

You really must see...



...Tetnuldi Mountains...



...Svaneti Towers...



...Ushguli...

Svaneti

WELCOME TO SVANETI

Svaneti, one of the most ancient and historical provinces of Georgia, is located on the southern slopes of the Caucasus mountain range, on the territory running between the Enguri and Tskhenistskali Rivers. Surrounded by the gigantic, snow-capped peaks of the high Caucasus, Svaneti is one of the most remarkable and picturesque regions of Georgia, if not the whole world.

Aside from the stunning natural beauty, the region's real treasure is the people - the Svans. With their own language, related to but distinct from Georgian, their own ancient traditions and crafts, and their immense sense of honour, Svans have always been a proudly independent people.

Reflecting their pride and independence, many Svans today still live in 25 metre high medieval stone towers, of which thousands survive. These towers, some with foundations dating back a millennium, were used to protect families in time of war, and it is said that some still house ancient treasures, brought up to Svaneti hundreds of years ago to protect them from invaders. Indeed, Svaneti's museums boast world class collections of icons, religious manuscripts and gold and silver jewellery.



ADVENTURE

Surrounded by mountains, Svaneti is a great place for visitors seeking an adventure. With many of its mountain peaks over 5,000 metres the region is one of the world's best locations for mountaineering. Ushba, although not the highest mountain in the range at an impressive 4,700 metres, is the most dramatic mountain in the area and considered one of the most difficult mountains to climb in Europe.

Svaneti is also great for skiers and snow boarders. The newly opened Mestia ski resort has amazing slopes for all standards of skiers. Detailed maps of trekking trails, information about qualified mountain and trekking guides, horse rentals and jeep tours can be found in the regions tourist information centre.

Ski slope type: red - 1900m; blue -2565m and "Mugvirshi" 300 m



ARCHITECTURE

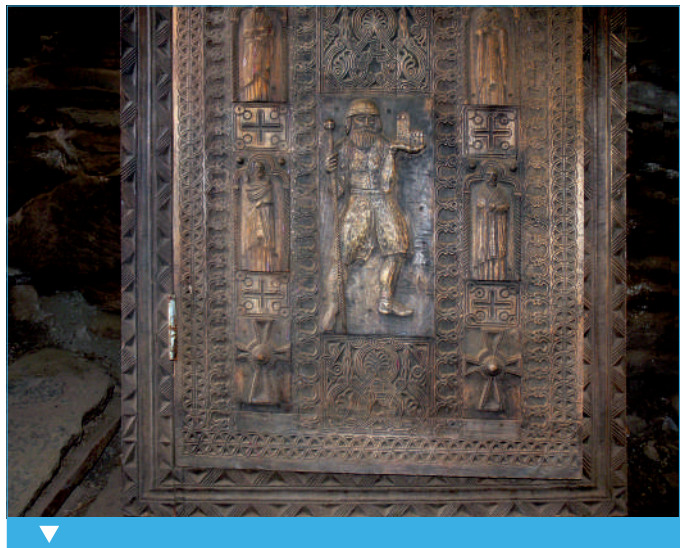
Towers and fortresses in Svaneti

Svaneti has preserved its original medieval architectural appearance to a remarkable degree. The characteristic landscape of Svaneti is formed by small villages on the mountain slopes, dominated by towers and surrounded by a natural backdrop of gorges, alpine valleys and snow-covered mountains.

The majority of tower settlements in Svaneti come from the early middle ages and the Svan towers were primarily used as defensive structures. Most of these towers are 20-25 metres tall and have four or five storeys. The tower levels are connected to each other via internal wooden staircases and covered by gabled roofs, with several narrow defense windows. On the highest floor there is usually a platform to attack from during invasions. The towers were built from local stone and some families still use the upper floors for storing crops.

A typical Svan family consisted of up to thirty or even a hundred members . Svan fortress was also the residential house. In the event of an attack they were used to protect their inhabitants. The

ground floor was used for living and keeping livestock, the first floor was used for storing hay. The house was heated by a hearth in the centre of a big room, where the food was also cooked. As a rule, the house was attached to a tower.



CULTURE

The history and culture of Svaneti is rich with folk music, with rigorous and powerful singing to match the severe habitat and hard life-style of the Svans'. The songs are mainly dedicated to national heroes, fights against the conquerors, religious holidays and famous royals (e.g. Queen Tamar), the Goddess of Hunting Dali. Many songs were composed before Christian times and therefore have a heathen context (e.g. the song "Lile" - is dedicated to the goddess of the Sun "Kaltidi"). Listening to these songs surrounded by snowy mountains and Svan towers and fortresses, you will certainly get a sense that you are back in the middle-ages. The Svaneti Museum of History and Ethnography is located in Mestia. It houses some of the most important archaeological and ethnographical materials and a rich collection of Georgian manuscripts and icons.



MESTIA

Mestia, the main regional centre of Zemo Svaneti, is situated 456km from Georgia's capital city, Tbilisi and is 1,500 metres above sea level. Mestia is the starting point for most trips in Svaneti, with a range of hotels, guesthouses and local travel services. It is a convenient base for exploring the area. From the centre of the town it is possible to hike up to the glaciers at the foot of mount Ushba, or take horses up to the pristine alpine meadows. Plus, a new ski resort and a new ski lift (length: 1407m) makes it possible to ski or snowboard even in the height of summer. Tourists interested in religious history will find plenty of examples of wall paintings, frescoes and icons from the Middle Ages in the churches around Mestia. Within Mestia, Saint George Church has preserved crosses and icons from the 12th century. Also, Pusdi Church still contains fragments of 13th century wall paintings.

The Historical and Ethnographical Museum

Most of the treasures of Svaneti are found in the Historical and Ethnographical Museum of Mestia, which was founded in 1936 houses collections of the Church of Saint George, in Seti. Exhibit highlights include icons from the Middle Ages and ancestral artifacts from the noble family Dadeshkeliani dating back to the Middle Ages. You can also view samples of metal chasing work from the 11th century, heirlooms from the Svaneti Dadeshkeliani royal family and an exhibition of Vittorio Sella's prints, an Italian photographer who travelled in Svaneti in 1889, 1890, and 1896, taking photographs of Svaneti's landscapes and settlements, and documenting the daily lives of the local inhabitants.

Mikheil Khergiani House Museum

The Memorial House of Mikheil Khergiani, a famous Georgian mountain climber, was founded in Mestia in 1983. Mikheil Khergiani became famous in Georgia and abroad by participating in many mountain expeditions and climbing competitions. Khergiani was known for his remarkable rock-climbing abilities for saving many people during mountain rescue missions. He died, tragically in Italy, in the Dolomites Mountains in 1969. The exhibition documents many exciting chapters from his life.

Ushguli

Ushguli's Medieval constructions, just like the towers and churches



of Svaneti, are under the protection of UNESCO. A historical settlement located in the very East of Svaneti, Ushguli is one of the highest settlements in Europe (2,000-2,200 metres above sea level). It was part of the so-called "Free Svaneti" as for centuries the people here defended the region against numerous attacks. The Church of Saint Mary is located on one of the highest points in Ushguli and it is also the home to the remnants of one of the most ancient fortresses of Svaneti with 37 towers, dating back to the reign of Queen Tamar. There is also superb area hiking and climbing, while horse riding and mountain biking are also available.



VILLAGES IN SVANETI

Latali

For centuries Latali was one of the strongest and richest communities of Zemo Svaneti. While the villages around Latali are known for their churches, the region itself has earned a reputation for its talented musicians and during festivities, visitors can enjoy the unique and amazing ancient polyphonic songs of the locals. One church worth visiting in Latali, particularly for the painting of the Coronation of King Demetre I, is the Matskhvarishi Church, which was constructed during the 11th and 12th centuries.

Becho

The path that connects Zemo Svaneti to North Caucasus is in Becho. A 13th century icon of the Archangel can be found in the nearby Church of the Messiah in Chokhuldi.



Kala

The most significant cultural sites in Kala are the Ipari churches of the Archangels and Saint Kvirike (in Lagurka), painted by Theodore, the artist of King David Aghmashenebeli. The Church of St. Quiricus is the biggest in Zemo Svaneti. On July 27th in Kala there is a celebration for Saint Kvirike, which is attended by most of the local community. In Svaneti, Kvirike is known as an agricultural divinity, which grants and protects the fertility of both people and animals.

Ipari

The biggest and most decorated church in this community is the Nakipari Church, built in the 10th century. Artwork in this church was painted by Theodore, King David the Builder's painter. The

church also contains an 11th century icon of Saint George carved in gold and silver.



Adishi

The village of Adishi, is located several kilometres away from Ipari, under Mount Tetnuldi. The village has four churches: the Church of Christ, the Church of the Archangel, and two churches of Saint George.

The Church of Christ held icons from the 11th-14th centuries (now stored at a museum), as well as a manuscript of Shatberdi dating back to 897, which includes detailed artwork known as the four-chapter book of Adishi.



Mulakhi

The most interesting sites in Mulakhi include tower-houses and the Church of Christ, with paintings dating from the 13th century. The site also includes an icon of Saint George from the 10th century and other various 16th-18th century icons.



Lentekhi

The small town of Lentekhi and its district belong to the historic Georgian province of Kvemo Svaneti. Cultural heritage of this area includes several notable monuments, in particular Saint George's Church (10th century), the Archangel Church of Thargizel (9-10th century), Tekal Church (10-11th century), the Lentekhi Castle of the Dadiani family, and the famous Svanetian towers in the village of Leksuri.

Lado Museliani Lentekhi Local Museum

This museum houses archaeological materials from the Bronze Age (implements, weapons, samples of adornment and ceramics), an 11th century ceremonial cross and crozier, details from a church altar with an image of Christ, and a 17th century manuscript prayer-book. The Kvemo Svaneti collection is displayed in a machubi (a local type of traditional dwelling).

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GETTING AROUND

Surrounded by 3,000-5,000 meter peaks, Svaneti, situated in the North-Western part of the country, is the highest inhabited area in the Caucasus. Situated on the Southern slopes of the central Greater Caucasus, Svaneti extends over the upper valleys of the Rioni, Enguri and Tskhenis tsqali. The province has been divided into two parts—Upper Svaneti and Lower Svaneti—centering at Mestia Queen Tamar Airport. Domestic flights are available on the valleys of the upper reaches of the two rivers Enguri and Kvanis-q'ali, respectively. They are distributed between the present-day regions of Samegrelo, Zemo Svaneti and Racha-Lechkhumi, Kvemo Svaneti.

By Air

Domestic flights are available from Tbilisi (Station Railway) to Zugdidi, and then from Zugdidi to Mestia by minibuses. The village of Adishi, is located several kilometres away from Ipari, under Mount Tetnuldi. The village has four churches: the Church of Christ, the Church of the Archangel, and two churches of Saint George.

By Land

Traveling by train is possible from Tbilisi (Central Railway Station (2, Station Square) to Zugdidi, and then from Zugdidi to Mestia by minibuses. Working Hours: 10:00 - 18:00 (Summer - 09:00 - 18:00)

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Information Center
Mestia Tourism

ENGLISH

Svaneti

Country of life



LEGEND

Settlements

- Regional center
- District center
- Community center
- Villages

Roads

- State importance road
- National unpaved road
- Highway
- Local paved road
- Local unpaved
- Cart track road
- Forest road
- Pathway

Boundaries

- State boundary
- Autonomous republic boundary
- Regional boundary

Hydrography

- River
- Intermittent river
- Lake and water reservoir
- Glacier
- Pass with elevation (m) and opening period
- Mountain (m)
- Airport
- USHGULI Name of community

Scale 1:230 000
1 centimeter equals 2.3 kilometers in real world

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PHYSICAL ALTITUDE SCALE

0	200	500	1000	1500	2000	3000	4000	6000
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Symbols

	Church/Monastery		Tourism Information Centre
	Monastery Complex		Mountaineering Camp
	Historic Towers		Mountain Climbing
	Historic Settlement		Birdwatching
	Museum		Horseback
	Ski Runs		Hiking/Trekking
	Waterfall		Hunting Place

SITES TO VISIT

Church/Monastery			Museum		
Ghvtismshobeli (Lamaria) Church in Ieli	D2		Lado Museliani Ethnographical Museum	C3	
Ghvtismshobeli Church in Chikhareshi	D3		Mikheil Khergiani House-Museum	C2	
Lamaria Complex	D3		Ushguli Museum	D3	
Lamaria Church in Zegani	D2		The Margiani Museum	D2	
Matskhovari Church in Bavari	C3		Mestia Historical-Ethnographic Museum	C2	
Matskhovari Church in Mestia	C2				
Matskhovari Church in Murkmeli	D3				
Matskhovari Church in Nesguni	C2				
Matskhovari Church in Paki	C3				
Matskhovari Church in Tavrili	C2				
Matskhovari Church in Zhabeshi	D2				
Matskhovari Church in Zhamushi	D2				
Matskhovari Lahili Church	C2				
Matskhovari Temple in Mami	D3				
Mtavarangelozhi Church in Chukuli	D3				
Mtavarangelozhi Church in Chvabiani	D2				
Mtavarangelozhi Church in Iprari	D3				

Other sights		
Hatsvali and Zuruldi Ski Runs	D2	
Mazeri Waterfall	C2	
Tourism Information Centre	C2	
Queen Tamar Airport	C2	