

Hitchhiking in Georgia- an interview with our friend Jagoda Niziol

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Very interesting conversation with our friend Jagoda Niziol. She's truly inspiring person and tireless traveler. Check out what she thinks about Georgia and get some great travel tips!

1. Did you like Georgia?

I was dreaming about going to Georgia for almost 2 years. I loved to listen my friend's stories about this country. I was watching pictures and imagined how it feels to be there. Georgia made an enormously positive impression on me, both the culture and the landscape. It is a small but very diverse country. Each regions are quite different from each other. In Georgia you can find the sea, the mountains and even the desert. We were through this country for two weeks. An amazing adventure was waiting for us every day . I will never forget this journey thanks to the people that we met on the way.

2. Is it safe in Georgia?

Yes it is. I think Georgia is a safe country, at least I felt safe there. During the whole stay we found no evidence of political conflict that took place in 2008. The only dangerous place, where it is not worth to go, is the region bordering with Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

People are very friendly to tourists, still offered their assistance. For Georgians, we were in an attraction, two traveling girls are rarely seen phenomenon there. Sometimes young men approached us and offered us an accomodation or invite us to go to a party together, but when we said say 'no' firmly enough, they gave up. In each city there was police who has daily control. We had frequent contact with the policemen. They were very polite and they wanted to help us at any price. We

have very good memories of the Georgian police, because they saved us out of trouble when we were stuck at night in Zugdidi (town at north-west from Kutaisi) and we could not find accommodation. Police officers arranged an accommodation for us. It was the safest night of my life, because we had a tent in front of police station.

3. Is the cost of living high in Georgia?

It depends, in Georgia there is a big corruption, there are two extremes: we met very wealthy people, driving cars of which the average person could never dream of. And also we met people living in extreme poverty, without running water in their homes. Georgians with whom we spoke complained about the high unemployment rate prevailing in the country, and low wages. The average salary is 450GEL (\$240)

Prices are similar like in Poland 1 GEL is approximately 60 cents.

I'm not a good informant when it comes to the cost of food, accommodation and transportation in Georgia. We were mainly hitchhiking, sleeping in a tent or at kind people houses. We paid for an accomodation only 3 times during our 2-weeks stay. Thanks to the hospitality of Georgians, we never get hungry. We didn't buy food everyday. But I remember some prices.

The bread is very cheap, it costs only 60cent. Fruits and vegetables are less than \$1 per a pound. Dairy products are quite expensive (yogurt price is \$2) maybe because it's rarely purchased by locals.

In Georgia, you can eat quickly and cheaply. In larger cities there are bars where you can buy regional and fresh food. Among others: khachapuri (thin pastry stuffed with lightly salted cheese- cost: \$1-\$2), hinkali (kind of dumplings, which is stuffed with meat. Hinkali have their original shape, it's served hot and contains aromatic soup inside- price id from 15 cents per piece).

Very good and cheap are fat rolls, stuffed with potatoes, red beans or meat, served hot (I do not remember their names but tyou can buy it in almost every bar; it costs from \$0,50 to \$1). Water can be purchased for 60 cents, but there are small springs from which you can enjoy it for free in every city.

When it comes to accommodation, we spent a night in the Georgian capital, Tblisi.

We accidentally found a hotel (BHM Hostel) in the city center. We had a lot of luck, because a night in a dormitory room, with bathroom, Internet access and unlimited coffee and tea, costed 30 GEL (\$20 for 2 people). Of course you can find something cheaper, but we were very happy with this choice. In the mountains of Kazbegi, as we have found cheap accommodation for 40 GEL (\$26) for two people. In addition, we got a bread and delicious salad for free.

The hotels prices range from 100 to 200 GEL per room. In Kahetii (south-western part of Georgia), you can even find accommodation for 15-30 GEL. Transfer route (bus) inside the city costs 0.3- 1GEL, and the cost of the long route is around 1 GEL for 10-20km.

4. What did you like the most in Georgia?

I liked the atmosphere of Georgia the most. This beautiful country has allowed me to momentarily forget the reality that we face, problems and the feeling of chasing time. I am very pleased that we were able to travel around the country by hitchhiking. Thanks to this, we were in places rarely visited by tourists, we could be closer to Georgian culture and traditions, stay and talk with the locals. It was a very valuable experience.

5. What was the biggest adventure that you experienced in Georgia?

The greatest adventure of my life was the whole trip to Georgia. Every day was full of surprises. Among other things: participation in a real Georgian Supra, learning traditional Georgian dancing, drinking wine with the Georgians, waiting all night to sunrise on one of the towers in Mesii (Svaneti region), touching a melting glacier, waking up among grazing cows and pigs, nap in the fog at 2000 m.a.s, overnight under the supervision of the police, drinking traps in the Georgian-speaking Polish (otherwise moonshine air cleaner, run by each Georgian), being in the desert, and to look down on Azerbaijan, passing the old crumbling train. It was a beautiful, unforgettable adventure!

6. And what can you tell about Georgian people?

Georgians are wonderful, generous and very helpful at the same time extremely proud of their origin and culture. I got the impression that they are so in love with themselves that they are not interested in things that go beyond the boundaries of their country. Many times we told them about our Polish culture and traditions,

but they were never interested. Hospitality is inscribed in their traditions. They have special sympathy for us Poles. Every time I told that we are from Poland, they became enthusiastic and they often mentioned our President Lech Kaczynski, who supported Georgia during the conflict with Russia in 2008. They love to share everything what they have, even if they have very little. Refusing help is downright rude. We are very grateful to Georgians and we will always remember a moments that we spent with them.

Thank you that I could share my trip experiances with you. If you have more questions or you are curious about the details of travel stories, contact me or my companion in travel Karolina Oltarzewska.

Karolina also runs a blog related to travel (in Polish), [check it out!](#)

If you like Georgia, [check out this article on Armenia.](#)