

**Q&A: DAVIT NARMANIA**

# Tbilisi's take on tourism

DAVIT NARMANIA, THE MAYOR OF TBILISI IN GEORGIA, TELLS COURTNEY FINGAR HOW THE CITY IS BOOSTING TOURISM WITH BETTER TRANSPORT ACCESS AND HOW IT IS ADDING GREEN CREDENTIALS TO ITS LOW-TAX, LOW-BUREAUCRACY ENVIRONMENT

**CURRICULUM VITAE**

DAVIT NARMANIA

2014

**Tbilisi**

Mayor

**Previously**

Minister of regional development and infrastructure of Georgia

**Q** Your administration has put a heavy focus on sustainable energy and a lot of effort is under way to make Tbilisi greener and more energy efficient. Do you think this will have a knock-on effect in increasing private investment in the city?

**A** Of course, the green and sustainable development of the city is connected to all of its economic activity – especially to the development of the hospitality and tourism business. All of the economic activity can be done sustainably, which is why we have developed a document called ‘The green strategy for the city of Tbilisi’. There are several projects to develop the city that come from this strategy.

Some of the projects include our new compressed natural gas buses, which have very low carbon dioxide emissions. [Our] municipal public buildings have an energy-efficient standard in them, including the municipal kindergarten buildings. We are also establishing green zones and planting trees – we have more than 700,000 new trees in the city.

**Q** How do you plan to develop the city's tourism potential and attract more visitors?

**A** We are doing several things for the development of tourism. First, we are developing the historical part of the city – preserving the cultural heritage, which is one of the main attractions for tourists. We are supporting the development of hospitality in the city. We are arranging information centres and we are supporting numerous cultural and touristic events. Tourists come to these events and this promotes the city.

During the past few months, what we have been doing is improving accessibility to the municipal transport system for tourists. Until now, you could only pay with [one standard



card] for transport, but now you can pay with any card, so the system will be more open and accessible. And there will be many more things that the city is doing. But the general policy about tourism is made by the national government, by the national tourism administration and the Ministry of the Economy.

**Q** What are the main opportunities that Tbilisi has for foreign investors?

**A** There are several reasons why foreign companies should want their businesses to be involved in Tbilisi, and these include low taxes and very simple administrative procedures. We are supporting investors by offering them several locations that they could invest in, for example, in our masterplan for development around Tbilisi. This should be very interesting for investors looking to invest in sport, leisure and recreational activities. We have other locations for industrial development in the surrounding areas of the city for warehouses and other industrial activities.

In Tbilisi City Hall we have an integrated one-stop shop principle, which means that [investors] can do all of the administrative procedures that are required to do business in Tbilisi in one step. We are welcoming investors who are looking to invest and... we have done all the necessary studies on attractiveness [for businesses in different sectors]. We have looked at their lucrativeness and their profitability.

More than half of the economic activity in Georgia is generated in Tbilisi. And most of the investments made in Georgia are made in Tbilisi. In general, the country is high up in many rankings, such as those of doing business, which tells us that the city and the country are very attractive to businesses. These businesses are welcome [and] have the full support of the government. ■

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