



**INSIDE JEWISH GEORGIA**  
**JDC Entwine Insider Service Trip for College Students**  
**In Partnership with Cornell University**

*From the Caucasus Mountains of southern Russia to the coasts of the Caspian Sea, the countries that make up this region include a diverse array of languages, cultures, religious majorities, and ethnic groups. Despite oil and gas industry advances, today these traditionally weak economies are struggling to recover from the recessionary effects of the global downturn.*

*Georgia continues to deal with the devastating impact of its August 2008 armed conflict with Russia, and to grapple with an unemployment rate of over 16%. Unemployment is also high in other parts of the region, and steep increases in the cost of energy and many staples exacerbate the situation of the poor and elderly. Social welfare systems are, for the most part, non-existent or rudimentary, and state pensions are among the lowest in the former Soviet Union.*

*The Jewish communities of the Central Asian Republics & Caucasus Region are comprised of two, separately led groups: those who trace their history in the region back thousands of years; and the newer arrivals, predominantly Ashkenazi Jews, who settled there after World War II. While centers of Jewish life are concentrated in the larger cities, there are some 400 smaller Jewish communities across this region.*

**Day One: Sunday, June 4: Departure Day**

Afternoon      Depart New York JFK Airport

**Day Two: Monday, June 5: Arrival in Georgia**

Morning        Arrive to Tbilisi International Airport

Transfer to Hotel for Check-in

Relax & Freshen-up

Afternoon      Welcome to Georgia! Opening Lunch and Ice Breakers Facilitated by Co-chairs and Staff at Restaurant

Briefing on the Jewish Community and JDC's Role in Georgia by JDC Representative

Evening        Festive Welcome Dinner with Georgian Peers!

Return to Hotel

*Overnight in Tbilisi*

**Day Three: Tuesday, June 6: Community Building Through Volunteer Initiatives**

Morning        Breakfast at the Hotel with Laura Hochla, Political Officer at U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi

Overview of Volunteer Projects with JDC Entwine Global Jewish Service Corps Fellow

*JDC Entwine's Global Jewish Service Corps (JSC) is a year-long professional opportunity for recent college graduates and young professionals to directly engage with JDC's global mission and actively fulfill the value of Jewish responsibility. JSC Fellows create innovative programs that respond to specific Jewish community needs, gain an understanding of pressing Jewish and humanitarian challenges around the world, and explore Jewish values underlying their service. JDC offers placements in Israel, the overseas Diaspora Jewish communities, and countries where JDC has non-sectarian projects.*

Depart Hotel for Tour of Jewish Tbilisi

*The tour will include stops at important Jewish sites, including the Old City, Synagogues, and more.*

*Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, takes its name from the ancient Georgian word "tpili," meaning warm. The city is also named in honor of the areas numerous sulfur hot springs. Today, Tbilisi is the country's commercial, cultural and political center, and is also a center of Jewish life.*

## DRAFT ITINERARY – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Afternoon Visit to the Jewish Community House & Presentation on Current Program Models with Organization Directors

*Tbilisi's Jewish Community House officially opened in 2003. Today the Jewish Community House is home to several Tbilisi Jewish Community organizations. It houses Hesed "Eliyahu" Welfare Center and Day Center, the JCC of Tbilisi and the Knowledge in Information Centre (KIC) of Jewish community in Caucasus countries. During the 2008 South Ossetian War, the Jewish Community House served as a center of relief activities, providing round-the-clock warm kosher meals, critical supplies and emotional support to displaced persons.*

*Throughout the year, the Jewish Community Center runs a variety of Jewish renewal programs, with a special focus on programming for children and young adults. JCC programs include classes on Jewish topics, art and cultural activities – including community holiday celebrations.*

*Knowledge in Information Center of Jewish community in Caucasus countries (KIC). The KIC provides professional training for the staff of JDC-supported organizations. The Director of the institute also leads the 26 Century Friendship Club, named in honor of the community's 2,600th Anniversary, meets once a month for lectures and cultural events and includes Georgia's Jewish and non-Jewish community members. 2014 was announced as year of friendship between Georgian Jews and non-Jews, and the anniversary will have its largest celebration in October. The chairman of the Anniversary Celebration Committee, Irakli Gharibashvili, is an prime minister of Georgia.*

Volunteer Project at the Hesed Eliyahu Day Center

*The Hesed Welfare Center model was developed in 1993 by JDC professionals in response to the multifaceted, unmet needs of elderly and disabled Jews in the Former Soviet Union (FSU). The centers provide vital home care services to needy and bedridden elderly, offering all types of assistance – such as the provision of food, health care, and much-needed companionship – to clients who are unable to care for themselves due to their age, health conditions, or lack of mobility. There is a network of some 160 Hesed Welfare Center across the FSU, which serve over 2,600 localities.*

*Tbilisi's Hesed Eliyahu was founded in 1997 to provide Tbilisi's needy, elderly Jews – more than 30% of the population – with vital services to ease their suffering and hardship. In addition to welfare services, the Hesed Day Center provides a warm environment where lonely pensioners can enjoy the company of their peers while taking part in lively discussion groups, cultural programs and creative activities.*

Lunch at the Jewish Community House with Organization Directors

Home Visits to Elderly Hesed Clients

Return to Hotel, Relax & Freshen-up

Evening Core Conversation #1: Setting Intentions

Visit to the Open-Air Ethnographic Museum

Dinner

Optional Evening Out

*Overnight in Tbilisi*

### **Day Four: Wednesday, June 7: Addressing Welfare Needs & Sustaining a Community**

Morning Breakfast at Hotel & Check-out

Visit to the Stalin Museum

Afternoon Lunch in Gori Hesed & Discussion with Hesed Director

*Gori was an important military stronghold in the Middle Ages and maintains a strategic importance due to its location on the principal highway connecting eastern and western parts of Georgia. In the course of its history, Gori has been invaded by the armies of regional powers several times. The city was occupied by Russian troops during the 2008 South Ossetian War. Gori is known as the birthplace of Joseph Stalin, the city has long been associated with its citadel, the Gori Fortress, which is built on a cliffy hill overlooking the central part of the modern city.*

Lend a Hand: Volunteer Project at the Hesed Georgian Dance Lesson

Caring for the Needy: Home Visits

Depart for Kutaisi

Evening Check-in & Freshen-up

## DRAFT ITINERARY – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Core Conversation #2: Guarantorship & Me  
Dinner at Restaurant with Local Jewish College-Aged Peers!  
Optional Evening Out

*Overnight in Kutaisi*

### **Day Five: Thursday, June 8: Engaging the Next Generation: Family Camp!**

Morning      Breakfast at the Hotel  
                 Depart Hotel for Day at Camp  
                 Arrive at Summer Family Camp  
                 Meet with Hesed Director & Camp Staff

Afternoon    Lunch  
                 Nature Hike & Discussion with Teens/Team Building Outdoor Exercises  
                 Free Time to Relax or Swim at the Beach

Evening      Dinner  
                 Bonfire with Singing & Dancing

10:00 PM    Return to Kutaisi

*Overnight in Kutaisi*

### **Day Six: Friday, June 9: Provision of Welfare & Jewish Renewal: Rustavi**

Morning      Breakfast at the Hotel & Check-out  
                 Depart Hotel for Rustavi

*Rustavi is located 16 miles southeast of Tbilisi on the Kura River. A main strategic point guarding the Georgian capital of Tbilisi from the south, the city dates back to medieval times. Modern day Rustavi was built during the Soviet era and officially founded in 1948. Jews only settled in Rustavi after the Second World War. Before Rustavi became an industrial center, Jews simply didn't live in this part of Georgia.*

*After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the subsequent economic downturn, these Jews found themselves in an extremely difficult situation. Not only did they face severe financial hardship from the dearth of employment opportunities, they also lacked the Jewish communal structure that could support them in their time of need.*

Afternoon    Lunch & Stop at Viewpoint/Cathedral  
                 Arrive in Rustavi  
                 Opening Briefing & Overview of Hesed Programs

*The Hesed Center in Rustavi, the only Jewish organization in the city, was founded by JDC in 1999. With no synagogues ever established in the city, the JDC-supported Hesed serves as a focal point for all Jewish communal activity. The Center's clients reside in the city as well as Kvemo Kartli and Kahetja which encompasses 15 small towns and villages as well as other remote locations where the extent of poverty is high.*

*This budding community continues to grow and develop through a dynamic range of programming opportunities. These include Jewish study classes, Shabbat and holiday celebrations, an active Women's club, concerts, Jewish cultural events and social gatherings.*

                 Pre-Shabbat Service Project with Hesed Clients  
                 Return to Tbilisi  
                 Optional Outing to Local Bath House & Spa

Evening      Pre-Shabbat Activity  
                 Shabbat Services with Hillel

## DRAFT ITINERARY – SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Dinner with Hillel Community Members

Optional Evening Out/Walk Back to Hotel

*Overnight in Tbilisi*

### **Day Seven: Saturday, June 10: Shabbat in Tbilisi**

Morning Breakfast

Shabbat Morning Services (Optional)

Free Time or Optional Trip to Bath House

Afternoon Group Shabbat Lunch

Walking Tour of Old City and the Main Street of Tbilisi led by Local Peers (Tbilisi Mall, Art Museum)

Freshen-up & Relax

Evening Core Conversation #3: Guarantorship & JDC

Festive Closing Dinner & Georgian Dance Performance “Tsisqvili”

### **Day Eight: Sunday, June 11: Return to US**

Morning Breakfast

Core Conversation #4: Assiyah & Taking It Home

Pack Up & Check-Out

Afternoon Lunch

Depart for Airport