

Transcaucasian Trail Notes: Lagodekhi National Park, Georgia

Matsimi Ranger Station to Machi Fortress

IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

The TCTA strives to provide accurate, current information as to trail conditions and the trail route. However, actual trail conditions may be different, and such information may not be accurate or complete. Trail users are urged to consider all the information available from other sources and to heed local advice when available. Trail users are ultimately responsible for all decisions as to the trail routes, trail conditions, weather, and safety.

QUICK FACTS:

- **Total Distance:** 12km
- **Suggested Duration:** 1 day
- **Elevation Gain/Loss:** 390m / 390m
- **Marking Type:** Yellow & white painted blazes
- **Difficulty Level:** Easy
- **Max / Min Altitude:** 434 m / 736 m
- **Recommended Season:** All year
- **Emergency Services:** 112



Note: This is an out-and-back route that passes through the border zone with Azerbaijan. Bring your passport, which you will need to show at the border guard station halfway along the route.

MATSIMI RANGER STATION TO MACHI FORTRESS

Lagodekhi National Park is located in eastern Georgia, adjacent to the border with Azerbaijan and Russia. It is the oldest protected area in Georgia, originally protected as a nature reserve in 1912. Lagodekhi is wildly diverse in flora and fauna, stretching from dense, subtropical lowland forest to alpine meadows more than 3,000 meters high. This makes it an excellent choice for year-round hiking, as the lower-elevation forests remain pleasant all year. Make sure to enjoy the groves of old hornbeam trees!

This hike follows a trail to the eastern edge of the park. On the other side of the river you'll be able to see Azerbaijan. Since this path passes into the border zone, you will need to bring a copy of your passport. About halfway through the hike, you will pass a border guard station. They will take down your information and give you temporary permission to enter the border zone. Expect a bit of a wait here, but otherwise it is a straightforward process.

The trail is mostly well-marked with yellow and white blazes. It is easy to follow as an out-and-back, although there are occasional intersecting paths that are not part of the main trail. The trail is mostly flat, but has a few steep sections. The final climb to the monastery is quite steep and there are no handrails, so it may not be accessible for everyone.

HOW TO GET TO THE MATSIMI RANGER STATION TRAILHEAD

The Matsimi ranger station is located on the eastern side of the park. It is not currently accessible from the main visitor center (although as of 2021, we are working on a new trail connecting the two stations). There is parking and a water tap available at the ranger station. If you arrive in Lagodekhi via marshrutka, you can take a taxi to the ranger station. Walking to Matsimi ranger station from the Lagodekhi bus station via road is 3.8 kilometers and takes a little less than an hour.



This guide was updated in March 2021. For the latest version go to www.transcaucasiantrail.org
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