



REPORT

ANALYSIS OF TOURISM POTENTIAL AND EXISTING CULTURAL TOURISM SITES
IN THE ELIGIBLE TERRITORY OF GEORGIA OF JOINT OPERATIONAL
PROGRAMME FOR TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION BLACK SEA BASIN
2014-2020

Project: “Development of Sustainable Cultural Tourism in the Black Sea Basin”, CULTOUR-BSB, MIS code: BSB-117, Grant Contract № 100708/05.09.2018r., funded under ENI CBC Joint Operational Programme Black Sea Basin 2014-2020.

Activity T1.1 “Preparation of analyses of tourism potential in the BSB countries”

Deliverable DT.1.1. Prepared analyses of tourism potential in the BSB countries

Beneficiary: N(N)LE Ecocenter For Environmental Protection, Georgia

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January 31th 2019



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T B I L I S I

I.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Tbilisi capital of the republic of Georgia, is an ancient center of Caucasus. Its history covers 1500 years from the date of formation to the present time. Because of its location on the crossroads between Europe and Asia, and its proximity to the lucrative Silk Road, throughout history Tbilisi was a point of contention among various global powers. City has often been threatened by enemies, but was always defended by its heroes: sometimes conquered and sometimes victorious. Despite it all, the spirit of Tbilisi has never been broken. In 1922-1936 Tbilisi was declared a capital of Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (including Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia).

Tbilisi is located in Eastern Georgia on both banks of the Mtkvari River. The elevation of the city ranges from 380–770 metres above sea level and has the shape of an amphitheatre surrounded by mountains on three sides. Tbilisi lies between Mtskheta Mtianeti (on the north) and Kvemo Kartli (on the south) Municipalities.

The relief of Tbilisi is complex. The part of the city which lies on the left bank of the Mtkvari River extends for more than 30 km from the Avchala District to River Lochini. The part of the city which lies on the right side of the Mtkvari River, on the other hand, is built along the foothills of the Trialeti Range, the slopes of which in many cases descend all the way to the edges of the river Mtkvari. The mountains, therefore, are a significant barrier to urban development on the right bank of the Mtkvari River. This type of a geographic environment creates pockets of very densely developed areas while other parts of the city are left undeveloped due to the complex topographic relief. *Tbilisi covers an area of 504.2 km² and divided into 10 districts: Saburtalo, Mtatsminda, Krtsanisi, Vake, Didube, Chugureti, Gldani, Nadzaladevi, Isani and Samgori.*

I.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Tbilisi is the economic center of the country, generating almost 50 percent of Georgia's GDP. The service sector, including government services, is dominating and contributes 88 percent to GDP. Its GDP per capita of 10,336 Georgian Lari (€3,600) is exceeding the national average by more than 50

percent. The service sector itself is dominated by the wholesale and retail trade sector, reflecting the role of Tbilisi as transit and logistics hub for the country and the South Caucasus. The manufacturing

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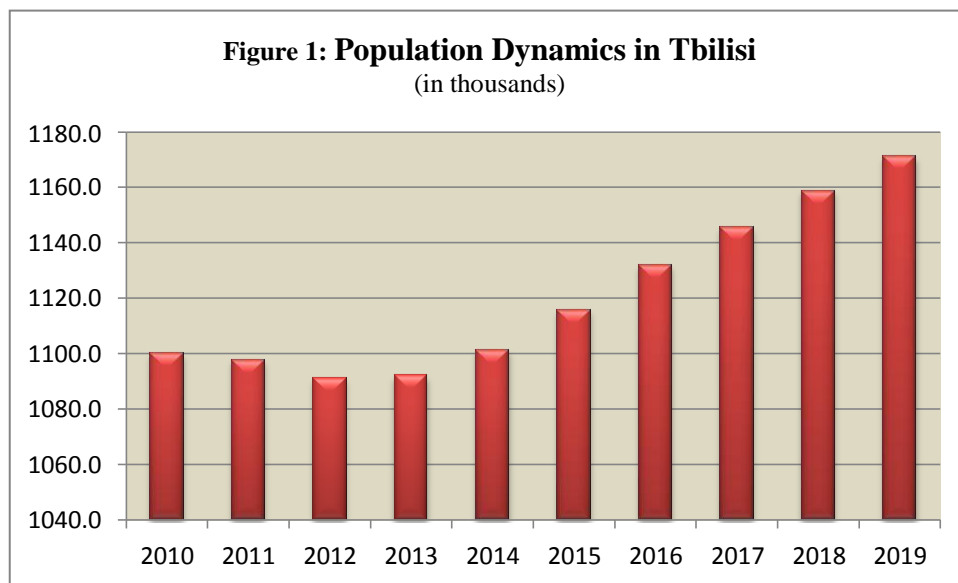




sector contributes only 12 percent to Tbilisi's GDP, but is much larger, by employment and total value added, than the manufacturing sectors in any other region of Georgia. The unemployment rate in Tbilisi is – with 22.5 percent – significantly higher in Tbilisi than in the regions.

Population

By 2018 the population of Tbilisi made up 1128.4 thousand (30.3 percent of the whole population of the country), population density is 2238 people per square kilometer. Between the 1989 and 2014 censuses, the population in Tbilisi decreased by 9.5 percent. Fertility and mortality rates in the city 13.3 and 10.7 per mille correspondingly. Natural increase made up 2.6 per 1000 inhabitants.



Source: Geostat

Around 90% of the population consists of ethnic Georgians (2014 census). Significant is a number populations of other ethnic groups such as Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Russians. Along with the above-mentioned groups, Tbilisi is home to other ethnic groups including Yazidis, Ossetians, Ukrainians, Greeks, Assyrians, Abkhazians, Germans, Jews, Estonians, Kurds and others.

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More than 92% of the residents of Tbilisi practise forms of Christianity (the most predominant of which is the Georgian Orthodox Church). The Russian Orthodox Church, which is in Full communion with the Georgian, and the Armenian Apostolic Church have significant followings within the city as well. A minority of the population (around 1.5%) practises Islam (mainly Shia Islam), while about 0.1% of Tbilisi's population practices Judaism. There is also Roman Catholic church and the Yazidi Sultan Ezid Temple.

I.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Monasteries, Temples, Fortresses

The **Anchiskhati Basilica of St Mary** is the oldest surviving church in the old part of Tbilisi. It belongs to the Georgian Orthodox Church and dates from the sixth century.

According to the old Georgian annals, the church was built by the King Dachi of Iberia (circa 522-534) who had made Tbilisi his capital.

After the soviet regime establishment in Georgia, the liturgical ceremonies in Anchiskhati church were halted. The museum of the handcraft wares was disposed in it and a little later - the art studio. The liturgical ceremonies were restored in the church since 1989.

Mamadaviti domed church is located in the south –west of Tbilisi on Mtatsminda. The name Mtatsminda derived from Atoni St. mountain in the 10th century. Due to the legend saying that St. Father Davit Garejeli lived in the cave of this mountain in the 6th century. On the very place a church was founded in the 10th century. The terrace around the Mamadaviti church has officially been announced as a pantheon of writers and public figures since 1929.

Virgin Mary church Sioni is located on the street having the same name, in one of the oldest districts of Tbilisi, in upper Kala. According to the legend the first church on the very place was constructed by the King Vakhtang Gorgasali in the 5th century.

Sioni church was attacked and restored several times. Church is totally restored by David IV the Builder in 1122, when Tbilisi was still in the hands of Georgians. In 1226 during Mongolian attack the church was damaged again, its dome was ruined according to Jalal Ed Din's order but the Sioni Church was soon repaired, this church was damaged once more during Temur Lang attack in 1386 and it was renovated by the King Alexander the First.

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Sioni church had been the crypt of Georgian Catholicos Patriarchs. According to the saying, St. Evstati Mtskheteli (died in 550 in tortures) lies in rest under the refectory, St. Nino's vine cross is kept in the church.

St. Cross Church known as Jvarismama, is located in lower Kala (old part of Tbilisi). According to the legend the construction of the first church on this place is linked with the King Vakhtang Gorgasali. St. Cross Church, constructed in the second half of the 5th century. The church that has come up today was built in the 16th century. It was demolished in 1920. The book-ware house was arranged in the church during the Soviet regime, in 1983 the reconstruction of the nearby territory of Jvarismama was carried out: all the residential houses and taverns near it were removed; the book-ware house was also removed from the place. The church has been functioning again since 1989.

Virgin Mary Metekhi church is located on the left bank of the river Mtkvari, on the cliff plateau, the first church on this place was probably built by Vakhtang Gorgasali symbolically resembling the church built on virgin Mary's tomb in Gethsemane garden in Jerusalem. According to the legend the former catholicos Kirion transferred the body of the saint Shushanik to this church in 7th century.

St. George Kvashveti Church is located on Rustaveli Avenue. Its name derived from one of the miracles by Davit Garejeli, who was one of the 12 Assyrian fathers living and performing their duties in Georgia in the 6th century. The first church was built here in the 6th century. In 1753 with the support of Givi Amilakhvari, the brick temple was built on this place, at the teens of the 20th century, a quite damaged church was destroyed and in 1904-1910 a new church was built according to the project of the architect Leopold Bilfeld.

The outstanding Georgian entrepreneur and supporter Davit Sarajishvili is buried in the yard of the church (1848-1911).

The Holy Trinity Cathedral Church is the religious center of Georgia. Its construction took 7 years and was finished in 2003. Its height goes up to 101 meters with 137 meter diameter including vestibule gallery. 10 churches are disposed in the interior. Together with the main cathedral, the chief gate, Iveria Virgin Mary and Ilya Tetezbitel churches are also included. The dome and 2.5 tone cross of the cathedral are gilded.

The idea to build a new cathedral to commemorate 1,500 years of autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church and 2,000 years from the birth of Jesus emerged as early as 1989, a crucial year for

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the national awakening of the then-Soviet republic of Georgia. In May 1989, the Georgian Orthodox Patriarchate and the authorities of Tbilisi announced an international contest for the "Holy Trinity Cathedral" project.

Holy Trinity church is one of the grandiose churches in the orthodox world.

The Armenian Church known as Norasheni is located in Lower Kala (old part of Tbilisi). This church is St. Mary Church. The first church was built on this place in 1740. The one that came up to day was built in 1790-1796, though the construction works were lasting till 1830.

The paintings by the Armenian artist Mkrtum Ovnatanian still remain in the interior.

Saint Peter and Paul Catholic Church located on Ivane Javakhishvili Street was built in 1870-1877 by the order of Konstantine Zubalashvili, the head of Roman-catholic parish and the supporter. The church was built according to the project of the architect Albert Zaltsman and this church is of earlier baroque style resembling the same style Roman churches.

The Roman Pope Paul the II visiting Georgia in 1999 performed the mass in St. Peter and Paul Church.

The Great Synagogue is located in old part of Tbilisi, was built from 1895 to 1903 in an eclectic style by Georgian Jews.

Mosque constructed in 1723-1735 during the Osman reign, which was destroyed in the middle of the 17th century with the order of Nadir-Shah. In 1846-1851 the mosque was renovated according to the project of the architect Jovanni Scoudier, but the latter was also destroyed at the end of the 19th century and the present mosque was constructed on its place. The mosque, located at the end of the Botanical garden is the only functioning one at present, and it serves as the Shiite for the Sunnite Muslims.

Narikala fortress is an historical fortress overlooking Tbilisi. The fortress was established in the 4th century and it was a Persian citadel. It was considerably expanded by the Umayyads in the 7th century and later, by king David the Builder (1089–1125). The Mongols renamed it "Narin Qala" (i.e., "Little Fortress"). Most of extant fortifications date from the 16th and 17th centuries. No one leaves Tbilisi without walking around this amazing fortress.

Protected Areas and Parks

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Tbilisi National Park is one of eleven national parks in Georgia, located to the north of the city of Tbilisi. The historical town of Mtskheta lies right outside of the western boundary of the park. The national park was established in 1973 on the basis of the previously existing Saguramo National Reserve (established in 1946). The area of the park is 243 square kilometres.

The park is located on the slope of the Saguramo Range, east of the Aragvi River, and belongs to the drainage basin of the Kura. The highest point of the park is 1,385 metres. The area of the park is mainly covered by trees and shrub of oak, hornbeam, and beech. The protected mammals in the park include red deer, lynx, Eurasian brown bear, red fox, and jackal.

The paved road connecting Tbilisi and Tianeti crosses the central part of the park, traversing the Saguramo - Ialno Range. A stretch of the Tbilisi bypass highway runs along the southwestern border of the park.

Tbilisi offers tourists diverse selection of parks and gardens in different districts with its historical monuments, personages and attractions. Among them:

Botanical Garden;

Mushthaid Garden;

9 April Garden;

Vake Park;

Zoological Park;

Mtatsminda Park

Pushkin Square;

Rike Park.

Museums

Georgian National Museum. The collections of the National Museum cover the history of the country, starting from animal remains dated back to 40 million years. One of the most amazing specimens at the museum is the prehistoric human remains found in Dmanisi. These remains date back to 1.8 million years and are the oldest sign of human existence outside of Africa. This discovery has changed the whole theory of human evolution. One of the most important collections of the Georgian National Museum is the Collection of Treasures that contains a big number of unique objects from different historical periods (from the second half of the 3th millennium BC through 19th century AD). The collection features gold and silver artifacts and jewelry from the pre-Christian period from Kakheti (East Georgia), Vani (West Georgia), Mtskheta, Trialeti Kurgans, Zhinvali, Akhagori, Martkopi, etc.

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These objects were discovered during archeological excavations from the beginning of the 20th century to the summer of 2004 and/or collected by historians. National Museum operates as a scientific-educational institution that preserves and exhibits a unique collection of natural and human history.

Museum of Fine Arts was established in Tbilisi in 1920 as the National Arts Gallery of Georgia. The Museum houses the best-known samples of Georgian artwork. Different collections of the Museum preserve approximately sixty thousand objects. The Museum is distinguished for its Georgian goldsmith pieces dated back to the 8th-19th Centuries. The most significant exhibits are the icon of Zarzma Monastery, the Chalice of Bedia, Anchistkhati and Khakhuli Triptychs, Processional Liturgical Crosses etc. Also unique are the exhibits of cut-enamel, jewelry and art textiles from 8th-15th cc. The Museum stores the works of famous Georgian painters: Niko Pirozmanishvili, Lado Gudiashvili, Elene Akvlediani, David Kakabadze and others. The Museum also hosts collections of Russian, Western Europe and Oriental (mainly Persian) artworks.

The Open Air Museum was founded in 1966 by George Chitaia, a famous Georgian ethnographer and academician, whose name it now bears. The museum is one of the most unique museums in Georgia: you can physically 'visit' almost all the regions of Georgia in several hours and learn about the architecture and traditions of different regions. The Open Air Museum is located in Tbilisi, Vake district, to the west of 'Turtle Lake'. It occupies 65 hectares of land. The Museum features objects of traditional art and architecture from different parts of Georgia.

Georgian National Center of manuscripts is one of the most important depositories of old manuscript books and historical documents in Georgia. The Institute of Manuscripts was set up on 30 June 1958. The Centre works in two directions: museum and research.

Georgian Museum of Literature. The museum houses unique samples of old and contemporary Georgian literature, as well as items representing cultural heritage of foreign countries: manuscripts (12th c. Four Gospels, 17th-19th c.c. philosophical-religious works); archives, manuscripts and memorial belongings (furniture, family relics, clothes) of well-known Georgian and foreign writers. Photographs and documents, bibliographical rarities, rare audio-video records. The museum fund: 140 000 items.

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State Museum of National Instruments. The museum houses collections of Georgian and South Caucasian people authentic musical instruments, as well as European mechanical and classical musical instruments. In the museum are kept manuscript notes of Georgian folk music, audio-video records, phono-photo materials. There are also replica of a 15th-14th c.c. B.C. swan bone flute, samples of fine and applied art, gramophone records (beginning of the 20th c.) of Georgian folk songs and so called Oriental songs. The museum stores paintings of L.Gudiashvili, I.Sharlemann, J.Khutsishvili, and collection of 18th-19th c.c. Oriental carpets and Georgian rugs.

Silk Museum. The museum was established in 1887 by Nikolai Shavrov, great enthusiast and silk specialist, and the building for it was built in 1892. Along with the museum collections, was established a library (the oldest book is published in 1601). The museum houses all kinds of collections of specimens connected with the silk production: collection of mulberry and its products; collections of silkworms, butterflies, cocoons (5.000 breeds and variations); collection of natural and synthetic dyes with samples; collections of models for domestic and industrial silk production; collections of silk products – threads, fabrics, laces, etc.; photo archive; especially interesting is that the museum collections represent all countries with traditions of silk production. Most of the collections of the museum were collected by N.Shavrov and donated by European, Russian and Caucasian colleagues. The museum and its library furniture themselves are good sample of 19th c. museum of natural history.

Ioseb Grishashvili Tbilisi History Museum was founded in 1910 as a City Museum. In 1943 it was renamed to the Tbilisi State Historic-Ethnographical Museum. Currently the museum is named after Georgian poet Ioseb Grishashvili. The museum houses collections that represent Tbilisi history, everyday life and culture (50.000 items). There are collections of archaeology, ethnography, documents, folk and applied art. The museum collection contains unique objects, weapons, various kind of ceramic, china, musical instruments, numismatics, textiles and household accessories starting from the Bronze Age. The museum has the collection of Lado Gudiashvili, Mose Toidze, Elene Akhvlediani paintings as well as masterpieces of other renowned Georgian artists. There are numerous of House-Museums and Galleries in Tbilisi.

Natural Touristic Resources

Turtle Lake is a direct English translation of **Kus Tba**, so named due to the perceived abundance of turtles living in these places.

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Turtle Lake is located on the wooded northern slope of Mtatsminda Mount at elevation of 686.7 m above sea level and fed by a small river Varazis-Khevi, a tributary to the Mtkvari. The area of surface is 0.34 km². Maximal depth is 2.6 m.

The Turtle Lake area is designed as a recreational zone and is frequented by the Tbilisians on weekends. It is also a place where festivals and concerts are held. West to the lake is the Open Air Museum of Ethnography, a large exhibition of Georgia's folk architecture.

Lisi lake is a small lake in the vicinity of Tbilisi. belongs to the Kura River valley, it's a place to a large mixed-use development project by the same name. The landscape is rocky and arid with shrub vegetation and plots of steppe. The lake and surrounding area provide a habitat for variety of different species of exotic birds. In addition to various avian species, the area around the lake provides shelter to a variety of animals such as turtles, foxes and hares.

The Tbilisi sea or **Tbilisi reservoir** is an artificial lake in the vicinity of Tbilisi that serves as a reservoir. The lake has a length of 8.75 km and a width of 2.85 km. It was opened in 1953 and has become a popular recreation spot. It is planned to develop the Tbilisi sea into a recreational park with various sports facilities. Tbilisi sea is the most popular destination for swimming.

Tbilisi has important landmarks and sightseeing locations. The Parliament and the government (State Chancellery) buildings of Georgia, as well as the Supreme Court of Georgia, are in Tbilisi. The city has important cultural landmarks such as the, Tbilisi State Conservatoire, Tbilisi Opera and Ballet Theatre, Shota Rustaveli State Academic Theatre, Marjanishvili State Academic Theatre, the Vorontsov's Palace (also known as the Children's Palace today), the National Public Library of the Parliament of Georgia, the National Bank of Georgia, Tbilisi Circus, The Bridge of Peace and other important institutions.

Traditions

Tbilisoba is an annual public holiday celebrated in October. For two days the city hosts various cultural and sports events. The central streets of Tbilisi are full of people celebrating the festival. Visitors can try traditional Georgian wine, cheese and sweets. The festival also includes the award ceremony of Tbilisi honourable citizens. Tbilisoba was established in October 1979.

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New Wine Festival in Tbilisi. the festival is held in one of green areas in Tbilisi in the beginning of May. Tourists can tasting various of excellent Georgian wine of the last harvest. Traditional Georgian barbeques and fresh bread are available at the festival to try keeping you sober. Accompanied by Georgian dances and songs performances, the festival lasts the whole weekend.

ArtGene is the annual summer (usually in July) festival of Georgian culture, handcrafts, music and dance held open air in the beautiful Ethnographic museum. There are artists and craftsmen exhibiting their products and giving masterclasses and there is are concerts and shows throughout the day on the main stage. Festivals participants also are from the different ethnic minorities of Georgia and from abroad.

Cheese Festival. Every year (in July) Georgia invites gourmets from all over the world to the Cheese Festival. In 2015 it became international, as Armenia and Azerbaijan filled the list of participants. The name makes the purpose of the event obvious - to introduce visitors to the regional types of cheeses. Hard flavorful dambal-khacho prepared according to technology which is recognized and protected by UNESCO, spicy Guda cheese matured in a bag made of sheepskin, Tenili Kveli from Southern Georgia, tightly woven into a braid, cheese in honey, oils, flowers, spices. Peasants from different regions enjoy showing the ancient tools used for preparing cheeses and tell visitors about specific details of preparation of different sorts of cheeses.

Hotels

The largest number of brand hotels are located in Tbilisi. Out of total number of 26 brand hotels, 12 are located in Tbilisi with 3,414 beds.

Tbilisi boasts several international hotel brands: Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel, Tbilisi Marriott, Courtyard Marriott, Sheraton, Holiday Inn, Citadines Apart Hotel, Best Western Tbilisi, Mercure, Hotels and Preference Hualing Tbilisi, The Biltmore Hotel. In 2017, the Ibis Styles Tbilisi Center was added to this list.

While visiting Georgia, tourists will be served as higher class facilities, as well as tourist and economical class, various types of accommodation facilities. In Tbilisi - as in the tourist regions of Georgia, many hotels will offer for the tourists - excursion services, accompanied by guide and animator, picnics and walking in nature.

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Restaurants:

In the shadow of Metekhi located in the old part of Tbilisi, Georgian restaurant In the Shadow of Metekhi offers cozy ambiance along with wonders of local cuisine. Guests are welcome to enjoy Georgian national songs and dances.

Taglaura is one of the most successful Georgian traditional restaurant chains. It combines four restaurants in Tbilisi located in most popular places in the town.

Taglaura guests will find themselves in the environment flavored with Georgian elements, where Georgian folk music singers will allow them to spend unforgettable evenings. The wax characters from legendary Georgian movies creates best mood for the guests who come there.

Restaurant **Tsiskvili** is an iconic Georgian restaurant. The unique authentic design is reached with: the natural waterfall, water mill and many ancient antiquities. Every evening guests can enjoy Georgian traditional musical and dance folk show.

The restaurant **Mepetubani** (located in the old part of Tbilisi) is a historic site, which is the Royal place and his residence. It is not only the residence of the king of Georgia but also a cultural center.

Funicular Restaurant Complex (located on the Mtatsminda plateau).

The Funicular Complex includes 4 separate dining facilities: Chela (traditional Georgian), Puri Guliani (bakery), the signature Restaurant Funicular and its Ball room.

Nightlife

In the recent years - beyond traditional attractions - Tbilisi has developed burgeoning nightclub culture. The leading clubs such as Bassiani, Mtkvarze, Khidi, and Café Gallery have featured major international DJs as well as local performers.

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I. A D J A R A

II.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Adjara officially known as the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, is a historical, geographic and political-administrative region of Georgia. Located in the country's southwestern corner, Adjara lies on the coast of the Black Sea near the foot of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains, north of Turkey. It is an important tourist destination and includes Georgia's second-largest city of Batumi as its capital. *Driving distance from Batumi to Tbilisi is 373 kilometers.* It covers an area of 2.880 km², accounting for 4.1% of the total territory of Georgia.

Depending on environmental conditions the territory of Adjara is divided into maritime and mountainous and consists of 5 Municipalities: Keda, Kobuleti, Shuakhevi, Khelvachauri, Khulo and city Batumi.



II.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Adjara has good land for growing citrus fruits, tea and tobacco. Mountainous and forested, the region has a subtropical climate, and there are many health resorts. Tobacco, tea, citrus fruits, and avocados are leading crops; livestock raising is also important. Industries include tea packing, tobacco processing, fruit and fish canning, oil refining, and shipbuilding.

The port of Batumi is an important gateway for the shipment of goods heading into Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The port is also used for the shipment of oil from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Its oil refinery handles Caspian oil from Azerbaijan which arrives

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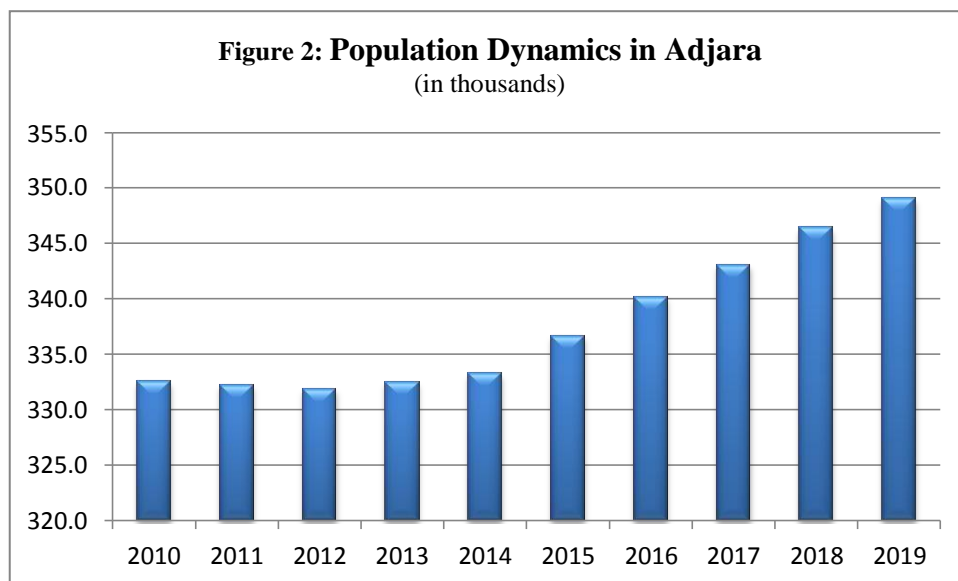




by pipeline to Supsa port and is transported from there to Batumi by rail. Adjara is the main center of Georgia's coastal tourism industry.

Population

As of 1 January 2018, the population of Adjara is 346.4 thousand. (9.3 percent of the whole population of the country Georgia) The *urban population* accounted for 56.4% of the total *population*.



Source: Geostat

Adjara's population density is 119 people per square kilometer, making it one of the most densely populated regions in the country.

Between the 1989 and 2014 censuses, the population in Adjara Region decreased by 15.1 percent. Approximately half of population are dwellers of Batumi (47.2%). After Batumi more populated municipalities are: Kobuleti (21.2%) and Khelvachauri (15.0%).

Compared to the other regions of Georgia fertility rate in Adjara is high. In 2017 crude birth rate made up 17.7 per mille and the death rate 10.1 per mille. Respectively natural increase was also high 7.6 per

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mille (5 times more than in Georgia). Natural increase was positive in all municipalities. The highest index was fixed in Khelvachauri Municipality (9.2 per mille).

As about fertility, the highest indexes were noted in the Khulo and Khelvachauri Municipalities (18.9 and 18.8‰ respectively). Among region's municipalities, death rate was high in the Khulo Municipality (10.8‰).

According to data of population census of Georgia 2014, 96.0% of the population in Adjara region are Georgians, Armenians (1.6%) and Russians (1.1%). In the region - in small groups also living: Ukrainians, Greeks, Assyrians, Ossetians, Yezids and other nationalities.

II.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Monasteries, Temples, Fortresses

The Skhalta Cathedral (located in the Khulo Municipality, village - Kinchauri) is a Georgian Orthodox monastery and cathedral church, dating from the mid-13th century. It is a large hall church design, with fragments of the 14th or 15th century Paleologian-style wall painting.

Skhalta is the only medieval church in Adjara that survived both the Ottoman and Soviet periods to become functional again in 1990. It currently serves as a seat of the Georgian Orthodox bishop of Skhalta.

Petra (Greek: Πέτρα) was a fortified town on the eastern Black Sea coast, in Lazica in what is now western Georgia. In the 6th century, under the Byzantine emperor Justinian I, it served as an important Eastern Roman outpost in the Caucasus and, due to its strategic location, became a battleground of the 541–562 Lazic War between Rome and Sasanian Persia (Iran). Mainstream scholarly opinion identifies Petra with a ruined settlement of Late Antiquity. Located at the village of Tsikhisdziri in Kobuleti Municipality.

Khikhani Fortress in Khulo Municipality was built in the 13th century A.D. Inaccessible from three sides, the fortress occupied a strategic position and retained its military function for 700 years.

It is believed that the site was originally occupied by a church (the Church of St. George) built in 1230 A.D. and the fortress was later built around it. The fortress has two main towers, the walls are 7-8 m high.

It was built at a strategic location and used to be a shelter to Georgian Royals when Tbilisi and Gori fortress were occupied. Sometimes Khikhani castle was called Tamar fortress. It used to have secret

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underground passages. Although in ruins today, visitors can see the remains of the rectangular towers, walls, a bakery, wine storage area, a water well and a church.

Situated at a height of 2635 meters above sea level the fortress provides spectacular views.

The Gonio Fortress (or the Gonio-Apsaros Fortress) is the oldest fortress of Georgia –occupying the territory of 4,5 ha is situated in village of Gonio, 15 km from Batumi city. The history of the fortress dates back several millennia. The earliest archaeological strata excavated by archaeologists in the fortress belong to the XV-XVII centuries BC. There is a legend that the name Apsaros comes from Greek myth of the Argonauts. According to legend, in this place was buried son of the king of the Aetes – Apsyrtus, killed by Jason.

Gonio-apsaros fortress is linked to many legends and myths. At the fortress there is a tomb, which is today considered to be the tomb of the Apostle Matthew – one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, the Savior who took in the circle instead of Judas Iscariot. According to one version the Apostle Matthew, after the death of Christ came in the Gonio fortress and stayed here to preach.

The total length of the fortress walls is 900 meters, and height – 5 meters. Initially, around the perimeter of the fortress of 22 towers were built – 7 meters, but some of them were eventually destroyed the fortress and today has a total of 18 towers. The fortress had 4 inputs and outputs, today only the western entrance has been retained.

The history of Gonio fortress still harbors many secrets. There are still ongoing archaeological excavations, and scientists are doing a lot of new discoveries, such as found near the southern wall in 1974 a treasure dated V century BC. Based on the huge historical and cultural value of Gonio fortress, government of Georgia announced it in 1994 as Museum-Reserve.

Temples and Churches of Batumi

Cathedral Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary was built 1898-1903. It is sometimes mistakenly included with an Orthodox church and almost nobody remembers that initially it was built as a Roman Catholic Church. When Adjara was annexed by the Russian Empire a flood of foreign citizens, among whom there were representatives of different nationalities many of which professed Catholicism, rushed to Batumi. Since there were no catholic temples in Batumi in the XIX century, then the representatives of this religion applied to the authorities with a request to build a church there.

The temple was built on the donation of the believers themselves but one of the main investors was the rich petroleum producer Stefan Zubalashvili.

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After the revolution when Georgia became a part of the Soviet Union (1921), the temple was confiscated by the government and used for various administrative and economic needs.

On 16 May 1989 the Batumi Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary was consecrated by Elijah II, the Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia. The Batumi Church was given a status of Cathedral church.

The Batumi cathedral church is one of the most beautiful ones in Georgia, built in the Gothic style. From both of the sides of the main entrance there stand statutes of apostles. Today the debates are under way whom these statutes belonged to: St Andrew the Apostle and Simon the Cananaean or St. Maria and Joseph. A unique characteristic of the temple is its large stained glass windows which can compete in beauty with the best example of French gothic architecture.

The Cathedral of Christ the Saviour

This church as many other churches of Batumi, has its own history. In the period from 1885 to 1887 the construction of the Armenian Church was under way, the Church project was developed by the Austrian architect Robert Marfeld. The Church had been operating up to the beginning of the XX centuries, when it was closed by communists and used as a storehouse. In 1959 the Church building was rebuilt again to an observatory.

After disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Armenian community and Armenian government began taking active measures to make the church going again. In 1992 the temple was given back to the Armenian Diaspora and in 1995 it began its operation. From 1993 to 2000 the temple was reconstructed.

The Armenian Apostolic Church in Batumi is small and rather simple in its decoration and décor. One of the features of the Church is glass painting, where there are eight-pointed stars which are not normally characteristic for Christianity in general, but it is a generally known fact that the Armenians were the first orthodox Christians that is why their symbolics is more ancient and close to the original. Number eight in the Christianity has a meaning of the future, since God created the Earth for six days, the seventh day will last till the Judgment Day and the eighth day represents the Paradise or Eternity. Another feature of the Armenian Church in Batumi is the tree planted by the well-known artist, collector and art patron Ivan Ayvazovsky in the Church yard.

Saint Nicholas Church in Batumi

is more than 150 years old and it is one of the oldest churches in the city. An initiator of construction of the Church was the Greek community of Batumi headed by mayor of the city Ilya Efremidi.

In the 30-s the St. Nicholas Church suffered the fate of many other religious structures in the whole territory of the Soviet Union. It was closed and delivered to the possession of the government. Almost

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during 20 years the Church did not work and only due to the efforts of the Georgian intelligentsia, the St. Nicholas Church was re-opened in 1946. In the same year the first restoration works were carried out started on the donations contributed by the Orthodox community of Batumi. The second stage of the restoration works was carried out in 1998-99. This time not only the external architecture of the building was subject to renovation but its interior as well.

Nowadays the St. Nicholas Church is not only a cultic monument but also one of the city's most beautiful architectural and historical monuments.

Holly Trinity Church was built in the second half of the XIX century in the territory of a Orthodox centers. This is a small church, one of the few operating in the territory of Georgia in the Soviet period. As many religious building in the 30-s of the XX century it was also closed. The church building was given for economic needs. After the Second World War, Georgia was overwhelmed by a massive tide of petitions for restoration of Orthodox churches.

The representatives of the orthodox community headed by Grigory Pukhno and Luka Shevchuk applied to Patriarch Kalistrat with a request to restore the operation of the Church. The Church was opened in 1947. Following this the renovation works participated with all the parishioners were began.

In 1976 the Church was almost complete destroyed as a result of fire. The decision was made to build a new church on the basis of the old one. The construction of the church new building was carried out during three years and finally in 1979 the first mass was administered in the Church.

The Church of the Holy Spirit is a Roman Catholic church. It was constructed in the late 1990s by the Georgian architects Oleg Pataridze and Giorgi Baghoshvili and consecrated in 2000.

The building replaced the earlier church which was confiscated by communists during the Soviet occupation but since 1989 serves as the Georgian Orthodox Cathedral of the Mother of God.

Protected Areas, Parks, Attractions

Kobuleti Managed Reserve is a protected area in Kobuleti Municipality, along the Black Sea coast in the northern part of the resort town Kobuleti. Kobuleti Protected Areas were established in 1998 to preserve unique wetland ecosystems recognized by the Ramsar Convention.

The Kintrishi Protected Landscape is a protected landscape in Kobuleti Municipality, located at the gorge of the Kintrishi River and was established in 2007.

Kintrishi Protected Areas include Kintrishi Protected Landscape and Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve which was first established in 1959.

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The Kintrishi Protected Areas were established to preserve unique flora and fauna and famous Colchian willow trees. Archeological excavations revealed pre-Christian monuments in this areas.

Seaside Park of Batumi more often called by the citizens as boulevard. Batumi Seaside Park is located on the north-western coastal part of Batumi, stretching along it for 7 km. The Park history begins in the end of XIX century. The first project of the boulevard was developed in 1881 by well-known Prussian gardeners Ressler and Reier. Their project was put into practice by the French nobleman, a garden designer and nature lover Michel D'Alfonse. Also Alfonse became the first gardener and superintendant of the Batumi Seaside Park. One of the most nameable places of interests in the Park is considered famous singing fountains. First dancing' fountains appeared here in 1977. Batumi Park is a favourite resting place both for the city-folk and numerous tourists.

Batumi botanical garden is unique as it contains flora from nine phyto-geographic areas: East Asia, North America, New Zealand, South America, the Himalayas, Mexico, Australia, the Mediterranean, and the Caucasian humid subtropics. Garden was established in 1912 by the prominent botanist and geographer Andrey Krasnov. The garden collection includes 2037 taxonomic units of plants, including 104 of Caucasian origin.

Batumi Botanical Garden is located 9 km north from the city of Batumi in Mtsvane Kontskhi ("Green Cape") and occupies a 111 hectare area of land. Visitors can go through the botanical garden by foot or by carts, which can be rented from the garden's administration.

Machakhela National Park is a national park in Adjara, in the valley of Machakhlistskali (Khelvachauri Municipality). The park was established in 2012 with an area of 8733 ha.

Machakhela National Park provides for the preservation of unique biological and landscape biodiversity, the long-term protection of ecosystem of Colchic forests, ecological safety and natural and environmental tourism and recreational activities.

Mtiral National Park (established in 2007) is located in south-western part of Caucasus, Lesser Caucasus, in particular extreme western part of Achara-Imereti range, on Kobuleti-Chaqvi range, near Black Sea. Its total area is 15698.8 ha. Mtiral National Park is located between Municipalities of Kobuleti, Khelvachauri and Qeda. The Administrative building is located in Chaqvi, while visitors center in village Chaqvistavi, which is 15 km away from administrative center. There are exhibition and presentation halls in visitors center where visitors have the opportunity to become familiar with the specifics of the National Park, services, tariffs and chose the desired option.

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Tourist trails of Mtirala NP are one or two-days. Trails are marked and well-arranged. Picnic and camping places are arranged, fire spots are allocated, as well as tourist shelter 9 km away from the beginning of the trail. National park offers hiking, horsing, scientific eco-tours.

The best season for visit is spring, summer and early autumn. Visitors center of national park will help you to organize guide and local transport.

Batumi Dolphinarium opened in 1975. At that time it was the first demonstrative dolphinarium in former Soviet Union. It used to belong to the greatest dolphinariums of the world. The existence of the dolphinarium, with the other sightseeings, made the town and the whole region more attractive for tourists. The dolphinarium amphitheatre is divided into 4 sectors and consists of 795 seats. The infrastructure includes serving the disabled people with wheelchairs and elevators.

The “Ali and Nino” (also known as the “Statue of Love”) moving sculpture is definitely one of the most amazing and memorable sights in this Georgian Black Sea resort. In the opinion of the most Batumi visitors “Ali and Nino” is a celebration of true love without boundaries and prejudices.

The 7-meter long almost translucent and made of steel figures of Ali and Nino are slowly moving towards each other, creating a single integral piece for a moment. This breathtaking process is repeated every 10 minutes.

The novel “Ali and Nino”, which is believed to be written by Kurban Said, inspired sculptor Tamara Kvesitadze to create this piece of art in 2010. The book was first published in 1937 in Austria in German language, and since then translated into 32 more languages. The book tells a story of love between Ali Shervanshir, a muslim Azerbaijani boy, and Nino Kipiani, a Christian Georgian girl. The novel reflects the First World War period in Caucasus.

Museums

Khariton Akhvlediani Adjara State Museum was founded in 1908 as a school museum on the initiative of a group of teachers and public figures of Batumi.

It is one of the oldest scientific-educational institutions where 180 000 exhibits are kept: unique items, collections, photos, works of art, over 100 items are preserved at the gold treasures of the museum.

Over 2000 rare manuscripts in Georgian, Russian, Armenian, Arabic, Turkish, Persian and other languages are preserved at the manuscript fund while the library contains 63000 books in various languages. Most of them are bibliographical rarities.

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Adjara State Museum of Art (date of establishment:1998). The museum houses paintings of famous Georgian and foreign artists (Niko Pirosmiani, D. Kakabadze, L. Gudiashvili, E. art, S. Bakalovich, A. Zommer, N. Ignatov, A. Zankovski, etc.) and drawing works (N. Churgulia, R. Petviashvili, L. Zambakhidze, G.Tsereteli etc.) sculpture (E. Pantareli's "Nymph and a Little Faun", G. Ochiauri's "Portrait", etc.), as well as samples of decorative art (ceramics, woodcuts, glasswork, engravings, tapestry).

Batumi Archaeological Museum (date of establishment:1994). The Batumi Archaeological Museum was created in 1994. It houses finds of various periods from within Adjara. Its principal attraction is the material from Pichvnari excavated since 1998 by the joint archaeological expedition of the Batumi Archaeological Museum and the Ashmolean Museum of the University of Oxford. The academic study and publication of the finds is proceeding apace, thanks to the existence of a conservation laboratory, a photographic studio and archive, and a rich specialized library.

The Nobel Brothers Batumi Technological Museum (date of establishment: 2007). The Museum represents the technical technological achievements introduced to Batumi at the end of the XIXth and beginning of the XXth centuries: activity of the Nobel Brothers, the Rotschids, and Mantashev. With Nobel Brothers help and activity the new technology of oil transit was implemented and Batumi was involved into the International Trade Affairs. There are exhibits on the development of tea culture, printing-house, and photography. In the museum there are the photos of Prokudin-Gorski - the first master of the coloured photography.

Machakhela Historical-Ethnographical Museum (date of establishment: 1984), located in the Khelvachauri Municipality, village Zeda Chkutuneti. The collections of the museum (former mosque) cover the history of village Akhasheni. There are: archaeological materials, numismatic, different things of Adjarian life and ethnography, paintings and craft works of local artists, different documental materials and photos.

Akhalsheni Museum (date of establishment:1969), located in Khelvachauri, village Akhalsheni. The collections of the museum cover the history of village Akhasheni. There are: archaeological materials, numismatic, different things of Adjarian life and ethnography, paintings and craft works of local artists, different documental materials and photos.

Shuakhevi Ethnographical Museum (date of establishment:1996), located in Shuakhevi Municipality village Oladauri. The collections of the museum cover the history of Ajara and Shuakhevi. There are: archaeological materials, numismatic, different things of Adjarian life and ethnography, paintings and craft works of local artists, different documental materials and photos.

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There are some local museums in the Shuakhevi, Khulo, Khelvachauri and Keda Municipalities.

Resorts and Natural Touristic Resources

Tsikhisdziri is a village in the Kobuleti Municipality on the Black Sea coast, 8 km south of the town of Kobuleti. It's become one of a series of sea resorts in southwestern Georgia and continues to enjoy summertime visitors to this day.

Kvariati is a village in Georgia, situated on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. It is part of Khelvachauri Municipality and a seaside resort.

Kobuleti is a seaside resort, visited annually by Georgians and many former Soviet Union residents. It is especially popular with Armenian tourists. Kobuleti is known with its traditions, hospitality, climatic areas, mild subtropical climate, ionized maritime air, bright shining sun and warm sea. The unique sandy beach widely inclined to the sea is noted with its marvelous views beautified by sky-scraped endemic pine trees, eucalypts, bamboo, cypress grove, date and cocoa palms.

Chakvi is a resort town by the Black Sea coast. It is part of Kobuleti Municipality.

Beshumi resort is located in Khulo region, at an altitude of 2000-2220 meters above sea level, 120 km from Batumi and serves as the best place for those who want to escape the heat and noise of the city.

The best combination of alpine and coniferous plants on the resort creates an attractive environment for relaxation and it is the best place for the tourists who enjoy picnics and hiking. Besides, here one can enjoy horse riding and adventure tours.

The Green Lake is located 6 kilometers away from Beshumi. Covered with coniferous plants, the Green Lake is the best place for picnic, camping and Water bicycles. Summer season is ideal to visit Beshumi. Leisure, entertainment and travel lovers can spend their vacation at the resort from June to the end of September, until the season is closed and the cottages are covered with snow for several months.

The ski resort - Goderdzi Resort is located in the Khulo Municipality. For skiing and snowboarding, there are 7.3 km of slopes available. 3 lifts transport the guests. The winter sports area is situated between the elevations of 1,700 and 2,364 m. Goderdzi Resort, located two hours drive from the popular seaside resort town of Batumi, is ideally situated for the creation of a four-season mountain resort. At an elevation of 2000m, the mountains are snow-covered from November to April, while the gently rolling topography of the valley floor offers plentiful development zones. Sitting at around 1700m elevation, the resort base is below the tree line, offering an attractive and welcoming character throughout the seasons.

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Traditions

Selimoba is held in Bako village, Khulo Municipality on July 3 and commemorates the life of Selim Khimshiashvili. A concert with the participation of local amateur groups of a folk handicraft products exhibition is held during the festival. It is supported by Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports of Adjara.

Shuamtoba ("inter-mountain festival") is a traditional festival, which is held on the summer mountain pastures of two municipalities (Khulo and Shuakhevi), in the first weekend of every August. Horse racing, folk handicraft products exhibition and a concert involving folk ensembles are held on Shuamtoba.

Machakhloba is Machakhela gorge festivity, held in the second half of September. It is a traditional holiday celebrated in Machakhela gorge, Khelvachauri Municipality. Festival begins at the Machakhela rifle monument (at the point of convergence of rivers Machakhela and Chorokhi), continues in the village Machakhispiri and ends in the village Zeda Chkhutuneti.

Kolkhoba is an ancient Laz festival. It is held at the end of August or at the beginning of September in Sarpi village, Khelvachauri Municipality. The myth about Argonauts is performed on stage during the festival.

Maretoba is celebrated on 7th May in the village Oladauri (Shuakhevi Municipality). Even though it is always different every year, it always begins with mass christening. Folklore ensembles are taking parts in the celebration. The fiesta is taking place S. Giorgi's church because it is associated with Maretoba. During the celebration many traditional sport games are played, songs are sang.

Chaooba celebration. It is happening in the village Chao (Khulo Municipality) during first weekends of May. Local people of the village together are making one big feast.

Festival „Batumboba” takes place in the beginning of Autumn, every year. The program of the festival consists of outdoor activities: celebratory marches, theater performances, markets of all sorts, concerts, exhibitions and etc.

In September the International **Birdwatching Festival** is held in Adjara. Foreign experts, volunteers and tourists from different countries come to the region to watch the massive migration of raptors and other birds on the East Black Sea shore. The Festival has been held in the region since 2012 and it

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contributes to the development of the birdwatching tourism in Adjara and conservation of migrating raptors.

Cuisine

Rich in taste and so different cuisine of Adjara is similar to a large extent to the Georgian one, but at the same time possessing its original and unique features. Mountain Adjarian cuisine offers much dairy. High value is given to local sour cream called „kaymaghi” that are served as side dish. Adjarians also widely use melted butter in their cuisine.

The most popular dish of Adjara is Adjarian khachapuri: cheese bread in a form of a ship filled with melted cheese with egg yolk symbolizing a sun in the middle. Also there are „borano” - cheese with greens rolled in flour and fried in melted butter, „sinori” - snack from home-made quark and rolled into thin bread and „yakhni” - stewed beef in ground walnuts, onion and garlic.

There are many fish dishes (trout and sturgeon), but local people prefer poultry (chicken, turkey and quail), beef and lamb. Naturally, there are traditional Eastern sweets that are served on Adjarian table such as baklava and shakarlama.

Hotels

In Batumi opened some world-class brand hotels: Sheraton, Radisson, Hilton, Marriott, etc.

There are also 5-Star Hotels Colosseum Marina Hotel, Georgia Palace Hotel & Spa Kobuleti.

On Adjarian Coastal Zones and mountainous part there are many hotels and Guest Houses where tourists have all possibilities for can rest and entertainment.

According to the data of Georgian National Tourism Administration in 2017, about 30% of international trips were to the capital city of Adjara – Batumi.

Restaurants:

Batumi restaurants: Heart of Batumi; Chacha time, Old Boulevard, Laguna, My Batumi and others - offering tourists nice adjarian food with lots of choices. There are also restaurants - Ukrainochka (Ukrainian restaurant), Uncle Feng's (Asian-themed bar) and other, where tourists can taste European and Asian cuisine.

Adjarian Region really lets tourists have a good time.

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II. Guria Region

III.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Guria is a region in Georgia, in the western part of the country, bordered by the eastern end of the Black Sea. The toponym "Guria" is first attested in the c. 800 Georgian chronicle of Pseudo-Juansher. Guria shares a border with Samegrelo Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Municipality to the north-west, Imereti Municipality to the north, Samtskhe-Javakheti to the east, Adjara to the south, and the Black Sea to the west. Guria is the smallest region among Georgia's regions has an area of 2,033 km² (2.9% of the total area of the country).



Part of the northern edge of the region is on the Colchis lowland, while to the south-east Guria extends as far as the Meskheta Mountain range.

Guria is divided into 3 municipalities, including: Ozurgeti Municipality, Lanchkhuti Municipality and Chokhatauri Municipality. The Capital of region is Ozurgeti.

Ozurgeti Municipality is located in south part of the region. Its area is 677 km². The climate is subtropical sea: the average temperature is 12-14°C. The Municipality consists of one town, four settlements (Qveda Nasakirali, Laituri, Ureki, Naruja), and 70 villages. The town of Ozurgeti is 325 km from Tbilisi, 60km from Batumi, 45 km from Poti, and 90km from Kutaisi. There is one reservoir in the area of the Municipality, as well as 13 rivers with a total length of 368 kilometers.

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Lanchkhuti Municipality is situated in the northwestern part of the Guria mountains. Its area is 533 km². It lies along the Black Sea on the West and has 18 km of coastline. Mountainous villages are located 400-500 m above sea level. In most of the municipality, the climate is subtropical. Lanchkhuti City is situated 300 km from Tbilisi, 85 km from Batumi and 42 km from Poti. The Municipality consists of one town and 55 villages. There are two lakes and five rivers in the municipality, total length of which is 75 km.

Chokhatauri Municipality

Chokhatauri Municipality is situated in the eastern part of Guria, the area of southwest Kolkheti lowland. The region comprises 822 km² and includes one town and 61 villages. Chokhatauri, a small settlement, is located a distance of 296 km. from Tbilisi, 82 km. from Batumi and 24 km. from Ozurgeti. The nearest railway station is 25 km. Geographically, 60% of the Municipality is mainly hills and mountains. There are a lake and two ponds in the territory of the Municipality. Two rivers, Supsa and Gubazeuli, run through the territory.

III.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Ozurgeti

As for the natural resources, there are iron, gold, tract for ceramics, construction stone, ceramic clay, benton clays, and turf found in the area. Rivers Supsa, Bakhvistskali, Achitskhali, Agidaqva, Natanebi, and Bzhuzha have a potential for producing hydro resources. There are three hydroelectric stations in the Municipality.

A large number of the workforce is primarily self-employed (approximately 7%). This is mainly a village population that has more than 1 hectares of land.

Lanchkhuti Municipality is famous for the following minerals: Chalk-stone Mine, Brick Clay, Turf, Oil Mine (Oil resources have not been calculated).

Chokhatauri Municipality represents an agrarian municipality, and its economy was characterized by the tendency of growth. In particular, the increase was noted in the spheres of hunting; entrepreneurship; trade and technical service; and transport, warehouse, agriculture and communications. The mineral water Nabeglavi clearly is a center point of the Municipality economic development. The 24-hour debit of the water is 500 m³.

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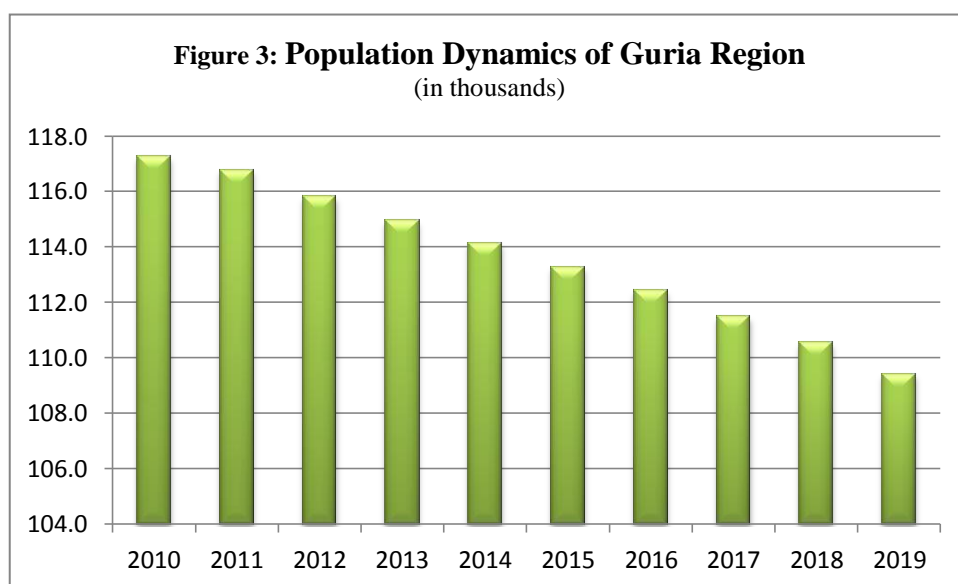




In Guria region the number of accommodation units registered in the database of the Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA, 2017) is 107, with a total of 4 564 beds. According to the the marked indicator, Guria region is on seventh place among the eleven administrative units of Georgia.

Population

According to the data of National Statistical Office of Georgia (**Geostat**), as of 1 January 2018 population of Guria region amounted to 110.5 thousands. Since 1990 population decreased by 30 percent. The similar fact was fixed in urban and rural settlements. The difference is that the decrease of rural population was larger than in urban settlements (32.1 and 25.6 percent respectively). More populated municipality in region is Ozurgeti.



Source: Geostat

In the 1990-ies the number of the births significantly decreased in Guria region. The most significant decrease was observed in 1990-2005. In aforementioned period crude birth rate declined by 1.7 times. More wide scale decrease of rate was fixed in the Chokhatauti Municipality (2.1 times). To the regional level in the next years despite the certain changes, there took place the stabilization of the mentioned indicator within 13.3-13.9 per mille.

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Nowadays Based on the value of the Crude Birth Rate, it does not provide a simple reproduction of the population. Among Municipalities the lowest rate fixed in Lanchkhuti Municipality.

Since 1990's the Crude Death Rate mainly kept increasing and reached high level for 2017. The value of the coefficient in the region (16.8‰), significantly exceeded the national average (12.8‰). Crude Death Rate was especially high in the Chokhatauri municipality (19.8‰). The main reason of high mortality is the aging of the population.

Natural increase of population is outcome of particular interactions between fertility and mortality. In the Guria region, natural increase is characterized by negative indicators, which was conditioned by fertility decline and mortality increase

Between the 1989 and 2014 population censuses, share of the age group of the population under 15 decreased, while the percent of the age group of over 65 and more remarkable increased.

The share of over 65 age population pointed to the aging of population of Guria, what was characteristic for Guria's population already in 1989. In following years region's population aging was significant and in 2014 Guria's population was on the high level of demographical aging.

According to data of population census of Georgia 2014, 98.1% of the population in Guria region are Georgians and 1.1% are Armenians.

The modern demographic situation can be characterized as decline of fertility. Increase of total mortality, significant decrease of natural increase, external migration.

III.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Resorts:

Ureki is a health resort on the Black Sea shore. It is famous for its magnetic sand beaches to which there is no comparison in the world. The beneficial health properties of magnetic energy have been known since ancient times and were used by Egyptians, Greeks and Indian Yogis for treatment of different diseases. Magnetic energy has anti-inflammatory and painkilling properties, it stimulates the regeneration of tissues, strengthens the immune system, and improves conditions from several severe

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diseases. One of the best mountainous resorts in Georgia is in Guria, the village of **Bakhmaro**. It is located in the district of Chokhatauri, on the Meskheta Mountain range, in the gorge of the Bakhvistskali River. Bakhmaro is located 2000 meters above sea level, and known for its fresh air: a mixture of the sea and mountain air, resulting in a unique local climate. Bakhmaro is recommended for those who have health problems and can benefit from clean air and healthy food. **Nabeghlavi** resort, also in the district of Chokhatauri, is known for its mineral waters. Nabeghlavi spring water, as well as mineral water, is bottled here. The water is popular in the international market as well.

Monasteries:

Achi Monastery or Achi Monastery of St. George is a medieval Georgian Orthodox church located near the village of Achi in Georgia's southwestern region of Guria. The monastery was constructed at the end of the 13th century or in the early 14th AD and was later reroofed, renovated and surrounded by a defensive wall.

Not far from town Ozurgeti, there is **Jumati monastery**. This monastery has several buildings: primary temple – church of Archangel, Khareba church, Mirkma, bell tower and surrounding territory. Jumati monastery played a very important role in educational and social life of whole Guria. In XV-XVI century Abbot of Jumati monastery Nikolay brought from his journeys five ancient manuscripts: Gospel, Mravaltavi, Xeltkanoni, Mamata tsigni and Kitkhva-migeba. One relic has a specific place in Jumati monastery. It is a big cross decorated with gems with a church shaped top made of gold. Cross has paintings of the Saints.

Erketi Church In the village of Chokhatauri Municipality – Erketi, church is built on the right bank of river Gubazeuli. This church was built in the name of Michael and Gabriel Archangels. Probably this church was built in X-XI century. The interior is painted by light-colored paint.

Likhauri Church has the small chapel on the west side, which was built in 1442 by the Ruler Giorgi Gurieli and his wife Elena. Khutsuri (old Georgian alphabet) inscription on chapel states, that Likhauri used to be called "Rekheuli".

Jikheti Monastery - from historical sources of this Monastery, Nuns had very close relations with the well known Monastery of St. John Evangelist in Atoni. Nuns from the Monastery of St. John Evangelist have sent an icon of St. Mary as a gift to Jikheti Nunnery in 1905.

Shemokmedi Monastery Complex - Middle Age monastery complex in Shemokmedi is located in Guria, on the left bank of river Bzhuzhi, 8 km to the south-west from the town of Ozurgeti, in the

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hamlet of Shemokmedi. The complex consists of three monuments: XVI century bell tower and two attached cathedrals - XII century Basilica of Deity and a dome church called Zarzma.

The Shemokmedi monastery was considered the richest monastery and had a rich stock of books. The monastery used to be the burial site of Shemokmedi Bishops and the family of Gurieli.

Resorts

Shekviteli is a village and sea resort in Ozurgeti Municipality, located on the eastern Black Sea coast, at the mouth of the Natanebi river. Shekviteli is home to the popular amusement park „Tsitsinatela”, large indoor venue Black Sea Arena, and the Miniature Park, an open air exhibition of scale models of Georgia's architectural landmarks.

Bakhmaro is a village in the Chokhatauri Municipality. It lies on the Bakhvistsqali river. A high-mountain health resort of Bakhmaro is located in the hollow of Guria mountains covered by pine and fir trees. . The holiday season in Bakhmaro is short: from the beginning of July until the end of August. Due to tough climate conditions the mountains of Guria by the beginning of September are covered with snow which in wintertime has the height of up to 4-6 meters. In the conclusion of research expedition it was pointed out that Bakhmaro's natural conditions satisfy all demands of winter resort and there was an opportunity of constructing 8-10 ski trails of different purpose that could operate during 4-5 months in full swing.

Village of Nabeghlavi famous with mineral springs is located en route from Chokhatauri to Bakhmaro. Spa and health resort springs are characterized by unique therapeutic and preventive properties, and their systematic application facilitates cleansing of the body from harmful substances and enrichment with needed minerals. Mineral water is recommended for individuals of any age, without any restrictions. The spring of 'Nabeghlavi' was discovered in 1905. Today mineral water 'Nabeghlavi' was given ISO 9001:2000 as well as certificate of compliance with the standards of the European Union and it is sold in the markets of more than 20 countries.

Resort of **Grigoleti** in Lanchkhuti municipality enjoys magnetic sand beach containing magnetite, titan-magnetite or ilmenite small particles and other rock splinters. Baths of hot sand provide thermal and mechanic influence to the human body activating immune process and improving metabolism, soothe nervous system, are useful for rheumatic and joint diseases.

Ureki is a seaside climatic resort on the Black Sea coast. Located within Ozurgeti Municipality, Ureki is 60 kilometers north of Batumi. It received a status of a town in 1953.

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Unlike many areas on the Black Sea, in Ureki beaches are sandy, rather than covered in pebbles. The sand in Ureki is classified as black sand and has magnetic properties, which some believe treat a number of health problems, including cardiovascular diseases.

Whole area was covered by forest once and it was impossible to hunt there, this is why the place is called Ureki, which in Georgian Language means deep forest.

Gomis Mta resort is located in river Bzhuzhi gorge of Guria region of Georgia, 17km from Ozurgeti at the height of 2100m. The resort is distinguished with its panoramic views, pine forests, Rhododendron luteum, beautiful mountains and many beautiful summer cottages of Alpine zone. The resort is very beautiful at every season.

Kolkheti National Park is created in order to protect and maintain Kolkheti wetland ecosystems of International importance. Park shares a border with Lanchkuti Municipality, is situated on 15 000 hectares of land in Municipality. Into the park flora and fauna of the Kolkheti Plain are preserved. Kolkheti National Park Administration offers boat tours on Lake Paliastomi and river Pichori gorge, as well as sport fishing, bird watching and eco-educational tours. Tours are carried out throughout the year.

Museums:

The Ozurgeti History Museum was founded on 1936. The museum hosts collections from Neolithic Age, unique examples of Early, Middle and Late Bronze Age Colchian culture, burial ground stocks from Iron Age, ancient silver and golden items, numismatic (golden coin of Alexander the Great, Colchian silver coins, Turkish coins, unique European silver coins), ethnographic (19th century working and living objects, fine art), archival books of historical value. Nowadays museum collections consists of more than 6000 exhibits, dated from the 9th millennium BC until today, including Napoleon Bonaparte`s rapier.

Ozurgeti Fine Art Center (date of establishment:1998). The museum houses collection of Georgian artists (Lado Gudiashvili, Elene Akhvlediani, Gia Bughadze, Mamuka Tsetskhladze, Niko Tsetskhladze, Avtandil Tavartkiladze, Bezhan Shvelidze, Guram Ghlonti, Giorgi Jashi, etc.), samples of folk handicraft (woodcuts, embroidery, kilims, tapestry).

Ekvtime Takaishvili Archaeological Musiem – Reserve (Ozurgeti Municipality, date of establishment 1998).

Memorabilia exhibited in the permanent exposition, related to life and deeds of Ekvtime Takhaishvili, the well known Georgian scientist and public figure.

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Unique photos and artifacts, common for ethnography of the historical province of Guria. Gurianta-Vashnari settlement remains of the V-VIII cc AD are located on the territory of the Museum-Reserve. Remains of the monastery dated by the II half of VI c were revealed during archaeological excavations, coupled with fragments of fortification facilities (probably of the monastery defensive wall), coupled with fragments of a small basilica and martyrium. A stone with Greek inscription has been found here as well, that is currently exhibited at Ozurgeti Local History Museum. Cultural layers of different historical periods were revealed on the territory of the Museum-Reserve, namely of early Antique and Hellenistic settlements, clay sarcophagus, jar-tombs and ancient bath-house.

Local Museum of Niko Berdzenishvili (Chokhatauri municipality, date of establishment: 1958).

The museum houses archaeological collections (VII-V c.c. B.C. Colchian axes, hoes, spearheads, materials of early antique period tomb: various beads, bracelets, earrings, crockery, implements), numismatic collections, as well as XVIII-XIX c.c. weapons (engraved with silver swords, daggers, rifles), XIX c. ethnographic collection (crockery and furniture, implements), manuscripts, musical instruments of the beginning of the XX c.: Georgian instruments: changi, panduri, salamuri and the XIX c., library (Georgian, Russian, French items, published in various periods of time).

Memorial Museum of Nodar Dumbadze (Village Khidistavi, Chokhatauri. Date of establishment: 1988).

In the museum are kept materials belonging to famous Georgian writer Nodar Dumbadze (1928-1984). There are: manuscripts, memorial things, writer's works, paintings and samples of ethnography.

Lanchkhuti Local Museum (Date of establishment: 1976). The museum houses archaeological (Middle and Late Bronze Age materials), natural history, epigraphic (From Etseri, XII c.), fine art, ethnographic and manuscripts (XIX-XX c.c.), numismatic materials, etc.

Memorial Museum of Egnate Ninoshvili (Village Archeuli, Lanchkhuti. Date of establishment: 1948).

The museum is situated in former house of famous Georgian writer Egnate Ninoshvili (1859-1894), what was built in 1880. In the museum are kept materials belonging to this writer. There are: manuscripts, memorial things, writer's works, paintings and samples of ethnography.

Culture and Traditions:

The population of Guria has a rich spiritual and family culture. Social relationships are strictly defined in Guria and they are known for their politeness and respect for the elderly. Music and singing play a

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vital role in Gurian culture and the Gurians helped develop the world famous Georgian polyphonic style of singing. Gurian songs generally consist of three or four independent melodies. “Krimanchuli” is one of the best examples of the Georgian polyphonic traditions. The word “Krimanchuli” means twisted iron. “Naduri” is a special song performed during a grape harvest or while working in the fields. Traditionally, singing “Naduri” lasted for longer than an hour and over 200 people sang it together during work. The economy in Guria is agriculturally based. Citrus, fruits, tea, nuts, grapes, and corn play an important role in the region. The cultivation of vineyards in Guria dates back to antiquity. Gurian villages are characterized by a special charm and color, especially in autumn. Wooden houses often have corn kernels spread out like beads and pumpkins drying in the sun, with yards of green trees, surrounded by wooden fences. The cultural life of Guria includes public rituals and traditions. Some of the biggest celebrations are Giorgoba (St. George’s Day), Mariamoba (St. Mary’s Day), and New Year (called Kalanda). Special preparations take place in each of the families during these celebrations. For the New Year celebration, Gurians place chichilaki, nut tree branches formed to depict the tree of life, in their homes the day before New Year. Chichilaki is considered the grantor of fertility and wealth; it is kept in the home until Baptism Day, January 19th, and is burned or thrown in the water afterwards. Gurians are known for their crafts, building skills, leatherworks, saddles, baskets, and straw hats. Hunting and fishing are also fundamental to their culture.

On Easter Sunday in the village Shukhuti (Lanchkhuti Municipality) local people have a more than 250 years old tradition of playing Lelo, this game is similar to rugby.

Black Sea Arena is an indoor arena located on the coast of the Black Sea in Shekvetili (Ozurgeti Municipality), some 45 km north of Batumi. The venue, designed by the architects from the German company Drei Architekten, is the largest open concert hall in the Caucasus. The auditorium has a capacity of 10,000 seats in circular grandstands. In recent years, at the concert venue of the Arena with their shows were: Christina Aguilera Vanessa-Mae Scorpions Aerosmith Robert Plant and ect.

The Ozurgeti Dramatic Theatre overlooks the city's central square. It is named in honor of Alexander Tsutsunava, whose statue stands in an adjoining park. It was founded in 1868, and the first production was a performance by local amateur actors. A new theater building was constructed in 1914. In 1933, another new building was constructed. In 1962, the theater was moved to yet another building, the five-storey Soviet Neoclassical-style structure in which it currently resides. It is one of the largest theaters in Georgia. In 1968, a large centennial celebration was held in the building and the theater was named

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after Tsutsunava. In 2005, the Ministry of Culture and the Theater Workers' Union declared the Ozurgeti Dramatic Theater to be the best regional theater in Georgia.

Cuisine

The people of Guria are amazingly hospitable. Guests are treated to tasty dishes, using walnuts and hazelnuts to bring a unique flavor to local products. Some regional specialties include: satsivi – chicken served cold in a walnut sauce, ghomi – a corn dish similar to grits served with cheese, Gurian khachapuri – cheese bread stuffed with hard boiled eggs, kharcho – a hot meat stew, mtsvadi – marinated beef or pork grilled over an open fire, pkhali – ground spinach mixed with nuts and spices, and chiri - dry fruit. Tourists can tasting the local sorts of vine and super alcoholic gurian drink – chacha. Known, that there are very old sorts of vine still preserved in Guria, like Chkhaveri, Kamuri etc. Also in the high mountainous hills and forests could be found the wild sorts of vine. The cultivation of vineyards in Guria dates back to antiquity.

III. I M E R E T I R E G I O N

IV.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Imereti is situated along the middle and upper reaches of the Rioni River. Imereti – One of the historic-geographical lands of the Western Georgia. Imereti is bordered by Likhi Ringe from the east, river Tskhenistskali from the west, Caucasus Mountains from the north and Persati, or Meskheta mountains from the south. **Imereti covers 6414.7 km².**

Imereti consists of two parts: Upper and Lower Imereti. Archeological evidence, suggests that humans started to dwell from the Lower Paleolithic Period (about 2,500,000 to 200,000 years ago).

The earliest monuments of urban life are found in Kutaisi, Vani, Vartsikhe (Rodopolis), Shorapani and etc. Due to the favorable geographical location, these cities have long had meaningful strategic, economic and political dimensions.

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Imereti consists of the following Georgian administrative-territorial units: Kutaisi (administrative capital of the region) and 11 municipalities: Baghdati, Vani, Zestafoni, Terjola, Samtredia, Sachkhere, Tkibuli, Chiatura, Tskaltubo, Kharagauli, Khoni.



IV.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The Imereti region is rich in *diverse mineral* resources. At present there are more than 100 mineral-raw materials reserves in Imereti, more than half of those are exported. The main minerals are Chiatura manganese, which represents the largest manganese reserve in Georgia and one of the largest in the world, having estimated reserves of 239 million tones of manganese ore.

The town of Zestafoni and the smaller neighboring town of [Shorapani](#) are industrial centers (Zestafoni Municipality). The Zestafoni ferro-alloy plant processes raw manganese ore shipped by rail down the Kvirila valley from Chiatura.

The significant mineral resources of the region are Tkibuli and Gelati: coal, building materials, clay reserves. The surroundings of the Kutaisi are rich in bentonite clays and marble. **The Imereti region's enterprises produces about 25-30% of the country's total products. Most of them are located in the towns along highway and railway lines.** Traditionally, Imereti is an agricultural region, known for its [mulberries](#) and [grapes](#).

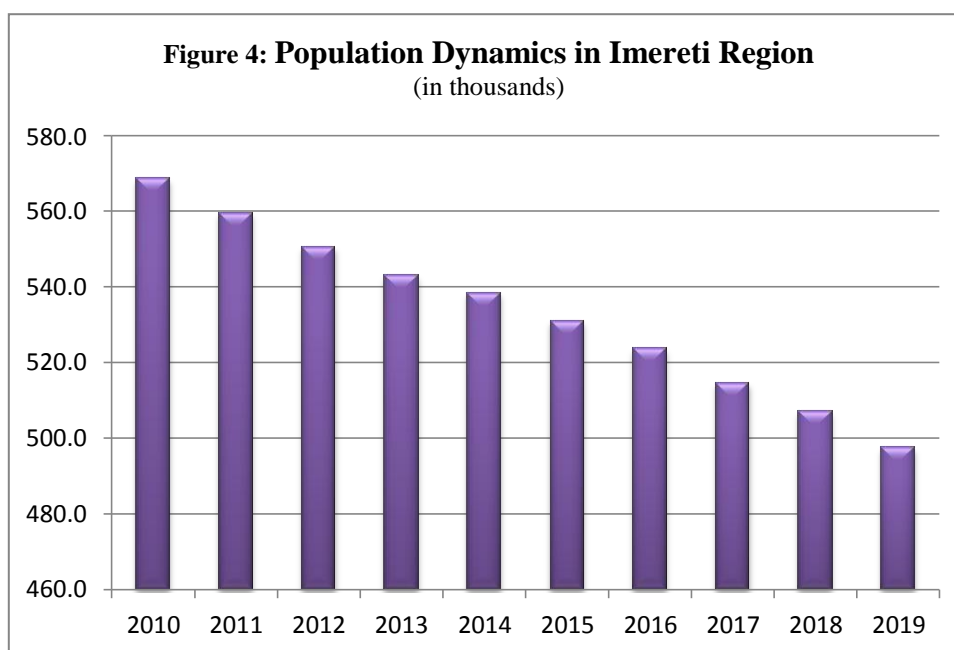
Population

In terms of population, it includes 507.0 thnd. persons (2018), or 13.6% of Georgia's population. Population density is 92 persons per square km.

The share of urban population is 49%, in the rural areas lives 51% of whole population. Between the 1989 and 2014 censuses, the population in Imereti Region decreased by 30 percent.

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Source: Geostat

Nearly third part of population are residents of the city Kutaisi. More populated municipalities are Zestafoni (56.5 thnd.) and Tskaltubo (51.4 thnd.). Baghdadi, Tkibuli and Kharagauli Municipalities are less populated (19.8, 19.3 and 19.1 thnd. respectively).

In the Imereti region by 2017 crude birth rate made up 14.8 per mille and the death rate 17.1 per mille. On the basis of these two components natural increase was negative (-2.3 per mille). It should be noted that except of Kutaisi city in the all municipalities of the region natural increase rate was negative.

The highest birth rate – 16.6‰ was fixed in the Sachkhere Municipality (2017). Among the regions municipalities the highest Crude Death Rate was noted in the Tkibuli Municipality (20.7‰).

According to data of population census of Georgia 2014, 99.3% of the population in Imereti region are Georgians. *In the region in smaller groups also living: Russians, Armenians, Ukrainians ect.*



IV.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Geographic location, landscape, historical-cultural and natural monuments, along with the traditional hospitality traditions provide fertile ground for the development of tourism in the Imereti region.

There are more than 900 historical and above 350 natural monuments in Imereti, which illustrate culture and history ranging from the late antique period to the beginning of the 20-th century. Their locations are also profoundly impressive to the visitors.

There are various types of adventure tourism advanced in Imereti, such as: mountain, recreational, cave, wellness tourism and rafting on the Rioni river. Additionally, ecotourism has the very promising potential for development. Agro-tourism is the fastest growing type of tourism, with more than 200 farm industries. Hunting and fishing tourism have particular prospects. Georgian traditions, wine and cuisine tourism are being targeted with the special care.

Major tourist resources in the Imereti region are: protected territories, national parks and recreational zones. Visitors are especially attracted to the mineral waters and balneological resorts. Imereti hosts 53 recreational, thermal and wellness centers. Special emphasis should be made on: Tskaltubo, Sairme, Nunisi, Sulori, Satsire, Zvare and others.

The promotional activities in Georgia and Imereti in particular have contributed to the constantly growing trend incoming visitors. The number of visitors in Imereti amounted to 80.000 in 2007. In 2016 more than 400.000 tourists visited region's historical and natural sites.

Monasteries and Temples

Gelati is a medieval monastic complex near Kutaisi. A masterpiece of the Georgian Golden Age, Gelati was founded in 1106 by King David IV of Georgia and is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

Bagrati Cathedral is an 11th-century cathedral in the city of Kutaisi. A masterpiece of the medieval Georgian architecture, the cathedral suffered heavy damage throughout centuries and was reconstructed to its present state through a gradual process starting in the 1950s, with major conservation works concluding in 2012. A distinct landmark in the scenery of central Kutaisi, the cathedral rests on the Ukimerioni Hill.

in 1994 Bagrati Cathedral, was included in UNESCO's World Heritage Site list.

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Motsameta monastery is standing above the rough Rioni river and is buried in coastal vegetation. It is located 6 km out of Kutaisi. According to the legend the monastery was constructed on the place where Muslim aggressors (8th-century) executed David and Konstantin Mkheidze, Georgian princes, who refused to accept Islam.

Geguti is a Georgian medieval royal palace, now in ruins, at the homonymous village, 7 km south of the city of Kutaisi. first mentioned in the Georgian Chronicle in the eighth century

Ubisa is a small village and a medieval monastic complex in the Kharagauli Municipality.

The monastic complex of Ubisa comprises a 9th-century St. George's Monastery founded by St. Gregory of Khandzta, a 4-floor tower (AD 1141), fragments of a 12th-century defensive wall and several other buildings and structures. The monastery houses a unique cycle of murals from the late 14th century made by Damiane apparently influenced by art from the Byzantine Palaiologan period (1261-1453). The monastery is also known for its honey made by the monks.

The ruins of Antique city of Vani, destroyed in the 1st century B.C., are located in the Vani Municipality. Vani is a very rich archeological monument with the remains of fence and gate and ruins of cult buildings and constructions. All the archeological materials discovered there is the real beauty of the State Gold Fund of Georgia. The last together with the Gelati architectural monument is under the protection of UNESCO.

Protected Areas, Parks, Sights

Sataplia Strict Nature Reserve is located 10 km from town of Kutaisi. The name Sataplia can be freely translated as a "honey place". Sataplia Strict Nature Reserve is part of Imereti Caves Protected Areas, which also includes Sataplia Managed Reserve, Prometheus Cave Natural Monument.

The Natural Park Sataplia was founded in 1935 to protect recently discovered karst cave with exotic stalactites and stalagmites as well Colchian forest, geological and archaeological sites. Park was expanded to its present borders in 1957. In 2010 and 2011 the Sataplia Managed Reserve was developed to accommodate tourists: visitor center was built, a coffee house in the middle of the park, a small museum, a small park with dinosaur models and glass observation deck built above the cliff. Furthermore, the main karst cave was equipped with lighting effects and a secure footpath.

Ajameti Managed Reserve is located 15 km away from Kutaisi in the municipalities of Baghdati and Zestaponi. The reserve is in the flatland of Rioni and it runs through parts of Ajameti, Vartsikhe and Sviri.

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In April of 1928, 20 ha of Kutaisi forested area was declared a nature reserve and in 1935 Ajameti Botanical Reserve was established at the ground level of the Ajameti forest massif. Ajameti was formed as a strict nature reserve in 1946 to preserve rare and relict Imeretian Oak and Zelkova trees. The famous oaks of Ajameti are ancient natural treasures, with some of the trees being over 250 years old.

There is substantial potential for ecotourism in Ajameti and its surrounding areas. Besides cultural tours, it would be possible to successfully launch automobile-led tours to Sairme and Zekari overpasses, or more generally to the Abastumani area.

Prometheus Cave Natural Monument also known as *Kumistavi Cave* and *Tsqaltubo Cave* is a karst cave located in Tsqaltubo Municipality. The total length of the cave is about 11 km, of which 1060 m are open to visitors. Cave has total of 22 halls of which six are currently open to tourists.

Prometheus Cave infrastructure includes visitors center and well-arranged cave. Visitors have an opportunity to observe the cave on foot as well as by boat.

Okatse Canyon Natural Monument is located in village Gordi, Khoni Municipality. A 1km long walkway suspended along the edge of the canyon will enable visitors to explore this natural wonder and its beautiful waterfalls.

The Katskhi pillar is a natural limestone monolith located at the village of Katskhi (Chiatura Municipality). It is approximately 40 metres high. The rock, with visible church ruins on a top surface measuring c. 150 m², has been venerated by locals as the Pillar of Life and a symbol of the True Cross. Religious activity associated with the pillar was revived in the 1990's and the monastery building had been restored within the framework of a state-funded program by 2009.

Parliament of Georgia. Parliament building in Kutaisi was built in 2010 – 2012 years, by Spanish architectures Alberto Domingo and Carlos Lazaro.

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Fountain in Kutaisi. This Fountain in Kutaisi is located in the central square of Kutaisi. It was built in 2011 by architect David Gogichaishvili. The fountain has 30 gold-plated statues. The statues are copies of those which were found during archaeological excavations in the Kolkhida lowland and belong to the Kolkhida bronze culture. “Tamada” (toastmaster) original statue belongs to VII century BC and was found in Vani, near Kutaisi.

Museums

Kutaisi State Historical Museum, formally known as the **Niko Berdzenishvili Kutaisi State History Museum** is a museum in Kutaisi, Georgia. A major museum, it is also considered to be one of the most important scientific-research institutions in Georgia with its extensive research library and laboratory. The museum, which was established in 1921-22 in the former National Bank of Georgia building, contains more than 190,000 artifacts, displaying the archaeological, numismatic, paleographical, ethnographical and spiritual heritage of Georgia.

Vani Archeological Museum - Reserve (Vani Municipality)

The museum's collection encompasses the period between the 8th and 1st centuries BCE. One of the exhibitions includes the city of temples, most representative of Vani culture. Architecture, gold-works, bronze sculptures and their fragments are represented at the permanent exhibition.

International symposiums dedicated to the historic and archaeological issues surrounding the Black Seaside region's Antic period take place in Vani each year. For decades, archaeological expeditions in the ruins of the city, with its unique discoveries, have been the focus of international scientific inquiry.

Galaktion and Titsian Tabidze House Museum is located in the patrimonial palaces of the famous Georgian poets: Galaktion and Titsian Tabidze (Tkchvishi Village, Vani Municipality). It holds personal belongings of the poets and their ancestors: accessories, clothes, embroidery samples, trinkets, paintings, graphic and sculpture works of Georgian artists.

There are local history museums in the Chiatura and Zestafoni Municipalities.

Resorts

Sairme Wellness Resort is located in a mountainous subtropical area of Baghdati Municipality, by far the largest greenery among the European and South Caucasian resorts, 950 meters above the sea level south of Kutaisi. Sairme has been known since the 1890s for its mineral springs, although the development of tourist infrastructures did not begin until a few years ago. The resort, which benefits

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from a mild climate and pristine environment, boasts clinics, spa centers, swimming pools, sports facilities shopping areas, restaurants and the modern Sairme Hotel. Built in 2013, it features 150 rooms to accommodates up to 390 people.

Tskaltubo Spa Resort (Tskaltubo Municipality) is situated only 7km. from the town of Kutaisi. Just in this picturesque place there was the resort of the Ministry of Defense of the Soviet Union, which is located on 16 hectares with the beautiful wood and historical buildings where Stalin used to spent his vacations. A 4- star complex of “Tskaltubo SPA Resort” with 141 rooms was opened in July, 2011.

Nunisi Balneological Resort located in the Kharagauli Municipality, 920 meters above the sea level.

Rest here is especially useful for those with skin and caused by nervous system diseases.

There are some local balneological resorts in the region: Sulori and Amagleba (Vani Municipality), Kursebi (Tkibuli Municipality), Qveda Simoneti (Terjola Municipality).

Traditions

Imereti region has some unique wine varieties and there is evidence that wine production here dates back to ancient times. Proof of their dedication to the craft of wine making can be seen in the ancient wine jars, grape presses, winery rules and traditions of the Georgian table in Imereti. Feasting and fun are an integral part of life for the people of Imereti, while singing is an essential element of the banquet table. The tradition of modern songs with guitar accompaniment in Georgia originated in Imereti. Even now, folk polyphonic, lyric and joyful songs are performed during festivities in Imereti.

People have special traditions for celebrating Giorgoba (St. George’s Day), Mariamoba (St. Mary’s Day), Barbaroba (St. Barbara’s day), New Year and Christmas, funerals and memorials, weddings, and births.

Shrosha (Zestafoni Municipality) is the ancient home of pottery in Georgia, known since ancient times for its masterpieces.

Gviriloba celebration has an outstanding role, due to its content, objective and goal. It was initiated by the beginning of the 20-th century and included horse racing, competition among orators, charity activities and public celebration in the central park of Kutaisi. There, gymnasium students organized lottery and transferred the accumulated money to the Society for the Spread of Reading and Writing, as

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well as to the diseased. Nowadays, this event is held annually on May 2 and is widely celebrated with various notable events.

Cuisine

Imeretian Khachapuri - is simply round bread stuffed with cheese. Its special taste comes from the typical Imeretian cheese used for the filling. This type of Khachapuri is usually prepared with Imeretian Cheese, which you can find anywhere in Georgia however its origins come from the Imereti region. It is a curd cheese made from cow's milk. It matures quickly within one or two days. It is soft and has a salty, sour taste.

Lobio - "lobio" in Georgian means beans. It is a very popular dish and there are many varieties of it. The bean is either cooked or stewed and is prepared with coriander, walnuts, garlic and onion. When stewed (usually in earthenware pots), the beans are traditionally served with mchadi and fresh white cheese, a strong brined cheese rather like feta. However, thick slices of sourdough and a mild feta or ricotta salata also make great accompaniments.

Mchadi - it is a fired or baked bread prepared with corn meal flour. It is very often served with lobio. As it is hot and often rainy, especially in Imereti and Samegrelo, corn grows everywhere there, and traditionally the everyday bread was mchadi, skillet-cooked corn muffins.

Pkhali - one of the most popular ingredients in Imeretian cuisine is nuts and you can find them in many types of dishes. Pkhali is a combination of ground walnuts mixed with vinegar, onions, garlic, spices, herbs and minced vegetables. It can be made with different vegetables.

Aubergine and pepper with walnuts - this is another delicious combination of vegetable and nuts. The filling is made with ground walnuts, garlic, vinegar, garlic, herbs and spices.

Imeretian cheese from the Imereti region of Georgia is a very popular curd cheese made from cows milk. It has a soft and springy texture and a slightly sour, salty taste. It is a "quick cheese" maturing in just one or two days.

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Wine and Georgia are two inseparable things. Even UNESCO included the traditional Georgian way of making wine in qvevri, in the list of Intangible heritage. It is possible to taste different sorts of wine all over Georgia, however in Western Georgia you will find the most delicate and uncommon kind of grapes. There you can find people who make wine in a traditional, thousand- year- old way. They grow their grapevines on chemicals-free soil. The most popular and prominent Imeretian wines are Tsitska, Tsolikouri or Otskhanuri Sapere.

Hotels

Hotels are located in Kutaisi: Best Western Kutaisi, Bagrati 1003, Hotel Kutaisi Globus, Hotel Discovery, Hotel King David.

Hotels are located in Tskaltubo: Tskaltubo Plaza Hotel, Tskaltubo Prometheus Hotel, Hotel Imereti, Nikala Hotel, Tskaltubo Health Resort.

Sairme hotel operates in the Sairme resort.

In the Imereti region are functioning plenty of Guest Houses and hostels.

Restaurants

In Kutaisi are located Restaurants and wine bars: Palaty, Toma's Wine Celler, Wine-bar Sapere, Bar-Restaurant Kaiser.

There are many good restaurants in the all municipalities of Imereti Region which offer tourists both - traditional and European dishes.

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IV. KAKHETI REGION

V.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Kakheti Region is located at the far east of Georgia, bounded by the Russian Federation to the north and Azerbaijan to the south. It consists of eight municipalities – Akhmeta, Gurjaani, Dedoplistskaro, Telavi, Lagodekhi, Sagarejo, Signaghi and Kvareli. The total area of the region is 11,375 km², which is 16.3 percent of the entire territory of the country. The administrative centre is Telavi.



V.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The suitable location of Kakheti, in particular, its proximity to Tbilisi and the common border with Azerbaijan turns the region into a transport corridor providing a strong basis for economic cooperation between the countries. If the number of tourists grows, the Telavi airport (which currently has only one take-off runway) may be put into operation.

The region has an agriculture-dominated mono-profile economy. As Kakheti is an agricultural region, the share of non-agricultural economy is small. The recent growth of construction has spurred the production of local construction materials (bricks, tiles, building blocks, etc.). There are mining and processing industries in the region: mining and processing of slate and marble, mining of limestone in the municipalities of Telavi and processing of limestone in the municipalities of Dedoplistskaro.

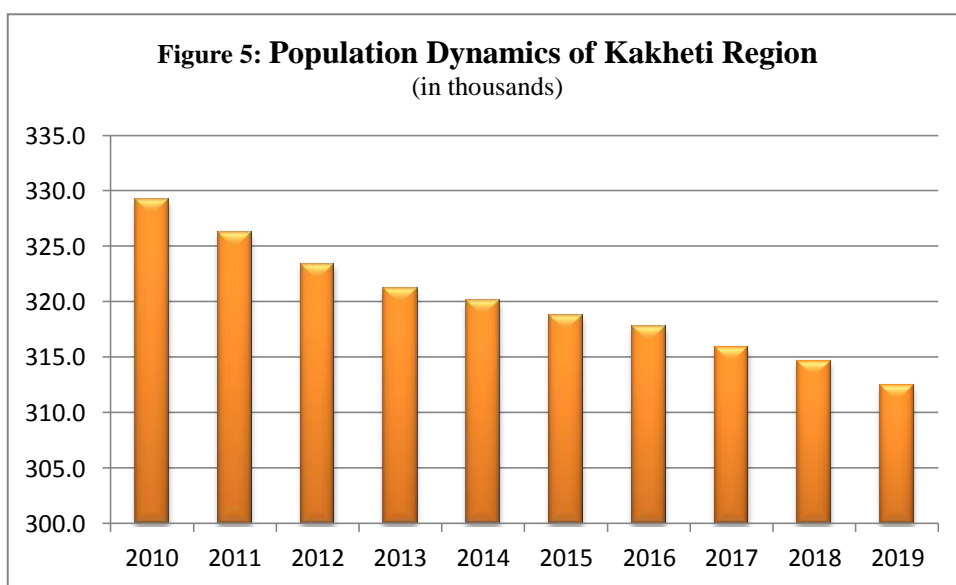
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Population

By 2018 Kakheti Region has a population of 314.7 thousands (8.4 percent of the whole population of the country Georgia). It is important to highlight that Kakheti is the less urbanized region in Georgia, with only 22.7 percent of its population living in towns and settlements.



Source: Geostat

Kakheti is one of the regions with the lowest population density, with only 28 people per km². The vast majority of the population, except in Tusheti lives on lowlands, and most villages are located across the main transport routes.

The dynamics of the population replicate the trend in other regions of the country. Between the 1989 and 2014 censuses, the population in Kakheti decreased by 27.4 percent.

More populated municipalities are: Telavi municipality (56.7 thnd.), Gurjaani municipality (53.1 thnd.) and Sagarejo municipality (52.3 thnd.). Dedoplistskaro municipality is less populated municipality (21.1 thnd.).

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In 2017 crude birth rate made up 15 per mille and the death rate 15.2 per mille. On the basis of these two components natural increase was negative (-0.2 per mille).

According to data of population census of Georgia 2014, 85.2% of the population in Kakheti region are Georgians and 10.2% are Armenians. In the region also living: Kists (Chechens) Armenians, Russians and other nationalities.

V.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Monasteries, temples and fortresses

Tourism revitalization in the entire country has sparked tourism in Kakheti. Kakheti certainly has some advantages for attracting both local and international tourists, such as its many historical monuments and potential for developing wine tourism.

Alaverdi Monastery (Akhmeta Municipality) located 20 km from Telavi. The monastery was founded by the Assyrian monk Joseph (Yoseb, Amba) Alaverdeli, who came from Antioch and settled in Alaverdi, then a small village and former pagan religious center dedicated to the Moon. At a height of over 55 m (180 ft), Alaverdi Cathedral was the tallest religious building in Georgia, until the construction of the Holy Trinity Cathedral of Tbilisi, which was consecrated in 2004.. The monastery is the focus of the annual religious celebration Alaverdoba. Situated in the heart of the world's oldest wine region, the monks also make their own wine, known as Alaverdi Monastery Cellar.

The Monastery of St. Nino at Bodbe is a Georgian Orthodox monastic complex and the seat of the Bishops of Bodbe located 2 km from the town of Signaghi (Signaghy Municipality). Originally built in the 9th century, it has been significantly remodeled, especially in the 17th century. The monastery now functions as a nunnery and is one of the major pilgrimage sites in Georgia, due to its association with St. Nino, the 4th-century female evangelist of Georgians, whose relics are shrined there.

Gremi is a 16th-century architectural monument – the royal citadel and the Church of the Archangels. The complex is what has survived from the once flourishing town of Gremi and is located southwest of the present-day village of the same name in the Kvareli Municipality, 175 kilometers east of Tbilisi.

Iqalto (Georgian: იყალტო) is a village about 10 km west of the town Telavi in the Kakheti region of Eastern Georgia. It is mostly known for its monastery complex and the Ikalto Academy.

The Ikalto monastery situated in the Iqalto village, about 10 km west of the town Telavi, was founded by Saint Zenon, one of the 13 Syrian Fathers, in the late 6th century. It was known as one of

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the most significant cultural-scholastic centres of Georgia. An academy was founded at the monastery during king David the Builder by Arsen Ikaltoeli (prominent Georgian calligrapher and religious author with noticeable role in the ecclesiastic life of Georgia. Ikaltoeli meaning from Ikalto), in the early 12th century. The Academy of Ikalto trained its students in theology, rhetoric, astronomy, philosophy, geography, geometry chanting but also more practical skills such as pottery making, metal work, viticulture and wine making and pharmacology. According to a legend the famous 12th century Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli studied there.

There are three churches on the monastery grounds – Khvtaeba, Kvelatsminda and Sameba. The main church, Khvtaeba (Holy Spirit), was built in the 8th–9th century on the site of an older church (in which Saint Zenon had been buried).

Shuamta monastery situated near Telavi in the village of Shuamta. It is a complex of several ancient churches. The small church standing in the foreground is dated the 5th century, the other two – bigger and smaller domical churches – the 7th century. The churches have the 12th-century paintings.

Nekresi situated in Kvareli Municipality near by to Shilda village, represents complex of ecclesiastical buildings and is one of the most important cultural centers of Georgia. The oldest is a chapel of the small basilica type built in 4th century, when King Trdat. In 5-7th centuries here was erected the main temple - St. Virgin's Church of the triple-church basilica type, which has several important inscriptions and wall-painting of 16th century. In 9th century was built the domed church. The monastery remembers numerous Muslim invasions. The legend tells us about one of them: Nekresi was attacked by Muslims and the defenders of the monastery let pigs out of the monastery. When Muslims soldiers saw pigs on their way, they ceased hostilities and left the monastery in peace. In commemoration of this rescue the pig was announced as Nekresi protector and up to now the Nekresi st. Virgin temple is the only church in Georgia to which the pig can be sacrificed.

The Gurjaani Kvelatsminda Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God constructed in the 8th or 9th century, during the "transitional period" in the medieval Georgian architecture. It is located in the town of Gurjaani (center of Gurjaani Municipality).

The Gurjaani church is the only extant example of a two-dome church design in the territory of Georgia. It is mostly built of straight courses of cobblestone. In the 17th century, Persian invasions and Dagestani inroads into the area resulted in abandonment of church services which would not resume until 1822. In 1938, the Georgian authorities cleaned the area of the church and restored it as a historical monument. Further conservation works were conducted in 2010.

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Protected areas and Parks

Lagodekhi National Park is situated in the Lagodekhi Municipality. The total protected area is 24,451 hectares. The reserves are located in north-eastern Georgia on the southern slopes of the Caucasus and border on Azerbaijan and Dagestan. The founder of the reserve was Polish naturalist Ludwik Mlokosievich. Lagodekhi National Park preserves a variety of rare local flora and fauna and was originally protected in 1912, under the Russian Empire, the first nature preserve in Georgia. Their ecoregion is that of the Caucasus mixed forests. Lagodekhi National Park is located 155 kilometers from Tbilisi.

Vashlovani Strict Nature Reserve is a protected area in Dedoplistsqaro Municipality, on Shiraqi mountain range and Georgian bank of Alazani River. The total protected area is 10,143 hectares, with forest at 4.032 ha, and the rest are fields, desert, ravines.

Protected forest mostly has pine tree and juniper. There are also Celtis, Pyrus salicifolia, pomegranate, Prunus mahaleb, Spiraea, Paliurus and others. There are many types of birds: Rock partridge, Griffon vulture, Eurasian golden oriole, Mistle thrush. Mammals are represented by wild boar, rabbits, fox, wolf, Caucasian bear, striped hyena, European badger and others. The purpose of the Nature Reserve is to protect and preserve rare species of rare forest flora and fauna.

Mariamjvari Strict Nature Reserve is a protected area in Sagarejo Municipality, on the southern slopes of Gombori Range, was founded in 1935 with the purpose of preserving untouched landscapes of relic Sosnowskyi pine (Pinus sosnowskyi).

Most of the reserve landscape is covered with forest. Relict Sosnowskyi pine of Caucasus is spread at 800-1800 m above sea level. It is represented by variety of forms due to tree polymorphism: pyramidal (Pinus Sosnowsky Nakai var. Pyramidalis Kurd.), compact (Pinus Sosnowsky Nakai var. Compacta Kurd.), oval (Pinus Sosnowsky Nakai var. Ovalus Kurd.), umbrella type (Pinus Sosnowsky Nakai var. umbraculifera Kurd.). In protected forest there are also specimens of hornbeam, oriental hornbeam (Carpinus orientalis), oak, beech, maple, elm. There are also many species of shrubs.

Presently Mariamjvari Strict Nature Reserve is part of Georgia's Protected Areas which also includes Korugi Managed Reserve and Iori Managed Reserve.

Batsara-Babaneuri Protected Areas is located in Kakheti, on territory of Akhmeta municipality. It was created in 2003 and includes Batsara-Babaneuri Nature Reserve and Ilto Managed Reserve. Batsara State Nature Reserve was first created in 1935. Batsara Nature Reserve is located in Pankisi gorge; namely, in river Batsara gorge at the right tributary of river Alazani. The nature reserve is

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located at an altitude of 700-2,000 meters above sea level. In the middle part of Batsara gorge there are remains of tertiary relict dendroflora, almost 270 ha stands of yew forests. Such size of yew stand cannot be found anywhere in the world.

Babanauri Nature Reserve was established relatively late, in 1961. Nature reserve is located in eastern part of the Caucasus Mountain, near village lower Alvani, Babaneuri and Laliskure. Area is located at an altitude of 380-1,100 m. The purpose of creation was to protect up to 240 ha Zelkova stands, which is part of the Red List of Georgia.

Tusheti is a special tourism attraction for its unique landscape and nature, as well as its protected areas. There has recently been a sharp increase in small hotels and guesthouses in Tusheti, which makes these areas increasingly attractive to Georgian and foreign tourists. However, the road connecting these areas to Kakheti passes through a complicated landscape, and most of the year, helicopter is the only means of transportation to reach those areas. This obviously limits the number of tourists in these areas.

Museums

Aleksandre Chavchavadze House Museum - (village Tsinandali, Telavi Municipality). The museum is located in the palace of the well-known Georgian poet, where one can see objects representing both the poet's life and creative work, and his epistolary and iconography archive, XIX c. editions on various subjects in French, German, English, Polish, Armenian languages, XVIII c. manuscripts, works of photographer Ermakov, samples of painting and lithography, XVII-XIX c.c. Georgian, Russian, French furniture, other household objects, crockery (Chinese, Japanese, French, German, Italian, Georgian, Russian), musical instruments; Aleksander Chavchavadze in 1830 laid out a decorative park which at the moment occupies 12 hectare land. There are different plants - medical, technical, etc. as well as exotic ones from China, Japan, Mediterranean, America, etc. In 1835 there was built one of the first in Georgia wine cellar, where are kept unique collection of wine from many countries (20.000 bottles).

Money Museum – (town Kvareli). The Money Museum of the National Bank of Georgia in Kvareli in Kakheti Region is the place to go to see the centuries-old history of money circulation in Georgia, from the 6th century B.C. up to the present. The exhibits cover twenty-six centuries and contain Colchian tetri, Alexander the Great staters, coins of the Roman Republic and Empire, Parthia coins, Sassanian drachms, Georgian-Sassanian drachms, Arab and Arab-Georgian dirhems, Byzantine nomismas, coins minted by the Kings of the united Georgian Kingdom, dirhams from the period of Mongolian dominance, Trabzonian aspers, XIV-XV century Georgian coins, coins minted by the Georgian Kings in the XVI-XVIII centuries, as well as civic coppers minted in Tbilisi in XVII-XVIII century, Iranian

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coins of the Safavid and the Efsarid, Ottoman money, European gold ducats and silver talers, Georgian-Russian money minted in Tbilisi in 1804-1834, also old banknotes and coins of the Russian Empire, paper money issued in Georgia after the revolution of 1917, namely the banknotes issued by the Transcaucasia commissariat in 1918, notes issued in 1918-1921 by the independent Democratic Republic of Georgia and paper money issued by the Trans-Caucasian Soviet Federation Socialist Republic in 1921-1924.

Telavi Historical Museum – (town Telavi). The museum complex includes memorial palace of the Kakheti king Erekle II (built in 1884-86), court church, reparents of philosophy school, bath and tunnel built by Erekle II, also Ketevan Iashvili Art Gallery. The museum houses king Erekle's belongings and along with them: numismatic collection, erly medieval sarcophagus, late medieval armor, and collections of XVII-XIX c.c. cooper household objects, weapons, Khevsuretian (East Georgian mountainous region) clothes. The Art Gallery houses the private collection (187 items) of Ketevan Iashvili donated by her to the museum. The collection includes works of XIX c. Dach, French, German, Russian (Aivazovski, Kramskoi and other peredvizhnik period artists) painters, also works of Georgian artists (E.Akhvlediani, L.Gudiashvili, J.Khutsishvili, etc.).

Georgian National Museum, Signagi Museum – (town Signagi). Signagi Museum was established in 2007. It is the first high standard museum in Georgia. Signagi Museum exhibits Archeology, Ethnography and Medieval expositions. The first archeological digs in Georgia are affiliated with the Caucasus Museum founded in 1852. Intensive archeological activities started in Kakheti in the 60-ies of the 20th c. Majority of the unearthed items such as household and cultic articles ranging in time from the Stone Age to the 1st c. BC, are now displayed at the Signagi Museum. Signagi Museum features diverse ethnographic material: musical instruments, weapons, vestments and items reflecting the lifestyle of this town. Medieval exposition features samples of the 4th-18th cc. city life from the settlements of eastern Iberia such as Beri, Rustavi, Khoranta, Nekresi, Khornabuji, Gavazi, Areshi, Gremi, and Bazari. Special place at the Medieval exposition is granted to archeological finds from David Gareja monastic complex. Signagi Museum exhibits 16 paintings by Niko Pirosmanashvili. Pirosmani was born in Kakheti's village of Mirzaani, therefore early period of his artistic career is affiliated with Kakheti.

Kvareli Ilia Chavchavadze Museum – (town Kvareli). This complex includes family castle and house of outstanding Georgian poet and public figure Ilia Chavchavadze (1837-1907) and exposition hall as well. The museum houses memorial objects of the poet and his family, poet's manuscripts, sets of established by him periodicals, family coat of arms, seal, household objects, XVIII-XIX c.c. weapons,

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furniture, manuscripts of Georgian and foreign public figures, paintings inspired by the poet's works (by H. Hrinewski, L. Gudiashvili, K. Guruli, S. Meskhi, T. Mirzashvili), rich collection of photographs and archive documents, collection of poet's works editions on various languages.

Niko Piroshmanashvili State Museum – (town Kvareli). The Museum located in Dedoplistskaro Municipality, Village of Mirzaani; The museum offers to visit dwelling house of 20th century legendary Georgian artist Nicko Piroshmanishvili (1862 - 1918) where several of his original works are presented in the exhibition halls. At the same time several pictures of the most celebrated Georgian artists are presented here, coupled with the world-famous lithograph of Pablo Picasso „Piroshmanishvili Portrait”. The museum possesses also the unique collection of old handmade kilims and carpets one of which was weaved by the artist’s mother. The museum has got rather large set of ethnographic material that clearly reflects traditional lifestyle of the historical province of Kizikhi.

In the region there are some local museums.

Resorts

Akhtala is a spa in the town of Gurjaani (Gurjaani Municipality), known for its mud bathes of volcanic origin. Beginning in the 1920s, Akhtala's potential for balneotherapy was studied and exploited by the Georgian Institute of Resorts and Physiotherapy.

“Lopota Spa Resort” is a resort hotel located in the Napareuli village (Telavi Municipality), 115 kilometers from the Tbilisi. A small paradise situated in the beautiful Lopota Valley, surrounded by ridges of the Caucasian mountain range, the resort has a recreation area. Here, each season is distinctively unique, ideal for relaxation, family reunions, weddings, business meetings, retreats, corporate, entertainment, fishing and sports events. Visitors are also able to ride high-breed horses and enjoy magnificent beauty of Kakheti region.

Resort is ideally located to access the main historical, cultural, famous and picturesque sites of the region. Hotel is destined for guests who desire to enjoy their holidays and explore various kinds of eco, extreme, cultural and wine tours.

Traditions

The wine for the Georgians is not just a drink. It is a piece of Georgian culture, national identity and heritage. Georgian oral and musical folklore is replete with masterpieces dedicated to the grapevine and wine. The wine continues to occupy an important place in the Georgian Christian culture to the present day.

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Kakheti is Georgia's main wine-producing region in the country's east. Wine grapes have been cultivated in these lands for 8,000 years, which, archaeologists say, makes Kakheti the cradle of wine. A total of 104 endemic varieties of grapes grow at the Alaverdi Monastery of Saint George, which traces its history back to the sixth century. The unique Georgian way of making wine was passed on by the Orthodox monks through the ages.

What makes Georgian wine unique is kvevri – large clay vessels used for the fermentation and storage of wine since ancient times. Even though kvevris are buried below ground level, old masters still decorated the surface with their signature patterns. It is a sign of special reverence.

In recent times, the monastery has embraced modern technologies, but it keeps making some of its renowned wine the old way.

Each village in Kakheti's fertile valleys makes its unique wine. Nowadays there are produced many varieties and types of wine, the most famous of which are:

Rkatsiteli – aboriginal vine breed of white wine grapes. Rkatsiteli grows in all Kakhetian areas and can be consumed as fruit. It stands out for abundant yields. In Kakhetian conditions it fully ripens around mid-September.

Kakhuri Mtsvane – (Kakhetian Green) aboriginal vine breed of white wine grapes that can be mainly found in Sagarejo Municipality, particularly around Manavi Village whose soil makes it reveal its best features. Mtsvane is known for its good crop yield.

Qisi – Georgian aboriginal vine breed of white wine grapes. Qisi is intermediate breed between Rkatsiteli and Kakhuri Mtsvane. Its grapes make both table and sparkling wines.

Khikhvi – Georgian ancient aboriginal vine breed of white wine grapes that can be mainly found in Gurjaani Municipality, particularly around Kardenakhi Village. It can be used to produce high-quality fortified liqueur wines. This breed does not yield much crops.

Cabernet-Sauvignon – French vine breed of red grapes. It is especially prevalent in Bordeaux. In Georgia it can be found in Telavi and Kvareli Municipalities and used to make high-quality table wines.

Tsinandali – The most famous Georgian white wine “Tsinandali” is made from the Rkatsiteli grapes. It can be found on the right bank of the river Alazani at an altitude of 300 -750 meters above the sea level. The region includes villages Tsinandali, Kisiskhevi, Kondoli, Vardisubani, Akura and other nearby villages.

Mukuzani – can be found in the centre of Kakheti, in Gurjaani Municipality on the right bank of Alazani river at the altitude of 350-750 m above the sea level. Micro-zone includes the whole area of

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Mukuzani; villages Velistsikhe, Vazisubani, Chumlaki and other nearby sites. The grapes mature end of September.

Akhasheni – can be mainly found on the right board of Alazani river on the 350-700m above the sea level. Mainly Akhasheni and Chumlaki villages make up AOC Akhasheni. Saperavi is the most cultivated grape variety there.

Kindzmarauli – dominate in Kvareli Municipality. The vineyards are placed on the 250-550 m above the sea level mostly along the left board of Alazani river. Kindzmarauli is characterized with very unique climate and structure. Kindzmarauli soil contains number of precious metals such as gold, diamond, silver etc. The unique natural conditions of these vineyards have an impact on the superior quality of wine. If in the past Kindzmarauli was famous only as a red semi-sweet wine, today excellent dry wines are made from the Saperavi grapes.

A family vineyard is not just wine. By dipping a thread of walnuts in thickened grape juice, the locals make churchkhela – the delicious all-natural candy invented in Kakheti. Churchkheles are good for your health, and they are more nutritious than bread

Dry grape vines make the best charcoal for shashlik, the main dish at any gathering and a symbol of Georgian hospitality – just like the wine from the kvevri family.

Cuisine

The [Kakhetian](#) cuisine is considered to be a more "meat-based" cuisine and the "Region of Wine". It is also known as the birth-place of one of the Georgian bread, **Tonis puri**.

Notable dishes from Kakheti includes : **Mtsvadi** (Meat cooked on fire), **Chakapuli** (Soup made of fresh herbs such as tarragon and meat of sheep or lamb), **Khashlama** (Boiled meat of beef or lamb), **Khashi** (ბაჭო - Boiled meat often eaten after Supra), **Chanakhi** (- Soup made of lamb and tomatoes), **Chikhirtma** (Soup made of chicken meat), **Ajapsandali** (Kind of ragout made of eggplants, potatoes and tomatoes), and many others.

In Kakheti, they made famous desserts such as **Churchkhela** (Candy made of grape juice and walnuts), **Pelamushi** (Dessert made of grape juice).

Kakheti is also well-known for its wines.

Hotels

Hotel Complex „Royal Batoni” is located in the Kvareli Municipality, on Ilia Lake, in 160 km away from Tbilisi. Distance from the Hotel to Ilia Lake is 200 metres and distance from the Hotel to Kvareli centre is 7 kilometers.

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Hotel offers tours in: Kakheti, Alaverdi, Tsinandali, and Gremi. Bicycle tours in Kvareli. Wine sampling and masterclasses in churchkhela, khinkali and barbecue making. Hotel has entertainment room with table tennis, table football and billiards. We also have bicycle.. Holidaymaker can rent water bicycles and scooters here, play tennis, basketball, volleyball, football, trampoline, etc.

Hotel complex „Kvareli Eden" is located in Kvareli, on the right bank of the Bursa river, 135 km from Tbilisi. The hotel is a few steps away from the center of Kvareli, where the museums, church and main sights of Kvareli are located.

The hotel complex has high class rooms, restaurants, bars, conference hall, bowling, billiard room, tennis court, wine spa. Here you can enjoy traditional Georgian cuisine as well as European dishes and snacks.

Inside of Kvareli Eden Hotel, is located Vinotherapie Spa. Wine Spa Kvareli is born to give a push to the tourism of the region, and to pay homage to the excellent properties of the wines and grapes from the Kakheti region.

Spa has been designed as a Wine therapy paradise, and it is the only of its kind in Georgia, and in Caucasus region.

Restaurants

Nadikvari Terrace – Telavi (Telavi Municipality);

Restaurant Erekle II - Telavi (Telavi Municipality);

Schuchmann Wines Chateau Restaurant – Telavi (Telavi Municipality);

Mala's Garden - Telavi (Telavi Municipality);

Restaurant Burji – Signaghi (Signaghi Municipality);

Pancho Villa in Signaghi - Signaghi Municipality;

Nikala Restaurant – Signaghi (Signaghi Municipality);

Restaurant Royal Batoni – Kvareli (Kvareli Municipality).

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V. MCKHETA – MTIANETI REGION

VI.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Mtskheta-Mtianeti is a region in eastern [Georgia](#), bordered by Russian Federation Republics of North Ossetia, Ingushetia and Chechnya from the north and Georgian regions of Kakheti and Shida Kartli from the east and south, Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, with the total area of 6.8 thousand km², makes up 9.8% of the country's total land. The region is divided into 5 municipalities: Dusheti, Tianeti, Mtskheta, Kazbegi and Akhagori. This last after the Russia-Georgia war 2008 is occupied by the Russian Federation and nowadays is controlled by the non-recognized Republic of South Ossetia. Administrative center is Mtskheta. Historically it covered the provinces of Khevi, Ertso-Tianeti, Pshavi, Khevsureti, Mtiuleti, Gudamakari and partially Ksani Gorge.



VI.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region is a major transport corridor, as an international automobile road passing through this region connects Armenia and Georgia with Russia. However landslides and avalanches block the road several times a year. A major North-South gas pipeline passes through this region too and is used for natural gas import from Russia to Georgia.

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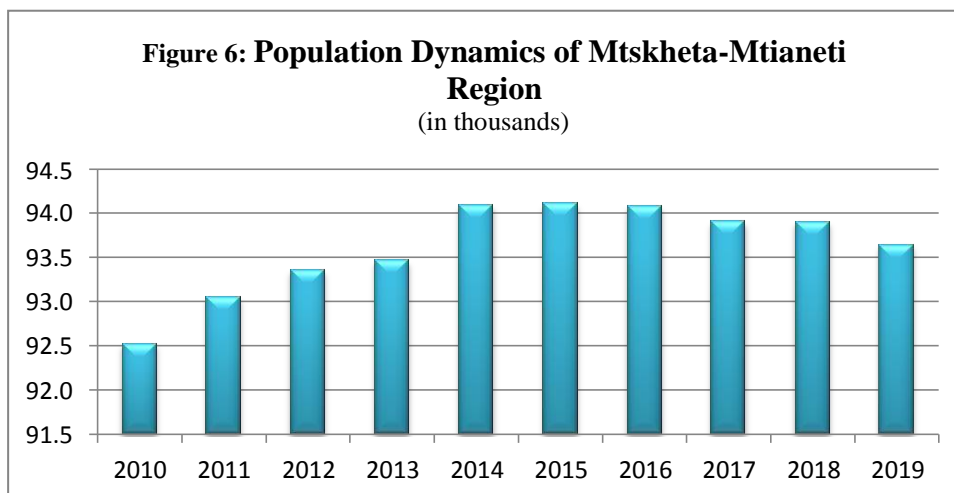
In Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, share from the manufactured production in accordance with economic activity falls mainly to industry, then construction, agriculture, trade, communications and etc. Out of industrial enterprises, the Brewery “Natakhtari”, the Brewery “Zedazeni”, “Aqua Geo”, “Shato Mukhrani”, the Ksani Glass Factory,”Barambo”, Paper Manufacturing Plant and others can be distinguished

There are no large commercial farms in the region. Potato is a dominant crop cultivated. Sheep and Cattle farming and dairy production are the main branches of agriculture.

The employment problem is still relevant for entire Georgia as well as Mtskheta-Mtianeti region. According to the data, provided by the Geostat, unemployment rate throughout Georgia amounts to 12,4%, while in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region more than 6.1%. Low level of unemployment compared with the data throughout Georgia is preconditioned by the fact that in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, the population is mainly self-employed on their own farms.

Population

By 2018 Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region has a population of 93.9 thousands (2.5 percent of the whole population of Georgia). Region is less urbanized only 23.3 percent of its population living in towns and settlements. A population density, with only 14 people per square mile. Between the 1989 and 2014 censuses, the population in the region decreased by 14.2 percent. The main reasons fixed fact were fertility decline and emigration processes.



Source: Geostat

Common borders. Common solutions.





More populated municipality is Mtskheta with more than 46 thousand inhabitants. In 2018 number of population of Dusheti, Tianeti and Kazbegi municipalities made up 26.1, 10.0 and 3.8 thousands respectively.

By 2017 crude birth rate in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti Region made up 11.7 per mille and the death rate 12.9 per mille. The value of natural increase was negative (-1.2 per mille). Natural Increase Rate was positive only in the Mtskheta Municipality (2.1 per mille).

According to data of population census of Georgia 2014, vast majority of population is ethnically Georgian 94.5%). In the region also living: Azeris, Ossetians and etc.

In 2010 Mtskheta Municipality increased by 10 400 people provoked by occupation of the Akhalkalaki Municipality territory by Russian Federation in 2008 and ethnic persecution of the local residents that led to setting up compact settlements of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) on the region territory (Tsereteli, Prezeti, Tsinaridzvelantkari and etc.). There are approximately 10 000 IDPs in the region.

VI.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Monasteries, Temples and Fortresses

Mtskheta-Mtianeti region is a major tourism destination with the UNESCO World Heritage Site of **Mtskheta** town and an exceptional portfolio of cultural heritage and natural products with a year round appeal for foreign and domestic visitors.

Mtskheta one of the oldest cities of Georgia, it is located approximately 20 kilometres (12 miles) north of Tbilisi, at the confluence of the Kura and Aragvi rivers.

Due to its historical significance and several cultural monuments, the "Historical Monuments of Mtskheta" became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994. As the birthplace and one of the most vibrant centers of Christianity in Georgia, Mtskheta was declared as the "Holy City" by the Georgian Orthodox Church in 2014.

In 2016 the Historical Monuments of Mtskheta were placed by UNESCO under **Enhanced Protection**, a mechanism established by the 1999 Second Protocol to the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict.

In the region the most significant sites are: Dusheti and Kazbegi historical towns with their vernacular architectural style, Svetitskhoveli church, Jvari temple, Shiomghvime monastery, archaeological sites of Bagineti-Armazi and Samtavro-Dzalisi; Zedazeni church, Bochorna church, Ananuri fortress,

Common borders. Common solutions.





Gergeti Trinity church, Shatili and Mutso historic fortified cultural heritage villages, and Sno fortress. The main nature attractions are Gudauri ski resort.

Paragliding, ski-touring, snowmobiling and sightseeing tours are popular activities with both youth and experienced sportsmen arriving in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region.

Popular outdoor activities include trekking and hiking, bird-watching, horse riding, mountain biking, bike downhill races, white water river rafting, fishing, mountaineering, rock climbing, and camping.

Helicopter skiing in the Caucasus is also a wellknown attraction for tourists visiting Gudauri where numerous slopes are available for heli-skiers. Some of the most spectacular runs start at 4500m around the summit glaciers of the 5047m Mt. Kazbegi.

Summer programs can be combined with summer skiing during April-May and even as late as June. Groups can be accommodated at the ski-hut (2650 m). Ski-lifts drop skiers up at 3300m peaks to enjoy the amazing contrast between winter snow and summer grassland.

A very popular hiking area around the famous peak Mkinvartsveri (the Greater Caucasus, Kazbegi), with the spectacular Darial canyon to the north and Truso gorge to the south. Natural landscapes vary from deep gorges and canyons with fast streams and sub-alpine vegetation to high mountain peaks (the highest is 5,033m) with glaciers. Woodlands are scarce with mixed and coniferous forests dominating. Geologically, the site is mainly made up of tertiary volcanogenic bedrock, with the scarce formations of Paleozoic and older granites.

Kazbegi is the most feasible site to watch vultures, mountain birds, and mountain goats. It is best to plan your visit for several days, although even a two-day trip for watching some birds is possible with a car.

Rafting is available on the river Aragvi. Local tour operators provide all the necessary equipment for such endeavours.

Djvari Monastery (6 th century) stands on the rocky mountaintop at the confluence of the Mtkvari and Aragvi rivers, overlooking the historical town of Mtskheta. According to traditional accounts, on this location in the early 4th century Saint Nino, a female evangelist, credited with converting King Mirian III of Iberia to Christianity, erected a large wooden cross on the site of a pagan temple. The cross was reportedly able to work miracles and therefore drew pilgrims from all over Caucasus. A small church was erected over the remnants of the wooden cross in 545 named the “Small Church of djvari”.

Svetitskhoveli (11th century) – One of the most important churches in all the Georgia – Svetitskhoveli Cathedral is located in Mtskheta town, as it is the most religious town of Georgia, it is the place where

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Christianity in Georgia takes its origin. Svetitskhoveli is the second largest church building in the country, after the recently consecrated Tbilisi Sameba Cathedral, and is listed as an UNESCO World Heritage Site along with other historical monuments of Mtskheta.

Ananuri (16-18 centuries) – The fortified church complex of is undoubtedly one of the most attractive sights along the Georgian Military Highway. The mirrored surface of the Zhinvali reservoir and forested foothills of the mountains provide a picturesque backdrop for its handsome towers and battlements.

Gergeti – Gergety Trinity Church built in XIII-XIV c is the only cupola church in the Khevi region. Perched on the top of the Tsminda Sameba (Holly Trinity) hill at 2170 meters above sea level, it is something of a symbol of Georgia. The severe beauty of glaciers and austerity of local people are reflected in the construction of such a huge church on such a height. The trek up to the Gergety Trinity church starts at the village Gergety and passes through lush forests and alpine fields.

Protected Areas and Parks

Kazbegi National Park is located on the northern slopes of Main Caucasus range, in the basin of the Tergi River in the Kazbegi district (gorge); lower marker of its territory is at a height of 1400 m above sea level, and the upper one is within 300 – 4100 m. Establishing of Kazbegi National Park serves the purpose of protection of the high mountain ecosystems.

Vegetation cover of Kazbegi National Park is quite diverse. It is enclosed in the very part of the Kazbegi florist zone of the Greater Caucasus, which is distinguished by richness of endemic species. 1347 species of plants can be found in this florist zone, 26% out of them are endemic. The alpine, sub alpine, xerophyte and plants of other ecological communities can be found here.

The forests of Kazbegi National Park are located on the steep slopes. 105 species of wood plants can be found in the Strict Nature Reserve, though mainly there are Litvinov's birch (*Betula litwinovi*), Sosnovski's pine (*Pinus sosnowskyi*), junipers (*Juniperus* – 3 species), Sea-buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*). It is remarkable that in Georgia there is a very rare large grove of Sea-buckthorn nearby the settlement of Stepantsminda, and the Caucasian rhododendron (*Rhododendron caucasicum*), Oriental beech and high-mountain oak are widespread in the vast areas.

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National Park is rich in Fauna. Here can be found the Georgia's Red List species, such as East Caucasian tur (*Carpa cylindricornis*), chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), Brown bear, lynx, et al. Birds of prey can be found in the National Park, which are also included in the Red List of Georgia, such as the Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), griffon vulture (*Gyps fulvus*) and Bearded vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*).

Museums

The Great Mtskheta Archaeological State Museum-Reserve (data of establishment: 1958).

Mtskheta – the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Iberia (Kartli) and the spiritual-religious centre of the country. This is the very place of interment of the tunic of Jesus Christ and the cradle of Christianity and Christian culture in Georgia. Majority of the most important samples of pre-Christian and Christian Georgian architecture is entered the World Cultural Heritage List of UNESCO.

Here presented several exceptional archaeological exhibits of different historical periods the earliest of which – the agricultural tools dated back by 4th millennium BC belonged to ancient farmers; toys of children of prehistoric times (2th millennium BC), precious metal artifacts of the Antique Period marked with highest level of craftsmanship and the perfect samples of the Ancient Greek epigraphy.

Stephantsminda Museum of History (Kazbegi Municipality, date of establishment 1934).

The museum building used to be memorial house of well-known Georgian writer Alexander Kazbegi (1848-1890). There are kept personal belongings and library of the writer, and ethnographic and craft collections of material culture, documents characteristic for Khevi (name of the mountainous region) and more widely – for Caucasian culture, for example household objects, accessories, crockery, kilims, saddle-bags (XIX c. and beginning of the XX c.), archaeological collection (numismatics, fragments of weapons and implements, adornments, decorations, earthenware, etc.), religious objects, works of local artists.

David and Giorgi Eristavi House Museum (Village Odzisi, Dusheti Municipality. Date of establishment: 1961).

The museum is situated in the memorial palace of 18th-19th centuries built by Eristavi's. The museum houses materials connected to the life and activities of David and Giorgi Eristavis, famous public figures: memorial collections, everyday life things, photo-materials, specimens of applied art, documents.

Ilia Chavchavadze Saguramo State Museum (Village Saguramo, Mtskheta district. Date of establishment: 1951).

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The museum houses memorial belongings of outstanding Georgian writer and public figure Ilia Chavchavadze (1837-1907), photo portraits of XIX c. representatives of Georgian culture, as well as photographs of everyday life of the epoqe, manuscripts of the writer, samples of published by him periodicals (Iveria, Sakartvelos Moambe, etc.), several samples of Georgian and foreign fine art (Jaques de Molle enters the Tamplier Order by Garnier, Mazepa surrounded by wolves by Verne, Fear by unknown French painter of the same period, works of well-known Georgian artists Lado Gudiashvili, Ucha Japaridze, Iakob Nikoladze), XVIII-XIX c.c. German decorative and everyday crockery, furniture, etc.

Vazha-Pshavela House Museum (village Pshavi, Dusheti district. Date of establishment: 1961) .

The museum houses memorial objects connected with life and work of well-known Georgian poet Vazha-Pshavela (1861-1915), ethnographic collection (XIX c. and beginning of the XX c.), various publications of poet's works, also are presented paintings, graphic and sculptures, photographs dedicated to the poet. Museum's branch: Korsha Ethnographical Museum.

There are some local museums in the region.

Resorts and Natural Touristic Resources

Gudauri – Gudauri is situated on the Georgian military road near the Cross Mountain Pass of the main Caucasus range, in about 120 km from Tbilisi. Even in winters with relatively little snow Gudauri offers stable snow cover from November through May. Average snow height on the slopes reaches 1.5 m. In spite of the fact that Gudauri is located at 2000 m from the sea level warm, sunny and quiet weather still prevails. Gudauri skiing routes offer abundant skiing possibilities to all categories of skiers. Both beginners and professional sportsman will enjoy the downhill runs here. Gudauri offers four types of runs: slalom, giant slalom, super giant and downhill racing, all approved by the FIS. Total length of runs in Gudauri is 16 km. Gudauri is also a summer destination. It offers following tourism activities: trekking tours in Truso and Khada Valleis, horseback riding, bird watching, rafting and etc. The resort offers 8 hotels. 4 guest houses and 3 family houses with total of 669 beds.

Sno Gorge – Located in Khevi province Sno gorge is a popular place among hikers as it gives you the chance to enjoy breath-taking views, virgin nature and get to know the every-day life of locals. A little path through the gorge will take you to another attractive part of the Caucasus – Khevsureti region.

Truso gorge – The wonderful scenery is sure to make an unforgettable impression on you. You will see some remote villages with defensive towers as you travel alongside the Tergi River. The area is also rich in mineral springs that flow down the rocks and change their colour.

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Juta –The second highest permanently inhabited settlement in Europe (2100m above sea level), enclosed by spectacular peaks. 6 months a year the village is cut off from the rest of the world by snow. This is one of the highlights in Georgia for trekking lovers. Here begins the ascent to the rocky slopes of Chaukhi mountain range (2580 m), visible all the way. You will enjoy the Rhododendron meadows and wonderful views of the surrounding mountains.

Mount Kazbegi – Georgian known as Mkinvartsveri (“Ice-Top”), this perpetually snow-covered giant is, at 5047m, one of the highest peaks in the Caucasus. Kazbegi is steeped in legend: the ancient Greeks believed that Prometheus was chained to the rocky flanks of the mountain as a punishment for stealing fire from the Gods and giving it to mortals, while Christian legend tells that the manger of Christ was brought to Kazbegi and is still hidden somewhere hereabouts. Whether you believe these tales or not, climbing the mountain is sure to be an unforgettable experience.

Dariali Gorge – The most spectacular gorges along the Tergi River stretching from the town of Kazbegi to the Georgian-Russian (North Ossetian) border. The name comes from the Persian ‘Dar-y-Alan’ meaning ‘Gate of the Alans’ as the gorge marked the beginning of the territory of the ancient Alans – ancestors of the present-day Ossetians.

Gveleti – Gveleti Waterfall located in the village of Gveleti. You must first drive through the stunning Dariali Gorge, from where there is a narrow path leading to the Gveleti Waterfall . There is short and easy trail that you need to walk to reach the waterfall. Beautiful untouched nature, lush wildflowers and crystal clear air are making the site certainly worth seeing.

Traditions

Mtskheta-Svetitskhovloba it’s not entirely a festival, more of a one-day celebration. But Mtskheta-Svetitskhovloba is one of the most important public holidays in the country. Marked on October 14 each year, the event takes place in Mtskheta, and the origin can be traced back to the miraculous acquisition of Jesus Christ’s tunic – Georgia’s most significant relic.

Besides religious services held in Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, the city marks the day with different festive events.

There are plenty of old traditional celebrations in the region: Kazbegoba, Athengenoba, Lomisoba, Lasharoba, Vazhaoba ect.

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Cousine

Khachoberbo (the mixture of cottage cheese and ghee) and Khinkali from Pshavi. Pshavi is a northern mountainous region (Mtskheta-Mtianeti) in Georgia. The folks in Pshavi have a special technique of preparing cottage cheese. The cheese is dried in a hanging facility made of wood branches. Then the dried cottage cheese is placed in a covered pot. It should be kept in that condition until molds grow on the cheese. The process usually takes a month and a half. Then the cottage cheese is mixed with ghee. The mixture is served with bread. Khinkali, Georgian dumplings which are served in every part of Georgia originates from Pshavi (Dusheti Municipality). Khinkali has been associated with traditional rituals held in the region. Whenever the rituals take place, Pshavi folks cook the dumplings.

Hotels

In the region located many of high class hotels:

Hotel Gino Wellness Mtskheta – Mtskheta Municipality;

Hotel Mtskheta Sanapiro – Mtskheta (Mtskheta Municipality);

Hotel Mtskheta Palace - Mtskheta (Mtskheta Municipality);

Alpina hotel - Gudauri (Kazbegi Municipality);

Hotel carpe diem – Gudauri (Kazbegi Municipality);

Hotel Edelweiss – Gudauri (Kazbegi Municipality);

Hotel Donata – Gudauri (Kazbegi Municipality);

Hotel soncho – Gudauri (Kazbegi Municipality);

Marco Polo hotel – Gudauri (Kazbegi Municipality);

hotel good aura, Gudauri (Kazbegi Municipality);

Rooms Hotel Kazbegi – Stepantsminda (Kazbegi Municipality).

There are also guest houses, hostels in the towns and villages.

Restaurants:

Old Mtskheta Restaurant – Mtskheta (Mtskheta Municipality);

Armazis Tskaro – Mtskheta (Mtskheta Municipality);

Tatin – Mtskheta (Mtskheta Municipality);

Salobie - tavern on the way from Tbilisi to old capital Mtskheta;

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Powder Bar Gudauri – Gudauri (Kazbegi Municipality);
Restaurant Truso – Gudauri (Kazbegi Municipality);
Anno`s Sweet Corner - Stepantsminda (Kazbegi Municipality).

VI. RACHA – LECHKHUMI AND KVEMO SVANETI R E G I O N

VI.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Racha – Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region is located in the north-western part of Georgia on the southern slopes of the Central Caucasus, at wide range of elevations between 400 and 4,000 meters above sea level. The region is bordered by Samegrelo-Upper Svaneti to the west, by Imereti to the south, by Tskhinvali region to the east and by Russia to the north. The region includes the historical provinces of Racha, Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti (i.e., Lower Svaneti) and consists of 4 administrative districts: Ambrolauri, Lentekhi, Oni and Tsageri Municipalities. The easternmost part is controlled by South Ossetia

It covers an area of 4600 km², accounting for 6.6% of the total territory of Georgia. The capital of the region is Ambrolauri, situated 270 km far from Tbilisi on road.



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VI.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The great part of the region is mountainous and economy mostly relies on agriculture. Due to the region's location the economy is heavily based on agriculture, demonstrated by that the largest proportion of the region's production (59%) is created by this sector.

The main agricultural activities in the region are potato growing, viticulture, animal farming, especially cattle. Grape is also cultivated in some areas, especially in lowlands of Tsageri and Ambrolauri, where the most of wine production is concentrated. The main export product of the region is the „Khanchkara” wine, exported to Ukraine, Poland, Germany and the USA.

The region is rich in water resources. The main river in the region is the 327 kilometre-long Rioni River, crossing the territory of western Georgia, originating in the Caucasus Mountains (in Racha) at an elevation of 2,960 meters above sea level, and running into the Black Sea.

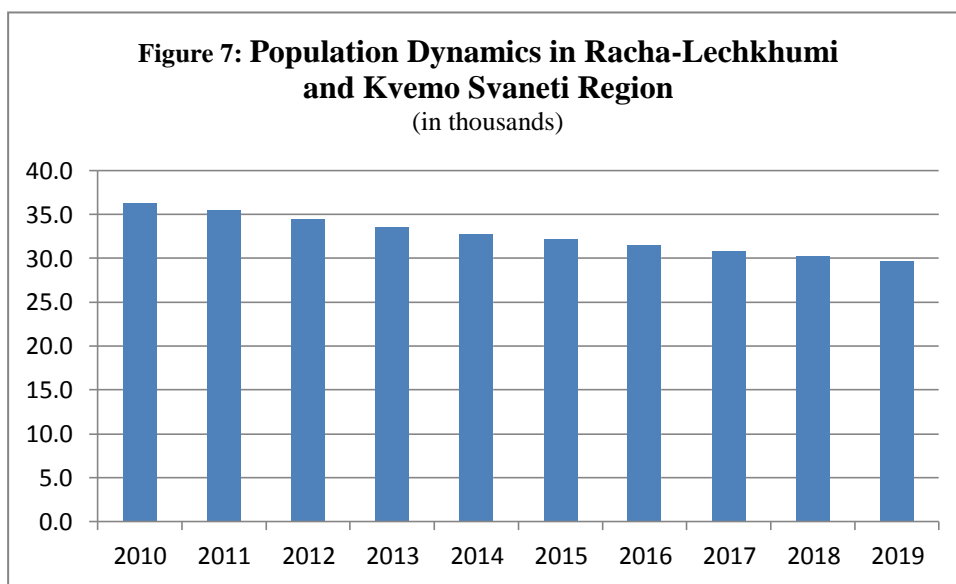
The development potential of mineral water supplies of the region has not been utilised yet and export to regional and international markets are very limited. Numerous mineral water springs are located in the mountains of Racha.

Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti is famous for its forest resources, with 61% of its territory covered by forests. In addition to virgin forests, which are maintained in their original form and bio diversity, there are many decades' old artificially planted coniferous woods. The main types of woods of the region are oak, fir, spruce, pine, birch and alder.

Population

Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region is the most sparsely populated region in the country.

As a result of uninterrupted migration, since the independence of Georgia (1991), between the 1989 and 2014 population censuses the region's population has declined almost by half. By 2018 region has a population 30.2 thousands (0.8 percent of the whole population of the country Georgia). 22.8 percent of its population living in urban settlements. A population density 7 people per square mile.



Source: Geostat

Significant decrease of population in mountain regions of Georgia is one of the most critical issues of the country. In order to reduce the negative effects the government approved a new law - „The Mountain Law”, with the aim to encourage development and investment in these regions and local people to work and live there. More populated municipalities are Ambrolauri (10.7 thnd.) and Tsageri (9.4 thnd.). Lentekhi municipality is less populated municipality (4.2 thnd.).

In the region the crude birth rate made up 11.2 per mille and the crude death rate 24.1 2 per mille. Very high coefficient of death was due by high scale of population aging in the region. On the basis of these two components natural increase was negative (-12.9 per mille).

Almost the entire population is ethnic Georgian (99.7%). The remaining 0.3% is composed of Russians, Ossetians and other nationalities.

VI.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Racha possesses highly attractive natural environment, diverse flora and fauna, unique tourists attractions, great wines, water and mineral water sources and fossil resources.



Tourist potential: Hiking/climbing, horse-riding, white water rafting (on the river Rioni), agro-tourism, Eco-tourism photo-video, bird watching, food and wine tours. At the same time, it is also possible to arrange tours in the mountains of average difficulty for climbers: Phasis Mountain (3090m), Anchakhi Mountain (4462), Shovi and Samertskhle (3584), Chutkhari (3562), Kareta (3354), and Lukhunists-veri (3216) while there are also walking tours to Mamisoni, Klukhuni and Lapuri crosses (2819). Cave tours: Gogoleti, Tsakhi, Tskhrajvari, Sakinule and Shaora-Sharauli underground caves.

Monasteries, Temples and Fortresses

Nikortsminda Cathedral (located in the Ambrolauri Municipality) was built in 1010-1014, is symbol of the golden age of Georgian architecture, with its unique facade decorations, bareliefs from the 11th century and 15th century paintings depicting noblemen of Racha and Imereti from those times. The temple was built in the name of St. Nicholas the Miracle-Maker and contains many examples of old Georgian script. . During 1534, King Bagrat III renovated the temple and founded the eparchy. The temple was significantly damaged during an earthquake in 1991. After its restoration, which lasted for several years, the temple was reopened in 1997. Currently Nikortsminda is a temple of the eparchy.

Barakoni Church of the Mother of God near the town of Ambrolauri, in the village of Tsesi.

Barakoni was commissioned, in 1753, by the local lord Eristavi from the architect Avtandil Shulavreli who is commemorated in the inscription of the eastern façade. It suffered further damage, though not serious, in the 1991 Racha earthquake, but was quickly repaired.

Fortress Minda (located between Oni and Ambrolauri) the largest fortress in the region of Racha. The fortress is located on the top of the mountain so that it is very difficult to approach it. Today only the remains of the structure have survived. Climb to the fortress will have on foot. From the fortress offers a beautiful view of the entire valley of the river Rioni.

Khotevi church (Ambrolauri Municipality) during the 13th century, the Church of Archangel and temple were built in the village of Khotevi. The first mention of the village was in writings dating back to the 11th century. It was a significant trade center, and served as a link for Imereti and Racha.

Mravaldzali St. George Church is situated in the village of Mravaldzali in Oni municipality. Limited information is available about the first images of the church, built during the 11th century. One of the images was the famous scene of praying at the conch according to legends: the Saviour on the throne with the gospel on the left knee, with the image of the Mother of God on his right and the fresco of John the Baptist on his left. Unfortunately, none of the frescoes have survived.

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Udabno (Chelishi) Ruins and Shareula River source – is a pleasant walk from Nikortsminda Ambrolauri Municipality (just few kilometers 2-3) in wonderful nature. Cold mountain river in deep forest, place for picnic and just heavenly rest in summer, also water dam where you can swim. Besides ruins of old monastery you can see the source of Shareula river as it disappears in the cave. In addition to all these, within 300 m radius tourists can visit one more cave called Sakinule („fridge”) where its considerably lower temperature than outside. So its nice destination for summer.

The Synagogue in located in the town Oni (Oni Municipality) it was built in 1895 in an eclectic style and is the oldest functioning synagogue in the county. It is Georgia's third largest synagogue after the Great Synagogue of Tbilisi and the synagogue of Kutaisi.

Protected Areas

Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti protected area (PA) located on the southern slope of Main Watershed of the Caucasus, in the territories of Kvemo Svaneti, Lechkhumi and Racha. It extends in the territories of Administration districts of Lentekhi, Tsageri, Ambrolauri and Oni within 500-4600 m above sea level.

Among the plants found on the territory of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti PAs 164 species are endemic to Caucasus, 26 – are endemic to Georgia and 5 – are endemic to Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti flora, which indicates to the importance of biodiversity of the territories.

Two species of tur can be found in the upstreams of the Rioni River, the East Caucasian Tur (*Capra cylindricornis*) and West Caucasian Tur (*Capra caucasica*). Both species are endemic to Caucasus.

Among birds which can be found on the territory are included in the Red List of Georgia: Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*), Griffon Vulture (*Gyps fulvus*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila craysaetus*), Caucasian Black Grouse (*Tetrao mlokosiewiczi*), et al.

There are 4 **Managed Nature Reserves** in the Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti: Askhi Plateau Managed Nature Reserve, Khvamli Massif Managed Nature Reserve, Shaori-Khikhata Managed Nature Reserve and Sadmeli Managed Nature Reserve. These Managed Nature Reserves are important for their karsts caves, plateau-like districts, limestone hillsides and deep erosion canyons.

Museums

Ambrolauri Museum of Fine Arts — (Date of establishment in 1965) located in the regional capital of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti in Ambrolauri. The museum houses collection of the paintings and drawings of well-known Georgian artists of XX century: Lado Gudiashvili, Elene

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Akhvlediani, David Kakabadze, Ucha Japaridze, Koba Guruli, Avto Varazi, Levan Tsutskiridze, Natela Iankoshvili, etc. **Oni Local Museum** (Date of establishment:1937). The museum houses several collections: archaeological (from the Stone Age up to late medieval times, most of items are the Bronze Age dated) – bronze figurine of a sheep, open-work astral buckles, bull decorations, adornments, fragments of weapons and implements; Collection of architectural details and relief fragments from X-XI c.c. St. George and St. Trinity churches; samples of X-XIV c.c. coins; ethnographic objects; manuscripts and printed books; paintings of XX c. well-known artists (Ucha Japaridze, Valentin Sherpilov, Vasil Shukhaev, David Nalbandian, etc.).

Lado Museliani Lentekhi Local Museum (Date of establishment:1937). The museum houses archaeological collections from Lechkhumi region mostly are dated Bronze Age, church ritual things (XI-XII cc.), manuscript prayers (XVII-XVIII cc.), also ethnography collection from Lower Svaneti which situated in Museum's Machubi (Svanian dwelling house).

Varlam Makharoblidze Tsageri Historical Museum (Date of establishment:1937). The museum houses archaeological collections from Lower Svaneti and Lechkhumi regions (West Georgia) mostly are dated Bronze Age and Antiquity periods. Among the items are: bronze horse rider, bronze treasury, stylized eastern and Cholchian bronze axes, Caucasian sickle, Hittite bridle, Stone Age implements – axes, arrowheads, knives; collection of coins – coin of Alexander the Great, Cholchian tetri, etc.; rare books (XIX c.).

Fustel School Museum (Date of establishment:2003) located in the Ambrolauri Municipality. Museum houses ethnographical materials of Racha: clothes, weapons and church ritual things, heraldic and archaeological exhibits.

Resorts

Utsera is known for its mineral water, "Utsera," and health resort/spa (Oni Municipality). While the village boasts the usual medieval churches, the 800-year-old "alley of trees" is especially worth a visit. The village is located 1,500 meters above sea level.

Utsera is rich in mineral water sources, 28 different mineral water types can be found here rich in calcium, iron, iodine and boron. These mineral waters are proven to be effective for treatment of various conditions, such as cholecystitis, cardiovascular disorders, chronic gastritis with normal and increased secretion, gastric and duodenal ulcer disease in remission phase, chronic colitis and enterocolitis, chronic hepatitis and angiocholitis, pancreatitis, chronic inflammation of the urinary

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system and peptic in postoperative period. Utsera is a proper starting point for hiking tours and for other outdoor adventures.

Shovi is an important health resort. Is located in Oni Municipality, 1,520 metres above sea level, in the valley of Chanchakhi River. The resort was founded in 1926. Visitors enjoy its mountain climate, nature and mineral waters. The resort is located at the base of the Mamisoni Mountain range and is surrounded by snowy mountains. The resort is known for its alpine climate, high mountains, pine forests, fresh air and mineral springs.. Shovi is famous for its mineral waters. Sixteen kinds of mineral water with different components were found in the area of Shovi. They are all rich in calcium but they all differ in their other components and their therapeutic properties. Shovi mineral waters contain calcium, natrium, magnesium hydro carbonates and also free carbonic acid gas. The climate and mineral waters are effective for treatment of respiratory, digestive and nervous system diseases. Shovi is officially named as a climatic destination.

Shaori Reservoir is the largest lake of the region with its special micro-climate – Always cooler in summer, snowed and often frozen in winter. The area of the Shaori Lake, the „Gate of Racha” is located 1,132 metres above sea level. The distance from Shaori to Ambrolauri is 19 km, 57 km to Kutaisi. Thanks to mixed forests, its very impressive especially during autumn colors when the surrounding colorful forests are reflected in the lake, and in winter after fresh snow, also when its great visibility in winter/autumn and you can see double views of snowed Caucasus summits. Usual perfect stop for barbeque/picnic, relaxation in summer, fishing, as well as camping.

Traditions

Racha carpenters are famous throughout Georgia. One of the biggest contributions they have made to Georgian art is the "Sakvartskhuli," the chair used by the head of the family. It had three legs and a semicircular back. The back of the chair is decorated with symbolic engravings.

In the region tourists can watch and even participate in the process of making traditional crafts.

In Racha-Lechkhumi region, families which grow grapes, with great pleasure, host and entertain volunteers who want to participate in harvesting the grapes. During the harvest the volunteer has the status of guest even though he is helping the host family, and no guest is left without special attention and entertainment. Local wine growers teach guests the old methods of vine cultivation and show them traditional wine cellars, known as marani, various wine glasses and equipment which are stored there.

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Guests are welcome to sample as much wine as they like! After the harvest is over, work moves to the marani where grapes are pressed, pelamushi (porridge with grape juice and corn or wheat flour) is boiled and churchkhela - nuts dipped in grape juice and dried - is prepared. Although the grape harvest is a lot of work, it is always accompanied with songs and dances. Huge picnics, called supras, are held for all the workers in the vineyard under the open sky.

At the end of August, regional government of Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti region is organizing a **wine festival**. The aim of this event is to promote agricultural products and improve links between local farmers and markets. Visitors can testing wines, enjoy great food, traditional folk songs and dancing.

Athangenoba is celebrated in the village of Glola (Oni Municipality) every November. The whole village assembles with flatbreads in their hands, wine and sacrificial animal. The oldest begged St. George for strengthen and succeed of the community. That day, pilgrims, with various rituals, were performing all things, which had been sworn with each other.

Cuisine

Ham from Racha. The folks in Racha prepare ham in a special way. The traditional technique of ham making takes 6 months. Each part of the pork should be carefully washed, boiled and salted. It is important that the pork is of high quality. The salted pork is kept for six months and served only on holidays usually with Lobio (kidney beans).

Shkmeruli is a chicken dish from the village of Shkmeri (Oni Municipality). Chicken in a special spicy garlic sauce becomes even more delicious if cooked on a clay pan.

Lobiani - is similar to Khachapuri (cheese cake) however instead of cheese it is filled with beans. In Georgia the most popular is Rachuli Lobiani, like a Khachapuri, but with beans and bacon. Lobiani is enjoyed all year round and is especially eaten on the Georgian holiday Barbaroba, or St. Barbara's Day (December 17).

Pkhlovani, it is bread filled with either raw or boiled beetroots or spinach and various herbs and flavors. Sometimes it is mixed with grated cheese.

Hotels

Hotel Sunset Shovi, the first 4 star hotel is situated in Shovi resort (Oni Municipality). The hotel opened in 2013 with 12 double rooms, 12 superior rooms, 6 executive suites, 5 additional rooms, a restaurant and a bar. The hotel also includes 4 independent cottages. The hotel offers various

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entertainment programmes such as: sports activities, rafting, fishing, hunting, horse riding. The hotel is open only during the summer season from mid-May to late August. The owner of the hotel is the Archi Group that attempted to restore the traditions of the resort that was lost after the 90s and support the development of the resort with the construction of a European-standard hotel.

Hotel Metekhara is situated in Ambrolauri (Ambrolauri Municipality), close to the Rioni River, not far from the centre, featuring 16 rooms, an outdoor swimming pool, restaurant, terrace and BBQ facilities. The hotel is opened all year round.

Orion Hotel is situated in the centre of Oni (Oni Municipality), located 30 km from Ambrolauri. The hotel operates on a seasonal basis between April and September.

Hotel Racha is situated in Shovi (Oni Municipality). The hotel is open only in July and August. The hotel comprises 50 guestrooms, out of which 12 rooms are higher categories. In terms of capacity the hotel is the largest in the region.

Guest houses with an average room capacity between 2 and 8 play significant role in the accommodation market of the region, typically operated by families.

Restaurants

„Racha” – Ambrolauri (Ambrolauri Municipality).

„Rachuli Ezo” – Oni (Oni Municipality).



VII. SAMEGRELO – ZEMOSVANETI REGION

VIII.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti is a region in western Georgia which includes the historical Georgian provinces of Samegrelo (Mingrelia) and Zemo Svaneti (i.e., Upper Svaneti is a historic province in Georgia), in the northwestern part of the country. Surrounded by 3,000–5,000 meter peaks, Svaneti is the highest inhabited area in the Caucasus. Four of the 10 highest peaks of the Caucasus are located in the region. The highest mountain in Georgia, Mount Shkhara at 5,201 meters is located in the province. Prominent peaks include Tetnuldi, Mount Ushba and others.

Svaneti is known for their architectural treasures and picturesque landscapes. The famous Svanetian towers erected mainly in the 9th-12th centuries, make the region's villages more attractive. In the province are dozens of Georgian orthodox churches and various fortified buildings. Architectural monuments of Upper Svanetia are included in a list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

In the west the region shares borders with Black Sea, in the north-west – Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, in the north – Russian Federation, and in the east – Imereti and Racha-Lechkhumi-Kvemo Svaneti regions. The total area of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti is 7468.2 km², 10.7% of the country's territory.

Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region includes 9 self-government units: self-governing city of Poti; Abasha, Zugdidi, Martvili, Mestia, Senaki, Chkhorotsku, Tsalenjikha and Khobi municipalities. Administration center is the city Zugdidi.



Common borders. Common solutions.





VIII.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Water resources and energy potential: Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti region is characterized with abundance of water resources. Black Sea coastal zone which is of trans-border significance is located in this region. 2,400 large and small rivers are registered in the region.

Quantity of ground waters comprises 25% of the region's total water resources. The region is rich with lakes and mineral and thermal waters (there are 13 lakes with about 65 km² of total surface area in the region). Jvari Water Reservoir with 13.5 m² surface area is located in this region too.

In Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti, there are reserves of pure potable and healing waters. Recreation and resort potential of the mineral and thermal waters in the region is not well developed because of absence of adequate infrastructure.

Forest resources: Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti region is one of the areas of the country with abundant forest resources. Forests cover 41% of the region's area.

There are 4 key deposits of tuff in the region: Anaklia and Churia (Zugdidi Municipality); Nabada (city of Poti); and Otsantsaleshi (Martvili Municipality). In addition, in Zugdidi, Martvili and Tsalenjikhka municipalities, there are small tuff occurrences. Aggregate tuff reserves comprise 48 million tons.

There are deposits of non-ferrous metals in the region. Estimated gold resource is 103.7 tons; lead – 300,000 tons; zinc – 370,000 tons; copper – 376,000 tons; cobalt – 6 tons; and silver – 8.4 tons.

In Martvili, Mestia and Chkhorotsku municipalities there are facing stones. There are marble deposits in Mestia Municipality. In Mestia, Martvili and Tsalenjikhka municipalities, there are facing stone deposits. Raw materials of the stone and gravel, limestone deposits, are set in Martvili, Senaki, Chkhorotsku and Tsalenjikhka municipalities. Deposits of limestone for lime production are located in Mestia, Senaki, Zugdidi and Tsalenjikhka districts. There is clay that is used to make bricks is present in the region.

In Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti region, industrial sector is weakly developed.

Currently, the regions key products include processed hazelnuts and timber materials. In Zugdidi Municipality, the production profile includes hazelnut and tea processing; in Abasha – ice cream and confectionery; in Tsalenjikhka – timber processing and tea production; in Martvili – tea processing and wine production; in Senaki – wine production; in Poti – production of cod liver oil, fish powder, meat and dairy products; in Chkhorotsku – hazelnut production; and in Mestia – timber processing.

Common borders. Common solutions.



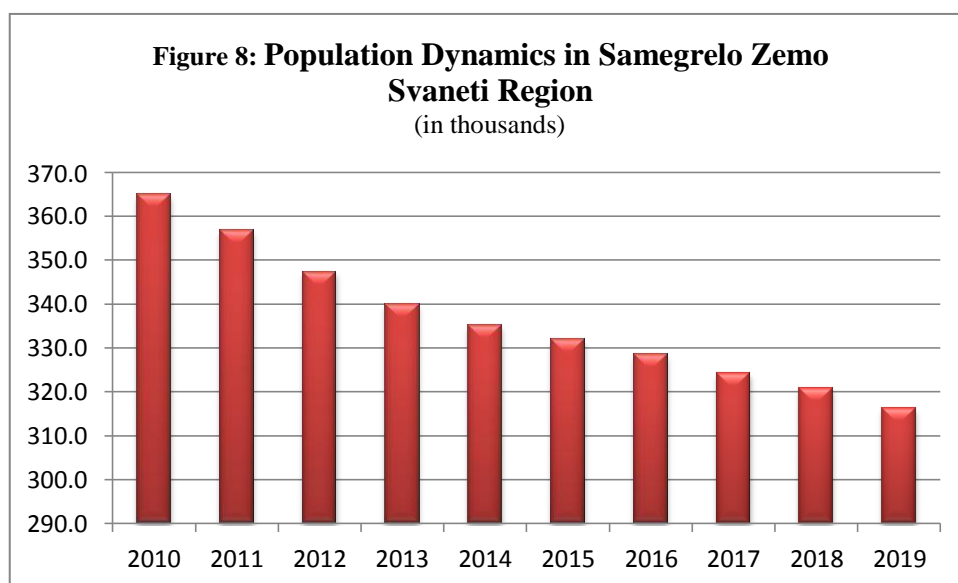


Population

The region is characterized with complicated social situation and demographic problems. Dynamics of both population migration and natural growth are negative.

With its population, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti is one of the large regions of Georgia. According to the official data by 2018, the population of the region made up 320.8 thousand people. Population density is 43 per km².

The most populated municipality is Zugdidi (103.3 thnd.). Mestia Municipality is less populated (9.5 thnd.).



Source: Geostat

33% of all IDP-s lived in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, among them 54% were residents in Zugdudu Municipality.

In 2017 crude birth rate made up 13.8 per mille and the death rate 15.9 per mille. Except of Mestia Municipality, Natural Increase Rate in all Municipalities was negative. Above-mentioned coefficient was very low in the Abasha Municipality (-7.6 per mille).

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The highest index of fertility was noted in the Mestia and Zugdidi Municipalities (18.5 and 15.5 respectively). Death rate was very high in the Abasha Municipality (18.2 per mille).

Internal and external migration negatively impact demographic situation of the region. Migration processes are mostly caused by difficult social situation and poor employment opportunities. Employable population mostly moves to Tbilisi or abroad for employment.

According to the Georgian census of 2014, 99,4% of the population is Georgian and 0,4% is Russian. Other ethnic groups live in the region, including : Ukrainians and Armenians.

VIII.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Monasteries, Temples, Fortresses,

Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti region has high potential for the development of tourism as a significant economic sector. This is due to a set of factors such as the ancient culture of Colchis and Svaneti, unique cultural and historical monuments, museums, caves, places for horse-racing and picnics, humid Kolkheti Lowlands and its rare natural environment, geographical characteristics of the region, landscape mosaic and biological diversity, glaciers of Zemo Svaneti, Black Sea waters, and developed resort zones. All these provide unique conditions for the development of various types of tourism (motor, horse, walks and eco-tourism; marine navigation, river navigation, hunting, fishing, observation of birds, agri-tourism, learning tourism, pilgrimage, extreme tourism, etc.).

Lamaria Church (Ushguli, Mestia Municipality), in the outskirts of Ushguli on a lonely hill there stands ancient Lamaria church (church of the Assumption of the Mother of God) with regular services. Local residents believe that it was under this church that Queen Tamara, who was a central figure in Svans history, was buried. They considered her to be a Christian benefactor who built all their temples, and gave generous gifts to churches.

The Church of Martvili (Martyrs) is located in the town of Martvili (Martvili Municipality). It was built in the first half of the VII century. In X century, after foundation of Chkondidi Episcopacy, Martvili became the Cathedral of Assumption of the Virgin Mary.

There was a scriptorium in the monastery. Collection of manuscripts created here is in safe keeping at the National Center of Manuscripts.

In Soviet times there were halted in the cathedral. The monastery was located in the tourist area. After tens of years of forced inactivity Martvili monastery in 1998 with the blessing of Georgian Patriarch Ilia II restored.

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From 2007 the monastery life in Martvili was revived. Patriarchal residence was built on the Cathedral grounds. Monastery established St. Andrew's Monastery of Fathers and St. Nino's Monastery of Mothers. Leaders revived monastic community living for both the monks and mothers.

Nokalakevi (Senaki Municipality) was a political center of Colchis (Egrisi) in Antique and early Christian times, the capital of the Kingdom of Lazika (IV-VIII cc.). It is located on the left bank of river Tekhuri, 17 km from the town of Senaki to the North-East. According to the history tradition, the fortress town was first built by Egrisi Eristavi (Duke) Kuji (IV-II cc. BC). The old name of the township - Tsikhegoji (Fortress of Kuji) - is related to him. The Greek sources of later times call this township Archeopolis (in Georgian - Nokalakevi or Old Town, or 'remnants of town'). Nokalakevi is surrounded by a fence having 3 km length. Its area is a territory of 19 ha and consists of 3 parts: Lower Town, middle fortress and citadel.

Protected Areas and Natural Touristic Resources

Sections of the protected territory of international significance, Kolkheti National Park, comprise the parts of two historical regions, Samegrelo and Guria. Kolkheti National Park (total area: 44,599.8 hectares) includes eastern coastal zone of Black Sea and basin of Paliastomi Lake. The Park is created for the purpose of protection and saving of Kolkheti wetland ecosystem of international significance. 67% of the Park's area is located in the territory of Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti region. Kolkheti marshes are very significant for their relict origin. Phytocenosis complexes rich with the relict and endemic varieties were maintained up to present. Two species – sea poppy and *Pancratium maritimum* – are included in the red book as endangered species. It should be noted that there are 194 species of birds in the Park territory. The Park is crossed by the annual migration routes of numerous birds and hence it is possible to observe many rare birds.

Kolkheti National Park, located in the western part of Samegrelo (Zugdidi, Khobi, Senaki and Abasha Municipalities), is a unique site with 28,571 hectares land area and 1,574 hectares marine area. In 1996, the Park was declared as a Ramsar Site, a status given to wetlands of international importance. The center for visitors and other infrastructure at Kolkheti National Park (significant infrastructure is located in the protected territory: visitor's center, administrative buildings, shelters for the guards, center for observing birds, information boards, information booths, berths and entrances, tourist paths, etc.) were so designed that the materials and technologies used in the construction process were safe for the environment and visitors. The Park has good potential with respect to eco-tourism development. During the period of migration, numerous rare birds could be observed here. There are towers

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installed in the Park for birds watching. Tourists could be accommodated either in the visitors' center of the Park or in the hotels of Poti and Anaklia. Walking routes run along the coastal dunes and lowland moors, though the best way to view the wetland areas is by boats. Visit to Kolkheti National Park is even more interesting due to the archeological and cultural monuments in its vicinity: Archaeopolis, the ancient capital city of Lazika (with the inscriptions and frescos from 2nd – 9th centuries BC), Martvili Monastic Complex, Khobi Monastery, Tsaishi Church, Khobi Convent and Kortskheli Monastery.

Enguri water reservoir and middle and upper reaches of the river, as well as Martvili Caves and Tobavrchkhili Lakes, provide good opportunities for the development of activities related to eco-tourism, hunting, fishing, horse-riding and other activity based tourism types. There are perfect conditions for the development of boating and rafting on Enguri River.

Katsobuti Reserve (Abasha Municipality) was established in the region in 1996, with a total area of 295 hectares. The territory of the Reserve is mostly plain, with no more than 40 m altitude above the sea level. The extremely changed remains of the Kolkhetian forests are maintained in this Reserve. Among several species of birds that live in this Reserve, population of Kolkhetian pheasants should be noted.

Zemo Svaneti (Mestia Municipality) protected area was included into the protected territories of Central Caucasus Plan. The protected territory is represented with Zemo Svaneti National Park. It covers the territory of Mestia Municipality and is located within 600-2500 m above sea level. In 1996, **Zemo Svaneti** was recognized as a place of world heritage. Zemo Svaneti is a world famous place of natural beauty. It has wonderful landscapes and this, together with the infrastructure developed in the recent years, attracts greater and greater numbers of tourists and visitors. Among the flora of Zemo Svaneti National Park, 212 species are endemic to the Caucasus; Georgian endemic species-52; and 9 species are endemic to Svaneti. Some birds are included in the Red List of Georgia. Adishi Glacier, and "Perkhulis Kva", one of the largest old glacier boulders, which are distinguished for their geomorphological and glacial characteristics are located in the Svaneti National Park. In Zemo Svaneti, winter resort construction has commenced at Atsvali and Tetnuldi mountains, ensuring attraction of additional tourists to the region.

River Abasha Waterfall Natural Monument is a waterfall at the source of Abasha River with a height of 30 m at 630 m above sea level in Martvili Municipality.

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Museums

Main Architectural sight of the Zugdidi (Zugdidi Municipality) is the **Dadiani Palace** museum.

Dadiani were an ancient aristocratic family known for their relationship with Napoleon Bonaparte! One of Dadiani princesses was married to Askil Murat, Napoleon's nephew. Therefore Dadiani princes received a lot of relics connected with Napoleon by the right of succession. For example, some personal things and pieces of furniture of the Emperor and one of his death masks (two others are in France and England). It all had been kept in the family museum of Dadiani Palace. There is here even a more significant relic – the Blessed Virgin shroud. According to the legend the shroud was taken from Byzantium to Western Georgia by the ancestors of Dadiani princes in the 15th century. The shroud can be seen only during the big church holidays.

The manor of Dadiani princes is also known for its **garden**. To plant it Princess Dadiani, the ruler of Mingrelia, (maiden name Chavchavadze, sister of Nino Chavchavadze, widow of Alexander Griboedov) invited eminent European gardeners and ordered rare plants from Europe in the middle of the 19th century. Today Dadiani garden is called Zugdidi Botanical Garden. Its total area totals 26.4 hectares. Some trees in the garden are about 200 years old and are unique for the Euroasian continent.

Svaneti Ethnographic Museum in Mestia (Mestia Municipality) was established in 1936. Museum has the richest exposition equaling collections of any European museum. There tourists will see valuable gold and silver items collected at various times: icons, ornaments, stamping, hunting accessories, military armor, coins and many other masterpieces of applied art. All these treasures were voluntarily offered by parishioners in favor of churches (according to the ancient tradition of highlanders of Georgia). The special place is occupied by the richest collection of ancient Georgian manuscripts of the 9th – 11th centuries.

Svan Towers (Mestia Municipality) are the symbol of Svanetia. Nowhere in the world is there an analogue of these unique defensive structures of the early Middle Ages epoch. Historically the existence of the towers is explained by the necessity of protection against enemy and natural disasters. Therefore each house had a similar tower which served for the families as a refuge in case of war. Alarm signalization was the other function of Svan towers. They were used as sentry posts. In case of approaching danger a fire was lit on the main tower. As soon as this flame was noticed on the nearest tower they lit a fire there as well. This process was repeated on and on until the entire gorge was instantly ready to fight.

Ushguli (Mestia Municipality) is one of the high alpine communities in Europe located at a height of 2200 meters above the sea level. It is situated 33km to the east of Mestia in a hard-to-access area. The

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community includes four ancient settlements: Zhibiani, Chvibianu, Chazhashi and Murkmeli. They are located in the upper reaches of Inguri river, at the southern foot of the giant mount Shkhara (5193m), the highest point of the Caucasus range. Most of architectural monuments date back to the 9-10th centuries. From all sides, villages are surrounded with glaciers and snow-capped mountain peaks. The landscape naturally creates grandeur as if painted by a skillful master.

Architectural complex Ushguli is a unique cultural-historical ensemble and has been classified as UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There are many local museums in the Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti Region. Chkhorotsku, Tsalendjikha, Senaki historical-ethnographical museums.

House museum of Mikheil Khergiani (Mestia Municipality), house museum of Terenti Graneli and Leo Kiacheli (Tsalendjikha Municipality) and ect.

Resorts

Anaklia is a sea resort town located in Zugdidi Municipality. It is mostly known for its sunny subtropical climate and newly developed infrastructure featuring modern sculptures and architecture created by the famous Italian designer and architect Michele De Lucchi.

The resort of *Menji*, is the balneological resort which is in Senaki Municipality, in the valley of the river Tsivi at the height of 29 m above sea level.

There is a lot of citrus and decorative vegetation, and different bushes also grow. It gives to the resort a beautiful look.

The resort is known for medical mineral sources which belong to hydrofluoric chloride-sodium waters. In the territory of Menj is sanatory, where patients with problems of joints, cardiovascular nervous system, with skin diseases, can treat are open, taking baths of healing waters.

Caishi – the balneological resort which is Zugdidi Municipality, is located on the bank of river of Dzhumi, in 10 km of by Zugdidi. Caishi's nature is madly beautiful. Mountain air of the resort fresh and pure, is very useful to health.

Caishi it is glorified by a citrus and tea plantations. Here also well grow up subtropical plants and very ancient trees. It is possible to try the most tasty grade of grapes – an isabella which grows in resort vineyards.

Caishi it is appreciated by three types of mineral waters. In process of studying of sources of waters of the resort, very important mineral element – silicon was found. It gives to water some very important properties and does water of even more unique.

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The ski resort Tetnuldi – Mestia is located in Mestia Municipality. For skiing and snowboarding, there are 13.4 km of slopes available. 5 lifts transport the guests. The winter sports area is situated between the elevations of 2,265 and 3,160 m.

The ski resort Hatsvali – Mestia is located in Mestia Municipality. For skiing and snowboarding, there are 5.6 km of slopes available. 4 lifts transport the guests. The winter sports area is situated between the elevations of 1,868 and 2,348 m.

Traditions

Kvirikoba, also known as Lagurka is celebrated in Svaneti from very ancient times every year on 28 July, the day of torment of saint Kvirike and saint Ivrita. Celebration takes place in village Kala (Mestia Municipality), at church of st. Kvirike and Ivrita, which was built in XI century

Vlakernoba is celebrated annually on 15 July in Zugdidi town (Zugdidi Municipality). This is the day when the holy relic is taken out of storage of Dadiani Palace History and Architectural Museum and available for the public to pay their respects.

Konstantineoba is celebrated in the Abasha Municipality since 1989 on May 15. The day of birth of great Georgian writer Konstantine Gamsakhurdia. Folk festivals held in the house museum of Konstantine Gamsakhurdia.

Music festival GemFest is held in Anaklia (Zugdidi Municipality) every summer.

Cuisine

Kubdari is among must-taste dishes of Svaneti. It is a bread meal filled with meat (lamb, pork or kid) and a mixture of onion and spices. One of its particular ingredients is a variety of cumin grown in Svaneti. Kubdari gained the status of the Intangible Cultural heritage of Georgia in 2015.

Chvishdari is a corn bread mixed with cheese and eggs or Matsoni (a milk product particular to Caucasian cuisine, similar to sour cream). The mixture is baked in a shape of balls or flat circles in an oiled pan. Chvishdari perfectly goes with fresh tomato and cucumber salads. In other parts of Georgia, baked corn bread and cheese are eaten separately.

Svanetian salt is a traditional spicy salt created in this region. It is not an ordinary salt but a mixture of salt, pepper, different spices and dried garlic. Svaneti is known for its variety of plants which also adds to the salt's exquisite fragrance. The salt can be used in any kind of meal from soups to salads and vegetables.

Tashmijabi is one of the most appetizing dishes of Svanetian cuisine. It contains potato, a brined

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Georgian cheese, salt and water. Potatoes are pureed and then mixed with cheese, water and salt to taste. Some milk can also be added to the mixture.

Gebjalia is a traditional dish from Samegrelo and means “Made into milk”. It is worth mentioning, that words the Sun and Milk are pronounced similarly in the Megrelian dialect (Georgian language is spoken throughout the country, but in some places dialects are maintained and used between locals. One of such place in Georgia is Samegrelo). We may assume, that Gebjalia was used as a sacred dish during ritual feastings. Usually, Gebjalia has the form of a circle and portrays the sun, but different forms of the dish are also made. Gebjalia goes well with Ghomi or Mchadi (Baked corn bread in Georgia).

Ghomi is a traditional Georgian dish from western region of Samegrelo. It is made with cornmeal and slices of cheese put in the hot portions to melt before tasting.

Elarji. Samegrelo could proudly bear a name of the gastronomical center of Georgia and the crown on Megrelian cuisine is Elarji. It is prepared of corn flour, cornmeal, and Sulguni cheese. Basically, it is Ghomi cooked with cheese. Every traditional Megrelian family has a special deep pot for Ghomi and Elarji. The cornmeal is cooked for about an hour and steered occasionally, so it is definitely not a fast food. Elarji is usually served with a nuts sauce – Baje. Soft and stretching cheese with crunchy cornmeal create a divine dish that melts in the mouth.

Ojaleshi is one of the famous red grapevine species in Georgia, known since ancient times and typically found in mountainous districts of Samegrelo; a sufficient source for high-quality dark-colored red table wine production. It is one of the finest red wine the country has to offer.

Hotels and Restaurants

In recent years, high class hotels were constructed in Anaklia and Mestia. Currently, there are 3 modern hotels with up to 250 rooms in Anaklia, and construction of a fourth one has commenced. In the town of Mestia, there are 5 high class hotels with over 400 beds. Currently the town is able to host 600 guests. In Poti, there are 2 comfortable hotels. In addition to the large hotels, there are up to 100 family hotels. High class restaurants operate in the region (mostly in Zugdidi Municipality, as well as in Poti, Senaki and Tsalenjikha).



VIII. SAMTSKHE – JAVAKHETI REGION

IX.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Samtskhe–Javakheti is a region in southern Georgia which includes the historical Georgian provinces of Meskheta, Javakheti and Tori. Akhalsikhe is its capital. Akhalsikhe is one of the oldest towns of Georgia (old name – Lomsia). It is located in 230 km from Tbilisi, in the Akhalsikhe plain, on both banks of river Potskhovi. In historical sources it is mentioned from XII century. In XIII-XIV centuries it is a political center of Samtskhe-Saatabago. In 1629-1828 it became part of the Ottoman empire as a capital of Akhalsikhe vilayet and a seat of Pasha. It used to be the most important center of prisoner slave trade. Historical part of the town of Akhalsikhe was built on the rocky mount on the left bank of river Potskhovistskali.

The region borders with Adjara, Guria, Imereti, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Armenia and Turkey. Its area is 6,421 m². There are six municipalities in the region – Akhalsikhe, Adigeni, Aspindza, Borjomi, Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki municipalities. The region centre is the city of Akhalsikhe



IX.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The region has a favorable geopolitical location. It is bordered by Turkey and Armenia which creates promising conditions for trade, economic and cultural relationships with these neighboring countries.

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The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, the Trans-Caspian **Gas** Pipeline, and the Marabda-Akhalkalaki-Karsi railway pass through the region.

The rate of unemployment in Samtskhe-Javakheti stands at 7.5%, which is much lower than the country's rate. The reason is that a large number of the region's population is employed in agriculture. However, the workforce in the region already employed or seeking work in any sector of economy, often need professional development.

The region is famous for its healing and recreation zones. Its climate provides an important potential for renewable alternative energy resources in the region.

The Samtskhe-Javakheti region is rich in mineral resources, mostly: mineral, thermal and salt-free water, finishing materials, calc-tuff, basalt, diatomaceous earth, pearlite, clay, sand and gravel, scoria, charcoal, gold and andesite. The existing stocks of resources have an important economic potential.

The Samtskhe-Javakheti region abounds in water resources – rivers and lakes.

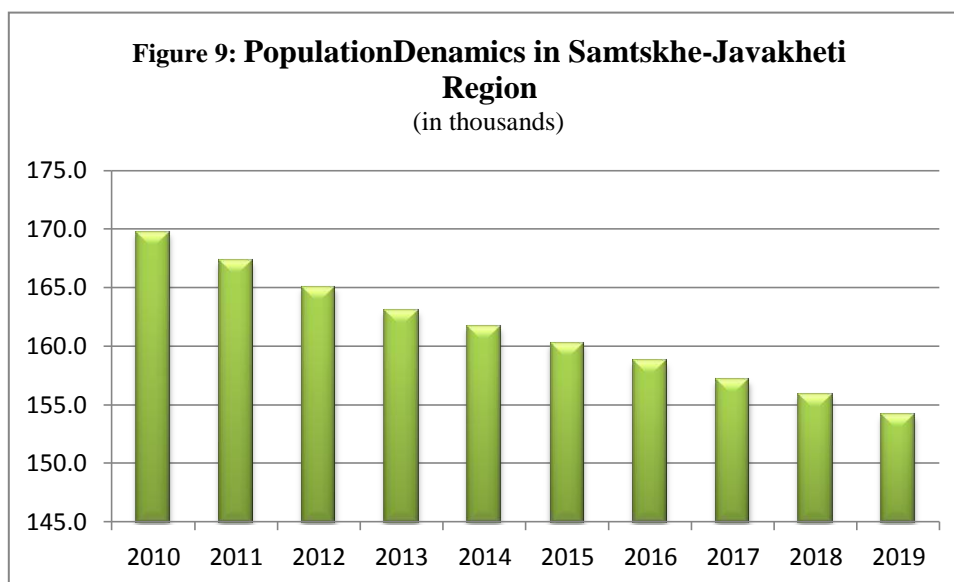
Region is rich in natural forests. Almost all the forests in this region have a significant role of regulating the climate, protecting the soil, regulating water flow, which is why the region is so wealthy in mineral waters and resort areas. There are 17 species of plants protected by the Red Book and 85 healing plants in the region.

Considering the mineral and other natural resources available in the region, industry in Samtskhe-Javakheti could be developed in the following main directions: mining, mineral waters, and manufacturing of furniture and wood items.

Population

By 2018 Samtskhe Javakheti Region has a population of 160.5 thousands (4.3 percent of the whole population of Georgia). Population density is 25 people per 1 km².

In the urban settlements lives 35.3% and in the rural areas 64.4% of population. Between the 1989 and 2014 censuses, the population in the region decreased by 31.28 percent. The main reasons fixed fact was emigration processes.



Source: Geostat

By 2018 the most densely populated districts are the Akhaltsikhe (39.4 thnd.) and Akhalkalaki (42.9 thnd.) municipalities.

By 2017 crude birth rate in the Samtskhe Javakheti Region made up 13.9 per mille and the death rate 12.4 per mille. The value of natural increase rate was positive (1.5 per mille).

Except for the Borjomi Municipality, abovementioned coefficient in all municipalities was positive, however, its values were low.

According to the population census 2014, in Samtskhe–Javakheti region mane ethnic groups are: Georgians 48.3% and Armenians 50.5%, other ethnic groups 1.2%.

IX.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Temples, Monasteries and Fortresses

Sapara Monastery is located 15 kilometers in the south-east from Akhaltsikhe. It is assumed to have been constructed in the 9th century. In the 13th-14th centuries, the monastery became residence for the



noblemen Jakeli to comply with the order of Mongols. The complex of churches is located in the wooden area and contains different buildings. The most striking is the Church of St. Saba, built in the late 13th and early 14th centuries. This hall church is dedicated to the Assumption of the Mother of God. There is a head of a bull on the top left side of the entrance. Legend has it that at the time of the building of the church a bull helped to fetch stones from the mountain to the site. Just as the work finished the bull was killed and eaten by a bear. The builder commemorated the bull by placing its sculpture at the entrance.

Zarzma – The first church on this site, Zarzma, was built in the 6th-7th centuries by the monk Serapion Zarzmeli, although the present complex dates back to the early 14th century. The main church is renowned for its superb frescoes, while the inscriptions of the monastery provide invaluable information on the history of Georgia.

Establishment of **Phoka Monastery** is credited to St. Nino of Cappadocia, who introduced Georgia to Christianity. Saint Nino came to Georgia through Javakheti and stopped near Pharavani Lake where she had a vision of a saint who gave her a letter addressed to the pagan king. In the 11th century a cathedral was built on the same spot.

The village of Kumurdo (Akhalkaqi Municipality) and Bishop of Kumurdo are first mentioned in historic chronicles of the 6th century. A cathedral dating back to the 10th century still exists in the village; it is a fine and high-quality example of Georgian architecture. The inscriptions remaining on the walls tell us it was built during the reign of Abkhazian King Leon in 964. There are some important monasteries and churches in Samcxhe-Ja-vakheti region such as the following: Timotesubani Monastery Complex; Kvabiskhevi Church of the Virgin; Daba Church; Chitakhevi (Green Monastery), Gogia Fortress, etc.

Vardzia (Aspindza Municipality) is a cave monastery in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Queen Tamar ordered the construction of Vardzia in the twelfth century. It contained apartments dug out of the rock and outside terraces for cultivation. An irrigation system was designed particularly for this. One of the central places in the cave system is the Church of Dormition with distinguished medieval mural painting. Since 1985 the site has formed part of the Vardzia Historical–Architectural Museum-Reserve.

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Khertvisi Fortress (Aspindza Municipality), the fortress was first built in the 2nd century BC, the church – in 985 while the present walls – in 1354. As the legend says, Khertvisi was destroyed by Alexander the Great. In the 10th-11th centuries it was the center of Meskheta region. During the 12th century it became a town. In the 13th Mongols destroyed it and until the 15th century it lost its power. In the 15th century Khertvisi was owned by Meskheta landlords from Jakeli family. In the 16th century the southern region of Georgia was invaded by Turks.

Rabati (Akhalsikhe Municipality) Developed under the influence of different cultures, Rabati Castle reflects eclectic architectural style. The complex has recently been renovated and now is one of the major tourist attractions of the region. Here you can visit the Museum of History and Art that houses the significant part of the region's cultural heritage. Alongside with the church, in this interesting complex you can find a Mosque, a Minaret and a Synagogue revealing its multi-cultural and multi-religious character.

Tmogvi (Aspindza Municipality), located few kilometers from Vardzia, was one of the most important fortress cities of the region. Built on 9-10th century, on top of a mountain high above the Mtkvari river, fortress controlled the caravan road leading from Asia Minor to Georgia. It expands over 3 hills, joined and encircled by a wall, which supplements the natural defense offered by the cliffs. Several construction layers are distinguished on the fortress territory. The older one dates by IX-X century. A secret tunnel connects the castle with the river to provide access to water even during a siege. Although the fortress is ruined today, it is very difficult to access it.

Atskuri (Akhalsikhe Municipality), is a former feudal fortress located on the right bank of Mtkvari River. The oldest records date back to the 10th century. The only entrance is a narrow tunnel cut into the cliff, which made the fortress so difficult to access that even once inside enemies were foiled by the guards.

Protected Areas

The **Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park** is a protected area in central Georgia, in Samtskhe-Javakheti situated in the Lesser Caucasus, southwest to the nation's capital of Tbilisi. Its ecoregion is that of the Caucasus mixed forests. One of the largest national parks in Georgia, stretching from the resort of Borjomi to the town of Kharagauli (Imereti Region). Together with adjacent Borjomi Nature Reserve,

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the total area is 851 square kilometres, i.e. more than 1 % of the total territory of Georgia. The park was founded in 1995 and officially inaugurated in 2001.

Its particular uniqueness is diversity of geographical and ecological zones, landscapes, historical monuments and rich flora and fauna.

The tourist season lasts all year, allowing visitors to experience the stunning variety of flora and fauna, including alpine meadows full of flowers, as well as stunning views and a broad network of twelve trails through the ancient woodlands. Paths are marked and well-arranged. Tourist shelters, picnic spots and camping sites are arranged along the routes. Sites for setting up a fire are also allocated. The Park offers hiking, horse riding, biking, snow shoes, cultural and educational tours. The routes function throughout the year. The park has rapidly developing tourist infrastructure.

Javakheti Protected Areas was established in 2011. It includes Javakheti National Park, Kartsakhi Managed Reserve, Sulda Managed Reserve, Khanchali Managed Reserve, Bugdasheni Managed Reserve and Madatapa Managed Reserve.

Javakheti Protected Areas include Municipalities of Akhalqalaqi and Ninotsminda. There are lots of lakes on Javakheti Plateau, including the biggest one – Lake Paravani. The highest point of Javakheti is Mount Great Abuli, with a height of 3,300 meters above sea level. Javakheti upland is the coldest places among settlements. It is characterized by dry continental climate, while the average annual temperature is quite low. In winter Javakheti lakes freeze for a long time

Javakheti is woodless region. There are artificial plantation of pine stands and small fragments on natural forest. The most important natural alpine forest composed with white birch, Caucasian mountain-ash, cotoneaster, raspberry bushes are found near Lake Kartsakhi parts on border of Georgia-Turkey.

Museums

Ivane Javakhishvili Samtskhe-Javakheti Historical Museum (Georgian National Museum)

Museum is located in the old castle, so called Rabat (Akhaltsikhe Municipality). Here are preserved archeological, ethnographical materials, old manuscripts, etc. Interesting is the 19th - 20th cc. unique collection of carpets; historical scripts, the 13th-19th cc. rich manuscripts, including the fragment of the manuscript of "knight in the panther's skin".

Vardzia Historical and Architectural State Museum-Reserve

Located in Vardzia (Aspindza Municipality). Museum-reserve is the cave-town architectural complex, the main part of it was built in the 11th c. in the period of Queen Tamar. Significant is the painting of

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Vardzia Virgin Mary's church, where among the scenes of Christ's life are also portraits of George III and Queen Tamar and Christ's icon.

Borjomi Local Museum (Borjomi Municipality).

Museum is located in the Romanoff's former chancellery, built in 1890. Here are preserved archeological materials of 1 st and 2nd millennia B.C. numismatic and Romanoff's belongings of XIX c.

Resorts

Abastumani On the Southern slopes of Meskheta range covered with coniferous forest is located a famous mountain climatic spa resort of Abastumani with the climate indispensable for prevention of pulmonary diseases. Spring season is especially wholesome when pine-trees start pollination. While breathing yellow dust gets into lungs and makes positive impact on them. Besides major treatment factor of the resort – climate, Abastumani is also famous for its hyperthermal, slightly mineralized springs ('Goliath Spring' – 4865 degrees, 'Snake Spring' -42 degrees, 'Suravandi Spring' – 239 degrees), with total discharge of 1 million l/day. Mineral waters are used for treatment of numerous diseases. The first mountain observatory in the former Soviet Union, located high up amongst steep hills at 1650m. Here through the powerful telescope it is possible to see apparently the surface of the Moon and even of Saturn and Jupiter.

Bakuriani Located at 1800m above sea level. In Soviet times Bakuriani hosted winter sport competitions of various levels. Members of the Soviet Olympic teams gathered there for training sessions. Fascinated by location and scenery of the resort, guests called Bakuriani 'Capital of Soviet skiing sport' and 'Soviet Davos'. Today 12 well-arranged skiing trails operate in Bakuriani, including: historic Kokhta-Gora (2155 m), length of cableway – 3000 m; Kokhta-2 mount known as 'Tatra' for experienced sportsmen (2255 m, total length 1800 m); total length of 'Didveli' 3800 m (given FIS certificate). Simple skiing trail known under the name of 25-er is operative for the beginners (length 300 m). Favourable climate and fir and pine woods make Bakuriani a popular summer resort as well. Ski-jumps, ski-tracks, snow shoeing, horse-rides, horse-drawn sledges, snow-mobile - all can be found in Bakuriani.

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Borjomi – Renowned in the 19th century as the playground of the Russian nobility and several attractive buildings still remain from that era, notably the Summer Palace of Duke Mikhail Romanov, son of Tsar Nicholas I. Today Borjomi is a popular resort and the centre of a nature reserve of dense forests harbouring hundreds of varieties of plant and animal species. The town is also famous for its mineral water “Borjomi”. Borjomi’s Mineral Water Park is located through a narrow, wooded valley and is a lovely place to walk. This was where the original mineral spring was discovered, and named Yekaterinsky Spring after the governor’s daughter, who was cured here.

Paravani Lake is a volcanic river in Georgia located at 2073 metres above sea level in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The lake is surrounded by villages. It is frozen during wintertime. In addition to the small rivers of Shaori, Sabadostskali, and Rodionovskis Tskali, the lake receives its water from snow, rain, and underground springs. Paravani lake is a must see lake in the region. Paravani Lake is popular destination for fishing.

Paravani – Extended between the beautiful alpine meadows, Paravani volcanic lake is the largest one in Georgia. Lake gets its water from snow, rain, and underground springs. Gentle breeze brings the scent of wild flowers and smell of grass that fills the air with an extraordinary freshness. According to the surface area (37.5 km²), Paravani lake is the biggest lake in Georgia.

On the territory of the region the river Mtkvari known as Kura is a great place for rafting lovers to testing own skills.

Traditions and customs

The Samtskhe-Javakheti region distinguished with it’s religious, folk and secular festivals, associated with local traditions and prominent people.

A folk festival **Shotaoba** associated with the great Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli. The Festival of Poetry is held annually in October.

On 28 august celebrated **Saparoba** in the Sapara Monastery.

Vardzioba – the Virgin Mary’s Assumption, celebrated on 28 august. During celebration people get together from different parts of Georgia.

zarzmoba - a religious festival held every year on the Memorial Day for the ecclesiastic figure Serapion Zarzmeli on 11 November in the village of Zarzma

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Ninooba celebrated on 1 June in Poka Village (Ninotsminda Municipality) by church officials. A holiday dedicated to Saint Nino's arrival from Cappadocia to Georgia. Orthodox Christian baptism ceremony takes place in Paravani Lake.

Cuisine

Apokhti is regarded as delicacy in Samtskhe-Javakheti, which is salted and dried meat.

Tatarberaki is traditional dish – a finely chopped slices of dough, which is eaten with onion stewed in butter.

Honey named -bakmazi is made of mulberry fruit.

Pride of Meskhetian cuisine is Tenili cheese, from sheep or cow's milk. The milk used must have a high fat content. Because it is difficult to make it was usually only made for celebrations. The technique for making this type of cheese was nearly lost but has been revived.

Bee keeping is also developed. There is a large range of wheat foods and a variety of baked goods,; nuts, somini, chatsekili bread, bazlava bread and other.

French-born catholics are living in several villages of Samtskhe-Javakheti. They eat snails, which are collected from December. Here they prepare gozinaki, where mulberry honey - bakmazs is used instead of honey.

Hotels

Crowne Plaza Borjomi (Borjomi Municipality), nested between hills and a small river, nearby Botjomi Central Park. The hotel has Spa and Wellness Center.

Borjomi Likani (Borjomi Municipality), located 350 m from the Kura River, Borjomi Likani features a spa and wellness center with indoor pool.

Borjomi Palace Hotel Borjomi Palace Hotel & Spa is located in Borjomi town centre, 800 m from the Mineral Water Park. It features a spa centre and a gym.

In Satskhe-Javakheti region is located many other hotels and gest houses: Milano Palace, New Star, Borjomi Park Guest House, Guest House Borjomi, Gino Wellness Rabath Hotel and Spa, Hotel Almi ect.

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Restaurants

There are plenty of restaurants in Samtskhe-Javakheti which offering guests various traditional and European dishes.

Bergi , The Bagrationi Restaurant , Inka Cafe, Pesvebi, Old Borjomi (Borjomi Municipality).
Restaurant Rabath , Mimino Restaurant, Dubli (Akhaltsikhe Municipality).
Taverna Mari , De Novo (Bakuriani – Borjomi Municipality).
Leki, Cafe Vardzia (Aspindza Municipality).

IX. KVEMO QARTLI REGION

X.1. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARASTERISTICS

Kvemo Kartli (Lower Kartli) region is located in the southeastern part of Georgia. It is surrounded by Tbilisi, Shida Kartli, and Mtskheta-Mtianeti Municipalities on the north; Samtskhe-Javakheti Municipality on the west; Kakheti Municipality on the east; and the countries of Armenia and Azerbaijan on the south. The city of Rustavi is a regional capital. The area of the region is of 6528 km squares, which accounts for 9.4% of the Georgian territory. There are six municipalities in the region: Bolnisi, Gardabani, Dmanisi, Tetritsqaro, Marneuli, Tsalka and self-government city Rustavi.



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Socio-Economic Characteristics

X.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Owing to its location, the region has great transport links. There passes the railway and the motorways which link Georgia with its neighbours Armenia and Azerbaijan. The main industries are located in Rustavi and Marneuli. The industrial production of Kvemo Kartlo comprises 20% of the global Georgian production.

The region is one of the most economically developed in Georgia. After Tbilisi, the region is ranked second in industrial production. Kvemo Kartli region is characterized by different concentration of mineral resources, whose potential is only partially used. In the territory of the region are located plenty of - limestone, quartz-greenstone, sandstone, basalt ores. Also: gold, copper, andesite and tuff ores.

The region is also rich in water resources – rivers, lakes, underground fresh waters. Compared to other regions of Georgia the Kvemo Kartli Municipality has few mineral and thermal water resources (except the territory of Bolnisi and Dmanisi Municipalities). The energy sector is represented by three heating plants in Gardabani. Kvemo Kartli has a diverse minerals, on which is based mining industry. In the region produced non-ferrous and ferrous metals. There are more than 200 ores in the region, among them black and precious metals, chemical and ceramic raw material and fuel resources. The region has possibilities to wind, sun and biogas potential.

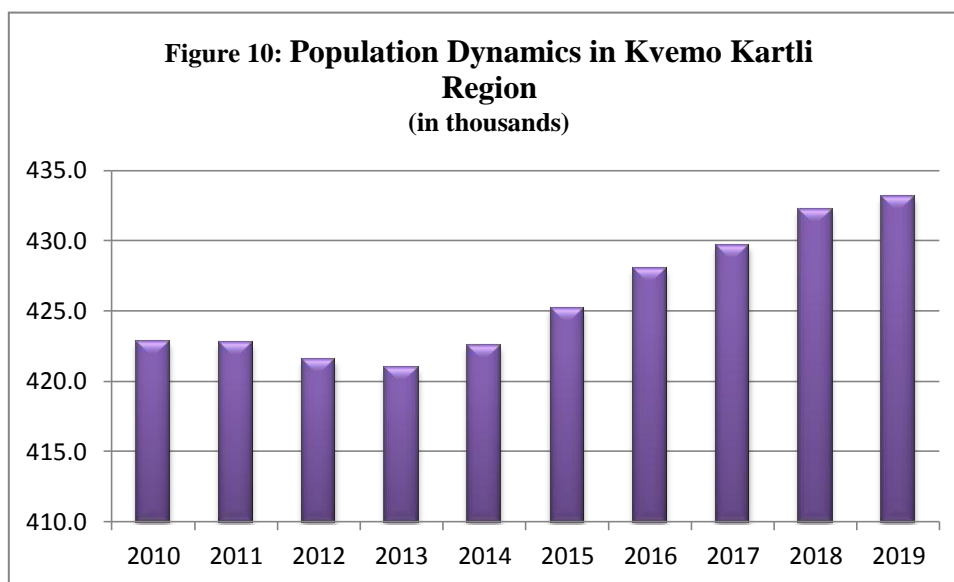
Rustavi (the administrative center of the region) is one of the youngest cities of Georgia. In days of the Soviet epoch Rustavi was the largest center of heavy industry, chemistry and machine-building. Today Rustavi is the fourth largest city in Georgia. A number of industrial enterprises is still active there.

Population

According to the data of Geostat by 2018, Kvemo Kartli region is the third most populated region in Georgia with a population of 432.3 thnd. (11.6% of the whole population of Georgia). A population density 66 people per square mile. 43.3% of the population lives in urban settlements.

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Source: Geostat

. Between the 1989 and 2014 censuses, the population in the region decreased by 30.6 percent. The main reasons fixed fact were fertility decline and especially emigration processes.

By 2018 more populated are Marneuli (106.5 thnd.) and Gardabani (81.3 thnd.) municipalities. Tsalka is less populated municipality (19.3 thnd.). By number of population (127.8 thnd.) Rustavi is the forth city after: Tbilisi, Batumi and Kutaisi.

By 2017 crude birth rate in the Kvemo Kartli region made up 15.5 per mille and the death rate 10.1 per mille. The value of natural increase rate was 5.4 per mille. It should be noted that natural increase rate in all municipalities – besides Tetrtskaro Municipality – was positive. The highest rate was fixed in the Marneuli Municipality (8.0 per mille).

According to data of population census of Georgia 2014, vast majority of population is ethnically Georgians (51.3%) and Azeris (41.8%). The ethnic Georgians live mostly in northern part of the region and comprise for the majority in the municipalities of Tetrtsqaro, Gardabani and Tsalka. The Azerbaijanis live in the southern part and comprise for the majority in the municipalities of Marneuli, Dmanisi and Bolnisi. The ethnic Armenians and Greeks mostly live in the Tsalka Municipality. Population of Rustavi are ethnic georgians (91.8%), Azeris (3.7%), Armenians (1.6%), Russians (1.2%).



X.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

Monasteries, Temples and Fortresses

Bolnisi Sioni historical monastery of the Holy Dormition is located in Kvemo Bolnisi village of Bolnisi Municipality, 7 km from the district center. The monastery is in the middle of the village, on a plain site.

Sioni is a three-nave basilica type construction. According to the inscription above one of the entrances, it was built between 479-493. Initiator and leader of the construction was Bishop David.

The monastery was heavily damaged during Mongol invasions.

In the XVII century by the will of Queen Mariam Sioni was renewed and maintained that shape till today.

Bolnisi Sioni is an active church and bishops cathedral since 1989. Bolnisi Sioni is a historical church of international significance (included in UNESCO list).

Distance to the tourist attractions (from municipality center) – 7 km.

Tsughrughasheni Monastery is located 10 km from Bolnisi (Bolnisi Municipality), in Poladauri Valley, on the right bank of the river with the same name. The monastery is in the category of the first half of XIII century sites. That means that “King of the Kings Giorgi” is George IV Lasha, heir of Tamar of Georgia.

Since the 1990s of the last century Tsughrughasheni is an active monastery again and the fact that it’s included in the UNESCO Classifier, says much about its international significance.

Between the oldest towns of Georgia **Samshvilde** (Tetritskaro Municipality) is without doubt one of the most memorized and exquisite because of its location, landscape, many important sites and rich historic past.

Samshvilde has a long history. Caves, menhirs and settlements in its surroundings and old cemeteries near them are dated to the second half of the IV millennium – III millennium BC by archeological surveys.

Dmanisi City Ruins

5 early human (hominids) skulls were uncovered here. Most famous of them are 1.8 million years old “Zezva and Mzia”. This place is rich in species of flora and fauna characteristic for tropical climate. On

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the territory of the city ruins there is Dmanisi Sioni of the 6th century which is still active. There is an outdoors museum, too. Distance to the tourist attractions (from municipality center) - 16 km.

Rustavi fortress (or fortified town of Rustavi) — historical fortress in Kukheti, Rustavi territory. The fortress was one of the several that were built around Tbilisi to protect the capital city. During its existence the fortress had three different fences for different periods. At first (V-VIII centuries) the fence had quadrangular towers and the second so-called internal fence had semicircular towers. Later both of these fences were joined into one fence (IX-XI centuries). The third, so-called external fence had a gate with a tunnel (XII-XIII centuries). The fortress had two fences on the east side at the same time. Rustavi fortress is the only fortress in Georgia where there're frescoes.

Avranlo Cyclopean Fortress is situated near Avranlo village (Tsalka Municipality) and dates back to the I century BC. Its cyclopean style walls are arranged into three storeys: at the bottom, slope and top of the mountain. A small church is attached to the cliff in which a very small cave is carved. Next to this church complex there are numerous caves, some of them unprocessed and others partially processed. In 2006 the fortress was granted a category of national importance.

Distance to the tourist attractions (from municipality center) - 25 km.

Protected Areas and Natural Touristic Resources

Algeti National Park is located in Tetrtskaro district. It comprises the southern slopes of the eastern area of Trialeti mountain range in the Algeti river gorge and is located at an altitude of 1,100-1,950 m above sea level.

The main entrance of the national park is located near the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary of Manglisi. Algeti National Park Administration has a small infrastructural unit – a picnic area with auxiliary buildings. A tourist trail called “Samepo Ridge” („Kings Ridge”) starts from the cathedral and includes a visit to the picnic area. It is possible to hire a guide and horses to enjoy the visit to its fullest. Visitors can visit the national park at any time of the year.

Dashbashi Canyon (Tsalka Municipality)

This natural monument is a canyon valley of rare type and distinguished by biodiversity formed in a riverbed cut into rocks of volcanic origin by Ktsia (Khrami) river on Dambashi volcanic highland. Plants on the steep highlands of the canyon and delightful waterfalls create a totally different microlandscape with unique microclimate, special fauna etc. Distance to the tourist attractions (from municipality center) – 3 km.

Tsopi And Khojorni Valley

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Walking route: Sadakhlo, Tsopi, Khojorni, Sioni, Kudro, Zemo Bolnisi (Bolnisi Municipality). There're sites from V-VI centuries (fortress, churches). Distance to the tourist attractions from municipality center 35 km.

Goruli Hillfort Situated between Tserakvi and Opreti villages (Marneuli Municipality). There is an attractive nature and many cultural sites here. A walking route passes through, good place for camping. Distance to the tourist attractions (from municipality center) - 42 km.

Pantiani lake (Dmanisi Municipality) The lake is surrounded by a coniferous forest. It has a big potential to attract tourists. Tents could be used to host tourists. There is a potential for the development of hunting tourism. Distance to the tourist attractions (from municipality center) – 6km.

Museums

Rustavi History Museum Museum mainly preserves objects that were uncovered during archeological expeditions in Rustavi and historic Kukheti (Gardabani region) – vessels made of clay, faience and glass, weapons and tools, bronze, silver and golden jewellery of local and foreign origin including Sasanian cornelian and stone seals from XIX century BC to XVIII century AD, numismatic and ethnographic collections, modern works of art etc.

Kldekari Museum-Reserve (Tsalka Municipality). The territory of the reserve includes ruins of the fortress and cyclopean style constructions built by the first duke Liparit Baghvasi in the 70s of IX century on the territory of historical Duchy of Kldekari, as well as numerous medieval sites. Distance to the tourist attractions (from municipality center) - 35 km. **Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani House Museum of Tandzia village** (Bolnisi Municipality). Prince Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani (1658–1725) was a prominent Georgian writer and diplomat. Orbeliani is noted in part due to his important role as an emissary of Georgia to France and Vatican, where he vainly sought assistance on behalf of his beleaguered King Vakhtang VI.

Distance to the tourist attractions (from municipality center) – 12 km.

Bolnisi Local Museum. There're relics from Paleolithic period to XIX century preserved here, including unique antique jug. There's a tourist attraction in the center of the city.

Tetritskaro Local Museum. In the museum there are many relicts here which will help visitors form a general idea about Tetritskaro's cultural and historic past. Many unique relics are exhibited here, from later stone age to the earliest history displays. Arouse the admiration a four wheeled combat chariot from Bedeni burial grounds dated to the end of II millennium BC.

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Resorts

Manglisi is health resort in the Tetritsqaro Municipality. It also functions as a mountain spa. Resort is located on the southern slopes of the Trialeti Range, on the Tbilisi-Tsalka highway, 56 kilometres west of Tbilisi, in the Algeti river valley. It is located at about 1,200 metres above sea level and enjoys a subtropical climate, with warm summers (average temperature in July, 19 °C) and mild winters (average temperature in January, -2 °C). Annual precipitation is 700 mm.

With a recorded history going back to the 4th century, Manglisi was one of the earliest centers of Christianity in Georgia and is a home to the medieval cathedral of the Mother of God.

In the Dmanisi, Bolnisi, Tetritskaro, Gardabani and Tsalka Municipalities are functioning sanatoriums and rest houses.

Traditions

Didgoroba is Georgian holiday, that is annually observed on August 12 (Tetritskaro Municipality). This holiday commemorates the Battle of Didgori on August 12, 1121. This is not an official holiday, but the festival is much loved by the nation.

The Battle of Didgori took place 40 km west of Tbilisi, modern capital of Georgia. The battle was fought between the armies of the Kingdom of Georgia and the Great Seljuid Empire (medieval Turko-Persian empire, the predecessor of the Ottoman Empire). At that time the Great Seljuid Empire was declining and King David IV of Georgia's decisive victory led to reconquest of Tbilisi, then-Muslim held city.

Preparations to Didgoroba are made several days before the feast day. The main events usually take place in the village of Didgori, the place where the battle was fought. Folk groups give free performances. President of Georgia often visits the celebration.

Georgians are attracted to Didgori not only by celebration of Didgoroba. People want to have a look at sword sculptures, that were erected on the Mound Didgori in the 1990s.

Novruz Bayrami is celebrated in the municipalities inhabited by Muslims, on March 21. Novruz is a Persian word. One part of the word "nov" means new, while the other part "ruz" means a day.

Cousine

Tenili cheese is Meskhetian cheese made in Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli regions from sheep or cow's milk. The milk used must have a high fat content. Because it is difficult to make it was

Common borders. Common solutions.





usually only made for celebrations. The technique for making this type of cheese was nearly lost but has been revived.

Hotels

In the central city of the region - Rustavi are located: Hotel Rustavi, Hotel Autopapa, Hotel Rio, Grand Vejini.

Deutsche Muhle Bolnisi (Hotel and Restaurant) – Bolnisi (Bolnisi Municipality)

KavKaz Hotel - Marneuli (Marneuli Municipality).

Hotel Deutsche Muehle Bolnisi (Bolnisi Municipality, 3-star hotel).

Hotel Kakhaberi – Manglisi (Tetrutskaro Municipality).

Restaurants

Samefo – Rustavi;

Ukrainka – Rustavi.

Marani – Bolnisi (Bolnisi Municipality);

Chveni Ezo – Tsalka (Tsalka Municipality);

Oghuz – Gardabani (Gardabani Municipality);

Muradoglu – Algeti (Marneuli Municipality);

Reataurant Algeti – Tetrirtkaro (Tetrtskari Municipality).

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X. SHIDAKARTLI REGION

X.1. GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Shida, or „inner Kartli” is Georgia’s heartland. The region is bordered by the Russian Federation to the North, Georgian regions of Mtskheta-Mtianeti to the East, Kvemo Kartli to the South, Samtskhe-Javakheti to the Southwest, Imereti to the West, and Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti to the Northwest. It consists of the following municipalities: Gori, Kaspi, Kareli, Khashuri; The area of the region is 4808.7 km², capital and largest city, Gori. Region occupies 9.2% of the country’s territory. In fact, the territory of Shida Kartli that is currently under the control of the Georgian government accounts for only 6,9% of the country’s total territory (within de jure borders). The northern part of the region, namely Java, and northern territories of Kareli and Gori municipalities (total area of 1,393 km²), have been controlled by the authorities of the self-proclaimed Republic of South Ossetia since 1992 and occupied by Russian troops since 2008 Russo-Georgian war.



Gori municipality is surrounded by the South Ossetian administrative district from the north, Kaspi municipality from the east, Borjomi and Tsalka municipalities from the south and Kareli municipality from the west. The area of Gori municipality is 2327.2 km².

Kaspi Municipality is located on the both side there is River Mtkvari of Shida Kartli. The main part of the Municipality is situated on the plain of Shida Kartli. Kaspi is surrounded by the Caucasus Mountain on the north and Trialeti Ridge on the south. The area of the Municipality – 803,2 km².

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Kareli Municipality is located on the plain of Shida Kartli. It is surrounded Gori Municipality by the east, Khashuri from the west, Znauri from the north and Borjomi Municipality from the south. The area of the Municipality – 1092,1 km².

Khashuri municipality is bordered by Kareli Municipality from the east and the north, Sachkhere municipality from the north, Borjomi municipality from the south and the west, Kharagauli municipality from the west. The area of Khashuri municipality is 585.2 km². The distance from the regional center-47km. The area of the Municipality – 585,2 km².

X.2. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

The proportion of population below the poverty line is high in Shida Kartli (about 20%), including those in extreme poverty (8%). It is partly due to a large number of IDPs. Shida Kartli is quite rich in natural resources. It has a wide variety of soils, forests (occupying 46% of the region's territory), water and other resources (e.g. recreational). Kaspi, Khashuri and Gori municipalities are rich in resources whereas the Kareli municipality has a lower amount of resources.

It should be noted that the region has a wide variety of mineral resources. The mineral resources of the region include iron, silver, gold, lead, zinc but due to their small number and limited use in production their economic value is generally low. There is also a negative impact of conflict areas (e.g. suspension of the Kvaisa development). Therefore, the mining of most resources is either limited or suspended. In this regard, the extraction of inert materials (sand and gravel) from river beds (in particular, the Mtkvari river)/ravines and their use in the construction industry is a comparatively important and perspective project. Among other mineral resources, the region produces flux limestone, dolomite, paving stones, magmatic rocks, lightweight aggregates, furnace limestone, brick clay, etc.

Industry in Shida Kartli is not well-developed - the number of sectors, employees and production rate is not large. Only food industry is more or less advanced and significant in the region.

Population

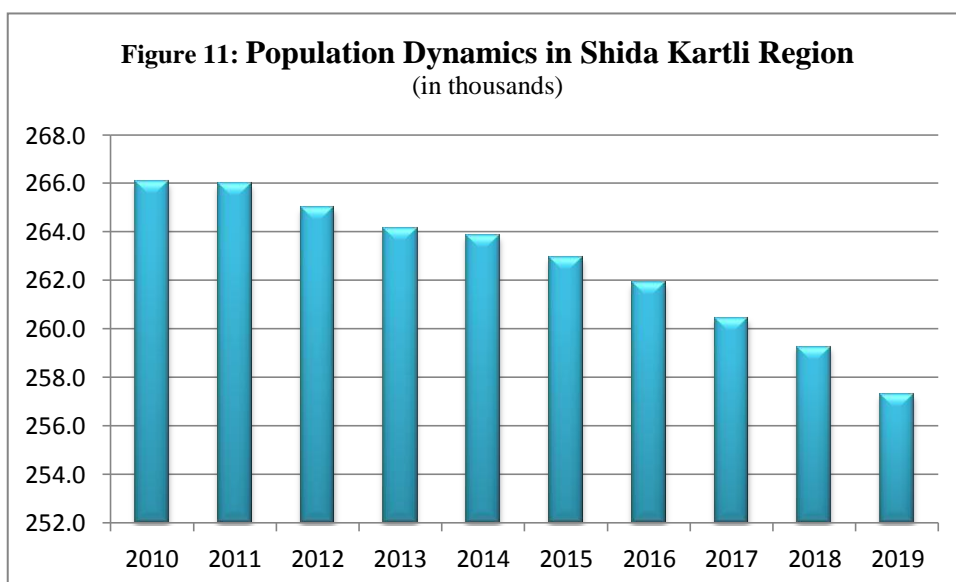
By 2018 Shida Kartli Region has a population of 259.3 thousands (7.0 percent of the whole population of the country Georgia). The share of urban population is 39.9%, in the rural areas lives 60.1% of whole population. Population density is 54 per km².

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Between the 1989 and 2014 censuses, the population in Shida Kartli Region decreased by 18.1 percent.



Source: Geostat

Nearly half of population are residents of the Gori municipality (47.5%). and the remaining population is almost equally distributed among three municipalities: 20.1% in Khashuri and about 16% each in Kaspi and Kareli Municipalities.

In Georgia there are 250.6 thnd. IDPs in total, of which 14.3 thnd. live in Shida Kartli, i.e. 5.7% of all IDPs in the country and 4.5% of the region's population. A majority of IDPs (almost 70%) reside in the Gori Municipality or in the city of Gori itself.

In 2017 crude birth rate made up 14.1 per mille and the death rate 13.2 per mille. On the basis of these two components natural increase was very low (0.8 per mille). It should be noted that in the Kaspi Municipality natural increase rate was negative (-5.1 per mille). The highest index of fertility was noted in the Kareli Municipality. Death rate was very high in the Kaspi Municipality (14.6 per mille).

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According to data of population census of Georgia 2014, 94.7% of the population in Shida Kartli region are Georgians, 2.1% are Azeris and 1.8% Ossetians. In the region also living: Armenians, Russians, Ukrainians, Greeks and other nationalities.

X.3. OVERVIEW OF EXISTING TOURISM RESOURCES

The tourism potential of Shida Kartli is generally related to a multitude of cultural, historical and religious sites in four municipalities of the region. Therefore, the tourism potential is considered to be one of the key areas for the long-term development of the region. The two-year dynamics demonstrates a substantial increase in the flow of tourists and visitors, which is a positive trend.

In the Shida Kartli developed some types of tourism: health tourism, eco-tourism, agro tourism, cultural, active. Region has a potential for the development extreme tourism.

Monasteries and temples

Ateni Sioni is located in 12 km from the town of Gori, near the village of Ateni, on the left bank of river Tana, on the roadside. Cathedral belongs to VIII century and is of a cross-dome tetra-arch type construction. It was built with greenish-greyish square-cut sandstone. On the walls of Ateni Sioni cathedral remain unique Georgian inscriptions and postscripts in Asomtavruli (type of the oldest Georgian writing) mentioning historical and other individuals, dates, and facts.

Gori Fortress was erected in downtown Gori, on the high rocky hillock. As archeological excavations show, the first fortified settlement here dates to IV-III cc. BC. In historical sources Gori fortress first was mentioned in XII century. Gori fortress had a strategic venue and holding it under control in Middle Ages meant establishment of control over province of Shida Kartli.

Ikorta church of the Archangel, commonly known as Ikorta (Gori Municipality) is a 12th-century Georgian Orthodox church located at the outskirts of the village Ikorta in Shida. Commissioned by the ducal family of Ksani in the reign of King George III of Georgia in 1172, Ikorta is the earliest in a series of the 12th-13th-century churches of Georgia that set a final canonical model of a Georgian domed church. The church was renovated in the 17th century, but the original design was largely preserved. There are two entrance portals, one to the south and one to the west. Original porches have

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been ruined, and the extant porch to the south is of much later period. There are a solar clock and an ancient Georgian asomtavruli inscription on the western wall.

Kintsvisi monastery is located in 3 km from the village of Kintsvisi (Kareli Municipality), on one of the highlands of the gorge of river Dzama. The monastery complex consists of churches of St. Nicholas, Virgin Mary, St. George, remnants of a fence and a two-level built-in bell tower. It was founded on the edge of XII-XIII centuries by order of the Royal court. The core building of the complex is the center-dome cathedral of St. Nicholas.

Kvatakhevi monastery complex (Kaspi Municipality) is a medieval Georgian Orthodox monastery in Shida Kartli. The Kvatakhevi monastic complex is situated near the village Kavtiskhevi at the end of the gorge cut by a stream in the northern slopes of the Trialeti Range, protected on three sides by the steep mountain slopes. It dates to the 12th-13th century. Historically, Kvatakhevi was also a literary center where several manuscripts were copied. It also possessed a treasure with many artifacts of medieval Georgian jewelry, a sizeable portion of which was later acquired by and are now on display at the Moscow State Historical Museum. The monastery was significantly damaged during Timur's invasions of Georgia in the 14th century, but was subsequently repaired, more completely under the patronage of Prince Ivane Tarkhan-Mouravi in 1854. A belfry was added in 1872.

Rkoni monastery complex (VII-XVIII cc.) is located in the vicinity of the village of Chachubeti (Kaspi Municipality). The oldest memorial of the complex is church of Virgin Mary (VII c.). In XIII-XIV cc. were built gates of the church of Virgin Mary, chapel, one-nave church of John the Baptist and refectory, tower of Svimon Mesvete; belfry of XVI-XVIII cc., living and utility rooms. Within a distance of 0,5 km from the monastery, on the river Tedzami is a one-span bridge - the best specimen of the bridges of medieval Georgia.

Samtavisi - The XI century dome cathedral of Samtavisi is located in the hamlet of Samtavisi in Kaspi Municipality (one of the legends on the cathedral dates completion of construction works at 1030). Samtavisi is a Bishop cathedral. It was built on the site where the Holy Father, Isidore Samtavneli of Assyria, erected the first cathedral.

Uplistsikhe - is located on the left bank of river Mtkvari, 10 km from the town of Gori. It can be detected on the southern slope of Kvernaki mountain range, on the area of 10 ha. Uplistsikhe is the only monument of Antique time in Georgia which nowadays remained above the surface of the ground. Town has streets, squares, water drainage ducts, various constructions, four gates, secret tunnel leading to river Mtkvari, a fence, et al. Today the fortified town is an outdoors museum.

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In X-VI centuries BC Uplistsikhe was a fortress of a chieftain (ruler) of the predominant tribe in Shida Kartli. Exactly at that time it was called Uplistsikhe which means Fortified town of a ruler.

Urbnisi monastery (village Urbnisi, Kareli Municipality) is a 6th-7th-century three-nave basilica which was rebuilt twice in the 10th and 17th centuries. Quite a simple and large church, it is based on twelve strong pillars for three naves. There are many inscriptions on the walls of the monastery which are thought to be the examples of the 6th-7th-century Georgian alphabet.

Near the village is an 8th-9th-century domed church, Ruisi Cathedral of Divinity, which serves as a center of the Urbnisi-Ruisi eparchy of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

Both Urbnisi Monastery and the Ruisi Cathedral are known for a major ecclesiastic council convened here in 1103-1104 by the Georgian king David the Builder to cope with problems within the church hierarchy.

Parks

Liakhvi Strict Nature Reserve (Date of establishment:1977) is a protected area in the historic region Shida Kartli on the southern slope of the Greater Caucasus range in the northeastern part of Tskhinvali District and in Akhlagori Municipality of Georgia. Reserve main goal is protecting flora and fauna in surrounding mountainous region. In general Patara Liakhvi gorge has many tourist attractions : ethnological, bird-watching and botanical. Nowadays Nature Reserve on the occupied territory of Georgia.

One of the largest national parks in Georgia, **Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park** includes part of two municipalities - Khashuri and Borjomi.

Museums

Sergi Makalatia Gori Historical and Ethnographical Museum (Date of establishment:1935, situated in the Gori).

The museum houses archaeology collection from local sites IV-III Millennium B.C. (ceramic family seals, collection of adornment, weapons), numismatic collection; collection of XVIII-XIX cc. ethnography (Georgian and Karabagh carpets and rugs, textiles, golden thread embroidery for religious clothes; collection of XVII-XIX cc. weapons etc.

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Ioseb Stalin Museum complex (Date of establishment:1937) consists of memorial house, where Stalin was born, exposition building with tower and Stalin's personal coach with interior, by which he had travelled to Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam. Museum houses Stalin's personal things, study room of Kremlin, manuscripts, gifts from over the world, Stalin's mask (author: Manizer), paintings (U. Japaridze, L. Gudiashvili, E. Akhvlediani, G. Totibadze, K. Magalashvili, A. Kutateladze, A. Bletkin, V. Serov, D. Maisashvili, S. Semenov etc.)

Jakob Gogebashvili House Museum (Village Variani, Gori Municipality. Date of establishment:1958)

is situated in the former house of famous Georgian public figure, publicist and holy person Jakob Gogebashvili (1840-1912). There are collections of exhibits belonging to Jakob Gogebashvili: his works, memorial things, manuscripts, correspondences, photos, paintings of Georgian artists etc.

Kareli Local Museum (Kareli Municipality. Date of establishment:1973). The museum houses archaeology collection from local sites of Bronze Age and of Iron Age (flint objects, weapons and household objects, iron swords, bronze buckles, spearheads, adornment, numismatic materials, samples of ceramic); XIX c. household objects, documents, photographs.

Ivane Javakhishvili House Museum (Village Khovle, Kaspi Municipality. Date of establishment: 1969) The museum houses materials belonging to the famous Georgian scientist-historic academic Ivane Javakhishvili (1876-1940). These are: memory things and photos, rich library, archaeological materials from Khovle-Gora excavations and ethnographic exhibits, other documents which reflect life of scientist personality.

Lesya Ukrainka House Museum (settlement Surami, Khashuri municipality. Date of establishment: 1952) is situated in the former house of Georgian ethnographic Nikoloz Abazadze. There are collections of exhibits belonging to Lesya Ukrainka(Larysa Petrivna Kosach-Kvitka, 1871-1913), her works, memorial things, manuscripts, correspondences, photos etc.

Resorts

Surami is a small town in the Khashuri Municipality with the population of 7.4 thnd. It is a popular mountain climatic resort and a home to a medieval fortress.

Surami is located on the southern slopes of the Likhi Range (alternatively known as the Surami Range) which divides Georgia into its eastern and western parts, four km from the town Khashuri, to which Surami is connected through a railway spur.

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Surami is adjacent to the Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park, noted for its diverse landscapes and abundance of historical monuments. The town itself houses The Mother of God Church complex constructed in the 16th-17th century, the 17th-19th century St. George's Church.

Gorijvari is a local balnaeological resort situated in the village Didi Gorijvari (Gori Municipality).

Traditions

Berikaoba is an improvised masqueraded folk theatre, stemming from the pagan festivity of fertility and rebirth. The name is derived from a Common Kartvelian root *ber*, meaning "a child". Berikaoba can be considered as a kind of Georgian Halloween. It's celebrated in early spring.

Berikaoba typically involves several men, the *berika*, who are mostly disguised as animals. The costumes and masks for the mystery are made of animal hide. Animal skulls, tails, feathers, horns, pumpkins, ribbons and bells are used to add colorfulness to the scene. The tradition of berikaoba was inscribed on the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Georgia list in 2013.

The similar tradition, **keenoba** (from "the Khan"), celebrated until easter, satirizing the foreign invaders of Georgia and later the Imperial Russian officialdom, enjoyed particular popularity in the 19th-century Tbilisi and its environs.

Oqonoba - in Gori, holiday okonoba is celebrated with pompous. Mass celebrations, concerts, hosting guests from various regions, blocking streets, frying barbecues, butchering sheep and etc. This holiday is celebrated by such forms from the 19th century.

Cusine

Fruit production is developed in Kartli. Apple and peaches are most popular. The viticulture is also developed. However, cuisine of Kartli is mostly famous for juices. Local traditional dishes are made of cornel, buttermilk and lolo, bread "kharcho". Various types of herbs and vegetables are used here. Especially popular are: beans, potatoes, onions, cabbage, cucumbers, tomatoes, radishes, garlic, watercress, coriander, parsley and celery. Kartli is also famous for its excellent pickles. The pick marinades are most distinguished.

Hotels

Royal House located in Gori, 0.9 miles from Stalin Museum, Royal House has a garden. Offering a bar, the property is located within less than 1 km of Gori Fortress.

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KMG Hotel (Surami, Khashuri Municipality) has a garden, terrace and bar in Surami. Featuring an ATM, this property also provides guests with a water park. National and European dishes are served at **Iveria Hotel** (Khashuri, Khashuri Municipality) Featuring a bar and a restaurant, Iveria Hotel is located in Khashuri. The 3-star hotel has air-conditioned rooms with a private bathroom and free WiFi. The property provides a 24-hour front desk. The staff was very accommodating. We arrived early in the morning, hours before check in. But they let us check in and were very welcoming.

New Hotel Lucky located in Gori and with Stalin Museum reachable within 0.9 miles.

Gogi Dvalishvili Wine Celler located in Gori. For tourists offers accommodations with a terrace. In the region functioning plenty of small hotels and guest houses.

Restaurants

Georgian Cafe-Restaurant Gamardjoba. This very traditional Georgian restaurant is situated nearby the Uplistsiche Cave town and it is a very good place to have a bite and a taste of local wine.

Wine Artisans Chateau is a significant winery near Gori, happily receiving guests who want to try and know more about Georgian natural wines.

In the restaurants, cafes and bars of Gori: L'avenue Gori, Cake House Gori, Cafe Bar Champs Elysees Gori, Chinebuli Gori, Berikoni Gori, Nikala - visitors can taste traditional Georgian and European dishes.



XI. UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

XI.1. Water supply system

Currently in Georgia a little less than 10% of the city population and more than half of rural residents have no central water supply in houses and are dependent on outdoor taps and wells.

Drinking water availability varies greatly by regions. According to the GeoStat data of 2016, 97% of in-house water supply is provided only in the capital city. The rate is 43.7% in Kvemo Kartli. Data of Adjara, Guria, Shida Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, and Mtkheta-Mtianeti are aggregated and their share is 43.1%. The rate is even lower in other regions. Generally, the capital and urbanised regions have better access to drinking water. Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti is an exception – in spite of relative urbanisation, most families use wells and not internal or outdoor taps to get water.

The water supply system in regions of Georgia

Region	The water supply system installed in the dwelling	The water system tap in the yard or in the vicinity	The well in the yard or in the vicinity	Natural spring in the yard or in the vicinity
Tbilisi	99.0	1.0	0.0	0.0
Adjara, Guria, Shida Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti	43.1	17.1	23.3	16.5
Kakheti	34.2	51.7	3.7	10.3
Imereti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti,	40.9	18.7	26.4	14.1
Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti	40.2	10.3	45.6	3.9
Kvemo Kartli	43.7	54.0	2.1	0.2

Source: Geostat

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Sewerage System

Before 2000 about two-thirds of the Georgian population was served by sewerage systems and municipal treatment plants in 45 cities. Most of these sewerage systems reportedly were in poor condition, resulting in significant pollution of downstream water resources.

According to the 2004 data of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, by 2003 wastewater treatment facilities were available in Tbilisi and Khashuri only, Batumi and Sachkhere biological treatment plants were activated in 2014. The situation is even worse outside big cities. A sewerage system is simply not available in rural areas of any region. This situation is more or less different in all regions of Georgia.

Electricity system

All regions of Georgia are electrified 100 percent except some high- mountain villages.

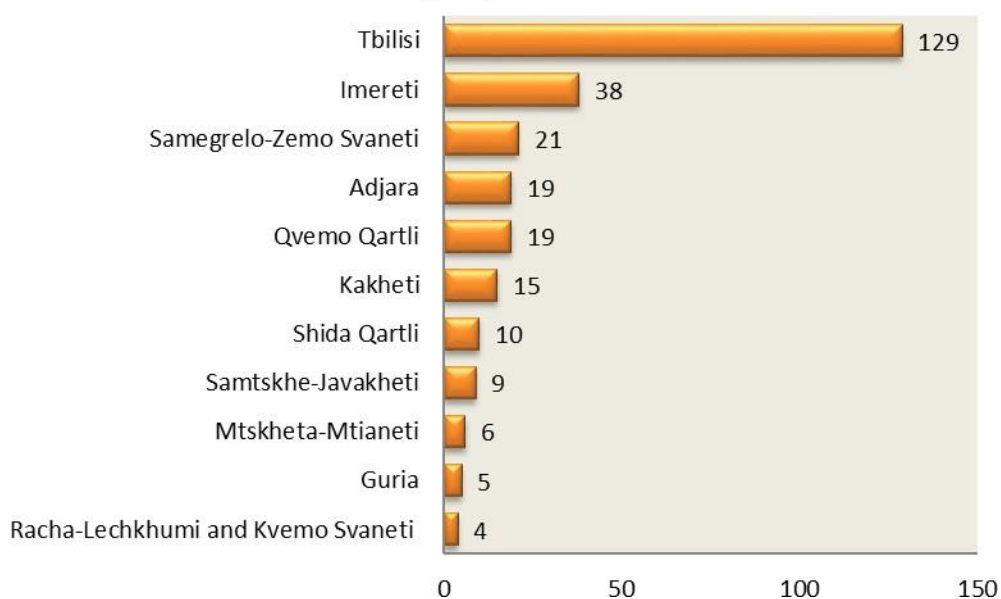
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XI.2. Health infrastructure

Number of hospitals and medical centers in the regions, 2018
(unit)



XI.3. Emergency services

There's only one emergency number in Georgia that provides every kind of urgent help: 112

By calling this number everybody can summon:

- Ambulance
- Firefighting crew
- Police
- Extreme situation management crew

The service is also adapted for people with special needs. The information of an urgent situation and the call for help can be made by video call and even SMS.

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112 has a new service – wrecker service. Towing vehicle is available only in Tbilisi for now. The service price is 30 Georgian Lari. 1km on standard towing vehicle costs 3 Georgian Lari, 1km on crane evacuator costs 4 Georgian Lari.

Using emergency services are absolutely free!

XI.4. Educational infrastructure

In Georgia, in the field of tourism, trained specialists in some higher institutions of the country:

- I.Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University;
- Ilia State University;
- Guram Tavarykiladze Tbilisi Teaching University;
- At the Caucasian University functioning a tourism school;
- Shota Rustaveli Batumi State University;
- Georgian National University (SEU);
- Grigol Robakidze University;
- Eurogerion Teaching University (Ersu)ro

In the region of Georgia Interested parties can receive vocational education in some vocational education institutions:

- Community College "Akhali Talgha" (Qobuleti, Adjara Region);
- Community College Aisi (Kachreti, Kakheti Region);
- College „Blask Sea“ (Batumi, Adjara Region);
- Vocational College Tetnuldi (Mestia, Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti Region);
- College „Fazisi“ (Poti, Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti Region).

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XI.5. Cultural infrastructure

There are about 40 theaters in Tbilisi, among them:

Tbilisi State Opera

Address: Rustaveli Ave. 25

Tbilisi's Opera House has a history spanning more than 160 years. Named after famous Georgian composer and founder of modern Georgian music, Zakaria Paliashvili, the project was initiated by the Russian Tsar's viceroy to the Caucasus - Mikhail Vorontsov. Supposedly, the initiative to build the opera house was seen as an attempt to soothe unrest in Georgia in 1832, and give credit to the cultural policies of the Russian Empire in the eyes of the restive Georgian aristocracy. French writer Alexandre Dumas visited Tbilis in 1858 - 7 years after the completion of the Opera House - and wrote in his book, "Caucasus", that he had "never seen any hall more spectacular than the one of Tbilisi Opera House in my entire life." Throughout its history, the Opera House has sustained two raging fires, one in 1874 and a second in 1973. After six years of renovation works, the Tbilisi Opera House opened yet again in January of 2016, and hosted a performance of "Abesalom and Eteri" - one of Zakaria Paliashvili's most famous traditional opera scores. Step inside to be transported into a world long gone, but make sure to call ahead before going.

Shota Rustaveli State Dramatic Theatre

Address: 17 Rustaveli Ave.

Shota Rustaveli State Dramatic Theatre is the largest and one of the oldest theaters of Georgia, located in its capital Tbilisi on Rustaveli Avenue. Housed in an ornate Rococo-style edifice, the theatre was founded in 1887 and since 1921 has carried the name of Georgia's national poet Rustaveli.

Kote Marjanishvili State Academic Drama Theatre

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Address: Marjanishvili St. 8

Kote Marjanishvili State Academic Drama Theatre is a state theatre in Tbilisi. It is one of the oldest and

most significant theatres in the country, coming second perhaps only to the national Rustaveli Theatre. The theatre was founded in Kutaisi in 1928 by Kote Marjanishvili. It moved to Tbilisi in 1930 to the former Brothers Zubalashvili philanthropic "Public House", the building it still occupies

Movement Theatre

Address: Aghmashenebeli Ave. 182, Mushtaidi Garden

It is called a theatre, but really it regularly hosts all different kinds of events from live concerts to circus performances and from fire shows to jazz evenings and charity concerts. The venue is located inside Mushtaidi Park, next to Dinamo Arena. Admission price to the events varies from one event to another, and is at times completely free of charge. Check out their facebook page for more details. During the events a small bar is working and there's an outside sitting area.

Gabriadze Theatre

Address: Shavteli St. 13

This tiny and unique marionette theatre is probably the best celebrated among Georgian theatres. The company is under the direction of noted artist, writer, and director Rezo Gabriadze. The beautiful building in the heart of old Tbilisi was designed by Gabriadze himself. Among the shows in its current repertoire are: "The Autumn of My Spring", "The Battle of Stalingrad", "Ramona", "Diamond of Marshal de Fant'e". We recommend you purchase the tickets in advance. As a rule, they get sold out immediately.

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Music and Drama State Theatre

Aghmashenebeli Ave. 182



Theaters also operate in the regions of Georgia:

- Batumi drama theatre (Adjara Region)
- Gori drama theatre (Shida Qarti Region)
- Zugdidi drama theatre (Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti Region)
- Telavi drama theatre (Kakheti Region)
- Ozurgeti drama theatre (Guria Region)
- Akaki Khorava state drama theatre (Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti Region)
- Valerian Gunia state drama theatre (Samegrelo Zemo Svaneti Region)
- Meskhishvili theatre (Imereti Region)
- Chokhatauri folk theatre (Guria Region)
- Chiatura drama theatre (Imereti Region)
- Zinaida Kverenchkhiladze Dmanisi State drama theatre (Dmanisi Region)

Cinemas are concentrated in large cities of Tbilisi and Batumi

- Movie house „Rustaveli”. Address: Tbilisi, Rustaveli Ave. 3.
- Movie house „Amirani”. Address: Tbilisi, Kostava M., 36.
- Movie house „Sakartvelo”. Address: Tbilisi, Guramishvili D. Avenue 2.
- Cinema City. Cinema club Address: Tbilisi, I. Mosashvili, 24.
- Movie house „Cinema house”. Address: Tbilisi, Paliashvili Z. 64.
- Movie house „Movie time”. Address: Tbilisi, Chavchavadze I. Avenue, 44.
- Movie house „Kavea”. Address: Tbilisi, Agmashenebeli D. Avenue 16th km.
- Kashe-Cinema club. Address: Tbilisi, Kiacheli L., 9.
- Movie house „Apolo”. Address: Batumi (Adjara region), Abashidze M., 17.

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XII. ENVIRONMENT

Georgia has a long history of establishing Protected Areas dating back to 1912 when the Lagodekhi Strict Nature Reserve was created. Nowadays, protected areas make up to 7% of the country's territory (384 684 ha) and about 75% of protected areas are covered by forests.

Georgian Protected Areas include:

- 14 Strict Nature Reserves
- 11 National Parks^[2]
- 19 Managed Nature Reserves
- 14 Natural Monuments
- 2 Protected Landscapes

Babaneuri Strict Nature Reserve (established in 1935) is a protected area in Akhmeta Municipality, Kakheti region on the bank of Alazani River, 439–985 m above sea level.

The Nature Reserve is located at the foot of the Greater Caucasus in the vicinity of villages Babaneuri and Argoq, it also includes the Batsara-Babaneuri Protected Areas. The main objective is to protect up to 240 ha of zelkova grove, trees that are featured in Regional Red List of Georgia.

Batsara Strict Nature Reserve (established in 1935) is a protected area in Akhmeta Municipality, Kakheti region in Pankisi Gorge on the bank of Alazani River, 700-2,000 meters above sea level at the foot of the Greater Caucasus. It borders with Ilto Managed Reserve which includes part of Ilto valley. Batsara Strict Nature Reserve is part of *Batsara-Babaneuri Protected Areas* which also includes Babaneuri Strict Nature Reserve and Ilto Managed Reserve.

In central area of Batsara gorge there are remains of relict dendroflora from tertiary period.

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Bichvinta-Miuseri Strict Nature Reserve (located in Abkhazia) is a protected area in the Gagra District and Gudauta District of Abkhazia^[1] formerly Abkhazia region of Georgia. Reserve main goal is protecting Bichvinta's relic and colonized flora and fauna.

Borjomi Strict Nature Reserve (established in 1935) is a protected area in Borjomi Municipality, Samtskhe-Javakheti region.

The tallest tree of the region — Caucasian fir (Abies nordmanniana) grows in protected area and can be more than 50 m in height.

Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve / Established in 1959 / is located in Adjara Autonomous Republic (Kobuleti Municipality) with a total area of 13,893 ha. It is located in a picturesque valley of the river Kintrishi, between village Tskhemvani and Khino Mountains, at an altitude of 300-2,500 meters above sea level. Protected areas are bordered with Kobuleti forest administration from the north, Shuakhevi municipality area from the east, Qeda municipality from the south and Mtirala National Park from the south-west. Kintrishi Protected Areas Administration manages two different types of protected areas – State Nature Reserve and Protected Landscape. Kintrishi State Nature Reserve was established in 1959 and its purpose is to protect relict forest and endemic species, flora and fauna of Shuamta.

- **Kobuleti Strict Nature Reserve** is a protected area in Kobuleti Municipality, Adjara region of Georgia along the Black Sea coast in the northern part of the resort town Kobuleti. Kobuleti Protected Areas were established in 1998 to preserve unique wetland ecosystems recognized by the Ramsar Convention. Reserve is very rich in plant species. Many of plants are of boreal origin and appeared here during the Ice Age of the Quaternary period. Kobuleti Protected Areas provide habitat for migrating, nesting and wintering water birds including Gallinago media, which is on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, Gallinago gallinago and many others.

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Lagodekhi Strict Natura Reserve is located in the Kakheti Region in north-eastern Georgia on the southern slopes of the Caucasus and border on Azerbaijan and Dagestan. Lagodekhi preserves a variety of rare local flora and fauna and was originally protected in 1912, under the Russian Empire, the first nature preserve in Georgia. Their ecoregion is that of the Caucasus mixed forests.

Liakhvi Strict Nature Reserve is a protected area in the historic region Shida Kartli on the southern slope of the Greater Caucasus range in the northeastern part of Tskhinvali Region and in Akhalgori Municipality of Georgia. Reserve main goal is protecting flora and fauna in surrounding mountainous region. In general Patara Liakhvi gorge has many tourist attractions : ethnological, bird-watching and botanical.

Mariamjvari Strict Nature Reserve is a protected area in Sagarejo Municipality, Kakheti region on the southern slopes of Gombori Range.

Mariamjvari Nature Reserve was founded in 1935 with the purpose of preserving untouched landscapes of relic *Sosnowskyi pine* (*Pinus sosnowskyi*).

Pskhu-Gumista Strict Nature Reserve is a protected area in the Sukhumi District of Abkhazia. Reserve main goal is protecting flora and fauna in surrounding mountainous region.

In 20th century control over this area frequently changed. In 1941 Russian Federation established *Pskhu-Gumista Reserve*. In 1978 size of protected territory was significantly enlarged to include area in Bzyb River gorge and Pskhu river gorge. When Georgia reestablished its independence in 1991 the modern **Pskhu-Gumista Strict Nature Reserve** was created. With outbreak of Abkhaz–Georgian conflict and subsequent war, de facto control is presently exercised by government of Abkhazia. Pskhu-Gumista Strict Nature Reserve is located in the mountainous part of Abkhazia on the southern slope of the Greater

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Caucasus range and consists of two areas. The area of Gumista Nature Reserve is 13 400 hectares in the Gumista River gorge. The area of Pskhu Nature Reserve is 27 334 hectares in the Pskhu river gorge and in the Bzyb River gorge. The protected area of Euxine-Colchic deciduous forests has many endemic specimens.

Ritsa Strict Nature Reserve is a protected area in the Gudauta District of Abkhazia. Reserve main goal is protecting Lake Ritsa and flora and fauna in surrounding mountainous region.

In 20th century de facto control over this area frequently changed. In 1930 Russian Federation established *Ritsinsky Reserve*. When Georgia reestablished its independence in 1991 the territory of reserve was enlarged and modern Ritsa Strict Nature Reserve established. With outbreak of Abkhaz–Georgian conflict and subsequent war, de facto control is presently exercised by government of Abkhazia, which established here in 1996 *Ritsinsky Relic National Park*.

Ritsa Strict Nature Reserve is located in the mountainous part of Abkhazia on the southern slope of the Greater Caucasus range, covering territory from the Gegi River gorge to the Pshchitsa River gorge. The strong differentiation of the relief from 100 m to 3,256 thousand meters above sea level (Mount Agepsta) creates a rich spectrum of ecological conditions for the growth of many plants and animal habitats ^[3] The largest, beautiful and famous is Lake Ritsa. Other lakes - Smaller Ritsa, Blue Lake - no less picturesque and beautiful. There are also several waterfalls here, the most famous among them is the Gegsky waterfall, with height at about 55 meters.

The protected area of Euxine-Colchic deciduous forests has many evergreen boxwood (Buxus colchica) groves as well as specimens of the Nordmann Fir (Abies nordmanniana), which reach heights of over 70 meters.

Sataplia Strict Nature Reserve is located 10 km from town of Kutaisi in Imereti region. The name Sataplia can be freely translated as a "honey place" and in fact bees used to live in small holes and caves and honey was harvested by the local population. The Sataplia Strict Nature Reserve was founded in

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1935 to protect recently discovered karst cave with exotic stalactites and stalagmites as well Colchian forest, geological and archaeological sites. Park was expanded to its present borders in 1957. In 2010 and 2011 the Sataplia Managed Reserve was developed to accommodate tourists: visitor center was built, a coffee house in the middle of the park, a small museum, a small park with dinosaur models and glass

observation deck built above the cliff. Furthermore, the main karst cave was equipped with lighting effects and a secure footpath.

Tusheti Strict Nature Reserve is located in the Tusheti Mountainous region in the north-eastern part of Georgia. Visitors center is located in village lower Alvani, Akhmeta Municipality.

The *Tusheti Protected Areas* includes **Tusheti Strict Nature Reserve**, Tusheti National Park and Tusheti Protected Landscape with total protected area about 113,660.2 ha. It is one of the eight new Protected Areas approved by Parliament of Georgia on 22 April 2003.

Flora of Tusheti region is highly endemic to Caucasus represented by 230 endemic plants which is more than 20% of total amount of endemics found in entire Caucasus region.

Vashlovani Strict Nature Reserve is a protected area in Dedoplistskaro Municipality, Kakheti region on Shiraqi mountain range and Georgian bank of Alazani River. The total protected area is 10,143 hectares, with forest at 4,032 ha, and the rest are fields, desert, ravines. Protected forest mostly has pine tree and juniper. There are also Celtis, Pyrus salicifolia, pomegranate, Prunus mahaleb, Spiraea, Paliurus and others. There are many types of birds: Rock partridge, Griffon vulture, Eurasian golden oriole, Mistle thrush. Mammals are represented by wild boar, rabbits, fox, wolf, Caucasian bear, striped hyena, European badger and others. The purpose of the Nature Reserve is to protect and preserve rare species of rare forest flora and fauna.

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XII.1. National parks of Georgia

Algeti National Park is a protected area in Georgia, in the southeast of the country. It lies in the region of Kvemo Kartli, within the Municipality of Tetrtsqaro, some 60 km southwest of the nation's capital, Tbilisi.

The Algeti National Park stretches along the upper Algeti valley at the woody southern slopes of the eastern Trialeti Range, with the highest point being Mount Kldekari at 2,000 m above sea level. The park was founded under the Soviet government in 1965 as a state reserve to protect the easternmost limits of the Caucasian Spruce and Nordmann Fir. In 2007, it was reorganized into a national park.

Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park is a protected area in central Georgia, in Samtskhe-Javakheti Region, situated in the Lesser Caucasus, southwest to the nation's capital of Tbilisi. Its ecoregion is that of the Caucasus mixed forests.

One of the largest national parks in Georgia, Borjomi-Kharagauli National Park includes six municipalities - Borjomi, Kharagauli, Akhaltzikhe, Adigeni, Khashuri and Baghdati - stretching from the resort of Borjomi to the town of Kharagauli. Together with adjacent Borjomi Nature Reserve, the total area is 851 square kilometres, i.e. more than 1 % of the total territory of Georgia. The park was founded in 1995 and officially inaugurated in 2001.

Its particular uniqueness is diversity of geographical and ecological zones, landscapes, historical monuments and rich flora and fauna. The park has rapidly developing tourist infrastructure.

National Park Javakheti is located in the south of Georgia on the border with Armenia and Turkey in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. The park is part of a transboundary protected area: in neighbouring Armenia, it joins the Lake Arpi National Park. The project to establish the national park was carried out

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by the Georgian government in cooperation with the WWF and was financially supported by the German government. Local authorities, communities and stakeholders are also involved in the management of the area.

Javakheti National Park is part of Javakheti Protected Areas which also includes Kartsakhi Managed Reserve, Sulda Managed Reserve, Khanchali Managed Reserve, Bugdasheni Managed Reserve and Madatapa Managed Reserve.

Kazbegi National Park is located in historic valley of north slopes of Caucasus Mountains (Mtskheta-Mtianeti region). Kazbegi NP total area is 78 543,4 ha. Only 35% on the park is covered by forest and the rest is alpine pastures, morenes, snow-covered peaks and impregnable rocks. These rocks and mountains are native areas for lots or rare and unique species of animals and birds. Kazbegi National Parks is characterized with high mountains and its lowest point is at an altitude of 1,400 meters. Despite the lack of tourism infrastructure, Kabegi National Perk is one of the most visited places among the protected areas of Georgia.

Kolkheti National Park is a national park located in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti and Guria Region in the historical region of Colchis in western Georgia. The wetlands of Central Kolkheti are a Wetland of International Importance, a Ramsar Site. It lies on a coastal plain on the Black Sea, between the mouths of the Tikori and Supsa and spanning the districts of Zugdidi, Khobi, Lanchkhuti, Senaki and Abasha. The park was established during 1998 and 1999 as part of Georgia's Integrated Coastal Management Project, which was backed financially by the World Bank (WB) and the Global Environmental Facility (GEF). Kolkheti National Park covers an area of 28,940 hectares and with protected wetlands protected area

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spans to 33710 hectares, incorporating the land of the former 500-hectare Kolkheti State Nature Reserve, which had been established in 1947, and its surrounding wetlands, including the lake Paliastomi.

Machakhela National Park is a national park in Adjara, in the valley of Machakhlistskali, Georgia. The park was established in 2012 with an area of 8733 ha.

Machakhela National Park provides for the preservation of unique biological and landscape biodiversity, the long-term protection of ecosystem of Colchic forests, ecological safety and natural and environmental tourism and recreational activities.

Machakhela National Park region features ruins of fortresses in historic region of Machakheli, arch bridges and wine presses. From the slopes of Mtavarangelози mountain there are views of Batumi and Machakhela gorge. Park visitor center is located in village Acharisagmarti, Khelvachauri Municipality.

Mtirala National Park is a protected area in Adjara region. Covering approximately 15,698 hectares (38,790 acres) in Municipalities of Kobuleti, Khelvachauri and Keda in the western Lesser Caucasus, it is situated between the Black Sea and the Adjara Mountains. It also adjoins Kintrishi Protected Areas.

Mtirala National Park Colchic broad-leaved and mixed forests include sweet chestnut and Oriental beech woods with pontic rhododendron, cherry laurel and Colchic box understories and a variety of lianas. Fauna recorded are Brown bear, Roe deer, and Wild boar, while avifauna includes Booted eagle, Eagle owl and Golden oriole. Amphibians inhabiting the park include Caucasian salamander, Caucasian toad, Eurasian mash frog and Caucasian viper.^[4] Mount Mtirala is one of the most humid areas in the country. The name Mtirala (meaning "to cry") is derived from the 4,520 millimetres (178 in) annual rainfall, making it one of the wettest areas of the former Soviet Union.

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Tbilisi National Park is one of nine national parks in Georgia, located to the north of the city of Tbilisi. The historical town of Mtskheta lies right outside of the western boundary of the park. The national park was established in 1973 on the basis of the previously existing Saguramo National Reserve (established in 1946) and is the oldest national park in Georgia. The area of the park is 243 square kilometres.

The park is located on the slope of the Saguramo Range, east of the Aragvi River, and belongs to the drainage basin of the Kura. The highest point of the park is 1,385 metres (4,544 ft). The area of the park is

mainly covered by trees and shrub of oak, hornbeam, and beech. The protected mammals in the park include red deer, lynx, Eurasian brown bear, red fox, and jackal.

The paved road connecting Tbilisi and Tianeti crosses the central part of the park, traversing the Saguramolalno Range. A stretch of the Tbilisi bypass highway runs along the southwestern border of the park.

The Tusheti National Park in eastern Georgia is one of the eight new protected areas approved by Parliament of Georgia on 22 April 2003.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the World Bank were part of this approval process under the "Georgia – Protected Areas Development Project". Plants conserved in the park are pine groves (*Pinus sosnowskyi*) and birch groves (*Betula litwinowii* and *Betula raddeana*).

The Tusheti Protected Areas includes Tusheti National Park, Tusheti Protected Landscape and Tusheti Strict Nature Reserve with total protected area about 113,660.2 ha.

The key faunal species in the park are the Anatolian leopard (*Panthera pardus ambornii*), bear, chamois, falcon, golden eagle, lammergeyer, lynx, mountain goat, wild goat and wolf. The park was named one of the "12 best places you've never heard of" by BudgetTravel in 2011 not only for its rich biodiversity but also for its aesthetic terrain, hamlets, old defense towers, cuisine, and folk culture.

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Vashlovani National Park is a national park located in the eastern part of Georgia, and was established in 1935 to preserve its unique shallow forests. In April 2003 the Reserve's area was expanded to 84.80 km² and Vashlovani National Park (251.14 km²) was made. The area is characterized by its dry climate sitting only 150-50 meters above sea level. Vashlovani State Reserve is notable for its unique, bad-land-like areas of desert and semi-desert steppe vegetation and arid and deciduous forests. It's also home to the great cliffs-of-the-canyons, known in the area as the "Sharp Walls", and the magnificent Alazani flood

plains and forests. In 2003, the first time the track of a Caucasian leopard was discovered, the following year, a leopard in the national park area was recorded for the first time with a camera trap.

Vashlovani Protected Areas tourist trail network gives the possibility of hiking for one or several days. Paths are marked and well-arranged. Bungalows, picnic spots, and camping sites are arranged along the routes. Sites for setting up a fire are also allocated. National park offers hiking, geological, biking, photo, cultural and educational tours.

Pshav-Khevsureti National Park is in Mtskheta-Mtianeti region of Georgia. Park has been established by direct involvement of World Wide Fund for Nature.

Pshav-Khevsureti National Park will help conservation of leopard in the Caucasus, as well as Bezoar goat (Capra aegagrus aegagrus), endemic East Caucasian tur (Capra caucasica cylindricornis), brown bear, European lynx, Caucasian red deer, chamois.

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XIII. TRANSPORT

The road network of Georgia exceeds 20,000 km. Common use roads are divided into three categories: roads of international significance, roads of internal significance and roads of local significance.

Regions of Georgia are connected with each other by:

1. Motor roads of international importance (1410 km.);
2. Motor roads of national importance (4949 km.);
3. Roads of local importance (15415 km.).

Georgia also has four lane high-speed trunk road (80 km.).

Road Supply in the Regions, 2016, km.

Region	International Motorways	Internal State Motorways
Tbilisi	-	52.0
Adjara	70.9	152.9
Guria	68.1	220.6
Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti	-	388.3
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	1227	740.9
Imereti	185.5	785.0
Kakheti	125.0	716.2
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	178.7	426.5
Samtskhe-Javakheti	234.5	300.1
Qvemo Qartli	221.9	641.8
Shida Qartli	202.5	524.2

Source: Geostat

There are some international roads in Georgia:

- E60, E97 and E117 Tbilisi - Senaki - Leselidze (544 km.) crosses regions:
- E60 and E70 Senaki-Poti-Sarpi (119 km.).
- E117 Mtskheta - Stepantsminda - Larsi (139 km.).

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XIII.2. Airports

Shota Rustaveli Tbilisi International Airport formerly *Novo Alexeyevka International Airport*, is the main international airport in Georgia, located 17 km southeast of the capital Tbilisi.

Kutaisi International Airport also known as **David the Builder Kutaisi International Airport**^[3] is an airport located 14 km west of Kutaisi, the third largest city in Georgia, legislative capital of Georgia and capital of the western region of Imereti.

Alexander Kartveli Batumi International Airport is an airport located 2 km south of Batumi, a city on the Black Sea coast and capital of Adjara, an autonomous republic in southwest Georgia. The airport is 20 km northeast of Hopa, Turkey, and serves as a domestic and international airport for Georgia and northeastern Turkey.

Queen Tamar Airport, or Mestia (local) Airport, is a small airport serving Mestia, a town in Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Georgia.

XIII.3. Georgian Railway

Georgian Railway is a vital artery linking the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, it sits on the shortest route between Europe and Central Asia. At present the fully electrified mainline of the Georgian Railway is 1,323.9 km (total: 1,576 km) in length, consisting of 1,422 bridges, 32 tunnels, 22 passenger and 114 goods stations. **Georgian Railway** is a vital artery linking the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, it sits on the shortest route between Europe and Central Asia. At present the fully electrified mainline of the Georgian Railway is 1,323.9 km (total: 1,576 km) in length, consisting of 1,422 bridges, 32 tunnels, 22

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passenger and 114 goods stations. Railway connects the main cities of Georgia.

Map of Georgian railway



Source:

-Geostat. <https://www.geostat.ge/en>

-Regional Development Program of Georgia 2015-2017.

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