

Tourist and Recreational Mapping of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti

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Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti is one of the most important tourist regions of Georgia, distinguished by its diverse natural conditions, rich cultural and historical heritage, and significant recreational potential. The region encompasses both the Colchis Lowland and the high mountainous areas of the Greater Caucasus, resulting in remarkable landscape diversity and a wide range of tourism resources. These characteristics create favorable conditions for the development of ecological, cultural, adventure, mountain, rural, and recreational tourism. Tourist and recreational mapping is an important branch of tourism geography that enables the assessment of the spatial distribution, concentration, accessibility, and development potential of tourism resources. Cartographic methods facilitate the systematization of tourist attractions, the planning of tourist routes, and the effective representation of regional tourism potential. The aim of this research is to identify, classify, analyze, and map the tourist and recreational resources of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti. The study examines the region's natural, cultural, and historical assets that contribute significantly to tourism development. Particular attention is given to major tourist destinations such as Mestia, Ushguli, Martvili Canyon, Okatse Canyon, Kinchkha Waterfall, Tobavarchkhili Lakes, the Enguri Valley, and Kolkheti National Park. The research employs cartographic, statistical, comparative, and spatial analysis methods, along with Geographic Information Systems (GIS). GIS technologies are used to locate tourism resources, analyze their spatial distribution, and create thematic maps. The study also evaluates transportation networks, tourism infrastructure, accommodation facilities, and service accessibility, which are essential factors for tourism development and visitor management.

The findings indicate that Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti possesses substantial tourism potential and high attractiveness for both domestic and international visitors. The diversity of natural and cultural resources enables the development of year-round tourism activities and the diversification of tourism products. Furthermore, the mapping process helps identify underutilized tourism locations, determine priority development zones, and support strategic planning for sustainable tourism growth.

The results of the study can be applied in regional planning, tourism management, infrastructure development, and sustainable resource management. Tourist and recreational maps provide valuable information for researchers, local authorities, tourists, and stakeholders within the tourism sector.

In conclusion, tourist and recreational mapping serves as an effective tool for assessing and presenting the tourism potential of Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, contributing to sustainable tourism development, regional economic growth, and the enhancement of Georgia's competitiveness in the international tourism market.