WINE ROUTES OF

GEORGIA
Georgians have shared the love for grapes from immemorial times and remain loyal to it through to modernity. Georgia’s ancient traditions and its wine culture are entwined with the country’s national identity. Georgians considered the wine a holy drink and it is deeply bound to their everyday life and culture.

Wine history springs from the Neolithic period, and the most vivid trace of this was uncovered in Georgia. Archaeologists discovered several grape pips of ancient millennia making it clear that the relationship between man and grapes started as early as the 6th millennium B.C., and the first cultivated vine was encountered in Georgia.

The diversity of the wild and indigenous grape varieties, the unique wine vessel (the Qvevri) and the oldest technologies of making wine – all confirm that Georgia is truly an ancient winemaking country. The ancient wine making method, which incorporates fermentation and storage of wine in clay vessels, is part of UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage.
GEOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE SHAPING GEORGIA’S WINE LANDSCAPE

The climate of Georgia is diverse due to the specific geographic conditions. Georgia is located on the border of subtropical and temperature climates between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea and has a complex relief due to the geology and the topography.

Georgia’s diverse natural conditions create the best environment for the development of high viticulture-winemaking according to the peculiarities of which the country’s territory is divided into several viticulture zones and micro-zones.
KAKHETI

Kakheti is the most important Georgian winemaking region. Approximately 65–70% of all Georgian vineyards are cultivated in the ancient and unique viticulture-winemaking region of Kakheti.

The wine made by the Kakhetian grape, both European and traditional style, is characterized by high extraction, high content of phenolic compounds and tannins, pleasant bouquet, sort-specific aroma and taste. It is home to 14 of the 19 Protected Designations of Origin of the country.

PAIRING YOUR WINE WITH THE LOCAL GASTRONOMY

Rkatsiteli wines usually go well with simple dishes, various cheeses, potato dishes, salads, meat soups, green beans, khachapuri (cheese-filled bread), and pies. Saperavi wines can be served with game meat such as boar, mountain goat and roasted wild birds. It also pairs well with lamb dish, such as Chanakhi, and pork skewers, hard cheese, ragout and oyster mushrooms.

MUST-VISIT IN THE REGION

Kakheti is famous for its rich cultural heritage and its numerous medieval monasteries and fortresses.

When visiting the region, do not miss:
- Cave lavra David Gareji.
- Tusheti Protected Landscape, Vashlovani National Park and Lagodekhi Nature Reserve, which all make Kakheti the best destination for nature lovers.
- Enjoy stunning views of Alazani Valley from various towns of the region.
PAIRING YOUR WINE WITH THE LOCAL GASTRONOMY

Tavkveri wines from Kartli wonderfully pair with salmon steak and with meat stews, while Shavkapito and Saperavi wines go excellently with lamb stews and ragout.

Chinuri and Goruli Mtsvane make great wines as aperitifs. They pair with green salads, cooked white meat and fish.

Kartli’s cuisine main trademark is a wide variety of vegetarian meals made with herbs and spices. Jonjoli is one of the famous Georgian appetizers.

MUST-VISIT IN THE REGION

The Kartli region, divided into Kvemo (lower) and Shida (inner), is worth visiting because of its historical monuments, especially its fantastic cave town Uplistsikhe.

- Do not miss Dmanisi archaeological site, where traces of first Homininis outside Africa were discovered, the German villages of former Elisabethtal and Katarinenfeld (nowadays Asureti and Bolnisi), as well as the Birtvisi and Dashbashi Canyon natural monuments.

- Svetitskhoveli Cathedral and Jvari Monastery, Ananuri fortress, the historical villages of Khevsureti and Kazbegi and the Gudauri ski resort are just a few of the several attractions worth visiting in this area.
3 IMERETI

Imereti is one of the most diverse regions of Georgian winemaking, where climatic conditions and soil composition are correspondingly different throughout the region.

PAIRING YOUR WINE WITH THE LOCAL GASTRONOMY

• Tsitska goes well with fish dishes, salads and green beans with walnuts.
• Krakhuna pairs with lamb dishes such as imeruli chakapuli, spit-roasted chicken, boiled tongue, cold poultry meat salads and chicken with white wine sauce.
• Otskhanuri Sapere is wonderful when matched with roasted veal, savoy beef dishes, and with Caesar’s mushrooms.

MUST-VISIT IN THE REGION

One of the most important winemaking regions of Georgia, Imereti, is worth visiting because of:
• UNESCO monuments, such as the Gelati Monastery.
• Protected areas with spectacular caves and canyons: Prometheus and Sataplia Caves.
• Spa resorts such as Tskaltubo, Sairme, Nunisi and others with healing springs that are used for treating various health problems and diseases.
Racha-Lechkhumi is distinguished by the scarcity of vineyards and rare grape varieties. This region differs from all other regions with its high-quality grapes and extremely deep, interesting wines.

### Pairing Your Wine with the Local Gastronomy

- Rachuli Tetra wines go well with khachapuri (cheese-filled bread) and Chanterelle mushrooms in walnut sauce.
- Tvishi pairs with fruits, biscuits, and light cakes.
- Aleksandrouli and Mujuretuli wines should be matched with ham from Racha, goose soup, roasted rabbit in sauce, veal stews or honey mushrooms.
- Khvanchkara wine goes well with bean soups made with ham and even with Lobiani (bean-filled bread).

### Must-Visit in the Region

Located in the north-west of the country, Racha-Lechkhumi region stands out for its stunning nature. While in the region, do not miss to:

- **Hike trails** to discover pristine forests, alpine lakes, beautiful waterfalls and mesmerizing landscapes.
- Visit some masterpieces of Georgian medieval architecture, such as Nikortsminda Cathedral and Barakoni Church, among others.
The Guria–Samegrelo region is probably one of the oldest centers of winemaking in Georgia.

PAIRING YOUR WINE WITH THE LOCAL GASTRONOMY

• Tsolikouri wines pair with a variety of dishes of Western Georgia starting from Mbadi (cornbread) and cheese to leek salad, chicken in plum sauce, eggplant dishes, or Khachapuri (cheese-filled bread).

• Ojaleshi wine is wonderful when paired with traditional meat dishes from Samegrelo region such as roasted lamb, Kuchmachi (heart, liver, kidneys, spleen and lungs) and cheese-filled roasted piglet.

MUST-VISIT IN THE REGION

While in Guria, do not miss the chance of visiting:
• Gomi Mountain and Bakhmaro Resort to feel yourself floating above the clouds.
• The coastline with curative, magnetic sands. It is worth visiting Ureki and Grigoleti.
• If you would like to taste some marvels of Georgian cuisine, head to Samegrelo that, besides delicious dishes, it stands out for its Martvili Canyon and other natural monuments and blue lakes such as Tobavarchkhili lake.
Meskheti is one of Georgia’s archaic wine-making regions. The region of Meskheti is the highest mountainous vine-growing region in Georgia and perhaps even in the whole world.

A TASTE OF THE LOCAL GASTRONOMY
The region is famous for Tatarberak, traditional dish made from tiny pieces of dough that are boiled and served with the sauce of melted butter and fried onion.

MUST-VISIT IN THE REGION
Located in the south-west part of Georgia, Meskheti is a region of great historical-cultural significance. It keeps numerous Christian and pre-Christian monuments, such as the Vardzia cave town, and Zarzma and Sapara monasteries among them. Akhaltsikhe Castle overlooking the city of Akhaltsikhe impresses its visitors.
This region is currently playing an active role in Georgia’s creation of new and restored vineyards. In recent years, the restoration of old grape varieties was initiated and efforts are made to follow actively on the winemaking process.

**PAIRING YOUR WINE WITH THE LOCAL GASTRONOMY**

Tsolikouri wines can be exceptionally accompanied by maize bread with cheese or chopped leek with walnut or traditional Khachapuri (cheese-filled bread).

Aladasturi is ideal to pair with roasted piglet and mushrooms.

**MUST-VISIT IN THE REGION**

- **Batumi**, the administrative center of the region, is the second biggest city in Georgia and it is famous for its jazz festival and summer beach bars. This coastal city is the beating heart of the country in the summer.

- The region is home to a beautiful botanical garden, two National Parks of Mtirala and Machakhela, and two Protected Areas of Kintrishi and Kobuleti, as well as the Goderdzi ski resort.
Abkhazia is considered the historical region of winemaking. The region is situated on the seashore, but its mountainous areas and river gorges are good for viticulture.

Abkhazura – spicy meatballs is a must try dish of the seaside region of Georgia. Abkhazian-style roasted chicken with ajika sauce is another distinguished dish of the region. Spicy ajika sauce gives the meat an incredible flavor.

MUST-VISIT IN THE REGION

As one of the distinctive regions of Georgia, Abkhazia stands out for its unique micro-climate transitional from subtropical to mountainous. While in this region, you can visit:

• **The Krubera Cave**, second-deepest-known cave in the world.
• **Stunning Ritsa Lake**, surrounded by mixed mountain forests and subalpine meadows.
• Numerous **health resorts such as Bichvinta, Gagra, Sokhumi, etc.**
MY TRAVEL NOTES
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