

# TBILISI - A DESTINATION FOR UNDEMANDING TOURISTS



Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, is a very pleasant city that has the potential to become even better. The city, located in the middle of the Caucasus mountains, has a lot to offer—for example, the Narikala Fortress, Sameba Cathedral, Paliashvili Opera House or the Old Town section of the city. However, it is a destination for adventurous and undemanding tourists.

The city is limited by many factors, mainly by the quality of tourist services provided. When these factors combine, the country's overall impression is somewhat dubious. Thus, **despite its rich cultural heritage and attractive landscape, independent travelers should be aware of the many pitfalls that travelling to Georgia's capital involves.**

## Public Transportation and Orientation

Many foreigners describe the public transportation in Tbilisi as a jungle. First, all routes marked on buses are written in unreadable Georgian script. The same goes for underground stations. So, for international visitors, orientation in the transport system is an almost unsolvable task. However, a positive aspect of public transportation in Tbilisi is that people regularly offer their seats to women, disabled people, and the elderly.

The downfalls of the transportation system are also true for the city itself. Most streets in the city are marked in Georgian. Only a few streets in the city center have inscriptions written in the Latin alphabet. But it is really just a few streets, thereby guaranteeing total chaos for people strolling around the city trying to locate a certain spot.

## City of Hostels

Official data from authorities indicate that only about 10% of the overall bed supply in Tbilisi is in hostels. But the impression is quite the opposite. It's hyperbole, but to a certain extent the capital can be called the city of hostels. The impression is that there are hostels everywhere except for the city center, where upper-level hotels are located. There seems to be a lack of compromise between the two, with few places providing both comfort and an affordable price. Thus undemanding tourists and adrenaline junkies will be more than happy to find suitable accommodation.

It is a much more secure option to rely on international hotel chains while booking accommodations for your trip to Tbilisi. The level of hospitality is guaranteed by a certain brand, and their rooms are held to a certain standard. Local accommodation facilities lack a lot in terms of hospitality services. This could make an experience in Tbilisi somewhat unpleasant.

## Annoying Taxi Drivers, Stray Dogs

But there are many more issues in Tbilisi. For example, annoying taxi drivers offer rides everywhere and anywhere, supposedly for the best prices. In addition, Georgia, like many other post-Soviet countries, is specific for the occurrence of the so-called "grey tourism market". The concept of this is

that ordinary citizens offer their services to tourists, mainly as drivers or amateur tour guides around the city's main sights.

These people are not official representatives or accredited tour guides. Their aim is to take advantage of confused tourists and earn some money in exchange for dubious and amateur services.

Moreover, there are many stray animals walking around the city, even in the city center. This can provide an element of shock for tourists, because some of the dogs roaming around the city are the size of a grown man.

There is also great poverty in the country. Many beggars and homeless people stroll through the streets of Tbilisi. Additionally, many buildings in the city are in terrible condition, and there are many buildings that have been under construction for a lengthy period.

Taking all these pitfalls into account and putting them together forms the reality of Georgia's capital. **There is no doubt that it is a beautiful city that boasts a rich cultural heritage and many attractions.** But the potential of the city is left unused for various reasons.

The destination is quite attractive, but for all the reasons detailed here, it is suitable mainly for middle-class leisure travelers, so-called "backpackers" and students, who are not too demanding in their needs. Thus, if you have high expectations for a destination, Georgia and Tbilisi probably aren't the right place for you.

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