



SVANETI

GEORGIA'S CROWN JEWEL

IN SVANETI, THERE IS SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

There are only a handful of places on earth where you may come across such a curious gathering of people: skiers recovering from a ride through the untouched slopes of the Caucasus mountains, adrenaline still pumping in their veins; retired researchers deep in conversation about the day's journey through remnants of old paganism and Christianity; art enthusiasts marveling at the wooden artifacts they have just acquired from a local merchant; a family of four back from a snowy walk in a soundless spruce forest; a group of locals singing polyphonic folk songs in praise of the Goddess of the sun; and the host, telling tales of naughty gremlins and magical creatures to wide-eyed children. All looking pleasantly exhausted, gathered around a blazing fireplace, enjoying mouth-watering Georgian food and wine, with a local twist. Welcome to Svaneti.

Nestled between some of the highest peaks in the Caucasus mountains, the historic region of Svaneti is often called Georgia's treasury. Home to a mere 18,000 inhabitants, it attracts on average 150,000 visitors every year. Humans have found refuge in Svaneti for ten millennia, with a bustling civilization forming in the Bronze age. Due to long-lasting winters and geographical isolation in the past, the region has nurtured and preserved a strong, unique culture. Its own language, Svan, belonging to the Kartvelian language family, is spoken to this day.



Like most mountainous regions in Georgia, Svaneti sustains a blend of pagan and Christian rituals, art, and architecture. The famous Svanetian tower houses erected in the 9th-12th centuries still stand strong to tell the tale of battles against invaders who plagued the region. Medieval churches still boast unique icons and murals while modern world-class museums display prehistoric treasures and masterful local artifacts etched in stone, gold, and wood.



While eternal glaciers and 5000-meter peaks dot every scene, Ushba—the poised, fearless double Matterhorn—is Svaneti's crown jewel. Abundant in alpine lakes, waterfalls, untouched forests, and mountain trails, Svaneti boasts activities for every taste—from ski touring, heliskiing, trekking, and mountaineering to horse-riding, kayaking, rafting, and paragliding. During winter, visitors flock to the region's two ski resorts—Hatsvali near Mestia, the municipal center, where riders can enjoy tree-skiing, and Tetnuldi, hovering between 2250 and 3180 meters above sea level where off-piste riders can descend up to 1500 meters in one go.

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In Svaneti, there is something for everyone. For artists, musicians, linguists, archaeologists, anthropologists, geologists, or botanists, the region is an inexhaustible source of surprise and inspiration. For foodies and alcohol connoisseurs, it is the cradle of wine, exquisite pastries, and unique dishes. And for those with itchy feet, Svaneti is the land of endless possibilities.

OUR TOURS

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the diversity and abundance of sights and activities in Svaneti. Shanland is here to help you take the back seat and follow carefully curated tours, filled with secret gems and authentic experiences.

Our gourmet guests usually frequent our gastronomic tour. Those who appreciate Medieval art and architecture opt for an extensive tour along some of Svaneti's most magnificent churches in the Pilgrimage tour. Those wishing to experience the best of both worlds usually go for one of our rich cultural tours. Our summer trekking tours welcome guests consumed with wanderlust while winter tours take some of our most daring visitors ski touring, heliskiing, and downhill skiing on the slopes of the Caucasus mountains.

While we can devise any plan tailored to your needs and interests, here are some of our most iconic tours.

THE CULTURAL TOUR

For millennia, Svaneti's daring climate and towering mountains have perfectly preserved a unique, rich culture. This tour takes guests down Svaneti's memory lane, starting from the hustle and bustle of Mestia in Zemo (Upper) Svaneti, all the way down to Lentekhi in Kvemo (Lower) Svaneti. Guests will visit everything from Medieval churches to traditional dwellings, learn local secrets like the art of making Svan salt, hats, and instruments, and even take a walk off the beaten track.

Day 1:

A 1-hour flight to Mestia from Natakhtari, a nearby town to the capital of Tbilisi

Day 2:

An introduction to some of the most spectacular nearby sights: the Museum of Ethnography, the Margiani House Museum, the Mikheil Khargiani Museum, the Church of Transfiguration of Jesus, the Lenjeri Church of St. Michael the Archangel, and a masterclass in Svan instruments, followed by a stay in Mestia.

Day 3:

Diving deeper into the Svan culture: masterclasses on producing Svan salt, creating Svan hats, and mining gold, followed by a hike in nature and story-telling by the fire.

Day 4:

A trip to Ipari to visit the Church of St. George, the Tower of Love and the Church of St. Kvirike of Kala, followed by a trip to Ushguli with a visit to the Museum of Ethnography, and a stay in Ushguli.

Day 5:

Getting to know Ushguli, starting with the Church of Lamaria, the House of Painters By P. Nizharadze, and visiting a Svan Machubi—a traditional local dwelling—finished by a stay in Lentekhi.

Day 6:

A trip to Chikhareshi to get a glimpse of the Church of Dormition of the Mother of God in Okondabishi (11-14th century), the Archangel church in Chukuli (10-12th century), moving on to Cholouri to visit the Church of St. George in village Sakdri (12-14th century), finished by a stay in Lentekhi.

Day 7:

A deeper dive into Kvemo Svaneti, starting with a visit to the Museum of Local Lore in Lentekhi, the Larashi Castle, and the Church of Ascension, enjoying viewpoints, a castle, and a Machubi, finishing off with a masterclass in Svan folk songs.

Day 8:

Traveling back from the Lentekhi airport to Natakhtari.



THE GASTRONOMIC TOUR

This tour, packed with masterclasses and tastings of some of the most unique and fascinating local dishes, was created with foodies in mind. Our guests take away some of the biggest tips, tricks and secrets of the Svan cuisine, and large bags of versatile, delicious Svan salt. Feeling full and invigorated, they stretch their legs in historic towns and villages and visit some of the most breathtaking local architecture.

DAY 1:

A 1-hour flight to Mestia from Natakhtari, a nearby town to the capital of Tbilisi

DAY 2:

Back to basics: getting some background at the Museum of Ethnography and the Margiani House Museum, followed by a masterclass in producing famous Svan salt and Kubdari, a meat pastry, finished by a stay in Mestia.

DAY 3:

A time to embrace some of the most unique ingredients, starting with a masterclass in Narchvi, a local cheese, in the villages of Lakhamuli and Hamashi, followed by a masterclass in catching and preparing salmon to make a salmon Kubdari in the villages of Becho and Shikhra, followed by a stay in historic Becho.

DAY 4:

Starting with a refreshing walk to the Shdugri waterfall, followed by masterclasses on some of the most unique Svan dishes, Mertsvi (a potato-based dish), Petvrali (cheese pastry with millet) and Ltspeki (a soup). A visit to the 10-12th century Church of Jonah the Prophet and the Church of Christ, finished by a stay in Mestia.

DAY 5:

Kicking off with cheesy local dishes, a masterclass in making Sulguni (a unique Georgian cheese), Kaarzi (a cheese-based dish), and Tashmijabi (a cornmeal-based dish), followed by a visit to the Church of St. George and a masterclass in cooking Chishdvari (cheesy cornmeal bread) and Kartoflar (potato-based pastry) in Adishi, tasting Svan Matsoni (Georgian sour yogurt rich in probiotics), finished with a stroll and a stay in Adishi.

DAY 6:

Stretching our legs with a visit to the Church of St. Barbare, followed by a masterclass in cooking Naskmli (a meat-based dish) and Gimbshari (a Svan pastry), tasting Shishgili (a garlic marinade), moving to a Mint Sulguni and Lchrkhali (a beetroot pastry) masterclass in Ushguli, tasting Ziskhora (home-made sausage). Visiting the Museum of Ethnography in Ushguli and the Church of Lamaria, finished with a stay in historic Ushguli.