

# SELECTION AND STUDY OF AGRO-TOURISM FACILITIES IN THE IMERETI REGION OF GEORGIA

## ВЫБОР И ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ АГРОТУРИСТИЧЕСКИХ ОБЪЕКТОВ ИМЕРЕТИНСКОГО РЕГИОНА ГРУЗИИ

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**Abstract:** *Agro-tourism a type of tourism, when the aim of tourist is to live like a local, work with him in the fields, have his meal on the table together with him, i.e. to become part of his family for a certain time period. In order to provide branding of tourism as "a rural tourism" in Georgia, with the support from the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, the home page has been designed on the main web page of the Tourism Geo-Information Center (which is being in the process of constant updating), on which there will be placed the agro-tourism facilities of Georgia with the appropriate itinerary. Also, a single agro-tourism database will be set, which will be available on the Internet.*

**KEY WORDS:** WINE AGRO-TOUR; LOCAL VINE VARIETES; FAMILY HOTEL; FISHING.

### 1. Introduction

Agro-tourism means taking a rest in a village, with people who run their small family farms, and they themselves are the hosts for the arrived guests, and they possess lodging facilities for them and can offer them various activities, which, for the Imereti region, may include several types of agro-tour, for example, such as: viticulture, cheese-making, pottery (clay), beekeeping, corn, gifts of the forests (blackberry, chestnuts, mushrooms) and other tours, and by involving the visitors in horseback rides, fishing, seeing natural beauties during the process of the execution of this tour.

Agro-tourism is a type of tourism, when the aim of tourist is to live like a local, work with him in the fields, milk cow, make cheese, cultivate land, have his meal on the table together with him, i.e. to become part of his family for a certain time period. In this regard, it is necessary to undertake a study of agro-tourism potential in the Imereti region, as a result of which, the potential tourist facilities must be identified, which are ready qualitative hosting of visitors. In order to ensure receiving on-site services of the desired quality, first it is necessary to correctly select and retrain several families in the service sector [3].

When talking about tourism development opportunities in Georgia, particularly in the Imereti region, it is necessary to study the following circumstances:

- Whether or not there is in existence in the region resources required for tourism development;
- Whether or not there is in existence a tourism market to enter;
- Whether or not there is in the region the need in the region for tourism development to achieve economic development goals;
- Whether or not there is in existence the necessary workforce for tourism development, without attracting additional workforce;
- Whether or not the transport infrastructure development costs are justified;
- Whether or not is possible the emergency of competitors from the existing or potential tourist projects in neighboring regions.

### 2. Preconditions and means for resolving the problem

Since the end of XX century, agro-tourism has become very popular in Europe. For example, the majority of Italian families have taken a

rest in the villages not only during their holidays, but also during weekends. In this regard, Georgia is no exception.

Agro-tourism deserves attention also because of fact that it works during the whole year in Cyprus and Bulgaria. A special program on agro-tourism development has been developed in Cyprus, which restoration and renovation of rural houses, as well as decoration of them in national style by saving the modern comfort and cosiness. Tourists are given the opportunity to get to know about the local culture, traditions, folklore, have a rest in mountain villages and walk by the sea coast at will. They can take part in the grape harvest and its squeezing process, in the harvesting and warehousing of other agricultural crops, to visit the watermills organized on the rivers, and forging and textile shops. In this respect, it is necessary to study and use the unique tourist capacities of the varied natural landscapes and geographical location of districts and villages in the Imereti region.

Bulgaria is one of the important tourist regions in the East Europe. It is known for both seaside and mountain resorts, and it is considered a promising recreation zone at the European scale. Given that to% of the population of Bulgaria live in the villages, it is easy to imagine that agro-tourism here has become very popular. Agro-tourism for the traditional villages does not need large costs. This type of tourism, here, is relatively inexpensive, effective and accessible to all categories of people. The tourists come to the villages from Bulgarian cities, Russia and mostly from Eastern European countries.

For selecting the villages and a particular host in them for agro-tourism, the tourist companies must have a list of mandatory conditions, after satisfying of which, a particular house will be included in the list of lodging facilities. These conditions are as follows: safe location, beautiful nature and landscape: existence of forest, river, lake or medical waters; it is desirable that peasant farm should have a national style and the infrastructure components as follows: opportunity to have meal in the gost family, the separate bedroom, shower and toilet. Existence of historic monuments and other attractions in the villages is very important for foreign tourists, and restaurant, tavern, or national cuisine dishes must be situated close to the host house.

A study of agro-tourism performed in the Imereti region has shown that there are about twenty facilities, which are mostly fully well-organized. These are locations, where the tourists can spend their weekends and even a whole week. In order to provide branding of tourism as "a rural tourism" in Georgia, with the support from the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation, the home page has been designed on the main web page of the Tourism Geo-Information Center (which is being in the process of constant updating), on which there will be placed the agro-tourism facilities of Georgia with the

appropriate itinerary, and a single agro-tourism database will be set, which will be available on the Internet <http://www.travelgis.ge>).

In addition, there is the Imereti Regional Development Strategy for 2014-2021, which is to contribute to the development rural tourism as well as to the growth in domestic tourism. These activities are, what has resulted, over recent years, in significant increase in the number of tourists interested in mountain resorts and agro-tourism facilities, in parallel to increase in the number of tourists relaxing on the sea [1].

Imereti region is situated mostly in the Black Sea humid subtropical zone. It should be noted that the influence of the sea is reduced in the low-mountain and medium-mountain zones of the region, but the climate is humid here. Winter is cold, but summer is relatedly dry and hot.

The region is situated along the rail and road transport routes and near the sea ports (Batumi – 130 km, Poti – 102 km). Just 10 km from Kutaisi municipality, there is located the David the Builder Kutaisi International Airport, from which the flights are performed intensively to Eastern European countries.

The region is distinguished by the diversity of natural resources, flora and fauna existing on the territory of Georgia. The region has great potential for the development of rural tourism (agrotourism).

There are more than 250 historic monuments in the Imereti region. Their location under conditions of the beautiful landscape of the Imereti region offers to the visitors a memorable experience. There are developed in the region the discovery and adventure tourisms, such as: the mountain-hiking, horse-riding and caving, rafting and canyoneering tours on the Rioni River (the largest river in the Imereti region), ecotourism and agro-tourism. New prospects for the development of hunting and fishing tourisms in the form of a new hunting farm. Particular is to be paid to the wine and cuisine tours [2].

There is no corner neither village in the Imereti region without some remains of the church, bell tower, ruins of fortress, watchtower or the abandoned house. Archaeological artefacts discovered on the Imereti's territory prove that even in the Lower Paleolithic time, man was already settled here. These are the caves of Sakazhia, Chakheti and Devishkverli, Sataplia surroundings, the Jruchula River Valley in Chiatura, etc.

Imereti is famous for the amazing caves created by nature. Five karstic caves in Sataplia 7 km from Kutaisi are located in the State Nature Reserves of Sataplia. The Sataplia Cave is well-appointed. There is hereabout located the Museum of Speleology, and at the same place there have been found the footsteps of the dinosaurs.

There are also the interesting caves of Kumistavi and Navenakhevi. Also, here, just like in Sataplia, the walking paths for the tourists are made here.

The Katskhi Pillar – a natural limestone rock – is one of the natural wonders, on which the oldest newly-restored small church is located, on the territory of Chiatura district. The height of this rock is 40 meters, and according to the assumptions of some researchers, here was the mansion for the hermit monks.

Georgia has the oldest pottery tradition. The oldest clayware was made in during the old Neolithic period. Pottery trade to this day remains popular in Georgia.

Imereti is also famous for its hospitality. Imeret's cuisine is very versatile. The common foods in this region are as follows: Imeretian cheese, khachapuri, pelamushi (Georgian dessert porridge made of condensed grape juice, mchadi, lobio and different kinds of pkhaleuli (vegetarian dishes made of different plants) similar to spinach. Khachapuri is a fine ornament to the Imeretian table – cheese-filled bread, which is baked in a pan or in an earthenware frying pan/ Mchadi is a popular Georgian cornbread, etc.

It is impossible to imagine the Imeretian table without wine. Vineyards in Imereti are growing in the valleys along the rivers and their tributaries. Exquisite, sparkling and European-type wines are mostly made here of local vine varieties: Tsitska, Tsolikauri, Krakhuna, Otskhanuri, Gzelshavi and other rare Georgian varieties.

Based on the centuries-old folk traditions, the original wine-making rules have been developed in the Imereti region. In contrast to the European wines, wine made by these rules is light and characterized by a pleasant aroma. Inviting the guests to the table to taste wine is considered a sign of respect.

### **Conclusion**

We have studied the wine agro-tours to the Persati Village in Bagdati municipality of Imereti region. The agro-tour passport data are given below.

#### **Wine Agro-Tour to the Village of Persati**

##### **Type of tour: Agro-Tour**

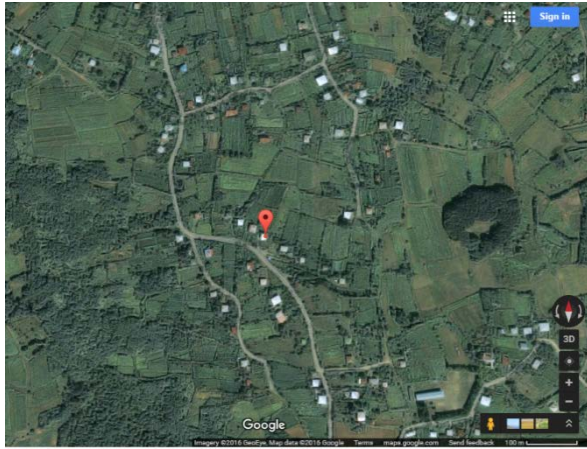
We offer the Wine Agro-Tour to the municipality's village of Persati, where you can spend the night in the fully equipped and finished apartments of the Kipiani family hotel, and in the wine cellar, you will see a complete cycle of winemaking and storage process. If you wish, you can freshen up and catch fish in the mountain river Khanistskali, and enjoy magnificent landscapes of Kvemo Imereti. Address: Persati Village, Bagdati Municipality. Telephone: +995 599216875.

##### **Kutaisi**

A city (since 1811) in West Georgia, the administrative center of the Imereti region. It is located along the both banks of the Rioni River. Population –192500 people (2010). From 978 to 1122 CE Kutaisi was the capital of the united Kingdom of Georgia. Kutaisi is one of the most ancient cities of Georgia. Archeological evidence indicates that the territory of the city has been populated already one hundred thousand years ago. The existence of Colchian culture has been confirmed here since the XV-XIII centuries BC. Along the right bank of the Rioni River there are remained traces of the extensive settlement of the VIII-VII centuries BC. Today, Kutaisi is the second largest industrial and cultural city of Georgia.

##### **Persati Village**

Persati is a beautiful village of the Imereti region, located in Bagdati municipality, 20 km from Kutaisi, and 4 km from Bagdati, at the left side of the Khanistskali River (the left inflow of the Rioni River, on 260 m above sea level. The community's center – Shubani Village. There are 2463 people living in the village (2014).



**Pic.1. Persati village in Google map.**

#### **The Kipiani family hotel**

With the help of the cordial hosts, you can spend a few unforgettable days individually or in group with your family in a full idyllic atmosphere of the Imereti's village, enjoy the natural surroundings and immerse yourself in pleasant positive emotions, have a rest and spend



**Pic.3. The Kipiani family hotel**

#### **The Kipiani family's wine cellar**

In the wine cellar of the Kipiani family, you can knowledge of the Imereti's winemaking technologies ranging from planting of vine to wine reliable storage. In the month of October, you will have the opportunity to be directly involved in winemaking technological processes; together with the hosts, to take part in technological



**Pic.2. Khanistkali River**

the night in the fully equipped and finished apartments of a four-storey house; have breakfast and dinner on the sundecks on the third and fourth floors, from where you have the magnificent view of natural landscapes; if you wish you can freshen up and catch fish in the mountain river Khanistkali.



**Pic.4. Family hotel interiors**

processes of care of vine and wine fermentation, to learn the operations of preparing the neck of churi (earthenware vessel for wine storage), churi wine fermentation technologies; with the help of the hosts, you will have the opportunity to have a picnic on the sundeck with barbeque made on the quicksets of vine, hot Imeretian khachapuri and sparkling wine Tsolikauri.





**Pic.5. Open churi with kvevrys filled with wine**



**Pic.6. Vine pergola of Tsolikauri variety**

#### **Kutaisi – Persati Village**

A good-quality asphalt road leads to the Ajameti Reserve surroundings, then it bends right. Then we go to the bridge on the mountain river Khanistskali and enter the beautiful settlement

decorated with the vine pergolas. Then you follow 2-3 kilometers the asphalt road, turn left and enter the well-known in Georgia oldest settlement inhabited by the Kipiani family.



**Pic. 7. Common barbel fish from Khanistkali River**



**Pic.8. Pleasant evening with friends**

#### **4. References**

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