

GEORGIAN TOURISM IS GAINING MOMENTUM



The travel industry in Georgia shows signs that the crisis is coming to its end. After two years in standstill, Georgian tour operators welcome foreign tourists again, though not in such quantities as it was before August 2008 when the war started.

According to the Office for Tourism and Resorts, **during the first four months of 2010, the inbound flow of tourists to Georgia amounted to almost half a million people, a nearly 40% increase over the same period last year.** According to the estimate of the same department, this year the country expects to welcome 1.7 million foreign tourists, the main group of which will very likely go to beach resorts in Adjara in the summer. Judging by the reservations, the majority of holidaymakers will come from Azerbaijan, Turkey and America.

The domestic tourism has evolved too. In 2009, **over 21% inhabitants of Tbilisi also had a vacation on the Adjara coast.** It is expected that this year's metropolitan segment will continue to increase. Other destinations on the tourist market are also expanding. While a few years ago tourists went on vacation to sea resorts in summer and to ski resorts in winter, **there is a growing interest in nature reserves in the country nowadays.** According to the Agency for Environment Protection and Nature Protection Zones, in 2009, national parks were visited by 100.000 tourists, of which 65.000 chose to visit Sataplia reserve. Other national parks that are often visited by tourists are Vashlovani and Borjomi-Kharagauli.

Currently the Georgian state is preoccupied by improving its infrastructure, actively building roads and providing financial support to local areas. In short, the state authorities are trying to encourage domestic tourism. Having mentioned that, it is quite interesting to note that **90% of vacationers who visit the natural reserves are the citizens of Georgia.**

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