

# Teach and Learn with Georgia

*Making a Difference...*



## *TLG Volunteer's Manual*

*For the Academic Year of 2013-2014*

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## *Acronyms*

CRC – Criminal Record Check

ERC – Educational Resource Center

TPDC – National Center for Teacher Professional Development

GEL – Georgian Lari

LET – Local English Teacher

LOR – Letter of Recommendation

MES – Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

RR – TLG Regional Representative

TLG – Teach and Learn with Georgia

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



*Shatili village in Mtskheta-Mtianeti*

### *About Georgia*

In 1991, Georgia broke free from the dying Soviet Union and began the long process of reinventing itself as a modern, democratic nation-state. As one of the oldest countries in the world, Georgia has a strong foundation upon which it can build itself anew.

Georgia's history stretches back 1.8 million years to a time when the first hominids were leaving their ancestral homelands in Africa for the wide world beyond. The fossilized *Homo erectus* remains found near Dmanisi, Georgia constitute the oldest hominid specimens discovered outside of Africa and mark Georgia as the site of the first Europeans.

As early as the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, Georgians had begun cultivating grapes and turning them into wine – a rich and proud tradition that continues to this day. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BCE, the origins of Georgian statehood had been established through the coalescence of tribal communities into larger civilizations such as the kingdoms of Colchis and Iberia.

As Georgian society and culture thrived, it attracted the attention of Greek adventurers who came to the Caucasus Mountains, to the kingdom of Colchis to learn the secrets of gold-panning using sheepskin. These adventurers were Jason and his Argonauts and the technology they sought was the legendary Golden Fleece.

From ancient times, Georgia existed as a crossroads of cultures—a land where East meets West. One of the earliest and easternmost Christian nations, Georgia served as a hub in the famous Silk Road. The northern branch of this pre-modern continent-spanning trade network passed northward through Georgia on its way to Europe.

Though the trade routes of the Silk Road opened Georgia to the wider world, they also opened it to invasion and conquest. For hundreds of years Georgia fought to maintain its

sovereignty, its religion, and its culture. Under renowned King David the Builder and King Tamar\* in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century, Georgia experienced two Golden Ages that saw a great expansion of Georgian culture, literature, and territorial control. Boasting a unique language and alphabet, Georgian tradition and civilization survived a constant onslaught of foreign armies—from the Arabs, to the Mongols, to the Ottomans, and finally the Russians in 1801.

Except for a brief period of independence following the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, Georgia remained under Russian rule for nearly two hundred years. At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Georgia finally regained its independence and reestablished self-rule. Despite the conflicts of the 1990s and 2008, Georgia continues to innovate and move forward with sweeping reforms in an effort to modernize and democratize while maintaining and respecting its past.




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\* Georgians refer to the female monarch Tamar of Georgia (r. 1184-1213) as “King” as a sign of respect to her great power and ability.

## About the Teach and Learn with Georgia Program

### TLG Background Info

Teach and Learn with Georgia (TLG) was created in 2010 as part of a series of extensive reforms to the Georgian educational system. Inspired by the President of Georgia's call for a year of education, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MES) together with the National Center for Teacher Professional Development (TPDC) designed TLG Program to bring native English speakers to volunteer in Georgian schools and live in Georgian communities, serving as language teachers, communication partners, and cultural ambassadors. The primary goal of TLG is to improve the English language skills of Georgian students, teachers and families.

As a post-Soviet country, Georgia is at a turning point in its history. For centuries, while other countries and cultures were globalizing, Georgia's borders were closed to the outside world. Now, as a sovereign state, Georgia has the opportunity to integrate with the rest of the world—linguistically and culturally. This is what makes TLG a particularly unique program. Bringing English speakers into classrooms increases English language proficiency throughout the country, which is essential to Georgia's ability to assimilate into the modern world. Further, bringing English speakers from diverse cultures into not only the classroom, but the communities, as well, encourages interaction and the sharing of values and customs—something Georgia has missed out on for far too long.

Following intensive strategic planning, the first group of volunteer English teachers arrived to Georgia in July 2010. By 2013, over 46 groups of volunteers from different countries have been placed throughout the regions of Georgia and the program is transcending its original goals.

**We invite **YOU** to be a part of Georgia's linguistic revolution.**

### TLG Mission Statement

Teach and Learn with Georgia (TLG), a progressive education movement initiated by the Georgian government, recruits native English speakers to co-teach English alongside local English teachers in public schools throughout the country of Georgia. TLG aims to improve Georgia's nationwide English language proficiency in an effort towards further globalization.

The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia together with TPDC has designed Teach and Learn with Georgia to:

- Recruit native English speakers to co-teach in Georgian public schools
- Promote English language education across Georgia
- Implement new teaching methodologies focusing on listening and speaking skills
- Track progress and tackle challenges in the Georgian education system
- Provide an opportunity for Georgian communities to share their values and engage in a cultural exchange with people from all over the world

## TLG Values

The TLG Staff operates under a strong system of core values:

- Respect – We appreciate and understand diversity amongst humanity, and treat all people with dignity and respect
- Honesty – We maintain the utmost integrity and honesty at all times
- Professionalism – We act in a highly professional manner, ensuring a safe environment and quality, while being responsive, responsible, and reliable
- Excellence – We meet each of our commitments with honor and devotion to duty, while always striving for excellent quality in every area of our organization

## Expectations and Roles of TLG Volunteers

Volunteers are expected to be punctual, flexible and maintain a positive attitude. Although this is a voluntary program it must be taken seriously and treated like a job. It is up to the volunteer to be responsible and meet the standards and rules set forth by the program and your school.

**Academic Roles:** At school, volunteers co-teach with up to three Local English Teachers for a maximum of 30 hours per week, which includes time spent planning lessons. The schedule will be determined by the school principal. There is only one volunteer per school. Volunteers create interactive activities with a specific focus on listening and speaking skills. Many volunteers organize extracurricular activities based on their personal interests and the needs of the schools.

**Non Academic Roles:** At home, volunteers are expected to provide their host families with three hours of English lessons each week. Volunteers participate in cultural exchange activities with their host families and integrate with the local communities.

## Benefits

Teach and Learn with Georgia offers the following benefits to TLG Volunteers:

- Monthly Stipend of Georgian Lari\*
- FREE Round-trip Ticket to and from Georgia
- FREE Vacation Round-trip Ticket in between the Two Consecutive Semesters
- FREE Medical Insurance
- Housing and Living Accommodations
- Mobile Phone on the TLG Corporate Network
- 24/7 Support from the TLG Staff
- Orientation Training Upon Arrival

Further, upon successful completion of the contract, each Volunteer receives a letter of recommendation from TLG and a certificate signed by the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia as well as Director of the National Center for Teacher Professional Development

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\* The monthly stipend after taxes deposited into the volunteers' personal bank account is 600 GEL. Monthly, the volunteers give their host families 200GEL to cover basic costs that are incurred when hosting a volunteer which include food and utilities. If a volunteer decides to rent an apartment, the monthly stipend after taxes will be 500 GEL.

under the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, signifying his or her dedication to the program.

## Eligibility

The minimum requirements for being accepted as a Volunteer into Teach and Learn with Georgia are as follows:

- Native in English
- Two years of post-secondary education
- Clean nationwide Criminal Record Check (CRC)
- Medical test clearance
- Flexibility, an open-mind, and a willingness to make a difference!

## Application Process

Applicants applying directly through TLG must first register on the [TLG Website](#) by clicking “APPLY NOW” and fill out the application form. In addition to the application form, several documents are required (see list below). Applicants must submit electronic versions of their documents to [applications@tlg.gov.ge](mailto:applications@tlg.gov.ge). Please bring hard copies of the Criminal Record Check and Medical Documents with you to Georgia. You can submit your documents all together or individually.

The required documents are:

- Your Resume/CV (pdf file; Name: Resume\_Paul\_Smith)
- A color copy of your passport (the page with your picture and information) (jpg file; Name: Passport\_Paul\_Smith)
- Copies of degrees/diplomas/certifications (please include all scans in one pdf file; Name: Certifications\_Paul\_Smith)
- 2 Letters of Recommendation – your recommendation can be sent to [applications@tlg.gov.ge](mailto:applications@tlg.gov.ge) directly by the referring party or forwarded to us by you (pdf file; Name: LORs\_Paul\_Smith)
- A nationwide Criminal Record Check (CRC) no more than two months old (pdf file; Name: CRC\_Paul\_mith). Please keep the hard copy (if it is not issued electronically) and bring it with you to Georgia \*
- Completed medical self-assessment form (please include all scans in one pdf file; Name: Self-assessment\_Paul\_Smith;) If you plan to complete the medical examinations in Georgia, you must still submit a complete medical self-assessment form
- Completed medical examination report and all of the lab reports for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV, Drug test, and Tuberculosis signed by a doctor. (Name: Medical\_Paul\_Smith;) Please note that if you prefer to complete the medical examination in Georgia, you do not need these forms
- 2 Clear color photos showing your full face (jpg file; Name: Picture\_Paul\_Smith)

**Please note**, that all volunteer-teachers (from all nationalities) should submit Criminal Record Checks (CRCs) that contain the following criteria: letterhead, contact information of the police department or government office that issued the check, the search results and a police/government logo, or stamp, or raised seal.

CRCs issued through third party providers are not acceptable, you can NOT use a private company to obtain the background check (unless they are approved by the government); it MUST come directly from a police department, government office/bureau or from their approved channels. Additionally, checks that were ordered online & come as ‘print outs’ are NOT accepted by the TLG program.

Criminal Record Checks (CRCs) need to be nationwide and must be no more than two months old by the intended date of arrival. If you have lived for a lengthy period of time in multiple countries, then multiple background checks may be necessary. Each country has its own process for obtaining CRCs--please consult your government for specific advice.

## *Getting Started*

Congratulations! You are ready to start a once-in-a-lifetime journey to come to Georgia and make a difference, teach in a Georgian public school, live with a host family, experience Georgian culture and gain valuable experience. Below you will find detailed information about what is expected of you as a TLG volunteer and what to expect in Georgia. We are happy and grateful that you have decided to participate in TLG and are looking forward to meeting you in Georgia.

## **Employment Agreement and Sworn Declaration**

Once you have been accepted to TLG, you will receive an Employment Agreement and a sworn declaration. The documents need to be filled out, signed, and returned in order to complete the application process. You will also sign three copies of the Employment Agreement during Orientation Training in Georgia after you arrive. The contract is written in English and in Georgian languages.

## **Passport**

Volunteers should have a valid passport that will not expire for at least one year after his/her arrival to Georgia.

## **Work Permit**

A work permit is NOT required for volunteers to join the program and teach in Georgian schools.

## **Visa Information**

List of the native English speaking countries whose citizens do NOT need a visa to enter and stay in the territory of Georgia for 360 days:

- United States of America
- Canada
- Great Britain
- Northern Ireland
- Republic of South Africa
- Commonwealth of Australia
- New Zealand

Please note: If your country is not listed above, you must check with your government to determine if there are any additional procedures required to travel to Georgia.

## Vaccinations and Immunizations

We recommend consulting your physician to determine which vaccinations are recommended based on your health and past vaccination history. As you will be working with children, you may consider making sure that your hepatitis and TB shots are up to date. If you plan on traveling to other countries, don't forget to ask your physician about any recommended vaccinations for those countries, too!

## Medical Checklist

Inform TLG about all medical conditions. If you have a pre-existing medical condition you should take several additional steps/precautions:

- Ask your doctor if you should be traveling.
- Bring a doctor's letter and copies of any prescriptions.
- Learn key words and phrases in the local language for your condition, medication (allergies) and what to say in case of an emergency. You can also talk to the medical coordinator during Orientation Training.
- Bring at least a three-month supply of any prescription or over-the-counter medications you use on a regular basis, including birth-control pills.
- You may want to bring a spare pair of glasses and extra contact lens solution.
- You may want to bring vitamins and supplements.

## Medical Kit

It is always recommended to bring a first-aid kit that contains basic items necessary to prevent and treat common illnesses and injuries while traveling and staying abroad. Here is a list of items you might want to consider bringing:

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| • Thermometer            | • Anti-inflammatory painkillers (Aspirin, Ibuprofen, Naproxen or other NSAIDs) |
| • Tweezers               | • Antihistamine (Benadryl)   |
| • Scissors               | • Throat lozenges  |
| • Ace Bandage            | • Antiseptic antimicrobial skin cleaner (hand sanitizer)                       |
| • Adhesive Tape          | • Antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin or Neomycin)                                 |
| • Band-Aids              | • Antihistamine (Benadryl topical cream or internal liquid)                    |
| • Butterfly closures     | • Calamine lotion  |
| • Dental floss           |  |
| • Sterile gauze pads     |  |
| • Lip Balm               |  |
| • Sunscreen              |  |
| • Insect repellent       |  |
| • Antacid tablets (Tums) |  |

## **How Much Money Should I Bring?**

Volunteers are paid at the end of each month, so you will need to bring enough money to get by in Georgia until your first payment is received. We recommend that you bring approximately one month's salary to address any potential first month expenses, such as tourism, food, and transportation in Tbilisi during your first week, gifts for host family/co-teachers, school supplies, telephone minutes, internet, unforeseen expenses, travel, or things you may have forgotten to pack or bring to Georgia.

Keep in mind that if you intend to get your medical check done in Georgia you will need about 72 GEL.

Volunteers are expected to live at the same level as the people in their community. They are given a monthly living stipend of 600 GEL, which includes 200 GEL (Approximately 120 USD) for your host family. Often Volunteers wish to bring extra money in order to travel to other countries on vacation. If you choose to do so, plan on bringing an amount that suits your own personal travel plans and needs.

Food and bottled water in Georgia is relatively inexpensive. A 500ml bottle of water, for example, will cost about 0.6 GEL (Approximately 0.35 USD). Bread is also very inexpensive, the price depends on the size and type of bread, but you should not expect to pay more than 0.8 GEL (Approximately 0.40 USD) for a loaf of bread.

Keep in mind that the monthly salary you will receive while teaching in Georgia (500 GEL after taxes) is very modest compared to Western standards, but is well above the average national salary. Volunteering in Georgia is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity, and it would be unfortunate if your experience were to be lessened by financial problems. Keep a strict budget and act responsibly.

## **Do I Need an International Driver's License?**

You do not need to get an international driver's license. Operation of any motorized vehicle is prohibited for TLG volunteers. Most urban travel is by metro, bus, mini bus, or taxi. Rural travel ranges from minibuses to a lot of walking.

## **Should I bring a Cell Phone with Me?**

You are welcome to bring your own unlocked phone from home, but keep in mind that upon arrival in Georgia, you will be given a corporate cell phone. TLG's corporate plan provides free calls to TLG staff and other volunteers. This plan costs the volunteer about 5 GEL (Approximately 3 USD) each month. Other calls and texts cost extra.

## Miscellaneous Items and Items That May Be Difficult to Find in Villages

*(Note: you will need to prioritize to meet the weight limitations for your flight, which is usually 20 kg [44 lbs]. Check with your airline for specific details regarding baggage limits.)*

- Camera
- Favorite books
- Games
- Inexpensive gifts
- Musical instruments
- Pictures for yourself and to share with friends and students
- Sewing kit
- Small tape measure (inches/cm)
- Swiss Army knife or other multipurpose tool (checked baggage)
- Tampons
- Travel clock
- Umbrella
- Ziploc storage bags
- Voltage Converter (Georgia uses 220 V, 50 Hz electricity and electrical outlets require C plugs)
- Baking or cooking materials such as baking powder, your favorite spices, vanilla extract, and chocolate chips—some ingredients may be hard to come by in Georgia, so if in doubt, bring some!

## Clothing

Although clothing is available at various shops, good quality clothing is expensive. Georgia has a humid subtropical climate with many areas of high elevation, meaning that winters may be colder than you are used to and summers may be hotter than you are used to, so make sure to bring appropriate clothing for all seasons. Also, be prepared for rain and snow.

### Women:

- Pants, skirts and dresses for hot and cold weather
- Clothing suitable for layering
- Wool or cotton sweaters
- Tights and stockings
- Shorts and Capris
- Thermal underwear
- Wool socks
- Sturdy shoes/boots
- Warm gloves, hat, and scarf
- Wool or down winter coat/raincoat

### Men:

- Casual dress pants – dark colors are preferable
- Long sleeve button-down shirts (light and heavy fabric)
- Sports coat
- Ties
- Shorts
- Thermal underwear
- Wool socks
- Sturdy shoes/boots
- Warm gloves, hat and scarf
- Wool or down winter coat/raincoat

## Flights: Tickets

*Boarding passes – Please make sure that you bring ALL of the boarding passes you receive during your flights to Georgia. You will need to hand them over to TLG during Orientation Training.*

After you are accepted into the program you will receive an electronic flight ticket approximately one week prior to your departure from your or from the TLG Flights Team.

You must confirm your ticket by email. In case of errors or questions, please contact the TLG Flights Team directly.

## Luggage

All tickets provided by TLG include 20 kg (44 lbs) of luggage. Each airline has its own baggage restrictions and allowances. Any extra weight fees are your responsibility and you must double check the website of each airline with whom you will travel to determine your weight limits. When your Employment Agreement ends you may find yourself flying home on a different airline than the one that brought you to Georgia. Do not forget to verify *their* luggage allowances too!

**Tip:** *Be prepared; sometimes luggage is lost. Pack an extra set of clothes, any prescription medication, a tooth brush, and tooth paste in your CARRY-ON LUGGAGE.*

## Flights Cancellation/Emergency Contacts

If there is a problem with your flight please approach the Gate Agent (the airline employee behind the desk in the area where you wait to board your flight) and inform them about your situation.

After you speak with the Gate Agent you must call the TLG Flights Team (+995) 577 239 839 so that the TLG Flights Team are kept informed and/or can assist you. When you make a call, please pronounce your first name and last name very clearly, say which airport you are flying to and explain the situation.

Emailing is always an option (flights@tlg.gov.ge), if it is not an emergency. Due to the time differences emergency situations can only be solved by phone call.

## Upon Arrival

A member or members of the TLG Staff will meet you at the airport no matter what time of day or night you arrive. The TLG Staff will help you exchange money at the airport.

Do not be alarmed if you or a fellow volunteer are asked by TLG Staff to be interviewed by the media upon arrival. Due to the fact that TLG is a very popular program, new volunteers are asked to participate in an interview upon their arrival to share this news in Georgian community. From the airport you will be taken directly to the hotel where you will stay with the volunteers in your group during your orientation training.

## *Orientation Training*

The Orientation Training Team's main responsibility is to facilitate the orientation training (for up to 10 days) preparing volunteers for their time in Georgia.

### **At the Hotel**

At the hotel you will live with a roommate for the duration of orientation training. During training, you will be provided with meals and bottles of water.

### **Training**

Orientation Training will help ease you into your new environment. It will cover many of the basic questions you may have and give you the knowledge you need to be a successful volunteer. You will also receive information about your host families and schools by the end of the training sessions. TLG team will ensure you are safely placed in your host family after your training is complete.

The main components of Orientation Training are Intercultural Training, Georgian Language Lessons, Teaching Methodologies, Volunteer Safety and Security, and Information Sessions. Information Sessions will be held with TLG's Medical, Legal, Academic and Non-Academic (host family) Teams as well as bank and medical insurance representatives.

During training you will have an opportunity to go on a shopping tour in order to purchase last minute items you may have missed while packing for your trip to Georgia.

This will be a busy week with sessions from 9am until 7pm every day (with lunch and coffee breaks liberally sprinkled throughout). As you are a TLG volunteer during the Orientation Training, you will be required to follow the training rules and procedures.



*Georgian Language Lessons  
at Orientation Training*

## *Living in Georgia*

One of the unique opportunities that TLG provides for its volunteers is placement within a Georgian host family as a means of promoting the exchange of cultural values. To this end, the TLG Non-Academic Team is responsible for assigning volunteers to schools and host families and provides ongoing assistance with cultural adaptation and communication between volunteers and their host families.

Due to the nationwide needs of the program it is not possible for TLG to take location preferences into consideration unless volunteers have specific need-based requirements.



## **Host Families**

Volunteers should be flexible about their housing expectations. The program has multiple criteria for selecting host families – safety, privacy, tidiness and the willingness to host a volunteer. Contrary to most Western living standards it is common to have several generations living together in one house. In cities, people generally live in apartments, though private houses are also common.

Host family accommodations are inspected by the Non-Academic Team according to the following guidelines: a separate bedroom, a furnished kitchen, hot (automatically or

manually heated) and cold water (indoor or outdoor plumbing), a toilet (Western or Turkish; indoor or outdoor), bathtub/shower (indoor or outdoor). Facilities vary from host family to host family and location to location.

In some areas of Georgia, running water, is not continuously available and may work on a schedule. The selected host families are among the best in their region. Heating systems can consist of a wood stove in the living room or gas or electric heaters throughout the house depending on the rural and urban areas of the country.

Requests to change placement will be considered only with a valid reason, such as a medical emergency or any kind of intolerant act towards the volunteer.

Host families' main motivations for hosting volunteers are:

- A desire to learn English language
- A desire to experience Western culture

Your daily interaction with your host family will help you adapt to the local culture and traditions. Families are usually willing and eager to explain the local traditions and are happy to see your interest in their daily life.

## Urban and Rural Areas

TLG volunteers will be placed all over Georgia. Being a geographically and developmentally diverse country, there are sharp differences between the villages in rural areas and the more urbanized areas.

**The urban centers:** Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Batumi, and other smaller cities such as Kobuleti, Rustavi, and Poti possess basic urban amenities that volunteers from North America and Western Europe will be familiar with. Of course, these cities will not be exactly like towns and cities in North America or Western Europe. Cities like Tbilisi or Batumi have modern public transportation systems, restaurants and cafes, and parks and theaters.

**Rural Areas:** Village life is quite different from city life. The pace is much slower and you will not see as many modern amenities as you would in the cities. The rural regions of Georgia have beautiful views of mountains, hills, and forests. Here the traditional culture is followed more strictly. Living in a village is an opportunity to experience a culture very different from your own.

## What to expect within a host family

There is no better way to learn a language and experience a foreign culture than to live with a host family. Georgians are renowned for their hospitality and taking in a guest is considered an honor. Georgian society is patriarchal, so in the traditional Georgian family,

the mother and the daughters typically take care of household chores. While this may offend some Westerners, it is considered normal in Georgia, as gender roles are more rigidly defined and adhered to than in the West.

You will be required to give 200 GEL (Approximately 120 USD) to their host families each month. This amount will cover the essential costs associated with providing you with daily meals and with utilities.

You should not expect to be served elaborate meals by your host mother every day. A meal may consist of some or all of the following: meat, fish, bread, dairy, and vegetables such as beans, tomatoes, or potatoes. You will have the option to cook any additional food you wish. For more information on Georgian food please see the [“Cuisine”](#) page on the TLG website.

Vegetarians are not very common in Georgia, but maintaining a vegetarian diet is definitely possible. Georgians eat lots of bread, dairy products, fruit, vegetables, pasta, and nuts. If you explain to the family that you cannot eat meat or any other product, they will understand and try to cook meals that take your needs into consideration. Many restaurants offer a vegetarian “fasting menu” for religious reasons.

According to TLG’s agreement with the host families, they are obliged to provide our volunteers with 2 meals a day. They are not responsible for cooking additional special meals for you personally; they will offer you the same meals that they have daily.

## Couples

Many volunteers arrive in Georgia with their significant others and want to live together in the same host family. TLG does its best to accommodate couples who come to Georgia together, but due to the difficulty of finding a family willing to host two volunteers, we cannot guarantee any joint placements for couples.

If a couple is placed together in one host family, they will be obligated to pay 400 GEL (Approximately 240USD) per month.

If we are unable to find a willing host family, we offer the following options:

1. The couple will be placed in different host families but as close to each other as possible.
2. The couple can find and rent an apartment or house on their own<sup>‡</sup>. TLG will assist with communicating with the landlord(s), but we cannot provide any financial support.

## English Lessons with Your Host Family

TLG Volunteers must offer 3 formal lessons per week to their host family members. In the first few days of your time with your host family, you should get together and negotiate agreeable times and dates for English lessons.

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<sup>‡</sup> If a volunteer decides to rent an apartment, the monthly stipend after taxes will be 500 GEL.

## Teaching in Georgia

The largest impact that volunteers have through the TLG program is on the students with whom they work on a daily basis. Volunteers work as co-teachers with local English teachers (LETs) at public schools throughout the country. The TLG Academic Team is responsible for providing Public School administrations and LETs with instructions and for helping volunteers establish good working relationships at school.

## Georgian Education System

Education has been one of the main focuses and priorities of the Georgian Government since 2004. Changes in the curriculum, teaching and learning methodologies, student assessment, teaching and learning materials, and teachers' professional development have significantly improved the nationwide education level.

## TLG Volunteers at School

You will be assigned to work in Georgian public schools across the entire country as assistants, focusing on listening and speaking skills in 1st-6th grade, with up to three local English teachers who have been selected and recommended by school principals.

Before starting to work at your schools, you will attend an Introduction Meeting (conducted by TLG Regional Representatives) where you will meet your co-teachers, school principals, and the Heads of the Educational Resource Center (ERC) in your region.

At the Introduction Meeting you will receive recommendations and guidelines for successful co-teaching, explore the syllabi for 1st – 6th grades, and receive instructions on how to effectively deliver negative (disciplinary) and positive (reinforcing) feedback to students. You will also learn about the assessment system in Georgia, which follows the National Curriculum.

## Working Hours

Working hours are 30 hours a week, Monday to Friday. These hours include planning time, either alone or with a local English teacher. Weekends are generally non-working days, however, local English language teachers or the school principle may ask you to work with them on some extracurricular activities, so please be flexible.

**Note:** *Lessons usually last 45 minutes, though 1<sup>st</sup> grade classes are only 35 minutes long.*

## Challenges at School

As a TLG Volunteer in a public school you can expect to face some challenges:

Even though teacher's professional development is a high priority and most of the local teachers are going through the requalification process that is aimed at introducing modern teaching methods, you may still meet local teachers who have not gone through this process. Some of them rely on read-translate-memorize as their primary teaching method. Some of them are grammar-oriented and focus primarily on the students that are eager and motivated to learn—other students maybe ignored during lessons.

Some local English teachers have never had any contact with a foreigner. You might be the first foreigner your local English teachers have ever met. This is why sometimes even the teachers may lack confidence in their ability to speak with a native or fluent English speaker.

Volunteers make lessons more interesting by engaging all students, using different teaching techniques, and demonstrating new ways to make each lesson exciting and fun. Your main role in the classroom will be to add listening and speaking activities to the lesson.

There are more than 2,000 schools in Georgia and most of them were built during Soviet times. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is reconstructing schools step by step – up to 100 new schools have been recently built and most schools have been equipped with new windows and central heating.

Renovation and infrastructural upgrades are on-going projects that take an enormous amount of time and resources. Some schools still have outdoor plumbing and some have Turkish style toilets. Resources such as CD players, copy machines, and projectors are not often available. The buildings and furnishings of a school may very well be in a state of disrepair.

## Extracurricular Activities

Though volunteers will only be working with 1st – 6th grades, they are welcome and encouraged to engage in extracurricular activities with the older students at their school.



*First graders*

Volunteers often start English clubs or movie clubs that are open not only to students but to teachers, local government members, doctors, and other locals as well.

## Portfolios

Volunteers are encouraged to develop a Teaching Portfolio. A portfolio will provide you with tangible memories and professional development gained during your experience in Georgia. TLG names the best portfolios at the end of the school year.

## Professional Conduct

While at school you should dress cleanly, conservatively, and professionally—not necessarily dress suits or coats and ties, but presenting a professional appearance according to Georgian cultural standards. This means dresses, skirts, and dress slacks for women (depending on the location; some schools in rural areas do not allow pants) and slacks and button-down shirts for men.

Georgians tend to dress more formally and conservatively than foreigners and they take great pride in their appearance. It is not uncommon to see young women wearing short skirts and tight pants, however, this is not recommended for volunteers. Foreign women are generally seen as less conservative in behavior so this kind of dress will attract unwanted attention.

As a TLG volunteer and an ambassador for your country, you are expected to act professionally both at school and outside of work.

Volunteers are strongly discouraged from posting flamboyant and disrespectful pictures on their Facebook, Twitter, and other social media websites. Do not, under any circumstances, add your students to your Facebook friends list. Doing so will only skew the line of actual friendship and a professional teacher/student relationship.

## *Monthly/Weekly Report Form*

Every Volunteer is responsible for filling out and submitting a Weekly/Monthly Report on the last Friday of each month. The TLG Team has specific procedures for reading each report and responding as necessary.

The Volunteer Weekly/Monthly Report Form has several rubrics (e.g. lesson planning, co-teaching, host family relations, etc.) which are used to track monthly progress in schools, classrooms, and the overall volunteer experience. This is the main source of volunteer feedback regarding successes and challenges facing each volunteer and helps TLG determine where extra resources and attention are needed.

## Summer Projects

During summer/winter break there may be activities for TLG volunteers who remain in Georgia. These activities could range from independently organized activities to summer camps to special projects run in conjunction with other Ministries. We hope to provide an extra educational and cultural experience for volunteers who wish to teach and learn in Georgia when the normal school year is out of session.

## Official Holidays in Georgia

**January 1 & 2** - New Year's Day

**January 7** - Orthodox Christmas

**January 19** - Orthodox Epiphany

**March 3** - Mother's Day

**March 8** - International Women's Day

**April 18** - Good Friday

**April 20** - Easter Sunday

**April 21** - Easter Monday/ Memorial Day

**April 9**- Independence Restoration Day; Day of the Deceased

**May 9** - Victory Day

**May 12** - St. Andrew's Day

**May 26** - Independence Day

**August 28** - The Virgin's Assumption

**October 14** - "Mtskhetoba"

**November 23** - St. George's day

The TLG Medical Team coordinates with and monitors the insurance company as well as other medical services and takes care of volunteers' well-being during their participation in the project.

## Recommendations

- You should make appropriate extra preparations if you have any existing medical conditions
- Drink plenty of water on flights and avoid drinking too much alcohol
- You should only drink bottled or boiled water or carbonated drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes
- Wash your hands often with soap and water; especially before eating or preparing food and after you use the bathroom, cough, or sneeze. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand gel (with at least 60% alcohol)

## Preventative Strategy

As a Volunteer, you must accept a certain amount of responsibility for your own health. Proper precautions will significantly reduce your risk of serious illness or injury. The most important of your responsibilities in Georgia include taking preventive measures regarding alcohol use and abuse, personal and pedestrian safety, and water and food preparation and consumption.

## Safety and Security in Georgia

According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Justice of Georgia and with the financial support from the European Union, Georgia was recognized as one of the safest states in Europe. Nonetheless, becoming a volunteer in a foreign country involves certain safety risks. Living and travelling in an unfamiliar environment, having a limited understanding of the local language and culture and being perceived as well-off are some of the factors that can put a volunteer at risk. Many volunteers experience varying degrees of unwanted attention. TLG has established procedures and policies to help volunteers reduce their risk and enhance their safety and security. These procedures and policies will be provided to you once you arrive in Georgia. At the same time you are expected to take responsibility for your safety and well-being.

### Stray Dogs

Stray dogs are common in Georgia and although the number of stray dogs has steadily been decreasing there is still a risk for rabies. Never approach a stray dog, do not try to feed a stray dog, never attempt to intervene in a dog fight, and avoid behaving like prey, i.e. running away. If you are bitten seek immediate medical attention by calling the insurance hotline.

### Insurance

Volunteers will receive 24 hour medical assistance service. Specifics regarding of the insurance coverage will be provided upon application to the program.

### *TLG Assistance*

#### TLG Hotline & Tlginbox@tlg.gov.ge

Communication with volunteers is one of the main functions of the TLG Staff. You can contact TLG either via hotline (locally **577 557871** or internationally **(+995 577 557871)**), or via e-mail ([tlginbox@tlg.gov.ge](mailto:tlginbox@tlg.gov.ge)). Calls to the TLG hotline are free from your corporate cell phone in Georgia.

The TLG Hotline Number is the main route of communication between volunteers and TLG. You can reach us anytime with academic, non-academic, medical or any other kinds of concerns:

- Issues at school
- Questions regarding the weekly/monthly report form
- Questions regarding contract extension or flights
- Host family issues
- Emergency situations

The bank, cell phone, and the health insurance companies have their own hotline numbers as well.

## TLG Regional Representatives

There are TLG Regional Representatives (RRs) in Adjara-Guria, Imereti, Kakheti, Samegrelo, Shida Kartli, and Tbilisi-Mtskheta-Mtianeti-Kvemo Kartli to provide assistance and coverage to volunteers all over Georgia. They are under the general supervision of the TLG Academic, Non-Academic and Medical Coordinators.

TLG Regional Representatives support volunteers as they live and work in Georgia: they visit schools and host families, conduct Introduction Meetings, accompany TLG Volunteers to the hospital in case of an emergency, and much, much more.

## TLG Events

Volunteers are occasionally provided with the opportunity to participate in events that introduce them to Georgian culture.



### *Important Information*

## Culture Shock

While in Georgia, you will experience ways of thinking and actions that differ from or even conflict with your own. This will force you to re-examine your assumptions and social behaviors which were once thought absolute, and may cause discomfort, disorientation and emotional conflicts. Below is an overview of commonly agreed upon symptoms and suggested remedies.

### The Four Stages of Culture Shock:

1. Initial Euphoria (Honeymoon Period or Fear) - Anything new is intriguing and exciting!
2. Irritation and Hostility (Crisis) – Feelings of homesickness and a negative attitude towards the host culture.
3. Gradual Adjustment (Recovery) – The local culture seems more comfortable and familiar.
4. Adaptation and Biculturalism (Adjustment and Ongoing Changes) – Complete adjustment to the host culture and possible Reverse Culture Shock upon return to your home country.



*Traditional Georgian Folk Dance*

## What are the signs of Culture Shock?

If you are experiencing anxiety, lack of self-confidence, panic attacks, loss of initiative and spontaneity, excessive anger over minor things, strong desire to associate with people of your own nationality, and/or feelings of isolation, you may be suffering from Culture Shock.

## How to cope?

- Keep in touch with friends and family
- Learn to say “no” and keep some time for yourself
- Talk to TLG Staff and TLG Volunteers
- Eat well
- Stay active!

Everyone experiences and responds to Culture Shock differently; what matters is how you cope with it. If you are coming from North America or Western Europe and have not experienced life in less-developed countries, you may have particularly strong culture shock. Keep in mind that it is totally normal—even expected.

Try to maintain a positive attitude and hang out with others who do the same. Surround yourself with other volunteers with whom you get along. Please refrain from posting all of your initial bad impressions on Facebook or Twitter, as this may make matters worse rather than better. Instead, try to organize day trips with friends to explore your city or region. Becoming familiar with your new surroundings will help you better understand the new culture, thereby eliminating some of the reasons that might make you feel despondent or isolated. Keeping in mind that what you are experiencing is perfectly normal will go a long way in easing the effect of culture shock.

## *General Information*

### **People**

The Georgian people, or Kartvelebi, are renowned for their friendliness and hospitality. In general, this hospitability is sometimes more apparent in regions than in the cities.

People in big cities value a more individualistic culture than inhabitants of rural areas. They are busier with the demands of modern life, and tend to be more open-minded and contemporary in their beliefs.

In villages, people value a more collective culture and are much more traditional than people in the cities. They live like one big family, everyone knows everyone, and they are known to be exceedingly hospitable.

### **Gender Roles**

Traditionally in Georgia there is a strong patriarchal society. Men take the leading role in the family and are mostly responsible for its financial support. Women mainly take care of the household and are busy with the everyday life of the family. The patriarchal system is less evident in the urban areas.

### **Food**

Georgia has a rich cuisine and people are often proud of their tasty meals. Traditional Georgian dishes like Khinkali, Khachapuri, Satsivi, Mtsvadi, etc. are cooked for holidays, parties, and weekends.

Meals vary according to the family's lifestyle and location. Generally speaking, breakfast mainly consists of tea/coffee, and bread, butter, cheese, and jam; cereals with milk are also popular. Georgians, especially in the rural areas, make their own wine, honey, cheese, and sour milk. Families cook one main meal in the early afternoon consisting of beans, fried/boiled potatoes, a variety of salads, and meat. Because almost all of the food in Georgia is locally grown and prepared, the availability of specific foods is seasonal. It is possible that some families may have an evening meal as well.

Fresh bread is a staple food item in the Georgian culture, and is usually eaten with every meal. In eastern Georgia, wheat bread is popular, while in western Georgian, people prefer maize bread called "Mchadi" instead.

Georgian food is very tasty, but it contains a lot oil, salt and starches. It may take some time to adjust to a new diet, so it is best to pace yourself in order to avoid digestive problems.

## Markets

In villages, there are small family-owned stores with essential items such as bread, milk, cheese, eggs, juice, water, hygiene items, detergent powders, shampoos, toothpaste and various other items depending on the store size. In cities, it's easy to find chain stores that carry a variety of domestic and imported goods. Keep in mind that imported goods are generally much more expensive than local goods.

## Transportation

It can be very easy and inexpensive to get around Georgia using various transportation systems, including trains, taxis, city and intercity buses and minibuses, and the Tbilisi metro.

Marshrutkas are minibuses that follow specific routes, but operates much like share taxis. Within cities, marshrutkas can be hailed on the street, and when passengers reach their destination, they tell the driver to stop by calling "Gamicheret!" or "Gaacheret!" and get off the marshutka and pay their fare directly to the driver (it can be either 0.8 GEL, 0.4 GEL or 1 GEL depending on the route of the marshutka). Intercity marshrutkas run from specific marshrutka terminals during the day and are the quickest and least expensive method of traveling from city to city or village to village. Marshrutkas can become very crowded at times, and do not necessarily follow any particular schedule.

Taxis, mostly in the cities, are plentiful. Many privately owned taxis run through official taxi companies. Fares should be negotiated before getting on the taxi, and costs vary depending on the distance. Most city taxi ride will cost between 3 and 7 GEL, while intercity rides can be significantly more expensive.

Intercity trains are an affordable way of traveling cross-country. However, train routes and schedules may be limited and trains tend to travel more slowly than taxis or marshrutkas – especially on local routes.

City buses are available in some of the larger cities. City bus trips generally cost around 0.5 GEL (0.30 USD). Intercity buses are also available from larger cities.

The Tbilisi Metro runs until 12 a.m. In order to use the Metro, a "money card" has to be purchased he Metro stations. The card costs 2 GEL, and credit is added by depositing money onto the card. Your first ride per day is 0.5 GEL, and subsequent rides are at a reduced cost. The Metro is quite fast and runs very often.

At times, people are seen hitchhiking, but this can be dangerous and is strongly discouraged.

## Buildings

There are many different building styles throughout Georgia. Historical districts in some cities are unique and have a mixture of European and Asian architecture.

Building projects are being undertaken in some Georgian regions; to renovate and restore the beautiful buildings of Tbilisi and create new housing and work opportunities in Kutaisi and Batumi.

There are many Soviet style block buildings throughout Georgia as well. Many of these buildings have not seen any maintenance work since they were constructed. In some regions there are still some buildings left that had been abandoned due to economic hardship or military conflict in the past. Some of these buildings are dangerous and unstable.

## Water

Tap water in the capital is filtered but in the regions families usually use spring water. Sometimes, in some cities, as well as in the villages, water is on a schedule, which means the water runs during specific hours only. In these cases, people collect water in water tanks to use during the day according to their needs.

It is highly recommended to use bottled or boiled water or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes.

## Electricity

Approximately 20 years ago, after the Soviet Union collapsed, electricity was rare in Georgia. However, in recent years, electricity has become available throughout the country. Georgia produces its own electricity, with the help of hydro-electric power stations built on the main rivers of the country. In emergency situations or hard winter conditions, electricity might be switched off temporarily. Additionally, power outages happen occasionally in both cities and villages.

The voltage in Georgia is 220 V and Georgia uses C plugs. Plugs/sockets are usually an issue when it comes to traveling, so always make sure you travel with a universal plug adapter. For more technical information about Georgia you can visit this [link](#).

## *Communication in Georgia*

### Internet

Internet connections are not available in all parts of Georgia. In rural areas, if there is internet, it is much slower than in larger cities. Public Wi-Fi is only available in major cities:

Tbilisi, Batumi, Kutaisi, Mestia, Telavi, etc. Keep in mind that even in larger cities many families do not have an internet connection and may not have computers at all.

The majority of schools will be equipped with computers and internet access. Volunteers can bring their laptop computers, though they are responsible for insuring and maintaining them.

USB internet modems are available for laptops. The prices and coverage areas vary from company to company; please follow the links below for more information:

[Beeline](#)

[Geocell](#)

[Magti](#)

[Maximali](#)

[Silk Net](#)

DSL internet service is available in most regions and works via the host family's telephone landline. This type of service varies significantly in installation cost and monthly fees, but you can expect to pay 20 – 70 GEL/month depending on bandwidth and location.

## Phones

International telephone communication is available in most cities but it can be expensive—as much as 2 GEL (Approximately 1 USD) a minute for a call overseas.

Volunteers may use their own cell phone or landline phone to make international calls. To make an international call from a cell phone, dial “+” or “00”, then the country code, city code and phone number. Remember to make sure you have enough money in your cell phone account before making an international call.

To make an international call from a landline, volunteers need to dial the international operator code; then country code, city code and phone number. Unlike a cell phone, landline bills will arrive after 20 days. Your local family can provide a more thorough instruction on how to pay the bill.

The international code for Georgia is 995. If someone from abroad would like to call you, they have to dial +995, then your personal cell phone number (for example +995 577 123456).

## Postal Service

Before someone sends a package to you in Georgia, make sure to check all the rules and regulations regarding postal service. Please be advised that the rules and regulations are subject to change without warning.

Receiving postal consignments, to determine the conditions of exemption from customs duties, keep in mind that:

The following text is excerpted directly from the Ministry of Finance of Georgia:

- a) Receiving different types of non-food products intended for personal use (clothes, shoes, home appliances, hygiene products and others) you may be exempted from customs duties if the price of the goods is up to 300 GEL and the weight – up to 30 kg.
- b) In case of food products you may exempt from customs duties if the price of the goods is up to 500 GEL and the weight – no more than 30 kg. This privilege is envisaged in case of such products such as: vegetables, fruits, nuts, citrus fruits, dough confectionery products, cereal preparations, dairy products, sausage, also - sugar confectionery products, which do not contain cocoa.

In case of some kinds of goods there isn't envisaged using these privileges. For example, food additives, coffee, tea, alcoholic beverages, fish, oil (regardless of weight and value) received as postal consignments aren't exempted from customs duties.

Note that in all categories of postal consignments it is prohibited placement of such things as:

- Drugs and psychotropic substances;
- The documents, which have the character of current and personal correspondence, as well as any type of correspondence, which is being exchanged between the parties, which do not represent the sender and the recipient or the person who lives with them;
- Live animals, if their mail forwarding is not allowed for countries interested in postal regulations;
- Explosive, flammable or other dangerous substances;
- Radioactive substances;
- Things having immoral nature;
- Objects, which are prohibited importation or circulation in the country of destination;
- Items that are with their nature or packaging threat to postal workers, spoil or soil other parcels or postal equipment.

If your postal consignment is subject to taxation, filling the customs declaration and sending the corresponding data to the customs authorities may be carried out by the transporter/the post office as your representative. After that you can get the parcel with the customs declaration. And the customs duties may be paid within 30 days from the registration of the declaration.

As for the rates of customs duties, they depend on the commodity codes of foreign economic activities under which goods are classified. These may be: Customs Fee, Customs Duty, Excise or/and Value Added Tax (VAT). They are calculated in the following way:

- Customs Fee \_ EUR 60.00 per customs declaration if the customs value of the goods is 3 000 GEL or over 3 000 GEL, and EUR 5.00 per customs declaration if the customs value of the goods is up to 3 000 GEL;

- Having in mind the commodity code (HS code) of the goods, the rate of Customs Duty may be 12%, 5% or 0% (in case of alcohol it is fixed); Excise Tax Rates are fixed and also depend on the commodity codes (e.g. tobacco products, alcoholic beverages are excisable goods);
- The VAT rate is 18 percent of a taxable import (the amount of taxable import equals the customs value of goods and the sum of duties and taxes payable upon the import of the goods into Georgia, except for the VAT).

Note that determining customs value of the goods means all expenses made before crossing the customs territory of Georgia (including purchase expenses, the transportation costs, insurance related expenses and others).

## Useful Resources

### TLG Website

### Social Media



### News

[www.onlinenews.ge](http://www.onlinenews.ge)

[Daily Online Analysis about Georgia](#)

[Inter Press News Georgia](#)

### Everyday

[Yellow Pages of Georgia](#)

[Tbilisi life](#)

### Distances between regions of Georgia

[http://omnestour.ge/omnestour\\_old/html/dmap1.html](http://omnestour.ge/omnestour_old/html/dmap1.html)

[http://distancecalculator.globefeed.com/Georgia\\_Distance\\_Calculator.asp](http://distancecalculator.globefeed.com/Georgia_Distance_Calculator.asp)

### History/Geography/Culture and more about Georgia

[www.georgia.travel](http://www.georgia.travel)

[www.elitetravel.ge](http://www.elitetravel.ge)

[www.lsgeorgia.com](http://www.lsgeorgia.com)

[www.tripadvisor.com](http://www.tripadvisor.com)

### Governmental Institutions:

[Government of Georgia](#)

[Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia \(visa requirements\)](#)

[The President of Georgia](#)

[Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia](#)

[Embassies in Georgia](#)

### Maps

[www.openstreetmap.org](http://www.openstreetmap.org)

[maps.google.com](http://maps.google.com)

### Shipping

[Georgian post](#)

*Thank You!*

*We Look Forward to Seeing You in Georgia!*