



EcoTour

2014

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Introduction



Major ecosystem types of Georgia include:

Forests: The most important biome for biodiversity conservation, covering 20% of the territory of the ecoregion.

Freshwater ecosystems: Wetlands and freshwater habitat covers 11.7% of the region.

Marine ecosystems of the Black Sea.

High mountain ecosystems, which occupy 17% of the Caucasus. These areas are major pasturelands for livestock and also rather fragile, but nevertheless possess a high biodiversity value.

Mountain steppe ecosystems at altitudes between 1,500 and 2,600 metres.

Semi-deserts: Ecosystems with elements of desert vegetation widespread in the lowlands and foothills of the eastern part of the South Caucasus, including eastern Georgia.

ITINERARY

Kutaisi - Tskaltubo - Martvili - Poti - Kobuleti - Kutaisi

Tour starts from KUTAISI

Day 1. Meeting the group in Kutaisi David Aghmashenebeli Airport, transfer to hotel (3* in city center). Accommodation and night at hotel.

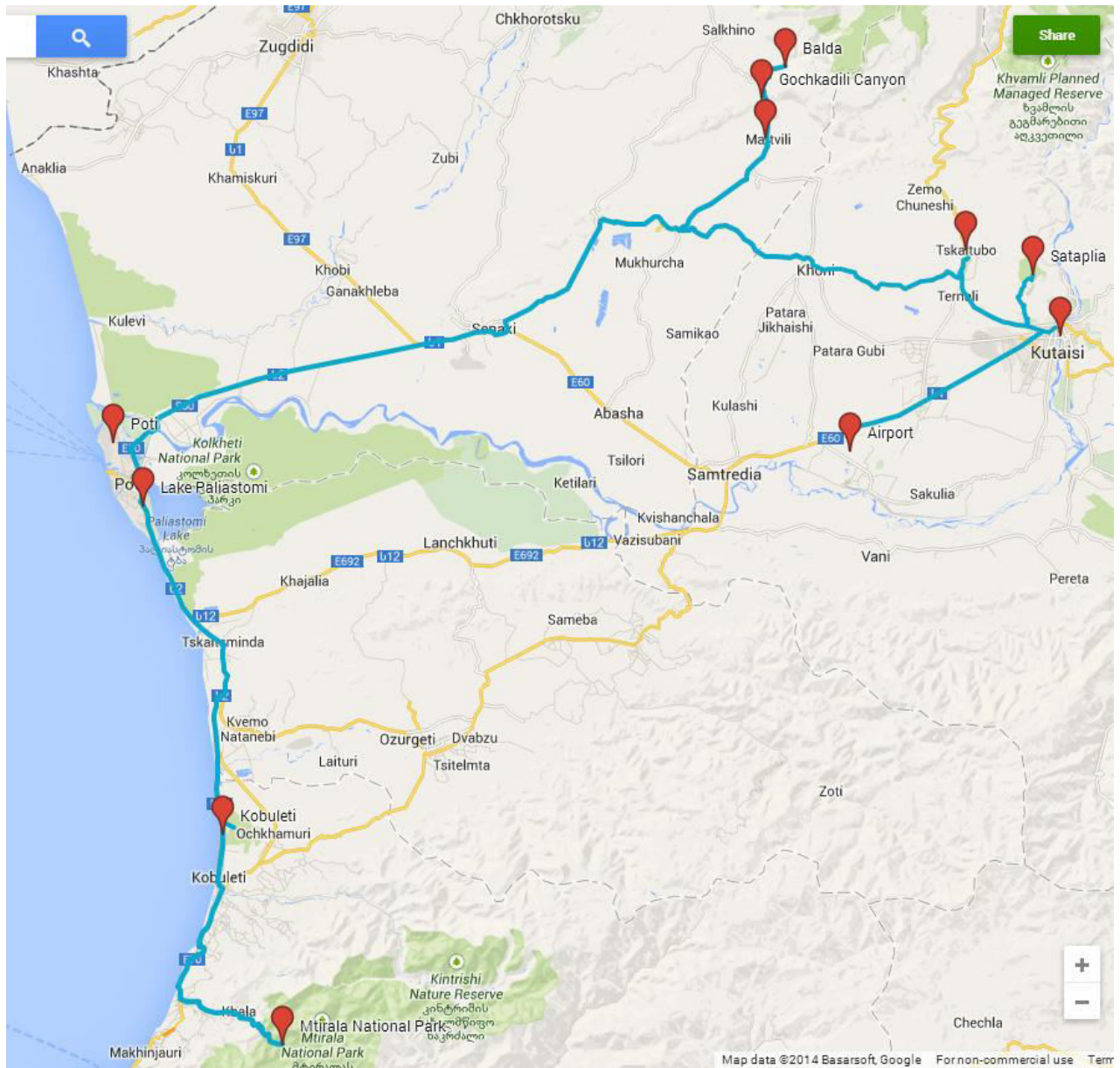
Day 2. Breakfast in hotel. Departure from hotel to the Sataplia reserve (30 min travel). Seeing time 3 hours. Transfer to Satsurblie cave (30 min) seeing time 40 min. Dinner in restaurant "Stalaktide". Moving to the Promete cave 5 min travel. Seeing time 2 hours. Departure from Promete cave to the Tskaltubo, accommodation in Guesthouse, lunch.

Day 3. Breakfast in hotel. Departure from Tskaltubo to Martvili (30min travel). Here our first stop is Gochkadili canyon.(river Abasha) Here you can stroll through canyon, dressed with Colchis rich vegetation and waterfalls,boat riding.-1 hour.From Gochkadili canyon trip is continuing to village Balda, hiking to Toba and Oniore waterfalls. Both waterfalls are from biggest of its kind, both coming out from cave, creating astonishing landscape. On the way, in nature we'll have picnic. Time- 5-6 hours.Returning to Martvili, accommodation in guesthouse, lunch.

Day 4. Breakfast in hotel. Departure from Martvili heading to Poti (road- 1.5 hour). Visiting lakePaliastomi. Riding with phantom boat on lakePaliastomi and river Pichori viewing tropical forest, wetland, great possibility for birdwatching. (3 hours) Picnic in nature.Our trip continues to Kobuleti Protected areas (road-40min). Here we are visiting Ispaniwetlends. Strolling on swamp with swamp walking skis. Time -2 hours.Accommodation in guesthouse, Kobuleti; Lunch.

Day 5. Departure from Kobuleti heading to Mtirala National Park. National Park stands out with its biodiversity, there are many varieties of unique plant and animal species. During tour we'll walk through national park trails, ride on zip line, taste local ecoproducts. Time 4-5 hours.Returning to Kutaisi, farewell dinner , transfer to airport.

Map



Kutaisi, Martvili, Poti, Kobuleti

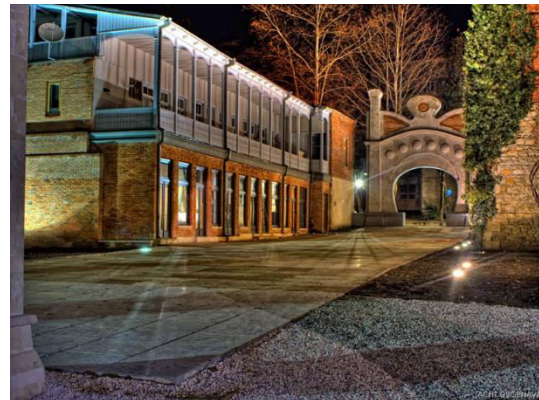
SIGHTS DESCRIPTION

KUTAISI



Kutaisi is considered as one of the oldest cities in the world. The old Greek history and mythology dates the city by the "Epoch of Minos" (XVII-XV centuries B.C). The well known "Argonautica", which express the tidings older then 3300 years, is totally focused on the main city - Kutaisi.

In 10th century the importance of Kutaisi becomes the first capital of United Kingdom of Georgia and the residential place for King Bagrat III. Kutaisi was capital of United Georgian Kingdom for 124 years after that.



TSKALTUBO



Tskaltubo is a spa resort in west-central Georgia. It is the main town of the Tsqaltubo district of the Imereti province. It is famous for its radon-carbonate mineral springs, whose natural temperature of 33-35 °C (91-95 °F) enables the water to be used without preliminary heating.

The resort's focus is on balneotherapy for circulatory, nervous, musculo-skeletal, gynaecological and skin diseases, but since the 1970s its repertoire has included "speleotherapy", in which the cool dust-free environment of local caves is said to benefit pulmonary diseases.

Tsqaltubo was especially popular in the Soviet era, attracting around 125,000 visitors a year. Bathhouse 9 features a frieze of Stalin, and visitors can see the private pool where he bathed on his visits.



MARTVILI



Small town in Samegrelo-ZemoSvaneti province of Western Georgia. Its monastery was Samegrelo's clerical centre in the Middle Ages. If you are interested in hiking, climbing, rafting or even caving, then the Martvili canyons are a great one.

The Martvili canyon area is located in the West of the republic of Georgia, in the historical province of Samegrelo. It is rocky wetland in which the Abasha river has formed a magnificent gorge over time, with canyons, caves and waterfalls. This gorge is usually referred to as the Martvili canyons, named after the nearby town of Martvili.

The Martvili canyons feature beautiful green and blue colors. It is a protected area. There are stretches of quiet water for peddling and swimming, but also steep rocks to climb, spectacular waterfalls to enjoy and caves to explore. If you prefer to keep dry, you can follow one of the hiking trails along and near the Abasha gorge. This will allow you to enjoy the warm climate and spectacular views.



POTI



Port city in Georgia, located on the eastern Black Sea coast in the region of Samegrelo-ZemoSvaneti in the west of the country. Built near the site of the ancient Greek colony of Phasis and deriving its name from the same. The recorded history of Poti and its environs spans over 26 centuries. In Classical antiquity and the early Middle Ages, the area was occupied by the Greek polis of Phasis which was established by the colonists from Miletus led by one Themistagoras at the very end of the 7th, and probably at the beginning of the 6th century BC.



LAKE PALIASTOMI



is a small lake near the city of Poti, connected to the Black Sea by a narrow channel. Its surface area is 17.3 km² and the mean depth is 2.6 m. Some ancient pieces of Colchis have been found near and in the lake by archaeologists. It is also an important fishery site. The lake is included within the boundaries of the Kolkheti National Park.



KOBULETI

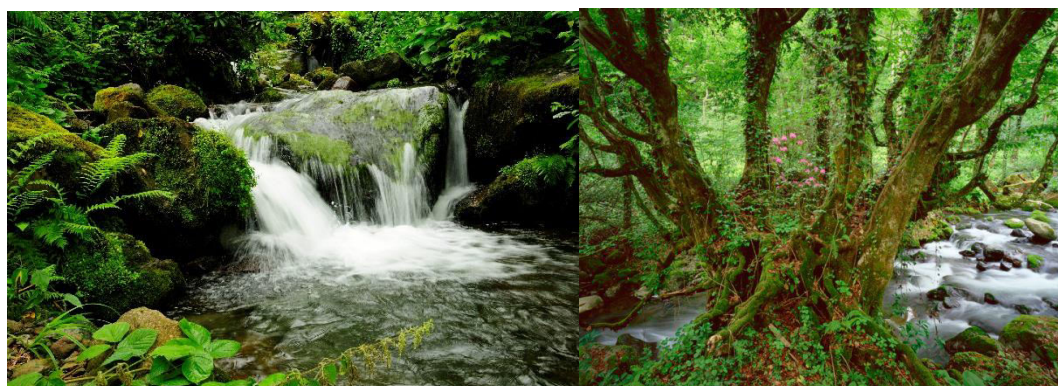


Kobuleti is a town in Adjara, western Georgia, situated on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. It is a seaside resort, visited annually by Georgians and many former Soviet Union residents. From the 17th century into the 19th, Kobuleti was a fiefdom of the Tavdgiridze family, first under the authority of the Principality of Guria, and then of the Ottoman Empire. It was known as Çürüksu during Ottoman rule.

The Kobuleti Protected Areas were established in 1999 and cover the Kobuleti Strict Nature Reserve (331 ha) and Kobuleti Managed Nature Reserve (439 hectare), which are located in Achara Autonomous Republic along the Black Sea coast in the northern part of Kobuleti. The territory is composed by contemporary (of Quaternary Age) marine-riverine and lacustrine -marsh sediments. Kobuleti Protected Areas cover the Ispani peat field. The relief is flat and slightly eroded because of the ShaviGhele and Togoni Rivers. Here is the typical humid subtropical marine climate - the annual amount of precipitation is 1500-2500 mm; the majority of this precipitation falls as rain in autumn and winter seasons.



MTIRALA NATIONAL PARK



The park was created in 2006. At 1.381 m above sea level, it is the rainiest territory in Georgia, hence the name "mtirala" meaning "weeping".

High humidity, frequent rains and fog make the landscape of Mtirala National Park very special. The park remains a protected site for Colchis flora and fauna including rare and endangered endemic and relict species. Here you can find the registered plants of 284 species, 202 genera and 68 families. 16 species are endemic ones. The rare relict endemics: Pontic oak (*Quercuspontica*), Medvedev birch (*Betulamedwedewii*), Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ungernii*), epigea (*Epigaeagaultheriodes*), Colchis box-tree (*Buxuscolchica*), Colchis bladder nut (*Staphyleacolchica*), yew (*Taxusbaccata*), common chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Colchis nut (*Coryluscolchica*), and walnut tree (*Juglansregia*) are included into the Red List of Georgia.

The fauna of the Mtirala National Park is represented by 95 species. 23 animal species are included into the Red List of Georgia: lynx, brown bear, Caucasian squirrel, Caucasian salamander, Caucasian adder and the butterflies - Apollo and Caucasian festoon. Among the relatively bigger fowl there are small eagles, kites, hawks, etc.

