

HOME

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WALKING WITH PURPOSE
FIRST LADY OF AFGHANISTAN
H.E. RULA GHANI

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OF THE ARTS WITH
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BREAKING INTO THE FORTRESS
OF THE PARLIAMENT

GEORGIA

THROUGH A LEBANESE LENS



Lebanese photographer Aia Dakdouk feels drawn to Georgia, the former Soviet Republic, where her lens captures the beautiful combination of Caucasus Mountain villages, Black Sea beaches and the cobblestone streets of old Tbilisi.

Everyone asks me:
“Why Georgia?”

I can’t explain it. Maybe it’s because in Georgia, I never felt I was a tourist. Maybe it’s because I never felt safer. Maybe it seemed familiar.

Like Lebanon, Georgia stands in the middle of East and West, at the intersection of Europe and Asia. It has beautiful mountains and beaches, old cities and villages with cobblestone roads. And like the Lebanese, Georgians are known for their tasty food and wine, and warm hospitality.

I made four trips to this former Soviet Republic in the past year, seeing it all and experiencing its four seasons.



Like Beirut, Georgia’s capital Tbilisi has diverse architecture that reflects the civilizations that once conquered it, including the Persians and the Russians. Its cobblestoned old town includes Eastern Orthodox churches and ornate art nouveau buildings, a fourth century fortress and Soviet-era Modernist structures.

A visit to Tbilisi would not be complete without a trip to the Georgian National Museum, and a glimpse of Georgia’s long, complex history of conquests and suffering.



I visited the huge Axmeteli Bazaar, full of women selling delicious cheese and fresh vegetables, prepared with love you could taste.



No matter where you are in Georgia, you are obliged to try the HOME-made cheese. In every HOME, the cheese has its own distinct flavor, from fresh, soft Sulguni—a full fat, calcium-rich cheese soaked in milky brine—to hard mountain cheese made from sheep’s milk. And you’ll probably also be served *tkbileuli*, the colorful sweet cake dessert.



The Gergeti glacier on the southeastern slope of Mt. Kazbek took my breath away! It juts straight up and wears a cap of snow. People live in a small village nearby, surrounded by huge mountains, while tourists come to hike the Gergeti or ski in its Gudauri resort.



I hiked in the beautiful Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park in central Georgia known for its mineral springs. In the foothills of the Greater Caucasus Mountains, I saw the tranquil Kaxeti Lake. Whether on road trips or on foot, I met so many kind people, some who spoke English, but most who communicated with me through gestures and smiles that made me feel welcomed, even when I didn’t understand.

Even the animals in Georgia are friendly! As I walked through a sweet-scented forest to a placid lake just before dark, dogs flanked me. I assumed they were protecting me from wolves. In a wide, open space, I encountered friendly horses and pigs. The experience was amazing.



In Sachkhere, a farming community in Western Georgia, I met Manan as she was walking with her cows. She was an older woman, friendly and eager to talk. But since we had no common language, gestures would have to suffice.

I wanted to tell her, “See you again.” I’m sure I’ll be back.

HOMIE MAGAZINE

The Soul of Lebanon

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& LEBANESE
OF THE WORLD



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