

Overlando Rental Handbook

Lada Niva 4x4





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Introduction

When you're heading out on an incredible adventure it's always a good idea to prepare properly and become informed on all necessary points, especially when travelling in a new country.

That's why put together this handy guide on everything we could think of to try and make your life on the road a little bit easier.

We've tried to anticipate any issues or questions that might come up while overlanding, but as you may know, there can always be something which comes up. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with us in such cases, and we'll be more than happy to help in any way we can!

We wish you the best and hope that your journey will be an incredible and unforgettable experience!



Scan QR to text us on Whatsapp

Important phone numbers

Police, ambulance, emergencies	112
24/7 hotline	+995 32 2197500



Operating the vehicle

Vehicle dimensions

Height: 1,65 m

Height with roof top tent: 2 m

Width: 1,69 m excl. mirrors

Length: 3,64 m

Weight: 1210 kg

Max. weight: 1610 kg

Max. fording depth: 0,21 m

Tyre pressure normal roads: 2.1 bar

Tyre pressure off-road: 1.0 - 1.8 bar

Gears

The gearbox on the Lada Niva is pretty straightforward. One thing you should know is to **not drive in 5th gear when driving <80 km/h**

When decelerating, try to not skip gears (don't go from 4th to 1st gear), but downshift.

Never go down a steep track with disengaged gears, and remember to **apply the engine brake** when driving downhill in the mountains. If you use the brake too much, they may overheat and stop working or wear out fast.

To get in reverse, press the gearshift lever down, and then move to R position. This can be a little tricky to shift into at first, so practice shifting into this gear a couple of times while stationary to gain confidence using it.

Fuel

The Lada Niva is equipped with a 42L fuel tank.

The fuel used is Petrol (**Premium 95**). Common names at fuel stations are *Euro Premium* or *Benzin*. Never fill up with Diesel or Petrol with a lower than 95 octane value. You can use 'regular' (92) fuel when nothing else is available.

There is a fuel gauge indicator on the dashboard, it is not very accurate, but does the job.

There are plenty of fuel stations around the country, but as you go to more remote areas be sure to fill up early and often.



Most petrol stations accept (international) cards, but sometimes cash is the only option, so always check with the station attendant before filling up.

Do not try to find the *cheapest petrol station*, but go to the bigger brands (Wissol, Gulf, Rompetrol, Socar) instead. You risk getting bad fuel at the small stations, which leads to engine stalls and other weird issues.

Doors

To open the rear trunk, you have to pull the handle behind the driver's seat on the side of the car. When you lift the hatch up, lift by the handle, not by the black bar above the licence plate, as this is just a light cover.

Off-road driving

Off-road driving can be a lot of fun, but it can also be dangerous. Make sure you are comfortable with the car before you go off-track. Try and feel how the vehicle behaves on easy terrain. Here's some general guidance on off-road driving.

- Off-roading is all about preparation and anticipation. It's always better to not get stuck, rather than to recover the vehicle. Try to choose the right gear, driving line and route well in advance. Stop and get out of the van to assess the tracks you can't see, routes you're not sure about etc.
- Be flexible: weather conditions change, there can be other traffic, bad luck - it can all happen and you need to be prepared to change your plans if things get unsafe
- Inform about the state of the road upfront with locals or police
- Don't do things you are not comfortable with. Remember you can always turn around and go back
- Avoid wheel spinning: it only gets you deeper in trouble
- Drive slowly and apply the accelerator gently to avoid spinning. You're not in a drag race.
- Fill your tanks up before going on a longer off-road track, fuel usage is higher and there are no petrol stations



Off-road rules / etiquette

- Uphill traffic always has preference over downhill traffic
- If you want to stop, don't stop on the track or right after a corner but find a safe spot next to the track.
- When parking always put the vehicle in first gear AND use the hand brake, don't rely on just one of the two
- Stay on the trails, and try not to make new trails
- Stay away from (wild) animals
- Get permission from landowners before entering their property
- Yield to mountain bikers, hikers and horses
- Read signs and obey them
- Leave no trace / take nothing but photos, leave nothing but footprints

Help others if you can but don't try to be a hero. **You are never obliged to help other vehicles recover!** Recovering cars can be extremely dangerous without proper material or experience.

If a car gets stuck - you can always call 112 - they have a special team to help get vehicles unstuck.

4-wheel drive

The Lada Niva has permanent 4-wheel drive. So you don't have to enable or disable it.

High-low range gears

To overcome steep inclines and declines or drive on sandy, snowy or muddy surfaces, it is possible to switch to low range gears. This is done by moving the **lower** lever to the forward position, while at a complete standstill.

Do **NOT operate this lever when in motion.** This may lead to serious damage to the transfer case.

Differential lock

The Niva has a centre differential lock. When engaged this locks the front and rear differentials into turning at the same time. This



way you can get more traction and avoid wheels spinning.

Never engage the diff lock on asphalt or hard surface roads. Only on mud, sand and gravel. Remember to turn off the diff lock when you get out of such terrain.

To engage the diff lock, move the upper (small) lever backwards.

If the diff lock is jammed, reverse the car a bit and try again. You may need several tries. You can engage the diff lock while driving at a **slow** speed, but it is preferential to do it while at a standstill.

Spare tyre and jack

The spare tyre and jack are located underneath the engine hood. Be sure to visit a mechanic after changing a tyre to firmly attach it and to get the puncture repaired if possible.

Air conditioning

The Lada Niva has air conditioning, but of course, being a Lada, it's not exactly straightforward to use. To enable it, switch on

the air conditioning button next to the 12V outlet. Also, switch on the fan. To adjust how powerful the AC is, there is a dial next to the steering wheel.



Dashboard legend



1. Head lights - 2. Rear wiper - 3. Ventilation - 4. Rear window heating - 5. Fog light - 6. Seat heating
7. Airconditioning - 8. Window control and mirror adjustment - 9. Diff lock - 10. Low/normal gear
11. Cigarette plug 12V (USB charger)



Accessories

Gas Stove

Our Nivas are equipped with a dual burner gas stove. It's pretty simple to use, but there are a few points worth mentioning. Screw the hose on the stove and make sure it's attached properly. The regulator should be positioned upwards. Only open the valve on the gas bottle a little bit. **After you're finished using the stove, please make sure you close the valve again.**



The stove runs on LPG gas. If you do happen to run out, most (older) gas stations which have a

sign saying LPG/Gas/გაზი, will be able to top it up. Gas is also sold from big trucks next to the road.

Sometimes condensation builds up in the regulator, and gas does not flow correctly. In this case, unscrew the regulator and let the water drop out.

WiFi Internet hotspot

All rentals are provided with a 4G internet hotspot free of charge, with a data pack of 5GB to use in Georgia. The coverage is generally good, even in remote areas.

To connect with your laptop or phone to the network, turn on the hotspot, and log in with the following credentials:

WiFi network name: Overlando Campers

Password: wheretheroadstops

If you run out of data and wish to purchase extra, please contact us and we can top you up with a new package for a small fee.



On the road

Traffic rules

Driving is on the right side of the road. On multi-lane roads, the left lane is the fast lane, but be prepared for cars to overtake you no matter which lane you're in.

General speed limits:

- 60 km/h in cities and villages
- 90 km/h on the open road
- 110 km/h on major highways

That being said, always follow the posted speed limit.

Always wear seat belts.

Do not drink and drive. There is a zero-tolerance policy on alcohol and drug usage while driving. Not only is this illegal, but the insurance will not be valid in the event of any incidents.

The police

In general, the police don't bother tourists, but as you are driving with local licence plates, you may occasionally be stopped at traffic checkpoints or after breaking a traffic law.

Do not get out of the car, but wait till the officer comes to your door. Road Police officers generally speak some English, have body cams and are generally friendly and professional.

In Georgia, corruption is not an issue anymore, so you don't have to worry about that. Also never try to bribe an officer. This is a criminal offence.

Fines

In Tbilisi and on the highways there are 'smart cameras' registering all kinds of traffic violations. In case you get caught we will receive a message and inform you.

If the police stop you and give you a fine, remember that you can never pay on the spot or with cash. They will give a receipt that has to be paid within 30 days. Just keep this receipt



and get in touch with us, and we will help you with the payment.

Never try to negotiate a fine. The fines are fixed and trying to negotiate may be interpreted as trying to bribe the officer, which is a crime.

Parking

Finding a parking spot in Tbilisi can be a challenge. There are several parking garages and car parks around the city which you can use for a small fee - but keep in mind the height of the vehicle.

Street parking is free in most areas, but in some city centres, there is a paid parking system. We have paid the fees already for Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Batumi, which means where you see a blue P on a sign you can park. Some of these parking signs will show that you need to pay an additional 1 GEL/hr that you park there, which you have to pay with the app 'Tbilisi Parking'.

There will be 'unofficial' parking guards in reflective vests that will help you with parking. Although not required, it is nice to give them some change (usually 1-2 lari) when you leave.

Accidents

We hope it never happens, but in case of an accident, please observe the following points.

First, make sure you and all persons involved are safe. Call **112** if you need an ambulance.

Do not move the vehicle from the accident location. This will void the insurance. Only move the vehicle when the police or insurance company instructs to do so or to bring people to safety.

Keep calm and stay polite. Always call the police (112) so they can assess the situation, make a report and help to recover. Afterwards, please call our hotline so we can inform the insurance agency and/or roadside assistance. At this point, we will give you further instructions on what to do.

All accidents, no matter how small, must be reported in this way. Doing otherwise will leave you financially responsible for any damages.



Navigation

There are several apps that can help you navigate in the cities and the countryside. Below are a few which we recommend based on experience.

Maps.me - For offline maps, hikes, off-road, villages. Maps of the region can be downloaded in advance and you can do simple route planning. Not very suitable to plan a longer route, though it will sometimes suggest interesting 'detours'. Don't rely on this entirely, especially on its time estimates.

Yandex Navi - For navigating in the major cities, planning longer trips. Great for time estimates and finding more functional routes, but will lead you down strange tracks every now and then.

Google Maps - When you're not in the car, Google Maps is your best friend. It has the most listings of locations, business, and so on. It's functional for route-planning but can choose some slower routes.

Driving at night

We do not recommend driving at night, especially in the countryside where the roads are in bad condition and other cars drive without proper lights. If you find yourself in a situation where you are, we recommend driving at a much slower pace than the posted speed limit.

Camping

Wild camping

Finding a perfect camp spot isn't difficult in this region. There are many nice spots on mountains, near rivers, meadows and in forests. We believe part of the fun of a road trip is finding a cool place to set up camp and enjoy the views while preparing dinner or when waking up. To make sure that areas don't get overrun and overused we prefer to give you tips on how to find spots, opposed to telling you where to go. Once you know what to look for, you'll never run out of incredible locations to set up for the night!

Wild camping is not forbidden by law and is considered safe. But always remember to use common sense, don't disturb nature or locals, and leave the place better than you found it. Avoid staying on lands that are clearly someone's property, or ask a local when in doubt.

We advise you to find your camp spot before sunset: when it's dark it gets exponentially more difficult to find a convenient place.



A great way to find camp spots in advance is using the app *iOverlander* (available on iPhone and Android). This is a community maintained campsite database made by fellow overlanders and we cannot recommend it enough.

Campsites

Although not very widespread, there are some small campsites in the region. We've listed a few on our website, and will add to this list as time goes on. If you find any on your journey that we don't have listed here, please tell us and we'll add them in!

Some national parks also have dedicated camping spots. Look on the maps, or just ask a ranger. Sometimes a small fee is charged.

Georgia

www.overlando.com/georgia/campings-in-georgia/



Armenia

www.overlando.com/armenia/campings-in-armenia/

Furthermore, it is common to ask at a hostel/guest house if you can stay in their yard or parking lot overnight.

Responsible travel

Drinking water

You'll find that in most cities, and in many areas across the country the tap water is perfectly safe to drink. In a lot of cases it's clean water from the mountains nearby. That being said, we recommend you to use precaution and drink water at your own risk. Even if the water is safe, it is possible to get a minor upset stomach if you're not used to drinking the water from the area.

If you're unsure, consider purchasing some form of water filtration device or bottle. Please consider the environment and avoid purchasing bottled water.

Be considerate

Please pay attention to your surroundings wherever you are and be respectful to local communities. If someone allows you to camp on their land, be respectful and don't make too much noise late into the night. You'll find Georgians to be incredibly generous, warm and friendly people, especially out in the countryside, so please don't ever give them any reason to change their mind. Don't be surprised if you set up for the night and you have a surprise guest bringing over a bottle of chacha, a type of local moonshine!

Wildlife and animals

As cute as they sometimes are, don't feed the wildlife. Leave food within the car overnight as well, to prevent any unwelcome overnight visitors from straying into camp. Be aware of where you set up camp - if there are traces of livestock having been nearby, consider an alternate location or risk waking up being surrounded by a herd of cattle, or a flock of sheep.



Sadly, there are a lot of street dogs and cats - and sometimes they may (seem to) be abandoned in nature. How noble it may seem - don't try to 'rescue' these animals. This is a big region wide problem that you can't solve as a tourist. There are almost no shelters that accept new animals, and unless you are planning to take the animal back with you - it's very unlikely to find a safe new home. Giving some dog or cat food, and a bit of attention, is the best you can do.

Fire safety

Only use fallen branches and other dead wood when building a campfire. Consider collecting dry wood when you see it during the day, and you'll thank yourself later when setting up camp in the late afternoon. Cutting down live trees/bushes makes beautiful areas ugly, ruins the environment around you and also just doesn't burn well.

Clear all flammable undergrowth such as dry leaves and sticks from around the place you wish to set your fire, in case any sparks fly out. Always, always ensure that your fire is out before leaving camp. Don't just bury it in sand

or dirt, as this actually lets coals stay hot for longer and can cause wildfires.

Nature's bathroom

When you've gotta go, you've gotta go. Just make sure you go well away from the camping area, places that would generally have foot traffic, as well as near any sources of water. We've supplied you with a shovel, so dig a deep hole so that animals don't go digging around after you've left.

Disposal of waste

In almost every village you will find big trash containers where you can leave your rubbish. Separated waste collection points are still quite rare in Georgia, but you will find recycling containers in bigger cities. It's worth it to keep your plastics separated and put them in these containers when returning the car.

We have a plastic recycling collection in our garage, note that only clean hard plastics, with marks PP(5), HDPE(2) and PET(1) are accepted. Others can't be recycled here.



Please note that waste collection in remote mountain areas (Svaneti, Tusheti, etc.) is problematic. Unfortunately this means that trash often gets dumped in nature, even when you put it in the containers. Consider taking your trash back to the lowlands and disposing of it there.

Leave no trace

Whether it's a quick pit stop or somewhere you set up camp, **please do everything you can to leave the area better than you found it.** Pick up any rubbish you find, whether it was yours or not and dispose of it correctly. If you're taking a bath out in lakes or rivers, please use natural and eco-friendly soaps.

Read up about the 7 principles of 'Leave no trace' <https://Int.org/why/7-principles/>



The Leave No Trace Seven Principles

01

PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE

- Know the regulations and special concerns for the area you'll visit.
- Prepare for extreme weather, hazards, and emergencies.
- Schedule your trip to avoid times of high use.
- Visit in small groups when possible. Consider splitting larger groups into smaller groups.
- Repackage food to minimize waste.
- Use a map and compass to eliminate the use of marking paint, rock cairns or flagging.

02

TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES

- Durable surfaces include established trails and campsites, rock, gravel, dry grasses or snow.
- Protect riparian areas by camping at least 200 feet from lakes and streams.
- Good campsites are found, not made. Altering a site is not necessary.
- In popular areas:
 - Concentrate use on existing trails and campsites.
 - Walk single file in the middle of the trail, even when wet or muddy.
 - Keep campsites small. Focus activity in areas where vegetation is absent.
- In pristine areas:
 - Disperse use to prevent the creation of campsites and trails.
 - Avoid places where impacts are just beginning.

03

DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY

- Pack it in, pack it out. Inspect your campsite and rest areas for trash or spilled foods. Pack out all trash, leftover food and litter.
- Deposit solid human waste in catholes dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water, camp and trails. Cover and disguise the cathole when finished.
- Pack out toilet paper and hygiene products.
- To wash yourself or your dishes, carry water 200 feet away from streams or lakes and use small amounts of biodegradable soap. Scatter strained dishwater.

04

LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND

- Preserve the past: examine, but do not touch cultural or historic structures and artifacts.
- Leave rocks, plants and other natural objects as you find them.
- Avoid introducing or transporting non-native species.
- Do not build structures, furniture, or dig trenches.

05

MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS

- Campfires can cause lasting impacts to the environment. Use a lightweight stove for cooking and enjoy a candle lantern for light.
- Where fires are permitted, use established fire rings, fire pans, or mound fires.
- Keep fires small. Only use sticks from the ground that can be broken by hand.
- Burn all wood and coals to ash, put out campfires completely, then scatter cool ashes.

06

RESPECT WILDLIFE

- Observe wildlife from a distance. Do not follow or approach them.
- Never feed animals. Feeding wildlife damages their health, alters natural behaviors, and exposes them to predators and other dangers.
- Protect wildlife and your food by storing ration and trash securely.
- Control pets at all times, or leave them at home.
- Avoid wildlife during sensitive times: mating, nesting, raising young, or winter.

07

BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS

- Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

Packing list

Must-haves

- ☐ Drivers licence
- ☐ Bank/credit cards (ATMs and exchange offices are widespread)
- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Travel insurance

Handy to have

- ☐ Notebook and pen/pencil
- ☐ Refillable water bottles

Personal care

- ☐ Toiletries
- ☐ Hairbrush

- ☐ Painkillers (don't bring anything with codeine)
- ☐ Sunscreen
- ☐ Wet wipes
- ☐ Hand sanitizer
- ☐ Eco-friendly soap

Entertainment & Electronics

- ☐ A good book
- ☐ An even better playlist
(hint: <https://spotify.link/esS3MbX7Gyb>)
- ☐ Playing cards
- ☐ Phone & charger
- ☐ Camera & charger
- ☐ Laptop & charger
- ☐ Travel adapter (Georgia uses 220V standard Euro/Schuko outlets)
- ☐ Torch, headtorch & extra batteries

Clothing & Gear

We're not going to start by telling you what to wear now, but here are a few things that we think you should definitely bring along with you!

- ☐ Clothes
- ☐ Day pack
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Hiking boots or a good pair of shoes
- ☐ Hiking socks
- ☐ Raincoat
- ☐ Flip flops
- ☐ Wide brim hat
- ☐ Light jacket
- ☐ Swimsuit or bathers
- ☐ Towels

Returning the car

While you don't need to deep wash the car, please take some time to clean up the interior and throw away any prepared food, get out the mud, sand and your garbage

You don't have to worry about a complete exterior car wash.

The drop-off time is no later than 16:00 on the last rental day, unless agreed otherwise.

Please fill up the fuel tank again before you return the car.

Return checklist

- ☐ Clean up the interior of the camper
- ☐ Fill up the left fuel tank
- ☐ Check the car for personal belongings, especially next to and behind the front seats, glovebox and cupboards
- ☐ Throw away any prepared food items
- ☐ Throw away your garbage

The DON'TS

We tried to make this handbook fun, useful and not full of DON'T DO THIS warnings. However, there are some points that we want to make clear that are not acceptable.

- **Do not walk or stand on the roof(bars) of the car or the tent**
We know it makes for a nice photo - but it also dents the roof or damages the tent - it is not made for it.
- **Do not use the mattress(es), pillows and blankets of the camper outside**
Not only is it very hard to clean, it can attract all kinds of bugs and fleas that you don't want inside the camper. Instead, rent or buy a picnic carpet if you want to lay in the grass.
- **Don't use the awning in heavy wind or rain**, and don't leave it out when you go away. It is made to give some shade or protection for light rain and light wind only.

- **Do not continue driving with a problem**

If you notice any technical issue, a strange noise, a check-engine light, etc. do not continue driving and hope for the best. At least contact us to check if it's fine to continue. A small issue might become a repair of a few thousand euros if left neglected.

Don't leave us with a last-minute surprise, either, by pointing out things that broke or did not work only when returning the car.

If it's a small thing, a short message is enough, so we can fix it and not disappoint the next guest.

- If you **smell the clutch** - you're doing something wrong. A clutch has a very particular smell, similar to burning rubber. This should not happen, also not in the mountains, and indicates overheating. Incidentally, this can of course happen, but not all the time. Unsure about it? Just reach out.

- **Don't put pans too close or over the stove knobs**

The knobs will melt!

- **Always close gas bottles** when you don't use them, and double check if stove flames are off. Never leave the stove unattended.

- **Don't fill up oil or other fluids without consulting**

Filling the wrong substance or specifications may cause serious damage to the car.

- **Do not leave valuables (phones/speakers/etc) in plain sight**

This is just common sense. Generally crime isn't an issue - but don't make it too easy.

The art of car maintenance

Before we give you the car, we thoroughly inspect it and check the fluid levels, grease points, tyres, etc. For short rentals this should be enough, but if you are taking the camper for a longer period of time - it is necessary to do some checks yourself every now and then.

We advise you to do these checks at least **every week**, after **500** regular kilometres or after **200** kilometres of mountain driving. This is for your own safety and proper maintenance of the car!

Only do these checks when the engine is cold, a good moment is in the morning before you leave.

1. **Check the engine oil level**

Open the engine cover/hood and find the oil level stick. Take it out, clean it with a piece of toilet paper and stick it back all the way in. Now take it out again, and check if the oil level is between 0 and 1 (Π)

If the level is close to or below 0, you need to fill up the oil. Please contact us for details.

2. **Check the coolant level**

Locate the radiator reservoir for the coolant. Usually the coolant has a red colour, and you can check the level on the side of the reservoir. The reservoir should be about half full or more.

If the level is too low, you need to fill up with antifreeze or *distilled* water. Don't use tap or mountain water! Contact us for details.

3. **Visually check for leaks under the car.**

Any liquid spilled on the road, drops hanging under the car?

4. **Visually inspect the tyres**

Check if you see nails in the tyre, new damages to the sidewall. Check if the pressure is similar on all tyres.

While driving, always keep an eye on:

- **Engine temperature**

The temperature gauge should never go much above 90 degrees.

If it does go higher, stop the car, let the engine cool down and check the coolant level.

- **Warning and 'check engine' lights**

Red lights mean: stop immediately

Orange/yellow lights: something needs to be checked

