was the Georgian capital, and it was here that Georgians accepted Christianity in the 4th-century A.D. The town remains the headquarters of the Georgian Orthodox and Apostolic Church. The town and its monuments have been designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and we will visit several of the highlights, including the 6th-century Jvari Monastery and the 11th-century Svetitskhoveli Cathedral. After seeing these sights we will return to the modern conveniences of Tbilisi.

*B,L,D...Hotel Varazi*

### **DAY 13 ~ Tbilisi**

Today is yours to further explore the city of Tbilisi. If you did not have a chance at the beginning of the trip, this is an excellent opportunity to see the ancient religious monuments of the city, including Tbilisi's oldest church,

Achiskhati (520 A.D.), which has largely preserved its original architecture despite the upheavals of the intervening years. It is also possible to organize a visit to the outskirts of Tbilisi, we can visit the Stalin museum in the town of Gory, or the cave town of Uplistsikhe, an ancient pagan settlement.

*B,D...Hotel Varazi*

### **DAY 14 ~ Departure**

After breakfast we'll transfer to the airport for our departure home. Please schedule your departing flight for no earlier than 11:00 a.m.

*B...*

## **LAND COST**

\$3590 per person (7-12 members)

\$3890 per person (6 members)

\$4090 per person (5 members)

Rates quoted are per person, based on sharing double accommodations.

Single Supplement—\$400 for “requested” singles; \$200 for “forced” singles. If you prefer single accommodations, you must pay the Single Supplement Fee. If you're traveling alone and wish to share accommodations, we'll try our best to find you a roommate. If that's not possible, we will only charge you half of the single supplement.

### **Tier Pricing**

Adventure travel works best with a small group of people. In order to operate these small groups, our trips are priced according to the number of full-price passengers on the trip. (Mountain Travel Sobek staff, trip doctors, and other discounted travelers are excluded from the count for this purpose.) We initially invoice you at the highest tier level price (the smallest group size we can operate). If the price drops due to an increase in group size, you will be refunded the difference.

### **What's Included**

- ◆ expert leadership
- ◆ accommodations in hotels in Tbilisi and two nights private homes while on trek
- ◆ all arrangements in the field, including camp meals, cook staffs, group gear and equipment
- ◆ meals as noted (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- ◆ airport transfers
- ◆ sightseeing as noted in the itinerary, with English-speaking guide for the city tour
- ◆ ground transportation
- ◆ entrance fees
- ◆ basic medical and evacuation insurance

### **What's Not**

International airfare; meals not noted in itinerary; insurance other than basic medical and evacuation insurance as noted above (we strongly recommend you purchase the supplementary trip insurance offered by Mountain Travel Sobek, which includes trip cancellation insurance); optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff; excess baggage charges; airport taxes; and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.).

### **Air Travel**

Airfare is not included in the land cost of our trips. For air reservations, we recommend you contact the airlines directly, either by phone or the Internet. In addition, many travelers elect to use their “frequent flyer” miles when traveling with us. **But please check with our staff before purchasing or obtaining your tickets.** We need to verify your arrival and departure schedule and ensure we have enough participants to operate the trip.

## **WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT**

### **Expert Leadership**

Expert leadership is the key to an exciting, unforgettable experience. Our trips feature gifted leaders for whom leading trips is a true vocation. Besides showing you wonders you’d never find on your own, they make sure everything runs smoothly and safely without a hitch. They are knowledgeable about all aspects of your trip, and take great pleasure in sharing their insights with you. More than just guides, they positively elevate your experience by being teachers, companions, and the best of friends. You’ll be in good hands with them every step of the way.

**Robert Smurr** is scheduled to lead this trip (see page 2). Rob is both a professor of Russian and Environmental History at Washington’s Evergreen State College and an experienced outdoor guide in the former Soviet Union. He spent two seasons leading climbs on Mount Elbrus, the highest peak in Europe (in the Caucasus Mountains of Russia) and several more seasons leading numerous treks in the Pamir, Tian Shan, and Altai mountains in Central Asia. Rob has excellent Russian language skills. He served as a U.S. Department of State interpreter in Leningrad and Moscow and studied at such places as the Defense Language Institute in Monterey, California, and the University of St. Petersburg in Russia. He obtained an M.A. in International Studies and a Ph.D. in Russian History at the University of Washington. Rob’s outdoor skills include mountaineering (he has summited peaks like Aconcagua and Mont Blanc), rock climbing (5.10), and advanced (Class V) whitewater kayaking. Rob is also a triathlete.

Leader assignments will be confirmed in the Final Bulletin sent to you three weeks prior to departure.

### **Activity Level**

Mountain Travel Sobek trips are designed for flexible, energetic people who like to be active and have a spirit of adventure and a positive attitude. We rate this trip as strenuous in nature. You should be in excellent physical condition and enjoy hiking. Hikes will range from four to eight hours in length (most are five to six hours). Horses will carry all the gear, so all you need to carry is a daypack with trailside essentials. Nevertheless, you should be prepared for a rugged wilderness adventure.

The level of fitness needed for this trip requires regular aerobic exercise for at least one hour 4-5 times a week. This may include aerobic fitness classes, power walking, jogging, cycling on hills, swimming, and cross-country skiing. Additionally, you must be able to sustain exercise for prolonged periods. We recommend that you start a moderate training program *several months* before departure, then slowly build up to a more strenuous level. Since training is highly sport-specific, include some hiking or running in your program. Consult your physician if you have questions concerning your underlying health. We can help answer questions for you or your physician concerning required levels of fitness and health conditions at altitude. If you have concerns about your ability to do this trip, we can suggest appropriate alternatives.

## THE NEXT STEP

### **Ready to go? Signing up is easy!**

Just call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) and reserve your spot! You can also book a reservation online at our website ([www.mtsobek.com](http://www.mtsobek.com)). If you prefer to use a travel agent, he or she can book your trip at no extra cost and provide other helpful assistance.

### **Then Leave the Rest to Us**

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, up-to-date health advice prepared by our consulting physician (an expert in wilderness medicine), and other details from procuring visas to advice on local customs.

### **Why Mountain Travel Sobek is Your First Choice for Adventure**

Mountain Travel Sobek is the pioneer in active adventure travel. No other adventure travel company can lay claim to that title. We were the first to take Americans trekking in Nepal, raft the wild rivers of Africa, and open up many previously inaccessible corners of the world to curious travelers. We set the standard for adventure travel and have a strong reputation for excellence that we do everything we can to maintain. Since we are the leading adventure company, we have a lot to live up to, so we make sure we provide safe, quality trips and the best customer service to our passengers.

### **References**

Don't take our word for how great our trips are. We'll be happy to provide you with references of satisfied past travelers.

### **Questions?**

Feel free to call us at 1-888-MTSOBEK (687-6235) if you still have any questions or concerns. We're here to help you. You can also check out our website at [www.mtsobek.com](http://www.mtsobek.com).

### **Note on Itinerary**

Although we will do our best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change. Please read the Limitation of Liability and Booking Conditions in the four-page Participant Information Form. You can find all this information on our website at [www.mtsobek.com/faq](http://www.mtsobek.com/faq) and the form itself at [www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant\\_info.pdf](http://www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf).

### **Limitation of Liability**

"Mountain Travel Sobek" is defined to include its owners, agents, directors, officers, employees, representatives and affiliates (collectively "Mountain Travel"). Except for the Alaska Discovery Inn, some small craft and some vans in Alaska, Mountain Travel does not own or operate any entity that provides goods or services for your trip including, for example, ownership or control over hotels or other lodging facilities, airline, vessel, bus, van or other transportation companies, local ground operators, providers or organizers of optional excursions, food service or entertainment providers, etc. All such persons and entities are independent contractors. As a result, Mountain Travel is not liable for any negligent or willful act or failure to act of any such person or entity, or of any other third party. Without limitation, Mountain Travel Sobek is not responsible for any injury, loss, or damage to person or property, death, delay or inconvenience in connection with the provision of any goods or services occasioned by or

resulting from, but not limited to, acts of God, force majeure, acts of war or civil unrest, insurrection or revolt, strikes or other labor activities, criminal or terrorist activities of any kind, overbooking or downgrading of accommodations, structural or other defective conditions in hotels or other lodging facilities, mechanical or other failure of airplanes or other means of transportation or for any failure of any transportation mechanism to arrive or depart timely, dangers associated with animals, marine life or vegetation of any sort, dangers incident to recreational activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, swimming, kayaking, sailing, canoeing, rafting, hiking, bicycling, rock climbing, etc., sanitation problems, food poisoning, lack of, access to or quality of medical care, difficulty in evacuation in case of a medical or other emergency, or for any other cause beyond the direct control of Mountain Travel. In addition, participants release Mountain Travel from its own negligence and assume all risk thereof. **On advancement of deposit to Mountain Travel, the depositor therefore agrees to be bound by the above recited terms and conditions. These are partial conditions. Your participation is contingent on your signature on the full list of terms specified in the four-page Participant Information Form**, which you can find it on our website at [www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant\\_info.pdf](http://www.mtsobek.com/pdf/participant_info.pdf) (or call us at 1-888-687-6235 and request a copy).

### **Arbitration**

Any dispute concerning, relating or referring to these Terms and Conditions, to any literature concerning this trip, or the trip itself, shall be resolved exclusively by binding arbitration in San Francisco, California, according to the then existing rules of the American Arbitration Association. Such proceedings will be governed by substantive California law without regard to the California Arbitration Act.

### **Conditions of Participation**

Your participation on a Mountain Travel Sobek trip is subject to the conditions stated in the four-page Participant Information Form, which includes the Agreement and Release from Liability and the Booking Conditions. Specific information on payment and cancellation policies is also contained within this document, as well as in our current catalog and on our website ([www.mtsobek.com/faq](http://www.mtsobek.com/faq)). We urge you to read this information carefully, and to call us if you have any questions.

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