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24 HOURS IN Batumi

Famous for its historical buildings and unique architecture that boasts an inherent love for art and design, the Black Sea resort and port city of Batumi, Georgia, is a popular spot for lovers of the seaside, and an up-and-coming regional MICE destination

MORNING

Start your day with a hearty breakfast at Ajarian House, a beautiful restaurant near the lush gardens surrounding Ardagani lake, that offers a picturesque way to start your day. The restaurant serves traditional Ajarian food, which is slightly different from regular Georgian food. It's a great way to settle into the culture of Batumi, which is the capital of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara – a region in the west of the country. Although it certainly doesn't make for a light meal, an Adjarian Khachapuri is a must-try: like the regular khachapuri that can be found across the rest of Georgia, this is also a pillowy boat-shaped bread that's stuffed with cheese, the Adjarian version adds a generous heaping of butter and an egg yolk in the middle, for a result that is immensely flavourful and so moreish you'll wipe your plate clean.

Next, walk off your meal with a stroll along Batumi Boulevard, with views of Batumi's famous coastline. This seven-kilometre strip will not only wake you up with some fresh, salty sea air, but it'll also give you a chance to check out some of the interesting artwork on display – the city is famous for its street art. Make your way from the Dancing Fountains to Europe Square, where you can see Batumi's famous Ali & Nino statue. Also known as "The Statue of



Love" (pictured above), a 7-foot tall kinetic sculpture created by Georgian artist Tamara Kvesitadze that moves constantly in gradual motion, until the two figures depicted join together as one, before separating again, over the course of 10 minutes each time. It depicts a story written by an author writing under the pseudonym of Kurban Said, of star-crossed lovers Ali – a Muslim Azerbaijani boy of noble descent – and Nino – a Christian Georgian princess – who fell in love despite the societal constraints keeping them apart between 1918-1920, and were separated by war before spending eternity searching for each other. Other notable monuments include the nearby 130-metre high Alphabetic Tower, the Batumi Tower with its in-built ferris wheel, the 19th-century Batumi Lighthouse, and Chacha Tower.

AFTERNOON

Just a short walk further down the boulevard, you'll find the Old Batumi Port. There are plenty of bars and restaurants here from which to enjoy a bite with a seaside view, whether that's before or after you've had a chance to enjoy a tour in the Argo Cable Car. It will take you up to the top of Anuria Mountain, giving you spectacular views of the city and the sea from about 250m above sea level, with a one-way journey up taking about 15 minutes.

If you're feeling tired and want to relax, this is an ideal time to head down to the old city, where you can enjoy the shops, picking up a few souvenirs, from traditional handicrafts to some famous Georgian wine, or local Imereti (also known as Imeruli) cheese.

If you still have the time and energy for a bit of adventure, however, two ideal spots for a mini-excursion include the Batumi Botanical Gardens – a 108-hectare area of land a 17-18km (or roughly 30-40 minute taxi ride) away from the Argo Cable Car that is not only one of the largest botanical gardens in the former Soviet Union, but also one of the most stunning – or one of the nearby vineyards, such as Beridze Wine Cellar in Makhinjauri, a 7.5km or roughly 15 minute taxi ride away.

EVENING

Wind down your evening by returning to the Old Town, where you can tuck into a last serving of delicious, authentic Georgian food at beloved restaurant

Heart of Batumi. After your meal, stroll to the nearby Batumi Piazza Square, where you can see its beautiful clock tower – which also houses a boutique hotel – and the many gorgeous decorative stained-glass windows and mosaics that surround it. Enjoy a nightcap at one of the restaurants in the open-air terrace area of the square, where you can watch locals enjoy whatever entertainment is being offered that evening, from peaceful live music, to the opportunity to dance the night away. **BT**



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