

# GEORGIAN TOURISM DISASTER CONTINUES IN 2021



The Covid-19 pandemic is having a striking effect on the tourism industry worldwide. Some countries however feel the effects more than others. This is the case of countries heavily dependent on the sector as well as smaller countries - or both. One of these countries is Georgia.

In the first quarter of 2021, Georgian tourism registered only 134.7 thousand international visits. This is 89.7 % less than in the same period last year, according to the National Tourism Administration.

**The borders of Georgia remain partially closed due to the pandemic since March 2020.** In March this year, Georgian authorities opened air borders and increased the list of countries whose citizens can visit the country without mandatory quarantine.

## Worrying Data

In the period from January 1 to March 31, 2021, 134,712 visits were made to Georgia. In the same period in 2020, when entry to the country was free in January-February, the number of visits reached 1,333,089.

For comparison, in 2019, with open borders, in the period from January to March inclusive, international travelers made 1,617,548 visits to Georgia. It must also be noted that only 116,566 visits this year were tourism-related. In 2020, this figure was 756,327, and in 2019 882,130.

## Who Visits Georgia?

Which nationalities are helping the Georgian tourism sector in this difficult period? Although the number of Turkish citizens decreased by 71.8% compared to 2020, they are still in the lead with 50,720 visits to the country from January 1 to March 31.

Armenians take second place with 18,733 visits during the specified period. This is 91.6 % less than last year. The third place was taken by citizens of Azerbaijan, the number of visits of which decreased by 95.7% and amounted to 11,314.

## Worst Affected Area

The success of Georgian tourism in 2019, with over 9.3 million international travelers and \$ 3.3 billion in industry revenues, pushed people to prepare for 2020. However, the pandemic destroyed all the plans and the hopes of the sector.

As a result, tourism revenues in 2020 fell to an incredibly low level of 427.7 thousand dollars, with the number of international travelers dropping to 1.7 million.

The sector which employs about 150 thousand people has been hit hardest by the pandemic, so helping tourism is a priority for the Georgian government. The authorities have begun to help from the first days of the pandemic, developing anti-crisis packages, which were implemented in 2020 in

several stages.

For more than 6 thousand companies related to tourism, property tax and income tax payments were deferred for four months until November 1.

In addition, 2.2 thousand hotels with a capacity of up to 50 rooms received subsidies of 80 % of a bank loan for 6 months. The companies also got the opportunity to restructure their loans.

**However, tourism workers and experts say that the aid is scanty and cannot compensate for the real damage caused to the industry and the people employed in it.**

According to them, while the hotel industry was able to find alternative income by transforming into covid hotels, tour operators, guides and other people working in the Georgian tourism sector have lost everything they could.

Date: 2021-04-11

Article link:

<https://www.tourism-review.com/georgian-tourism-sector-suffered-substantial-losses-news11972>