

# FROM OMALO TO SHATILI

Duration: 4-5 days

This is 5-day version of the trek, to finish it in 4 days you have to hike from Omalo to Parsma on day 1 and from Parsma to Kvakhidi on day 2.

Difficulty: Hard

You will gain elevation quite slowly and the path is well-trodden, but the trek is 75 km long, takes five days and you will need to cross 3431m high pass. So it's somewhere on edge between moderate and hard.

When to go:

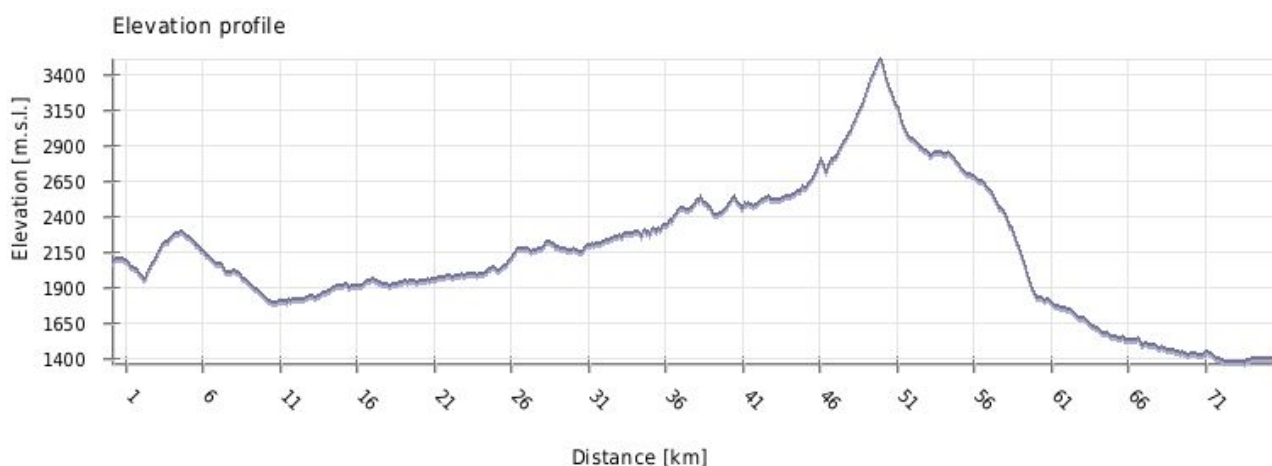
Best time to go is July-August. For people looking for a shoulder season - Atsunta pass usually becomes passable in the second half of June and shepherds leave the area with their herds in the first half of October.

How to get to Omalo:

There is no public transport to Tusheti. To get to Omalo, you will need to hire a driver with 4WD. First get to Kvemo Alvani village - marshrutka departs from Ortachala bus station in Tbilisi at 9.am and two hours later arrives at Alvani. There you will need to ask around for a driver offering a ride to Omalo. The trip usually takes 5 hours and costs 200-250 GEL.

How to leave Shatili:

Marshrutka to Tbilisi leaves every Thursday and Sunday at 12:00 am and costs 20 GEL. During the season, it's often full so I strongly recommend to buy tickets in advance on the day before. Ask around the village where to find the driver. If you missed the marshrutka, you would have to hitchhike or take a taxi. Taxi to Tbilisi costs about 300 GEL.



## Day 1: Omalo - Dartlo

(distance 10.9km, 405m up and 670m down)

This undemanding walk can be finished the same day you arrive at Tusheti providing you leave Telavi early in the morning (and down want to spend time around Omalo). You follow the dirt road to Dartlo, just on one spot, approximately 1,5 km behind the village it's better to take a shortcut - follow the serpentine climbing the meadow to the right of the road, over the hill (see map).

Shortly afterward, you will reach dirt road again. Climb a bit further to the small pass - the meadow there is called Ghele and in the past served as the meeting point of elders of local communities. From there, follow the slowly descending road all the way to Dartlo.

The village is charming (it's been sensibly renovated) - there are a couple of guesthouses, two restaurants, and small grocery shop. For even better sights, I recommend to climb to the Kvalvo tower, standing some 200m above the village.

A good place to camp is by the river, beneath the village.

## Day 2: Dartlo - Girevi (distance 14km, 414m up and 196m down)

In the morning, you can pick of two roads. One follows the Alazani river all the way to Parsma; the other one goes a bit uphill, passes Dano village and descends to the river again. Parsma is a great spot for a lunch break - it's a really nice village with several impressive towers.

In the afternoon, leave the jeep road behind and continue walking upstream, toward the Girevi. The path sometimes leads on the rocks very close to the water, but keep going and stay on the left bank. In Girevi you will be approached by border guards and asked to fill in registration forms for trekking in the border area, the whole process could take some 15-20 minutes.

## Day 3: Girevi - Kvakhidi meadows (distance 14.2km, 978m up and 584m down)

Not far behind Girevi village, Alazani valley splits into two. Follow the stream of river Kvakhidisitskali (valley to the right), the path is clearly visible. You will pass ruins of Chontio village and then just keep walking up the valley. During the day you will be checked by border guards twice, first time halfway through the valley, second time towards the evening.

At the end of the day, you should come to shepherds shelter and a small bridge over the river. Since 2016, the shepherd turned it into a little food stall so you can buy here also some basic food. Cross it and soon you will come to flat meadows ideal for camping (as on the photo, you can see them long before). We got water from one of the smaller streams in the area.

### Trail parameters

Distance	75,13 km
Trail type:	A → B trip
Max. elevation:	3413m
Min. elevation:	1360m
Total climb:	2948m ↑
Total descent:	3578m ↓

Since 2017, some enterprising shepherds with horses are waiting at the meadows for the hikers and offering them to take their backpacks. They may even persuade them that a horse is necessary to cross the river upstream. However, most usually, it isn't.

#### **Day 4: Kvakhidi - Khidotani ridge** (distance 16.8km, 1405m up and 1168m down)

Continue by Kvakhidisitskali river. You will have to cross it twice, the first time by a footbridge, the second time just to ford it. After you ford the river (there is a stone with Exit Shatili mark), you will see three valleys in front of you. Take the one to the right and start the ascent - path in the lower section is not too obvious, but soon becomes much more visible.

You will see a saddle which looks like Atsunta pass. When you think you are almost there, the path turns right and climbs heap of shale - Atsunta is to the right of the lowest part of the ridge. But you can't miss it, just follow the path and the map. Climb the pass. Here starts red touristic marking.

Descent from Atsunta pass is my favorite part of the trek. You may be tempted to descend all way down to the river, but don't do it. Stay on the left side of the valley and the road will eventually bring you to Khidotanis range. It is an amazing place with great view of the Tebulo mountain. If you walk far enough, you will find several small campsites not far above the treeline level. Carefully find a place to camp - just don't pick a too exposed place as storms in Caucasus can be pretty severe.

#### **Day 5: Khidotani ridge - Shatili** (distance 19.6km, 300m up and 1511m down)

The day begins with a steep and muddy descent into the valley of Khonistskali river. Here the path turns into dirt track again. Follow the road, it will lead you through Khonischala village to the confluence with Andaki river, where lies the ancient fortress Mutso (there is one more checkpoint not far before the fortress).

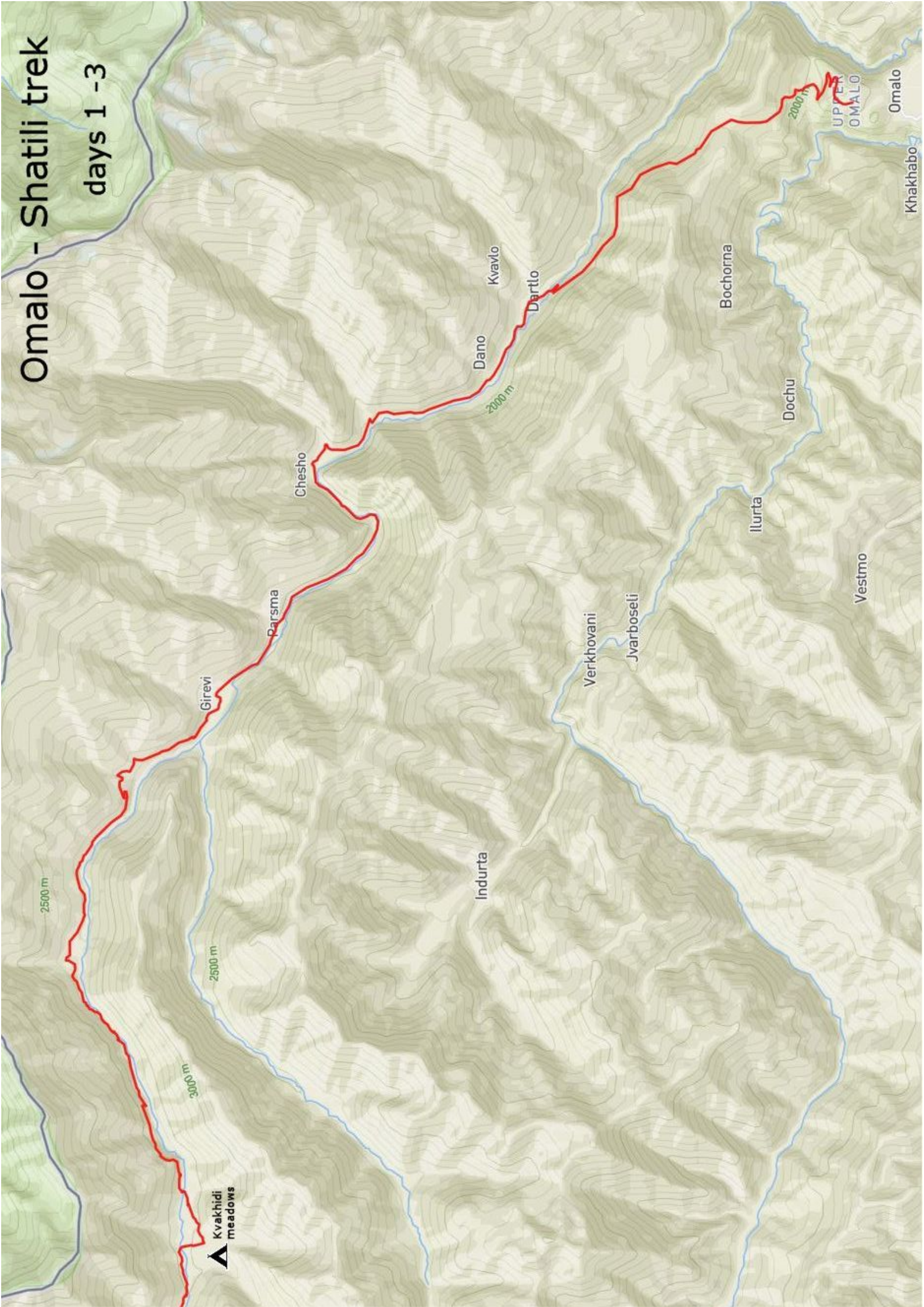
Mutso fortress is definitely worth a climb. There is a major reconstruction project going on (works should be finished in 2018), so some areas turned into a building site. I must admit I liked it more when Mutso was empty and quiet, but looking forward to the time when the whole reconstruction is finished. Not to forget, there is also a small restaurant by the road, another place to get food on the trek.

Continue down the road (or hitchhike, this section is not that interesting). Another interesting sight on the road is Anatori - House of the Dead in a place where the road bends back south. From there it's only 30 minutes to Shatili fortress.



# Omalo - Shatili trek

days 1 -3





# Omalo - Shatili trek days 4 - 5



Anatori

1600m

Shatili  
**Shatili**

Mutso

Khomis-chala

Khone

Ardoti

Andaki

Tebuló 4292m

Atsunta pass  
3431m

X

Kvakhidi  
meadows