

## Tusheti - the heart of Georgian tourism

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**ABSTRACT:** Ecotourism is an important link in the development of tourism in our country. The field of interest of ecotourists is wildlife, various nature reserves and protected areas, and scientific observations of nature. Supporters of ecotourism development argue that it provides interrelated development of different sectors of the economy and creates additional jobs in the places where ecotourists travel. The number of ecotourists in Georgia increases significantly every year, which, in turn, significantly contributes to the development of the country. As a rule, such people as: scientists, researchers, organizers of educational tours appear as ecotourists. Also, people who want to learn about the natural and cultural environment and history of this or that country, travel to protected areas, etc. To attract tourists, the Kakheti region has certain advantages, such as the abundance of historical monuments, extraordinary natural conditions. This region is known for numerous historical-cultural monuments, extraordinary landscape, nature reserves and protected areas.

**KEYWORD:** ecotourism, ecotourists, Kakheti, Tusheti, landscape, cultural monuments, traditions and events, protected areas of Tusheti, national reserve, Tusheti National Park.

### Introduction

Discussion: Tusheti, the most beautiful corner of Georgia, is located on the Eastern Caucasus. Tusheti can be reached through the Abano pass, the highest in Georgia, and it is located at 2900 meters above sea level. Tusheti protected areas include Tusheti State Reserve, Tusheti National Park and Tusheti Protected Landscape. Its total area is about 122,050 ha.

For centuries, Tusheti was a refuge for serfs who ran away from their masters, to avoid serving the king, or during religious or political persecution. It also played the role of an outpost of Georgian culture and influence in the North Caucasus, both for kings and many princes. The process of encroachment, which continued for centuries, contributed to the invasion and strengthening of Georgian tribes in the North Caucasus.



The road to Tusheti is quite difficult and it is possible to move only by high-speed vehicles, but instead, guests are greeted with beautiful views. Going through this difficult and quite impressive road, we will get to the fabulous world called Tusheti. If you are a fan of extreme tourism and ecotourism, follow me and let's travel together on the way to the sky and enjoy the beauty of this amazing world, where the antiquities and traditions that we can hardly meet in the bar of Georgia are still quite well preserved. That is why Tusheti is a kind of archive of the history and culture of our country.

Tusheti is distinguished by landscapes with high aesthetic values - alpine meadows and preserved primeval pine forests, peaks covered with permanent snow (Tebulo - 4492 m above sea level, Diklo - 4785 m above sea level, Borbalo - 3294 m above sea level. ). Unique monuments of cultural heritage are preserved in Tusheti; Traditions and customs are preserved. Here you will meet historical villages and villages; items of existing culture and handicraft samples. Today, there are more than 50 villages or hamlets left in Tusheti. Only a few of them are inhabited throughout the year. Tusheti is distinguished by landscapes with high aesthetic values, Tusheti villages and buildings are very interesting from an architectural-historical point of view. There are several castles in each village; Some of them have the purpose of a shrine, others - military. Religious and public holidays are connected with shrines. The local population prepares specially for the holidays. Tusheti is one of the most beautiful and ethnographically interesting and diverse corners in the regions of Georgia.

Tusheti State Reserve was established in 1961, its area is 10694 hectares. The nature reserve has been created to protect and preserve the biodiversity, rare and endangered animals and endemic relict plant species. The forests of the reserve are distinguished by species diversity, high endemism and the presence of specific bio-ecological relict species. It includes the areas and habitats of many rare and endangered animal species. Among the animals living here, it is worth noting the nyamor, the Caucasian goby - its number is limited to a few specimens in the Caucasus, it is included in the red list of the World Conservation Union;

Deer, wolf, lynx, bear, etc. are also worth mentioning. From birds - shevarden, mountain eagle, etc. Educational, scientific and eco-tourism is allowed in the nature reserve, it is possible to move on foot and on horseback on specially defined routes.

Every village of Tusheti is a historical monument by itself. There are monuments of cultural and economic value: shepherds' summer apartments and their surrounding areas. Old villages and villages are located in Tusheti, most of which have well-preserved castle towers from the late Middle Ages. The hospitality of Tushes has always been a guarantee of the safety of tourists and visitors. Tusheti is an interesting corner in many ways. This impenetrable mountainous area is the homeland of the short and stiff-kneed Tushuri horse and the faithful helper of the shepherds - the Georgian shepherd.

Tusheti is one of the interesting tourist places. Tourists are attracted by its picturesque nature, local customs, historical and cultural monuments. Tourists can use various types of tourist services.

The ethno-cultural peculiarity of Tusheti, in contrast to other traditional cultures of Georgia, is mainly determined by the historically formed specific farming system - a combination of nomadic sheep-herding, cattle-breeding and farming. Religious holidays are special for the Tushes. The cycle of cultic days-athnigenobs begins on the hundredth day after Easter and lasts for two weeks. In addition to alud cooking, a horse race is also held on the days. It is a beautiful sight to see how the riders will ride their horses on the Tusheti mountains. The holiday is a great festival of folk art, in which local people and visitors participate with special joy. The women are skilled in weaving and carding. Tushuri rugs, made in its characteristic geometric style and natural colors, are popular among folk art lovers. Colorful socks, knitted shoes "chitebi", felt hat and „kechebi” are popular among tourists. During the day, the guest who comes to the village will definitely be invited to the table, and the Tushes do not pay attention to the religion of the guest at this time.

An inseparable element of Tushur civil and religious celebrations is music, Georgian melodies performed on the harmonica.

Gudi cheese is one of the most interesting products in Tushu, Georgian and world cuisine. If you are a foreigner and have not yet tasted this wonder, then I will tell you that this cheese is similar to French Roquefort, but without the blue mold. We recommend that you go to Tusheti immediately and taste it.

The technological secrets of making sheep's cheese were passed down from generation to generation by shepherds and are still available today. Tushur sheep cheese is known as "Guda cheese", because the final perfection of the cheese's taste properties takes place in "Guda", a specially processed sheep skin.

In addition to Tushur cheese, khinkali (boiled hearty meat cubes), kotori (khachapuri), khavitsi and others are famous.

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**Conclusion:** In winter, Tusheti is covered with impenetrable snow, the population moves to the plain and the pulse of Tusheti stops. There are only a few families left in each village who cannot leave this wonderful world and continue to live alone until spring comes, until the first ray of sunlight melts the snow and the stream forms, and after that, the gurgling starts again, and the residents, missing the smell and warmth of Tusheti, will once again enter the vast paths and echo the surrounding environment. Tushur songs will be heard around the bonfire, Tushur beer and khinkali will be brewed again, traditional holidays will be held again, locals will again entertain guests and visitors from the city. If you see Tusheti once, it will be deeply imprinted in your memory and you will want to visit it again and again. And on every visit you will discover and learn more and more new and interesting things. Because Tusheti is a place that everyone must see.

Botanical, photo and ecological tours are developed on the territory of Tusheti, wild birds and animals are observed. The place has quite a good potential for the development of eco-tourism. Currently, there are already well-equipped family guest houses, and it is also possible to set up tourist tents.

Visit Tusheti and you too will become a part of the beauty of this vast world, you too will enter the Tusheti life and believe me, the invisible threads between you will definitely be opened. Once you share this wonder, it will surely remain in your memory as one of the sweet memories.

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