

Mtskheta tour (14:30 – 19:30)

29-th of January, 2020

Tbilisi – Jvari Monastery – Mtskheta – Svetitskhoveli Cathedral – Tbilisi

Mtskheta (Georgian: მცხეთა, translit.: *mtskheta* [mts^hxet^ha]) is a city in Mtskheta-Mtianeti province of Georgia. One of the oldest cities of Georgia and its former capital, it is located approximately 20 kilometres (12 miles) north of Tbilisi, at the confluence of the Mtkvari and Aragvi rivers. Currently a small provincial capital, for nearly a millennium until the 5th century AD, Mtskheta was large fortified city, a significant economical and political centre of the Kingdom of Iberia.

Due to its historical significance and several cultural monuments, the "Historical Monuments of Mtskheta" became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994. As the birthplace and one of the most vibrant centers of Christianity in Georgia, Mtskheta was declared as the "Holy City" by the Georgian Orthodox Church in 2014.^[2]

In 2016 the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta were placed by UNESCO under **Enhanced Protection**, a mechanism established by the 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.



Mtskheta panorama with the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral

See more details about Mtskheta in: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mtskheta>

Jvari Monastery

Jvari Monastery (Georgian: ჯვრის მონასტერი) is a sixth-century Georgian Orthodox monastery near Mtskheta, eastern Georgia. Along with other historic structures of Mtskheta, it is listed as a World Heritage site by UNESCO. Jvari is a rare case of the Early Medieval Georgian church that survived to the present day almost unchanged. The church became the founder of its type, the Jvari type of church architecture, prevalent in Georgia and Armenia. Built at top of Jvari Mount (656 m a.s.l.), the monastery is an example of harmonious connection with the natural environment, characteristic to Georgian architecture. Jvari Monastery stands on the rocky mountaintop at the confluence of the Mtkvari and Aragvi rivers, overlooking the town of Mtskheta, which was formerly the capital of the Kingdom of Iberia.



Views of Jvari Monastery



See more details about Jvari Monastery in: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jvari_Monastery

Svetitskhoveli Cathedral

The **Svetitskhoveli Cathedral** (Georgian: სვეტიცხოვლის საკათედრო ტაძარი, *svet'icxovlis sak'atedro t'adzari*; literally the **Cathedral of the Living Pillar**) is an Orthodox Christian cathedral located in the historic town of Mtskheta, Georgia, to the northwest of the Georgian capital Tbilisi. A masterpiece of the Early and High Middle Ages, Svetitskhoveli is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. It is currently the second largest church building in Georgia, after the Holy Trinity Cathedral.

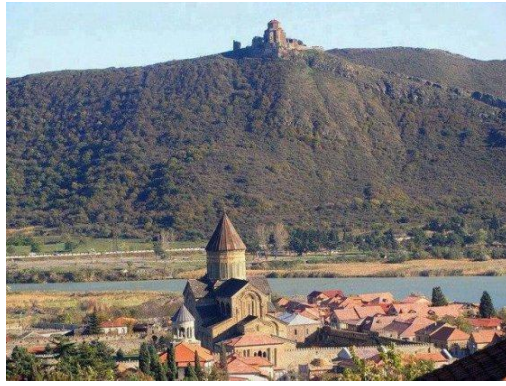
Known as the burial site of the claimed Christ's mantle, Svetitskhoveli has long been one of the principal Georgian Orthodox churches and is among the most venerated places of worship in the region. Throughout the centuries, the cathedral served as the burial place for kings. The present cross-in-square structure was completed between 1010 and 1029 by the medieval Georgian architect Arsukidze, although the site itself dates back to the early fourth century. The exterior archature of the cathedral is a well-preserved example of typical decorations of the 11th century.

Svetitskhoveli is considered an endangered cultural landmark; it has survived a variety of adversities, and many of its priceless frescoes have been lost due to being whitewashed by the Russian Imperial authorities.

The original church was built in 4th century A.D. during the reign of Mirian III of Kartli (Iberia). St. Nino is said to have chosen the confluence of the Mtkvari (Kura) and Aragvi rivers as the place of the first Georgian Church.

According to Georgian hagiography, in the 1st century AD a Georgian Jew from Mtskheta named Elias was in Jerusalem when Jesus was crucified. Elias bought Jesus' robe from a Roman soldier at Golgotha and brought it back to Georgia. Returning to his native city, he was met by his sister Sidonia who upon touching the robe immediately died from the emotions engendered by the sacred object. The robe could not be removed from her grasp, so she was buried with it.^[4] The place where Sidonia is buried with Christ's robe is preserved in the Cathedral. Later, from her grave grew an enormous cedar tree. Ordering the cedar chopped down to build the church, St. Nino had seven columns made from it for the church's foundation. The seventh column, however, had supernatural properties and rose by itself into the air. It returned to earth after St. Nino prayed the whole night. It was further said that from the seventh column a sacred liquid flowed that cured people of all diseases.

In Georgian *sveti* means "pillar" and *tskhoveli* means "life-giving" or "living", hence the name of the cathedral. An icon portraying this event can be seen on the third column on the left-hand from the entrance. Reproduced widely throughout Georgia, it shows Sidonia with an angel lifting the column in heaven. Saint Nino is in the foreground: King Mirian and his wife, Queen Nana, are to the right and left.^[4] Georgia officially adopted Christianity as its state religion in 337.



Views of Svetitskhoveli Cathedral



The Glory of Iberia (1880s),
An icon by Mikhail Sabinin
Illustrating the legend of Living
Pillar

See more details about Svetitskhoveli Cathedral in:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Svetitskhoveli_Cathedral



A 17th-century ciborium under which the
robe of Jesus is said to have been buried