

WAVERLEY GATEWAY GUIDE

Connecting International Capital with Emerging & Frontier Markets

GEORGIA

Eurasia

Dialogue | Trust | Partnership

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WHERE AND HOW TO ENTER

KEY INVESTMENT LOCATIONS

Location / Region	Strategic Importance	Priority Sectors
Tbilisi	Capital and dominant commercial, financial, and services hub	Financial services, IT, real estate, retail
Batumi (Adjara)	Black Sea port city and established tourism/casino destination	Tourism, hospitality, gaming, port logistics
Poti / Black Sea coast	Georgia's principal deep-water port, key node on the Middle Corridor trans-Caspian trade route	Port logistics, trade, shipping
Kutaisi	Second-largest city; free industrial zone and growing logistics/manufacturing base, Kutaisi International Airport a budget-airline hub	Manufacturing, logistics, light industry
Anaklia (Black Sea coast)	Site of Georgia's long-planned deep-sea port project, strategically important for Middle Corridor capacity	Port infrastructure (project status politically contested)
Tbilisi Free Industrial Zone / Kutaisi FIZ	Established free industrial zones offering tax incentives for export-oriented manufacturing	Manufacturing, assembly, re-export
Svaneti / Kazbegi (mountain regions)	Established and emerging alpine tourism destinations	Tourism, hospitality, real estate

INVESTOR ENTRY ROUTES

- Enterprise Georgia and the Georgian National Investment Agency provide centralized facilitation, incentives, and sector guidance for foreign investors
- Free Industrial Zones (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Poti) offering corporate tax exemptions and simplified customs procedures for qualifying manufacturing and export ventures
- Georgia's long-standing liberal company-registration regime, routinely ranked favorably by the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business framework, with company registration achievable within days
- National Bank of Georgia oversight of currency and capital-account activity; the lari is freely convertible with no major repatriation restrictions
- Free trade agreements with the EU (DCFTA), China, the EFTA states, Turkey, and CIS countries, giving Georgia an unusually wide preferential trade network for its size
- Public-private partnership structures for infrastructure, energy, and port-development projects coordinated with relevant ministries

MARKET-ENTRY OBSERVATION

Georgia in October 2026 presents one of the sharpest contrasts in this briefing series between economic performance and political trajectory. The economy continues to grow robustly, with Geostat reporting 6.9% year-on-year real GDP growth in the second quarter of 2026, moderating only slightly from 7.4% a year earlier, driven by transportation and storage (+19.8%), information and communication (+16.6%), and continued strength in trade and manufacturing, even as construction and agriculture contracted. Georgia

has long been regarded as one of the most business-friendly jurisdictions in its region, with rapid company registration, a liberal trade regime including free trade agreements with the EU, China, and the CIS, and a free-floating, convertible currency.

This economic openness sits in increasing tension with a deepening political crisis that began in late 2024 and has not resolved. The ruling Georgian Dream party, widely understood to be controlled by billionaire founder Bidzina Ivanishvili, suspended EU accession talks in November 2024 after winning a disputed October 2024 parliamentary election, triggering sustained nightly protests in Tbilisi that have continued intermittently through 2026. The United States sanctioned Ivanishvili in December 2024 for allegedly advancing Kremlin interests and undermining Georgian democracy, and congressional pressure for further sanctions against his associates has continued into 2026; the EU has similarly suspended practical accession support and imposed travel restrictions on senior officials. Georgian Dream's government, which denies being pro-Russian, has simultaneously deepened ties with China, with the Prime Minister and economic ministers describing a "new phase" in the relationship through 2026 and citing the Georgia-China free trade agreement as a growing driver of trade and investment even as the Western relationship has deteriorated.

INVESTOR RISK & MARKET ACCESS

KEY ENTRY BARRIERS

Issue	Potential Impact	Possible Mitigation
Suspended EU accession and deteriorating Western relations	EU accession talks remain frozen since late 2024; EU funding has been cut and travel restrictions imposed on officials; the US suspended its strategic partnership	Do not assume imminent EU-regulatory alignment benefits; monitor the accession freeze as a structural, not temporary, condition
US sanctions on the Georgian Dream founder	Bidzina Ivanishvili, understood to control the ruling party, was sanctioned by the US Treasury in December 2024 for allegedly advancing Russian interests, with further sanctions pressure ongoing in 2026	Conduct enhanced counterparty due diligence on any entity with direct or indirect Ivanishvili-linked ownership
Sustained political unrest and civil-liberties concerns	Nightly protests have continued intermittently since late 2024; hundreds of detentions and reports of injured journalists and activists have been documented by international monitors	Factor reputational and operational risk from ongoing civil unrest into site-selection and public-facing business planning
"Foreign influence" legislation targeting civil society and media	A Russian-style foreign-agents law passed in 2024 continues to constrain Western-funded media and civil-society organizations	Assess exposure for any investment involving media, advocacy, or civil-society-adjacent activity
Contested Anaklia deep-sea port project	Georgia's flagship Black Sea port development has faced repeated delays, investor withdrawals, and political controversy over its ownership and strategic direction	Treat Anaklia-linked opportunities as high-uncertainty pending resolution of the project's political and financing status
Geopolitical balancing between the West, Russia, and China	The government's simultaneous EU-accession rhetoric, deepening China ties, and avoidance of confrontation with Russia create a structurally ambiguous strategic position	Structure cross-border and trade-dependent investment with awareness of this balancing act and its potential to shift
Opposition fragmentation and boycott politics	Major opposition blocs have boycotted recent elections and parliament, weakening conventional channels for political risk assessment	Engage a broad range of political and civil-society contacts rather than relying solely on government channels for risk signals

INVESTOR RISK NOTE

Georgia presents a genuinely unusual risk profile: an economy that continues to perform strongly by almost any conventional metric, rapid growth, currency stability, ease of doing business, and a wide trade-agreement network, operating under a government whose legitimacy is contested by a significant share of its own population and by its traditional Western partners. The core economic risk to investors is relatively low in the near term; Georgian Dream has prioritized continuity and has not disrupted the business environment in the way its political trajectory might suggest. The more significant risks are reputational, regulatory-trajectory, and longer-horizon: continued Western sanctions pressure could eventually extend beyond Ivanishvili personally, EU-alignment benefits that investors in the region have historically priced in are now genuinely uncertain, and the government's deepening China relationship alongside a cautious, non-confrontational Russia posture represents a meaningful break from Georgia's post-2003 Western-integration trajectory. Investors should distinguish between Georgia's currently sound operating environment and its uncertain medium-term geopolitical alignment.

MARKET ACCESS

Georgia maintains an unusually broad network of free trade agreements for a country of its size: the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the EU (which predates and remains technically separate from full EU membership, though its future benefits are clouded by the accession freeze), a free trade agreement with China in force since 2018 and deepening through 2026, agreements with the EFTA states and Turkey, and CIS free-trade arrangements covering most former Soviet states including Russia. This gives Georgia a distinctive position as a trade and logistics hub straddling Western, Chinese, and post-Soviet commercial networks simultaneously. The Middle Corridor trans-Caspian trade route runs directly through Georgia via the Poti/Batumi Black Sea ports, positioning the country as a key node for China-Europe trade that bypasses Russia, a role that has grown in strategic importance since 2022 regardless of Georgia's own political trajectory.

WHO SHOULD THE INVESTOR MEET?

INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE

Actor	Why It Matters	Waverley Engagement Angle
Prime Minister's Office (Irakli Kobakhidze, Georgian Dream)	Sets economic and foreign-policy direction, including the deepening China relationship	Primary government counterpart, though understand the Ivanishvili influence on ultimate decision-making
Enterprise Georgia / Georgian National Investment Agency	Principal investment-facilitation bodies for foreign investors	Standard first point of contact for market entry and incentive guidance
National Bank of Georgia	Monetary authority; maintains a freely convertible, floating lari	Relevant for currency and banking-sector matters; not a major practical constraint
Office of the President (Mikheil Kavelashvili, replacing Salome Zourabichvili)	Largely ceremonial but politically symbolic position; the prior president was a prominent opposition and EU-integration voice	Monitor for signals of the broader political trajectory rather than as an operational counterpart
EU Delegation to Georgia	Administers the frozen accession process and remaining DCFTA trade relationship	Important for understanding the practical limits of EU-alignment benefits at present
Chinese Embassy / Ministry of Commerce counterparts	Coordinates the deepening Georgia-China economic partnership and free trade agreement implementation	Increasingly relevant channel given the government's stated strategic reorientation
Civil society, independent media, and opposition parties	Operate under increasing legal and practical constraint but remain active; provide an important independent perspective on the operating environment	Engage as a source of balanced risk assessment distinct from government messaging

CURRENT INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS CHANNELS

The American Chamber of Commerce in Georgia (AmCham) and the EU-Georgia Business Council remain active despite the political freeze, alongside the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for domestic business liaison. A growing set of Chinese business and trade delegations reflects the deepening China relationship. The World Bank, EBRD, and Asian Development Bank maintain active country programs, though the pace and framing of EU-linked development finance has been affected by the accession suspension. International press-freedom and civil-society organizations (Transparency International, Reporters Without Borders) provide ongoing independent monitoring of the political and civil-liberties environment relevant to reputational due diligence.

INVESTOR PROFILE BEST SUITED

Georgia currently suits investors who can separate a genuinely well-functioning, liberal commercial operating environment from an uncertain and contested political trajectory: trade and logistics investors benefiting from Georgia's Middle Corridor position and broad free-trade network, manufacturers leveraging the free industrial zones' tax incentives, and tourism and hospitality investors building on Batumi and the mountain regions' established visitor bases are all reasonably well-positioned. Investors with significant reputational sensitivity, those in sectors adjacent to media, civil society, or Western-government-linked activity, or those requiring confidence in EU-regulatory-alignment benefits, should weight the current political environment heavily in their assessment. Portfolio and passive investors should note that Georgia's sanctions and accession-freeze dynamics are evolving and warrant ongoing monitoring rather than a one-time assessment.

FROM INTELLIGENCE TO ENGAGEMENT

STEP 1: Separate operating-environment risk from political-trajectory risk

Assess Georgia's genuinely strong near-term business environment independently from its uncertain medium-term geopolitical alignment when structuring investment decisions.

STEP 2: Conduct enhanced ownership due diligence

Screen counterparties for direct or indirect links to sanctioned individuals, particularly Bidzina Ivanishvili and Georgian Dream-affiliated structures.

STEP 3: Engage Enterprise Georgia and relevant free-zone authorities

Open direct dialogue with investment-facilitation bodies to confirm current incentive terms, which remain operative despite the political crisis.

STEP 4: Monitor the EU accession freeze and sanctions trajectory

Track both the EU and US positions toward Georgia as leading indicators of how the Western relationship, and associated regulatory and market-access questions, may evolve.

STEP 5: Assess Middle Corridor and China-relationship opportunities on their own merits

Evaluate trade and logistics opportunities tied to Georgia's expanding China ties and Middle Corridor role independently of the broader political controversy.

WAVERLEY'S ROLE

- Independent due diligence distinguishing Georgia's operating environment from its contested political and sanctions landscape
- Direct liaison with Enterprise Georgia, free industrial zone authorities, and relevant ministries for market entry structuring
- Ongoing monitoring of the EU accession freeze, US/EU sanctions developments, and the Georgia-China relationship trajectory
- Reputational and ownership due diligence support for counterparties with potential Georgian Dream or Ivanishvili-linked exposure

INVESTOR CALL TO ACTION

Engage Waverley for an updated political-risk and sanctions-exposure assessment before committing capital to any Georgia-based venture or counterparty.

Request a tailored briefing on Middle Corridor and free industrial zone opportunities that can be structured independently of Georgia's broader political controversy.

WAVERLEY INVESTOR INTELLIGENCE & OPPORTUNITY PIPELINE

Georgia's clearest near-term opportunity lies in Middle Corridor trade and logistics, where the country's Black Sea ports and free trade agreements with both the EU and China position it as a genuinely valuable node regardless of the political controversy, assuming the long-delayed Anaklia deep-sea port project does not materialize as a bottleneck. The free industrial zones in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Poti offer an established, de-risked manufacturing and re-export opportunity with a consistent incentive framework. Tourism and hospitality, centered on Batumi and the mountain regions, continue to show resilience. A fourth, more cautious opportunity lies in the deepening Georgia-China trade relationship itself, which investors comfortable with that specific geopolitical alignment may find increasingly substantive.

POSITIONING

Waverley's assessment of Georgia is deliberately bifurcated: the operating environment for conventional commercial activity remains genuinely strong, while the political and geopolitical trajectory, suspended EU accession, US and EU sanctions pressure on the ruling party's founder, and a deepening China relationship, represents real and evolving uncertainty that did not exist as recently as 2023.

For investors able to conduct careful counterparty due diligence and monitor the political situation on an ongoing basis, Georgia continues to offer a genuinely productive commercial environment, particularly in trade, logistics, and manufacturing; for those requiring confidence in Georgia's Western integration trajectory specifically, the current environment calls for caution and active monitoring rather than assumption.

SELECTED SOURCES

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