

Churches of Racha-Lechkhumi

Route sheet · 16 churches · 3 groups by municipality

Three Groups of Churches

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|----------|---|-------------------------|
| 1 | The Ambrolauri group
Nikortsminda → Barakoni (Tsesi) → Khotevi → Zemo Krikhi → Raketi (Patara Oni). All along the Ambrolauri-Oni road. Both of the region's major churches are here. From Nikortsminda you can walk to the Udabno and Sakinule caves. | <i>1 day · easy</i> |
| 2 | The Oni group
Oni Synagogue → Mravaldzali → Skhieri Monastery → Upper Racha (Gona, Dzhoisubani). The synagogue breaks the monotony of a church route. Near Mravaldzali there's a heart-shaped karst lake. | <i>1 day · moderate</i> |
| 3 | Tsageri and Lechkhumi
Maximus the Confessor above the Tskhenistskali → Tabori → Labechina. Separately, the Khvamli church at 2,000 m: that's a full trek, not a drive-up. | <i>1-2 days · hard</i> |

What to Bring

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| ✓ Cash in lari: donations and candles, no card terminals | ✓ Trekking shoes: the Khvamli church is reached on foot |
| ✓ Headscarf and skirt: active churches won't let you in otherwise | ✓ Water and a snack: most churches have no shops nearby |
| ✓ Offline map: signal drops out in the mountain villages | ✓ Spare time: mountain roads, low average speed |

Why Racha Has So Many Churches

In 1010 Bagrat III founded the Duchy of Racha, and the new administrative unit needed spiritual centres. Over the following decades Nikortsminda, Patara Oni, Zemo Krikhi and Mravaldzali went up almost simultaneously. Mountain isolation preserved them: large campaigns rarely reached Racha, but neither did large construction projects.

Church Reference

16 sites · period · district · GPS coordinates

Site	Period	District	GPS
Nikortsminda	1010–1014	Ambrolauri Mun.	42.45923, 43.08820
Zemo Krikhi Archangels	late 10th – early 11th c.	Ambrolauri Mun.	42.49687, 43.19357
Raketi St. Nicholas	first third of 11th c.	Ambrolauri Mun.	42.53626, 42.97786
Labechina Archangels	12th c., rebuilt 13th–14th	Ambrolauri Mun.	42.57273, 42.90575
Khotevi Archangel	17th c.	Ambrolauri Mun.	42.46797, 43.13864
Barakoni	1753	Ambrolauri Mun.	42.54184, 43.21944
Mravaldzali St. George	11th c., rebuilt 1894	Oni Mun.	42.51499, 43.34340
Skhieri Monastery	monastic life from 9th c.	Oni Mun.	42.56238, 43.42399
Oni Synagogue	1895	Oni Mun.	42.58708, 43.44642
Gona Archangel	no data	Oni Mun.	42.79644, 43.54418
Dzhoisubani St. George	no data	Oni Mun.	42.54090, 43.36664
Khvamli Church	ruins 11th–13th c. + 1910	Tsageri Mun.	42.50856, 42.71572
Tskheti St. George	18th c.	Tsageri Mun.	42.62324, 42.80274
Tabori Mother of God	18th c. (first mention)	Tsageri Mun.	42.60674, 42.89139
Maximus the Confessor	no data	Tsageri Mun.	42.65686, 42.77487
Goni St. George	no data	Tsageri Mun.	42.49825, 42.80585

A dash in the GPS column means the coordinates are still being confirmed. Dating follows Georgian Wikipedia, the Tsageri municipality site and Ekvtime Takaishvili. Nikortsminda has been on UNESCO's tentative list since 2007; it is not a World Heritage Site. The grave of Maximus the Confessor near Tsageri is an attribution by tradition, not an established fact.

How to Use the Coordinates

The format is latitude, longitude, and pastes straight into Google Maps search. A ~ marks an approximate point. Sat-nav doesn't always recognise these villages by name: save the points in advance and download an offline map. Entry is free almost everywhere.