

**THE STATE OF TOURISM AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES OF
ABKHAZIA IN THE POST-CONFLICT SPACE AND ASPECTS OF
ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY**

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Abstract. Knowledge of the features of exploitation of tourist and recreational resources of Abkhazia is important for ensuring the safety of rare natural phenomena and rational nature management. Abkhazia, as the most demanded part of the resort and tourism industry, currently uses a very small part of the resources consumed annually in the 80-90s of the last century in the tourism sector. The reason is a difficult crime situation, an unfavorable investment environment and a low vote of confidence on the part of tourists.

The tendencies of irrational use of tourist and recreational resources under the actual government are clearly visible. Under the conditions of occupation, a number of facts of appropriation by the Russian Federation of the desired resort complexes have already become the norm. A luxurious state-owned villa built on the coast of Mysser was handed over to Russia in exchange for the restoration of the Abkhazian railway and airport. During the Olympics in Sochi, 1 million cubic meters of water will be taken from the rivers and coast of Abkhazia. The removal of meters of inert material has reduced the area of the beach through erosion at many seaside resorts. The export of a large amount of timber has become a prerequisite for the degradation of the ecosystems of Abkhazia.

In the post-de-occupation period, it is necessary to draw up a new landscape and architectural general plan of Abkhazia, with the national park of Abkhazia, functional zones and energy-saving ecotourism infrastructure. Prior to this, the active participation of international environmental organizations is important in order to preserve the existing unique biodiversity and ensure environmental sustainability.

Keywords: *Abkhazia, tourism, recreation, ecology, sustainability.*

Relevance of the topic. The study of the current state of tourism and recreational resources of Abkhazia is important to ensure the preservation of unique and rare natural phenomena and rational nature management for future generations.

The climate of Abkhazia, relief, proximity and contrasts of the sea and mountains, biodiversity, underground world and canyon-like valleys have attracted hundreds of thousands of tourists since time immemorial.

The main goal of our study is to find out what the situation is after 30 years at tourist and recreational facilities in the occupied territory of Abkhazia, to identify environmental and socio-economic threats and to identify potential exploitation opportunities.

The mountain systems of Abkhazia, valleys, passes, panoramic views offered interesting conditions for lovers of mining, adventure tourism and mountaineering. A clear confirmation of this is the peaks of the Abkhazian Caucasus: Dombayulgen (4046 m), Gvandra (3989 m), Ertsakhvi (3910 m), Ptish (3789 m), Safricha (3789 m), Didi Khutia (3544 m), Patara. Khutia (3280 m.), Azhara (2907 m). Passes between the peaks of these mountains: Safricha (3550 m), Gvandra (2950 m), Nahari (2880 m), Nauri (2860 m), Kluhori (2896 m), Marukhi (2769 m), Sancharo (2292 m.), Magana (2265 m). The Marukhi and Kluhori passes were used for tourists from the North Caucasus and represented a medium and difficult category in the route network of pass tourism. Departure mainly: Dombay-Teberda-Northern shelter (Russian Federation)-Southern shelter (Georgia, Abkhazia). A similar route was presented at the head of the Bzip valley - in the Pskhu valley. Glaciers Achapara, Gvandra, Marukh, Ptish, Safrichi, Klich, Khutia are important objects for lovers of glacial and extreme tourism.

There are also many unique mountain-climatic and ski areas in the Caucasus of Abkhazia. One of them is Gagra-alpiuri (the same Mamdzishkha), located not far from Gagra. This object is presented at an altitude of 1873 meters above sea level. Since the beginning of the 20th century, a 30 km long road has been built here, first for wagons, then paved. It was also planned to build a cable car on this site, which would take tourists from the sea to the top of the mountain in 20 minutes. The uniqueness of this mountain was that in October, when there was still a “velvet” season, snow fell here on the coast, and a tourist could be skiing from the sea in half an hour. That is, in half an hour he survived three seasons: autumn, summer and winter.

De facto tour operators in Abkhazia offer tourists hiking in the Kelasuri, Bzif and Machar valleys. They try to stay away from the Kodori and Gumista valleys, so as not to accidentally get into the mined area [1].

Abkhazia is distinguished by a variety of natural monuments. Among them are the most important karst caves: Novoafonskaya, Abrskilskaya, Krubera, Pantyukhin well... Of the above, comfortable and amateur caving caves Novoafonskaya and Abrskilskaya were used, and the rest were reserved for professional sports. speleologists. Only the cave of New Athos received 1 million tourists during the year in 1987.

The rivers in Abkhazia Bzif, Kodori, Chkhalta, Sakeni, Kelasuri and Marukh are multifunctional tourist sites. In accordance with the existing technical characteristics, it is possible to organize water and recreational, as well as rafting, canyoning and fishing tours. As for the rivers Enguri, Psou and Galigada, they are only suitable for bathing and recreational and fishing tours. Here, not far from Gagra, the world's smallest river Reprua flows.

Lake Ritsi is the deepest lake (101 m) in Georgia and is a recreational place with boats. There are wooden houses on the shore. In the lower part of Bzif there are Lakes Malaya Ritsa and Blue Lake, interesting for tourism. An interesting mountain tourist route is presented in Amtkeli - the municipality of Gulrifshi Lake (507 m above sea level). Fishing tours are also interesting in Inkiti - a relict lake on Cape Bichvinti, where 10 species of fish are found [2].

Of the balneological centers of Abkhazia, only the resort complex Avadhari is currently functioning. The thermal baths of Tkvarcheli are fully depreciated, as for the thermal waters of Kindgi, bathing is carried out in the wild [3].

On the coast of Abkhazia Gagry, Bichvinta, Mysera, Gantiadi, Leselidze, Gudauta, New Afon, Sukhumi, Gulripshi, Tamish, Kindgi, Ochamchire, Mziuri create interesting sea resorts. From here, cruise liners often called in Sukhumi, and passenger pleasure boats once an hour went to the ports of Gagra and Ochamchira and provided tourist services along with other sea transport. Cliffs protruded from the existing coast line in the upper and lower part of Esher and Gagra-Chigirifshsky district, which increased the transparency of the water and represented a real paradise for divers.

Lyonozov, who bought a piece of land here at the end of the 19th century, made a big contribution to the development of the Müsser coast as a resort. Doctor Kovarsky knew about the uniqueness of this place, he opened a hotel and boarding house here. In 1913, another hotel "Villa Roza" was founded here. A total of 200 dachas were planted on this coastal territory, which caused a violation of the ecological balance. That is why Müssera was soon declared a reserve [4].

In the 1970s, a fashionable state-owned country house was built in one of the bays of the protected area, with an area of more than 180 hectares. It was leased to the Russian side under an agreement dated September 14, 1995 between the Government of Abkhazia and the Main Directorate of Security of the Russian Federation. A new agreement between the governments

of the Russian Federation and Abkhazia on the transfer of property to Russia and its use on the territory of Abkhazia was signed in January 2022. Russia claims that delaying consideration of the issue of ratifying the agreement on Gosagarak will affect Russia's willingness to invest in such large-scale projects as the construction of an airport, the reconstruction of tourist facilities and railways [5].

In the past century, the coastline, formed by natural factors, was subjected to strong anthropogenic impact (sediment removal from the coast, the construction of hydroelectric power stations and ports, irrational bank protection) and underwent noticeable undesirable transformations (washout of beaches, coastal erosion). Often, their trend became irreversible, and coastal infrastructure was threatened with catastrophic destruction. The resort, tourist and transport infrastructure of the region is mainly located in a strip of 3-5 km along the coast. The acceleration of the sustainable economic development of the country, the growth of maritime traffic, the construction of harbors and the actual implementation of the resort and tourism industry will increase the risks on the sea coast, which requires the restoration, protection and stability of the coast.

Based on the norms of recreation and use of beaches (the area of the beach per vacationer is 62 m²), it should be noted that the rather unstable state of the beaches of Abkhazia and the trend of their development clearly cannot meet these requirements, and in most cases (Gudauta, New Athons, Eshera, Babushara, Varche, Kindgi, Ochamchire, Gagida, Phichori) we have very deplorable social and dangerous geocological conditions. It is clear that the protection of the coast and the cessation of erosion processes is a prerequisite for the protection and survival of tourism and recreation facilities located on its coastline [6].

As a result of an irrational, consumerist attitude to the natural resources of Abkhazia and inattention to the processes of environmental pollution in the occupied territory, an alarming ecological situation has been developing for years.

Inert materials are mined and exported in a barbaric manner, with no consideration or concern for environmental conditions. Intensive export of inert materials from Abkhazia began in 2008. During this period, for the construction of the Olympic city of Sochi, the Russian side daily exported from the port of Sukhumi a large amount of inert material, only 1 million tons. According to experts, the unplanned, barbaric extraction of inert materials in the coastal zone of Abkhazia exposes the Black Sea ecosystem to real danger, which will lead to the degradation of coasts and beaches, the creation of new problem areas, the aggravation of existing situations, and the expansion of the sea due to intensive extraction of inert materials. With such a trend, Kvemo Gulrif and Ochamchire may be among the settlements that will lose their recreation area, and in a few years, it will probably become necessary to evacuate the local population

from these places. As a result of ongoing processes, the width of the beach area near Cape Sukhumi has already noticeably decreased, and existing processes are also noticeable in other areas.

The already difficult environmental picture is also exacerbated by the export of unique wood species from Abkhazia for sawn timber (Bichvinta pine, ugchari, Georgian maple, boxwood...) [7].

Accordingly, the reduction (abrasion) of coastal beaches and the cutting of unique forest cover lead to the degradation of tourist and recreational areas, which ultimately reduces the efficiency and marketing opportunities for tourist and recreational resources.

Urgent and long-term investments are considered as the most important factor in achieving sustainable development of the post-conflict space of Abkhazia and restoring the tourist and recreational infrastructure. However, long-term capital investment is linked to security in post-conflict Abkhazia. And in the conditions of the volatile political situation in the region, the impossibility of determining priorities for economic development, and profound changes in the views of the political elite, large-scale actions with their unexpected negative consequences may become a possible manifestation. political risk factor [8].

Thus, the main tourist and recreational resources of the studied region show a completely new picture in the post-conflict space of Abkhazia in the conditions of political, socio-economic and environmental instability. A person who, in turn, has diametrically changed the political spectrum of the region, which has the character of an action directed against universal human values and serves to form a regime against the formation and strengthening of the Georgian statehood, hinders the recovery of the economy. The tourism business here will continue to be discrete, since the intensity of tourist flows from the “countries of the free world” is possible only under conditions of de-occupation, when the fear of the tourist disappears and a vote of confidence appears in the local service personnel and the population.

The fear factor is reinforced by the still existing mined areas, which pose a threat to both tourists and the local population. That is why it is important to carry out demining operations with the support of international organizations.

In the post-de-occupation period, it is necessary to draw up a new master plan for the landscape and architectural planning of Abkhazia so that individual mistakes made during the tourist boom in the Adjara region are not repeated. Aspects of preserving and restoring the green environment should be brought to the fore. A national park of Abkhazia with its important functional areas and energy-saving ecotourism infrastructure should be created. Maximum priority should be given to electric, cycling and electric vehicles (both public and private fleets).

Bypass roads should be created throughout Abkhazia so that the coastal road network is intended only for the local population and tourists, which will be the best way to increase the intensity of tourist flows.

In resort centers, it is necessary to arrange a water supply and sewerage network, as well as install treatment facilities near the confluence of rivers with the sea.

Under the conditions of de-occupation, the purposeful implementation of the above measures will contribute to the optimal use of the tourist and recreational resources of Abkhazia, the socio-economic development of the region, and the restoration of the brotherhood bridge destroyed by enmity.

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პოსტკონფლიქტურ სივრცეში და მდგრადობის უზრუნველყოფის
ასპექტები

მაღხაზ ღვინჯილია გეოგრაფიის აკადემიური დოქტორი, ცხუმ-აფხაზეთის მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის წევრ-კორესპონდენტი, ცხუმ-აფხაზეთის მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის გეოგრაფიისა და ტურიზმის ინსტიტუტის დირექტორი, საქართველოს ეროვნული უნივერსიტეტი - სეუ, პროფესორი, ტურიზმის მიმართულების ხელმძღვანელი
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წარდგენილია ცხუმ-აფხაზეთის მეცნიერებათა აკადემიის I საერთაშორისო კონფერენციის სამეცნიერო კომიტეტისა და გეოგრაფიისა და ტურიზმის ინსტიტუტის მიერ

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საკვანძო სიტყვები: აფხაზეთი, ტურიზმი, რეკრეაცია, ეკოლოგია, მდგრადობა.