

# The Georgian Times

NO 1 NEWSPAPER IN GEORGIA

THE GEORGIAN TIMES MEDIA HOLDING

Distributed free

No 7 (1570) Friday, July 29, 2016 International Edition - Published by "The Georgian TIMES" Media Holding Since 1993 www.geotimes.ge



## Orbi Group Project Gains Global Recognition



GENERAL SPONSOR



## Paradise Investment Resort: one of the biggest tourist projects in Kakheti, with over 300 rooms

On p. 11



## Batumi to Host 4<sup>th</sup> International Music Festival

In September 17-22, Batumi Arts Centre will host its 4<sup>th</sup> grand international music festival, BATUMI MusicFest. The festival was founded by famous Georgian Classical Pianist and UNESCO Ambassador Eliso Bolkvadze and is organised with the support of her charity fund "Lyra". It has been supported by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia and Ministry of Culture of Adjara since its establishment.

On p. 12

## THE CHÂTEAU IN KISISKHEVI



On p. 4



Astoria Tbilisi – Quiet but Central

On p. 3

## Georgian Tourism Is On The Up



The Georgian National Tourism Administration is much in the news at the moment, as it is involved in a large number of different projects. Here GT interviews its head Giorgi Chogovadze about the overall strategy behind the development which keep it in the public eye.

What kind of tourism development strategy do you have for 2016-2017? What new directions are you planning to take?

The Georgian National Tourism Administration will continue to successfully implement the projects we have developed over recent years. We have an active international marketing campaign and have already emerged in new tourism markets in addition to traditional ones, greatly boosting the number of tourists.

On p. 7

## Georgian Tourism – a Growth Industry

On p. 8

## Sports Tourism in Action – Tbilisi to Host International Conference on Sports Marketing

On p. 9



SPECIAL EDITION

## Global Conference on Wine Tourism to Be Held in Georgia for the First Time

On p. 10



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## The Georgian TIMES

# 1 English-Language Newspaper in Georgia

First published in 1993.  
 The Founder and the President Malkhaz Gulashvili. Tel: (+995) 577 461 046  
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# Astoria Tbilisi – Quiet but Central

The two buildings of the four star Astoria Tbilisi hotel are located on the slope of Mtatsminda at the junction of Chitadze and Chonkadze streets in a green and quiet part of Tbilisi. Only a few seconds walk from the hotel is Rustaveli Avenue, where the core attractions of the city are located: museums, galleries, the Georgian National Opera and Ballet Theatre and the Shota Rustaveli State Drama Theatre. The funicular railway to Mtastminda Park, another major attraction for visitors, is only 100 metres from the hotel.

The hotel is well furnished and offers a comfortable courtyard, indoor swimming pool, sauna and gym, two meeting rooms, two conference halls, which can hold 60 and 120 people respectively, a technically-equipped conference hall, a lounge bar, internal parking and two restaurants offering morning breakfast and Georgian and European cuisine. It has 146 rooms, including suites, junior suites, family rooms, standard rooms and rooms adjusted to the needs of disabled persons.

The professional staff team provides high quality service 24 hours a day. As a hotel with absolute comfort, quiet atmosphere and convenient location it is ideal for both business meetings and deep relaxation.





# THE CHÂTEAU IN KISISKHEVI

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# Georgian Tourism Is On The Up

*The Georgian National Tourism Administration is much in the news at the moment, as it is involved in a large number of different projects. Here GT interviews its head Giorgi Chogovadze about the overall strategy behind the development which keep it in the public eye.*

**What kind of tourism development strategy do you have for 2016-2017? What new directions are you planning to take?**

The Georgian National Tourism Administration will continue to successfully implement the projects we have developed over recent years. We have an active international marketing campaign and have already emerged in new tourism markets in addition to traditional ones, greatly boosting the number of tourists.

We participate in many international conferences and tell a large number of interested people, including tour operators, about the tourist potential of Georgia. We have launched a large-scale promotional campaign on one of the world's most popular travel portals. TripAdvisor, which is focused on 10 target markets. We have also produced a commercial video clip promoting Georgia for the summer tourist season.

Furthermore, we conduct international press tours for well-known journalists from popular and distinguished TV stations, magazines and newspapers which encourage them to help us raise awareness of Georgia's tourism potential. We hosted 400 foreign journalists in 2015, and have welcomed the same number in 6 months this year.

We continue to undertake small infrastructure development projects; here we can single out the "Wine Road," which we resumed this year. We identify cellars throughout the country and prepare direction signs and name boards for the recommended wineries.

We have published a pilgrimage site catalogue, entitled "Orthodox Pilgrims in Georgia," and the thematic brochure "Georgia for Jewish Travellers" to promote religious tourism in the country. We have also opened a convention bureau to develop business tourism. This year, we hosted the fifth meeting of the technical advisory board of the World Tourism Organisation and the 16<sup>th</sup> session of its committee on statistics and the Tourism Satellite Account. In September we will host the first global wine tourism conference for the World Tourism Organisation in the region of Kakheti, which is an unprecedented achievement for the country and has come about thanks to our diligent efforts. We are expecting nearly 250 delegates from different countries, including the tourism ministers of various states and Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organisation Taleb Rifai. We are conducting a promotional campaign entitled "Meet Georgia", involving 14 press tours and more than 70 TV reports from different regions of Georgia.

**What do Georgia's tourism statistics look like at present?**

The number of foreign tourists visiting Georgia has increased since 2015 and we have set new records. More than 2,600,000 international travellers have visited Georgia within the first 6 months of this year, a 13% increase over the first half of last year. Over one million international travellers have stayed in Georgia for more than 24 hours, an 18% increase on the same period of the previous year.

Tourism is one of the country's fast-growing sectors and an essential part of its economy, which is re-



Giorgi Chogovadze, head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration

flected in the income from international arrivals. Georgia received additional 150 million US Dollars from foreign tourism in 2015 and reached 1.94 billion US Dollars in total. During the first quarter of 2016, 354.5 million US Dollars was accrued from foreign tourism in Georgia, 48 million US Dollars more than in the same period of 2015. The marketing campaigns launched by the Georgian National Tourism Administration have played a vital role in achieving this growth; new direct flights and an increase in the frequency of flights to different travel destinations have provided additional incentives for prospective international travellers.

**How congenial are Georgia's legislation, tax system, business environment and infrastructure for the tourism industry? How do you support travel agencies?**

The Government of Georgia supports and contributes to the development of the tourism infrastructure and the attraction of investment to the tourism industry. Tourism is the top priority of the country. The government is developing infrastructure throughout the country to boost its tourism potential; in this regard, roads are being built and municipal transport and railways have been significantly improved. The leading travel destinations, health resorts and historic monuments are being restored and repaired.

Investors are growing more interested in the sea, mountain and spa resorts of Georgia and more than 80 hotels are planned, or are currently being built, around the country. Mid-level hotels are being built all over Georgia as well as high-end brand hotels. This will quickly develop our country, and lead to more facilities being built, a higher rate of employment and much more revenue from the private sector.

**Does the country have the potential to offer high quality and varied services to tourists, and what are you planning to do in this respect?**

The Georgian National Tourism Administration offers training for individuals engaged in the tourism industry to improve the quality of services. We retrained 1,100 people throughout the country in 2015. The same training programmes are available this year. The subjects are English language, hotel management and services, care for the disabled, first aid, tax codes and financial accounting, marketing and sales support, English language for taxi drivers, agro-tourism facilities operations, guide skills, alpine guide training etc. It is important to note that we have invited internationally-recognised trainers from the United Kingdom and Switzerland to retrain hotel staff and upgrade the quality and safety of mountain resorts.

**How important are government-funded tourism projects? How successful was "Check In Georgia" in terms of accruing income?**

The Georgian National Tourism Administration is an active supporter of "Check In Georgia", which involves 35 events in 19 towns around Georgia and will last the whole year. The Georgian National Tourism Administration releases information about these events to the international market, via exhibitions and online marketing, and as a result millions of people are becoming aware of them. Similar campaigns boost the awareness of international travellers and demonstrate that Georgia is a safe and dynamic travel destination.

As you know, people from lots of different countries have attended the concerts already given as part of this programme. One of the projects developed as part of it is the new Black Sea Arena, a concert hall built at a cost of 200 million GEL, which was opened on July 30 and will host performances by world-renowned celebrities such as Christina Aguilera and Vanessa Mae.



# Georgian Tourism – a Growth Industry

American news outlet CNN has named Georgia amongst the best travel destinations for 2016, along with Taiwan, India, Iceland, Madagascar and Iran. Another outlet, Forbes, has cited the Georgian resort of Borjomi as one of the world’s top travel destinations.

The World Economic Forum has ranked Georgia 71<sup>st</sup> of the 141 countries on its Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (Spain and France top this list). The index is calculated by comparing 15 different economic, infrastructural and cultural criteria. Georgia scored highest in the healthy environment (disease control, access to pure drinkable water) and security categories.

As a result of all this, Georgia can expect significant growth in the number of international visitors, and this is now occurring. Global marketing is being undertaken which is further raising awareness of the country’s tourist potential.

There were 2,636,313 international arrivals in Georgia during the first six months of this year, a 12.9% increase on the same period of last year. The number of visits (for 24 hours or more) was 1,011,680, 18.1% more than in the same period of last year.

International arrivals according to type (January-June 2016)

Type of Visit	2015: 6 month	2016: 6 Month	Change	Change %
for 24 hour and more (tourist)	856,612	1,011,680	155,068	18.1%
Transit	536,918	521,746	-15,172	-2.8%
One-day visit	941,780	1,102,887	161,107	17.1%
Total	2,335,310	2,636,313	301,003	12.9%

Azerbaijan was the leading source of January-June 2016 visitors, Georgia welcoming 18.1% more of its residents than in the same period of last year, followed by those of Turkey (4% more), Armenia (1.4% more), Russia (15.6% more) and Ukraine (26.3% more). The number of visits from EU countries also increased, as in the first half of the year Georgia welcomed 29% more people from Latvia, 20% more from Italy and 12% more from France+12%. There were particular increases in numbers of visitors from Iran (400%), India (340%), the Philippines (208%), Israel (95%), China (57%) and Uzbekistan (31%).

Country	2015: 6 month	2016: 6 month	Change	Change %
Azerbaijan	581,006	686,102	105,096	18.1%
Turkey	605,410	629,754	24,344	4.0%
Armenia	545,187	552,806	7,619	1.4%
Russia	343,441	397,075	53,634	15.6%
Ukraine	55,335	69,912	14,577	26.3%
Iran	7,463	37,335	29,872	400.3%
Israel	17,018	33,252	16,234	95.4%
Kazakhstan	13,616	17,274	3,658	26.9%
Poland	15,292	16,480	1,188	7.8%
Germany	15,194	15,069	-125	-0.8%
USA	13,655	14,868	1,213	8.9%
Belarus	8,653	12,019	3,366	38.9%
India	2,680	11,794	9,114	340.1%
United Kingdom	7,933	8,138	205	2.6%
Greece	6,832	6,964	132	1.9%

In June Georgia was visited by 517,038 international travellers, a 4.1% increase on last June. 228,866 of these stayed in Georgia for 24 hours or more, an increase of 15.8%.

International arrivals according to type (June 2016)

Type of visit	2015: June	2016: June	Change	Change %
24 hour and more (tourist)	197,573	228,866	31,293	15.8%
Transit	131,710	110,324	-21,386	-16.2%
One-day visit	167,511	177,848	10,337	6.2%
Total	496,794	517,038	20,244	4.1%

Azerbaijani was again the leading source of visitors in June alone, Georgia welcoming 1.9% more than in June 2015, followed by Armenia (-3.9%), Turkey(-7.2%), Russia (+4.4%) and Ukraine (+35.3%). In terms of EU member states, Georgia welcomed 66% more people from the Czech Republic, 33% more from Lithuania, 25% more from Bulgaria, 20% more from Germany, 19% more from France and 18% more from Latvia in June.

	Country	2015: June	2016: June	Change	Change %
1	Azerbaijan	113,172	115,277	2,105	1.9%
2	Armenia	111,877	107,463	-4,414	-3.9%
3	Turkey	113,869	105,683	-8,186	-7.2%
4	Russia	89,449	93,397	3,948	4.4%
5	Ukraine	12,378	16,746	4,368	35.3%
6	Israel	7,368	12,666	5,298	71.9%
7	Iran	1,920	11,783	9,863	513.7%
8	Kazakhstan	4,187	5,463	1,276	30.5%
9	Poland	5,620	5,389	-231	-4.1%
10	Belarus	3,158	3,989	831	26.3%
11	USA	3,403	3,792	389	11.4%
12	Germany	2,976	3,583	607	20.4%
13	India	515	2,372	1,857	360.6%
14	United Kingdom	1,754	1,711	-43	-2.5%
15	Greece	1,697	1,656	-41	-2.4%

According to final figures for 2015, net income from foreign tourism was 1.94 Billion US Dollars, 149 million more than in 2014, representing a growth of 8.3%.

In the first quarter of 2016 net income from foreign tourism was 354.5 Million US Dollars, 48 million more than in the first quarter of 2015, a growth of 15.7%

Tourism accounted for 6.7% of Georgia’s GDP in 2015, an increase of 16.2% on the previous year. In the first quarter of 2016 this figure was 6.8%, which represents a growth of 11.5% compared to the same period of last year.





# FIABCI Prix d'Excellence Award WORLD RECOGNITION OF ORBI GROUP!



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# Orbi Group Project Gains Global Recognition

*The Orbi Twin Tower, a new 4,500 room hotel complex, is being built on the Black Sea Coast in Batumi. It is the world's sixth largest hotel in terms of number of rooms and has been awarded the FIABCI Prix d'Excellence 2016, the prestigious "Real Estate Oscar," in the category of World's Best Investment Project.*

Here the Director General of Orbi Group, Irakli Kverghelidze, tells us about the project itself and the awards it has won.

Orbi Twin Tower is a globally important project. What significance does building the world's 6th largest hotel complex have?

The list of world's ten largest hotels is as follows:

1. The Palazzo Resort Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas (8,108 rooms)
2. The Izmailovo Gamma Hotel, Moscow (7,500)
3. The Signature Hotel at MGM Grand, Las Vegas (6,772)
4. The First World Hotel, Genting Highlands, Malaysia (6,118)
5. The Encore Las Vegas, Las Vegas (4,570)
6. **The ORBI Twin Tower, Batumi (4,500)**
7. The Luxor Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas (4,400)
8. The Mandalay Bay Hotel, Las Vegas (4,337)
9. The Ambassador City Jomtien Hotel, Pattaya, Thailand (4,210)
10. The Venetian Hotel, Las Vegas (4,027)

Building the sixth largest hotel complex in the world in terms of number of rooms is a matter of pride for The Orbi Group. This project goes beyond merely regional importance and gives global dimensions to the company and the tourist city of Batumi. Further details about the Orbi Twin Tower can be found at the following webpage: [www.orbigroup.net](http://www.orbigroup.net).

***You have just returned from Panama, where the Orbi Twin Tower project gained worldwide recognition. How significant is the FIABCI Prix d'Excellence for the country?***

Good question. Our complex being recognized as the best investment project worldwide is obviously a great victory not only for our company but the entire country.

The FIABCI Prix d'Excellence is a very prestigious prize. There is none more important - it is the same as an Oscar. FIABCI is the international real estate federation, which was founded in Paris in 1948 by leading European and American developers and real estate professionals. In 1954 FIABCI was granted the status of official consultant to the United Nations Economic and Social Council. This is the only real estate organisation which can speak from the UN tribune.

Global projects such as the Trump Tower in New York, the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Disneyland in Paris, Millennium Park in Chicago, Republic Plaza in Singapore, The Palace in Taiwan, Sinar Mas Land Plaza in Indonesia, Norwest Business Park in Sidney and many other famous architectural projects have won the Prix d'Excellence at various times. It is so important that it has ensured the advancement of the companies which have won it.

Orbi Group is the first company in the post-Soviet space to win this award. We were competing against huge companies from the United States of America, China, Singapore, Dubai, Malaysia, Japan and Europe, whose

budgets are 15 or 20 times larger than Georgia's, let alone our company's.

The 70-member jury of internationally-recognised experts from over 40 countries assessed our project alongside those presented by these huge companies over a period of six months. It unanimously declared Orbi Twin Tower to be the world's best investment project for 2016. Never before in FIABCI's history has the jury taken a unanimous decision, and this was emphasized by the FIABCI president at the award ceremony.

***Orbi Group is selling apartments in Orbi Twin Tower. What makes an apartment different from a flat?***

Just like a flat, an apartment is the private property of the customer. The right to the property is registered in the public registry, and there is no substantial legal difference between a flat and an apartment in terms of property rights. The difference is that these apartments are part of a multifunctional hotel complex with a 5 star hotel infrastructure and high class services such as a reception, concierge service, room service, security guards, technical services, a casino, spa centre, outdoor and indoor pools, cafes, restaurants, shopping zones, children's playgrounds, a medical centre and so on. The owner of the apartment is not limited to living in it themselves: it is up to them to decide whether to use the apartment for residential purposes, for relaxing or even for renting. If the owner wishes, the Orbi Group can offer the apartment for rent and the owner will gain a regular income from this rental. It is worth noting that the multifunctional hotel complex, with 5 star infrastructure and services, has created increasing demand for these apartments, giving them a high rental value.

***How can an interested person purchase an apartment in Orbi Twin Tower? What are the terms, and what kind of benefits would they receive?***

Orbi Twin Tower has a unique architecture and location, being only 50



metres from the sea in the vicinity of the dancing fountains. Each apartment also has a magnificent sea view.

We are conducting a promotional campaign for Orbi Twin Tower, as our company traditionally does for each new project. During this, apartments are available at the best prices. They can be purchased for only 17,500 US Dollars up to September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016, with an initial payment of 1,700 US Dollars and monthly payments of 250 US Dollars. The apartments have Italian furniture and European standard fixtures and fittings.

The complex includes both standard and higher class apartments. Certain types of apartment will be sold for five hundred thousand, one million or even one and a half million US Dollars.

As for the benefits, I would like to underline that there are two key factors when purchasing or investing in real estate:

***What kind of income could the property bring if it was rented out?***

***How much can its value increase over time?***

The annual income from a standard rented apartment will be 5-6,000 US Dollars. The value of the property will at least double when the project is fully constructed. The full construction will take another 24 months.

***These are rather attractive terms, and I think there will be great interest. How many Georgian citizens are***

***buying apartments from you and what kind of sales dynamic do you have outside the country?***

Orbi Group has created a product which should be attractive for both citizens of Georgia and people living abroad. Orbi Group has around 30 offices in 7 countries, and 50 more branches will be opened by the end of 2016.

Our apartments are not just a real estate but a business and a source of regular income. We offer very simple and flexible payment terms for Orbi Group apartments, therefore people living in Georgia who can afford an initial 1,700 US Dollar and 250 US Dollars a month thereafter can easily buy an apartment from Orbi Group. Given the abovementioned, our citizens are very interested in this project and we have many clients from both the cities and different regions of Georgia.

There are also many cases of Georgian citizens living abroad buying apartments for their parents, or other family members living in Georgia, in order to give them a stable source of income. They also take a rest in these apartments on their vacations.

Apartments are available for professionals (for instance: lawyers, accountants, auditors, doctors etc.), who do not have the opportunity to go into business independently; they buy them under a flexible payment system, which yields them an additional

income without disrupting their professional activities. As I have already mentioned, the apartments are rented out and managed by Orbi Group and the customer receives the rental money monthly in their bank account.

There is high interest in the apartments from foreign countries such as Germany, Poland, Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Israel, America, Dubai, Qatar and so forth. At present we have customers from 35 countries. Now Orbi Twin Tower has been named the world's best investment project for 2016, overseas interest will only grow.

***Can you outline Orbi Group's future plans?***

Orbi Group will launch a large-scale project in Tbilisi in the near future. It is also due to be the first Georgian development company to undertake projects outside the country, and several of these will be implemented. The company plans to develop many other new projects and lines.

***Once again I would like to congratulate you on the global recognition of Orbi Twin Tower, thank you for this interview and wish you success. How can a stakeholder contact the company and buy an apartment?***

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# Sports Tourism in Action

## Tbilisi to Host International Conference on Sports Marketing

Georgia is taking its first steps in developing sports tourism. The country is determined to make Georgia an attractive destination for sports fans and is adopting marketing techniques used all over the world to achieve this. A memorandum of understanding on this has been signed by Giorgi Chogovadze, Head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration, and Zurab Bokolishvili, President of Prime Sports Management (PSM).

Tbilisi will host an international conference on sports marketing in a couple of months. Successful sports competitions (like the FA Premier League and La Liga), football clubs, sports administrators and marketing specialists will examine ways of making sports events profitable from a business point of view.

PSM's daughter companies Fight Nights Georgia and Travel and Events Georgia will be organising a range of sports events in the coming months. These include:

- August 27 – Fight Nights Global 52 (a mixed martial arts event);
- September 5-8 – Triathlon World Cup;
- September 17-18 – MMA (Mixed Martial Arts) European Championships;
- October 27-29 – Marspo Batumi (International Conference on Sport Marketing);
- November 21 – MMA, Georgia v. World Team;
- December 5-7 – Fights Nights Global (Mixed Martial Arts);
- February 2017 – Silk Road Cup (Kickboxing and Muay Thai championship).

The August 27 FIGHT NIGHTS competition will be held at the new Black Sea Arena, which holds over 8,000 people. The Triathlon World Cup will take place at the Volleyball Arena in Tbilisi. The MMA European Championships (amateur) will be held at the New Sports Palace and 150 participants are expected. Between 7 and 800 martial artists from 40 countries are expected to contest the Silk Road Cup at Tbilisi Sports Palace next February.

Fight Nights is the largest promotions company in Europe, and now Georgia has found a place on its list of hosting countries. The August 27 event will be the first Fight Nights Georgia promotion, and the sports marketing conference is another important step in developing sports tourism in this country.

As Zurab Bokolishvili says, "The conference will bring a considerable flow of knowledge to this country. We are expecting speakers from different leagues and clubs, marketing specialists and business managers. The programme will reflect the current realities and challenges in Georgia, and will address issues of sports marketing, sports administration, and the management of sports federations, clubs and leagues. All these activities serve to promote sports tourism, which is of paramount importance for us.

"Persons employed in sports sector will acquire knowledge from experienced specialists, develop contacts and learn where to focus their work. The very first conference of



this kind took place in Moscow in April, and turned out to be very representative. Georgia needs to know more about scheduling tickets, attracting fans and sponsors, TV-friendly products and branding sports organisations, so I was keen to offer the same sort of conference in Tbilisi and

am pleased that it will be happen in late October."

Sport events promote the country and encourage foreign tourists to visit it, consequently enhancing the country's tourism potential. Around 4,000-4,500 guests will visit Georgia to attend this year's scheduled events.

## Why Georgia (the Country) Is the Secret Gem of Europe

This holiday season, forget the plane ticket to Milan. Cancel Berlin. And don't bother with London. Instead, head to Georgia. (And we don't mean hop on a local liner to Atlanta to enjoy a game of college football and a mint julep.) Georgia also happens to be the name of a tiny Caucasus country that sits under the belly of Russia and borders Turkey, Armenia, and Azerbaijan—a hidden, Black Sea-skirting gem tucked between Eastern Europe and Western Asia. The recommendation to visit is not so random either. The country has been under an international spotlight recently thanks to the Georgian-born designer Demna Gvasalia of Vetements, who is also now the creative director of Balenciaga. And it doesn't stop at the runway: Georgian cuisine has been making a delectable move to the States. So why not head to the country to see the trove of cool for yourself? Here, the top five reasons why you should book your ticket and explore Tbilisi, Georgia—now.

### The Calorie-Boasting Cuisine

Over the past few years, a wave of Georgian restaurants have become a hit stateside: homelike nooks on New York's Lower East Side such as Oda House, or Compass Rose in Washington, D.C. And there is no doubt about why this Eastern European cuisine has crossed the Atlantic. Who wouldn't love the rich and delicious clog-your-arteries effect? Aside from broth-y,



meat-stuffed dumplings called khinkali, or badrijani nigvzit, walnut-and-garlic-filled eggplant rolls, the perfect example of an ultimate calorie-packed national delicacy is khachapuri adjaruli. In this dish, the bread is in the shape of a pinched boat, stuffed and baked with a traditional Georgian cheese called sulguni, topped with a melted stick of butter and raw egg, and then mixed together by the server or diners. Too tame to try the fresh-from-the-chicken garnish? You can also opt

for a simple khachapuri. It's still guaranteed to leave you happily full as well as soar past your daily nutritional requirements. The best way to top it off, too? A swig of Georgian wine—it's fermented in a kveri, a B.C. tradition that involves a clay vessel buried far underground.

### We'll toast to that anytime.

Head to the Old City for Some Cobblestone Cool

A blast from the past, the Old City of Tbilisi looks intact from its ancient

Byzantine-meets-Russian inception. The 12th-century Metekhi Church sits on top of a cliff, while primary color-slathered houses pop in the foreground and buildings appear as if they may tip into the Mtkvari River. As you explore the throwback section, make sure to catch the city's famed marionette show by Rezo Gabriadze, held in a teetering clock tower, or pick up a simple souvenir. Also, remember to look toward the sky when you walk: Traditional Georgian architecture is known for its high-scooping, filigree-like take on woodwork when it comes to balconies.

### Georgia's Heart-Pumping Take on Ballet

Ready for some ballet? No, not the delicate Swan Lake-type pirouettes or wispy ballerina topknots. We're talking swords, shields, and lots of lower body strength. Welcome to the Sukhishvili Georgian National Ballet. Founded by ballet dancers Iliko Sukhishvili and Nino Ramishvili in 1945 (it was previously named Georgian National Ballet), the Georgian style of dance is an intense, chest-puffing production, pumped with testosterone and sweat—almost like a weapon-waving cardio workout in traditional Georgian clothing. Another fun fact? The men skip the classic box-toe ballet shoes. Talk about tough.

### The Down-Low Spa Experience: The Sulfur Baths

Need to soak off that jet lag? The quickest cure-all is to take a dive into the Georgian version of the Turkish hammam or Russian banya: the sulfur bath. Built on hot sulfur springs, tons of bathhouses offer visitors a dip in warm, egg-scented pools of water to rejuvenate. The ancient tradition is said to have magical healing powers, from curing muscle aches to clearing up skin. And you don't need deep pockets to experience the poached egg moment: A typical dip ranges from \$20 to \$70. If you want to get the luxe treatment, you can rent out a private bathhouse, complete with a personal massage-meets-scrub and a sauna room to sweat it out.

### Where to Stay: Rooms Hotel

Please, skip the adventure of booking an Airbnb or a youth-packed hostel when you arrive in Tbilisi. The place to stay is Rooms Hotel—or as the locals simply refer to it, Rooms. A part of the Design Hotels franchise that includes the Ludlow Hotel and Crosby Street Hotel, Rooms is a chic limbo that wavers between Georgia and New York. There is a throwback vibe to the decor: antique rugs, plush lounge couches, and a very-well-stocked library. Hungry or thirsty? There is a stellar cocktail bar (complete with a mixologist), and the food is locally sourced. Expect to eat up and sleep well.

by LIANA SATENSTEIN



# Global Conference on Wine Tourism to Be Held in Georgia for the First Time

Georgia will host its first international conference on wine tourism, under the aegis of UN World Tourism Organization, on September 7-9. This was announced at the international tourism fair in London, and follows a presentation made by Giorgi Chogovadze, Head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration, and Zurab Pololikashvili, Georgia's Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Kingdom of Spain, to Secretary General of the World Tourism Organization Taleb Rifai.

Georgia's rich and ancient wine-making traditions and its underdeveloped tourism potential are considered the basis for attracting many more visitors to the country. This important event is being hosted in Georgia in recognition of this potential.

"Wine tourism is a rapidly expanding segment, with huge opportunities for demand diversification. Georgia's wine tourism potential is very well known and we are happy that your country will be hosting the global conference on wine tourism for the first time. We made a statement about this conference at the tourism fair in London as it is a very important event. The conference is of the utmost importance for Georgia as the country is widely believed to be the birthplace of wine. It has winery traditions of thousands of years and excellent wines are produced there," said Taleb Rifai.

Senior government officials, experts and representatives of tourism organisations from around the world will take part in the conference. Nearly 250 delegates are expected. International wine experts and sommeliers will also consider the current

challenges, obstacles and opportunities in the wine tourism sector.

"This conference will demonstrate the tourism potential of the country and promote Georgia as the birthplace of wine on a global scale. Once again Georgia will come into global focus as the country which preserves 8,000 years of continuous wine-making tradition, whose pitchers ("Kvevri") have been declared intangible cultural monuments by UNESCO and which has more than 500 types of indigenous grapevine. Georgia's status as "the wine country" will be reaffirmed, and awareness of Georgian traditional wine-making will be raised," said Giorgi Chogovadze.

The Georgian National Tourism Administration is working with representatives of the global wine tourism sector to ensure that the first global conference on



Giorgi Chogovadze; Taleb Rifai of the Wine Tourism Association.

wine tourism in Georgia is held successfully.

"We are about to host a very significant conference, which should be held in a proper manner. Vast numbers of tourists will visit Georgia in connection with the conference. Tourists are one of the essential sources of income which makes a

country's economy sustainable, so we should not miss this opportunity. We need to create our own standard of good taste; we must look at others and improve our infrastructure. It is our job to give directions to the owners of wine facilities about such matters," said Levan Chubinidze, founder

The Georgian National Tourism Administration has previously suggested a "Wine Road" project, which will involve identifying and assessing all Georgia's wine cellars. It is hoped this project will now be implemented throughout Georgia.




  
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# Paradise Investment Resort: one of the biggest tourist projects in Kakheti, with over 300 rooms

In the wine region of Kakheti lies the Paradise Investment Resort, a modern hotel located near the village of Jugaani, 10km from Telavi. It is already open for business, and on completion of its spa, swimming pool and other services in the coming months Paradise Investment Resort will offer unforgettable hospitality.

Paradise Investment Resort will boast over three hundred rooms, including executive rooms, suites and private studios, the Paradise spa and open pools for adults and kids. Its main restaurant and a number of coffee shops will keep everyone supplied with food and beverages.

Paradise Investment Resort will deliver a restful stay in a comfortable, eco-friendly environment. All guests have free wifi access, and each room is equipped with LCD flat screen TVs with an extensive selection of international TV channels, a private bathroom, minibar, safe and phone. It also offers a stable of mild-mannered riding horses, a children playground, billiards, table tennis and bicycles to its guests.

The project was designed to blend with its surroundings. Its one and two-

storey buildings blend the Georgian rustic style with a modern touch. Its superior balcony rooms offer nice views over the resort, and guests can enjoy evening chats there in the open over a cup of tea.

Paradise Investment Resort meets all international hotel standards. Its rooms are between 18 and 35 square metres, and have all the facilities required in an international hotel.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October 2009 Georgia and Kuwait signed an agreement on the promotion and reciprocal protection of investments, which was approved and put into force by both countries' parliaments. One element of this was the promotion of tourism between Georgia and the Gulf countries. Businessmen from Kuwait decided to invest in Georgia on the basis of this agreement, and every single stage of the project was discussed and agreed upon with Georgian government.

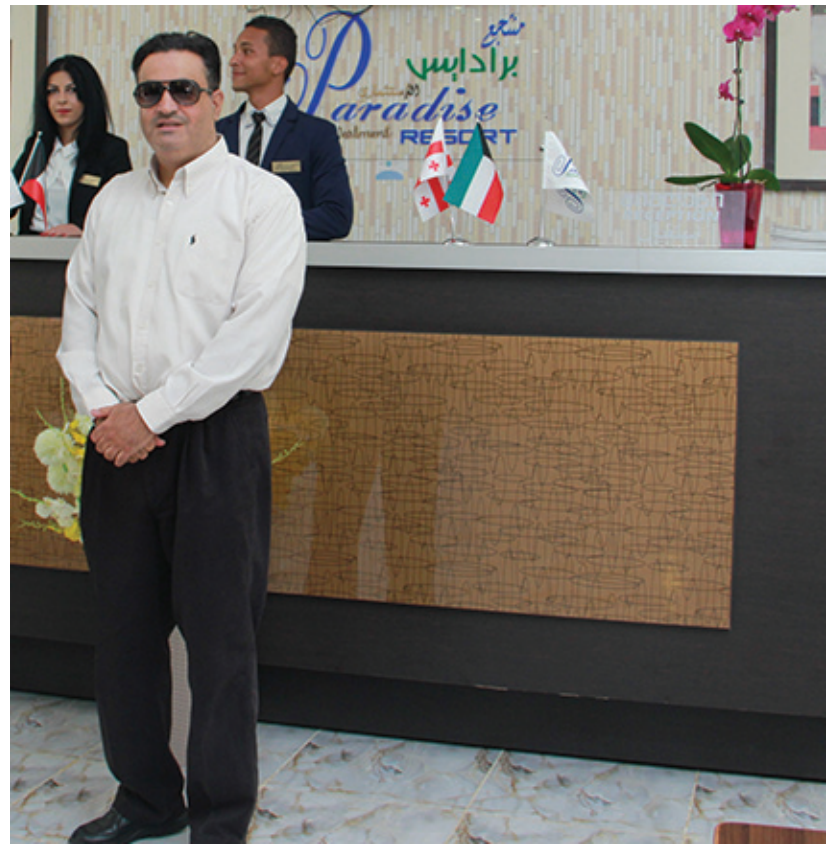
Paradise Investment Resort is the first Kuwaiti private investment project in the Georgian tourism industry, and is strategically important for the economic cooperation between Kuwait and Georgia. The project chose its site on the basis of a Georgian government suggestion. Since the initial investment in 2011,

it has provided jobs for the local population. The project is crucial for the economy of Kakheti, as it is a huge facility which caters for hundreds of people, and its marketing team is working hard on promoting the resort to attract tourists from all over the world.

The project has upgraded the tourism infrastructure in Kakheti and increased the region's contribution to the state budget. Tourism is one of the leading industries in the world today, but the majority of Paradise Investment Resort's employees are locals, demonstrating that the Paradise Investment Resort team is striving to get a win-win result for both them and the people around them.

His Excellency the Ambassador of Kuwait to Georgia, Mr. Mubarak Mohammed Alsuhaian, visited Paradise Investment Resort on 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2016. He gave a positive evaluation to the project and stated that it was a positive step in Kuwait-Georgian economic co-operation.

Paradise Investment Resort is an international trademark registered in the UN, Kuwait and Georgia.



His Excellency the Ambassador of Kuwait to Georgia,  
Mr. Mubarak Mohammed Alsuhaian

*Welcome to Paradise Investment Resort*

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# Batumi to Host 4<sup>th</sup> International Music Festival

## Batumi Music Fest – September 17-22

On September 17-22, Batumi Arts Centre will host its 4<sup>th</sup> grand international music festival, **BATUMI MusicFest**. The festival was founded by famous Georgian Classical Pianist and UNESCO Ambassador Eliso Bolkvadze and is organised with the support of her charity fund "Lyra". It has been supported by the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia and Ministry of Culture of Adjara since its establishment.

The classical music stars who have arrived in Batumi will take part in the music festival with the Batumi Symphonic Orchestra and perform masterpieces of Georgian and world classical music. A seminar is also being held to celebrate UNESCO's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

It is worth mentioning that **BATUMI MusicFest** has become a full member of European Festivals Association, the first time a Georgian music festival has achieved this.

Master classes for young Georgian pianists and violinists will be conducted as part of the festival, and the best students will be selected for participation in international master classes and gala concerts.

Here The Georgian Times interviews renowned pianist and UNESCO Artist for Peace

Eliso Bolkvadze about this year's festival.

**This will be the 4<sup>th</sup> Batumi MusicFest. What makes this year's festival different?**

In 2013, when I set up the festival, I wanted it to have an individual character in terms of its values and offerings. First and foremost, I wanted it to become a springboard for young Georgian musicians and a global manifestation of the Georgian cultural identity. International awareness of the festival has increased each year, and this is a sine qua non for achieving these things; several reputable magazines provide comprehensive coverage of the festival, which has already gained traction at international level. Joining the European Festivals Association will contribute further to its rapid integration into the cultural landscape.

One of the main features of the festival is the master classes for young musicians, which give them an opportunity to both demonstrate and upgrade their talent and experience. Master classes will be given for both pianists and violinists, and next year I expect cellists will also be offered them. The fact that young musicians have expressed interest in these master classes is of the utmost importance, as it encourages the future generation of music lovers and promotes classical music throughout the country.



Batumi Music Fest is one of the most prominent cultural visiting cards with which the country can promote its image. This year's programme is pretty diverse but basically includes a range of popular classical masterpieces. One evening will be completely dedicated to Georgian folk music.

**It is now widely recognised that Batumi is a city which hosts international classical music stars year on year. Who is going to visit Batumi this year?**

The renowned American conductor Philip Mann is coming this year, and we will open the festival together on September

17; we will perform Mozart Piano Concerto.

Cyprien Katsaris, the French pianist, will also visit Batumi and present a Ravel masterpiece. Slovenian clarinetist Darko Brlek will give a concert of Mozart works for Clarinet and Orchestra on September 17, at the opening ceremony.

The final concert will be dedicated to brilliant Georgian composer Aleksandre Machavariani. His son, the conductor and maestro Vakhtang Machavariani, will conduct it.

**Can you specify the importance of joining the European Festivals Association and the opportunities this gives Batumi**

**MusicFest and the arts in general in Georgia?**

This is of paramount importance in many respects: first and foremost, it gives the festival a distinguished status at international level, which is a significant step forward for the cultural life of Georgia. It also promotes better understanding of music management and international music festival structures in Georgia. Little by little Georgian managers will be able to attend international seminars, where they will learn modern music industry development strategies. This will eventually increase interest in domestic festivals amongst Georgian arts patrons. Next year I expect us to attract the interest of the private sector and increase the duration of the festival. My ultimate aim is to expand the format of the festival and include a variety of artistic forms in it: theatre, cinema, poetry reading etc.

**The main goal of the festival is to discover talented young people. Accordingly, master classes for young Georgians are being held. What kind of prizes will they be competing for?**

The young talents who take part will all be winners because all of them will receive diplomas on September 21. But the best of the best will be granted the chance to participate in international competitions and

gala concerts in different European cities.

**In 2013 you founded the "Lyra" charity fund, which has developed close co-operation with the "SOS Talents – Michel Sogny" international foundation. The goal of "Lyra" is to find and support young Georgian pianists. How do you find and then help these young talents?**

When I am in Georgia I listen to young pianists as often as time permits. I give them advice and instruction. They are invited to France and Switzerland on a regular basis to take master classes with the renowned musician and methodologist Michel Sogny. He is widely known for his innovative and unique methods, which rapidly develop young talents' capabilities. They become familiar with these methods and pursue a special programme.

The charity fund "Lyra" also works closely with the E. Mikeladze Music School in Tbilisi, run by Mr. Gia Korkadze. Six young Georgian pianists are preparing to participate in international programs under the instruction of Professor Natalia Natsvlishvili.

**When and where will Batumi festival tickets be available? Tickets are already available at the box office of the Batumi Music Centre at 1 Odyssey Dimitriadis Str, Batumi; Tel: +995 599 09 04 86**

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