

Historical-geographical and touristic values of Eastern Georgia

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Received date: 14.01.2025; Accepted date: 16.03.2025;
Publication date: 05.05.2025, doi: 10.56334/sei/8.3.58

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Citation. Keadze M., Gogebashvili I., Zubitashvili T., Kobiashvili E., Baindurashvili L., Nazghaidze S. (2025). Historical-geographical and touristic values of Eastern Georgia. *Science, Education and Innovations in the Context of Modern Problems*, 8(3), 953-961. doi: 10.56352/sei/8.3.58. <https://imcra-az.org/archive/358-science-education-and-innovations-in-the-context-of-modern-problems-issue-3-volviii-2025.html>



Abstract

In Eastern Georgia, the landscape of which includes the eastern territory of the Likhi Range, there are many valleys hidden in the mountains. The high peaks of the Caucasus are always covered with snow, which is quite an interesting sight from the Kakheti plain. Because in the spring, nature awakens in the plain and everything around is covered in green, and against the background of this greenery, the great snow-capped Caucasus Mountains are clearly visible. This is precisely the important environment that amazes foreign tourists, and whoever has been there at least once and seen this beauty will definitely return a second time. In this work, I would like to introduce you to the beautiful landscape of Eastern Georgia, its historical-geographical and tourist values, which leave an indelible mark on the visitor.

Key words: Eastern Georgia, landscape, tourist values, nature reserves, untouched natural-territorial complexes, historical-cultural monuments, traditions, Georgian architecture.

Discussion

In Eastern Georgia, the temperate subtropical forest landscape of the plain is represented in inner Kakheti, namely, on the Alazani Plain and the adjacent hills. Within Georgia, the Kakheti Plain landscape stretches from northwest to southeast for about 110 km, with an average width of 25-30 km, and an altitude of 200-500 m above sea level.

The main ridge of the Caucasus borders the Alazani Plain from the northeast. There are practically no foothills in the region. And the hilly strip is very narrow. That is why the Kakheti Caucasus has the appearance of a huge, 2-3 km high wall, which creates one of the most beautiful landscapes in the whole world and is quite interesting for tourists.

From the southwest, the landscape of the Kakheti Plain is bordered by the Tsiv-Gombori Range and the Iori Plateau. To the southeast, the landscape passes into the territory of Azerbaijan. The main features of the landscapes of the Kakheti Plain can be considered a flat relief and a moderately humid subtropical climate. On the site of the felled forests, a large area is occupied by agricultural crops, in particular vineyards. The cult of the vine occupies an important place in the region, and therefore the region has great potential for the development of wine tourism.

The history of winemaking in Kakheti begins in the 3rd-2nd centuries BC and to this day represents an important sector of the region's economy. The relief of Kakheti promotes the development of cycling and equestrian tourism, the river valleys are a good resource for the successful

development of adventure tourism and for hiking enthusiasts. Tourist interest in Kakheti is growing. The issue of wine and tourism promotes the development of business tourism, since the region is the cradle of wine tourism and there is a great interest of tourists in Kakheti. Agrotourism is successfully developing, which allows tourists to come at any time of the year and directly participate in rural life, grape picking, pressing, cooking Tatar and raising churchkheli, as well as in farms.

The Alazani Plain is built of - gravel, sand and clay. The Alazani Plain has a straight surface, which is slightly inclined along the Alazani River. Terraces and extraction cones are well-defined here. These cones begin where the tributaries of the Alazani River emerge from the mountains. The Alazani River Chala occupies a central place in the landscape of the Alazani Plain.

Intact natural-territorial complexes have been preserved only in reserves and protected areas, which are quite numerous in the Kakheti region. In particular, the Vashlovani and Tusheti protected areas, as well as the Lagodekhi, Mariamjvari, Batsara-Babaneura reserves and the Iori, Korughi and Chachuni reserves. Which play a rather active role in the development of tourism in the region. Each of them offers nature lovers natural wonders, based on which we can say that Kakheti has quite good prospects for the development of ecotourism and scientific tourism.

Currently, a fairly large area of the Kakheti Plain landscape is occupied by vineyards, grain crops, orchards and gardens. Villages in Kakheti are mainly built on the hills and hills on the outskirts of the Alazani Plain, stretching in a single strip and encircling the Alazani Valley like an arc. Where local residents are actively involved in the development of agrotourism in the region.

When describing the Kakheti Plain, we must definitely mention the historical ancient church monasteries and architectural monuments, which tell us a lot of interesting stories and are a source of interest for visitors. The Kakheti Plain, located in eastern Georgia, is rich in historical and cultural heritage, especially known for its ancient churches, monasteries and architectural complexes. This region is often considered the cradle of Georgian winemaking and has a long history intertwined with the development of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Let us introduce you to several notable ancient churches and monasteries that adorn the Kakheti Plain: Alaverdi Monastery - Founded in the 6th century, Alaverdi Monastery is one of the oldest and most important in Kakheti. It features a remarkable temple dating back to the 11th century with well-preserved frescoes. The monastery is also known for its ancient winemaking traditions.

The Gremi architectural complex includes the 16th-century Church of the Archangels and the ruins of the Royal Citadel. Gremi was once the capital of the Kingdom of Kakheti and is of exceptional architectural and historical significance.

Nekresi Monastery: Founded in the 4th century, Nekresi Monastery is perched on a hill and offers stunning views of the surrounding landscape. There are several churches on the site, some of which date back to the early Middle Ages. It is also an important archaeological site.

Kvareli Monastery (St. George Monastery): Kvareli Monastery, located near Kvareli, has been a spiritual center since ancient times. The complex includes a church and various monastic buildings, making it a peaceful and picturesque place.

Ikalto Monastery: Founded by Saint Zenon in the 6th century, Ikalto Monastery was an important religious center and theological school in the 9th century. It contains the remains of ancient churches and is closely connected to Georgia's rich literary and cultural heritage.

Sighnaghi: Although not a monastery, Sighnaghi is a picturesque town known as the "City of Love" and is notable for its well-preserved walls and churches, including the Church of Saint George. It also serves as a gateway to the Kakheti wine region.

Tsinandali is known for its beautiful estate, which includes a historic church and garden. The estate belonged to the Chavchavadze family, influential figures in Georgian culture and politics.

These sites not only represent the religious history of Georgia, but also reflect the architectural evolution and artistic expression of Georgian churches and monasteries. The complex religious and cultural situation of the region makes Kakheti a treasure trove of history for both visitors and scholars. The living traditions of winemaking and hospitality that characterize Kakheti further enrich the experience of exploring its historical sites.

Let us consider the landscape of the Iverian Plain, which is spread over a significantly large territory. It occupies 2/3 of the plain landscape of Eastern Georgia and includes three historical and geographical provinces - Shida and Kvemo Kartli and Gare Kakheti.

Shida Kartli is a historical region and is located between the Likhi Range and the Aragvi River. The tourist potential of the region is determined by its geographical location, nature, Ankara springs, large and small rivers, and an abundance of natural and artificial monuments. The plains are characterized by a relatively flat relief, which is poorly dissected by rivers.

When discussing the history of Shida Kartli, we should note that this region is located in central Georgia, is rich in historical and cultural heritage, where many ancient churches, monasteries and architectural complexes are represented. The area played a significant role in the development of the Georgian Orthodox Church and has many important religious sites that reflect different architectural styles and historical periods. Here are some notable ancient churches:

Uplistsikhe: One of the oldest urban settlements in Georgia, Uplistsikhe is a rock-cut city dating back to the Early Iron Age (around the 1st millennium BC). Although not strictly a monastery, it contains a number of ancient churches and rock-cut religious buildings. The most important is a basilica from the early Middle Ages.

Shio-Mgvim Monastery: Founded by Saint Shio in the 6th century, this monastery is located near the city of Mtskheta. It has several churches, including the main church built in the 9th century. The site is known for its stunning natural scenery and peaceful atmosphere.

The historic city of Mtskheta, once the capital of ancient Georgia, is home to several UNESCO World Heritage Sites. These include the Svetitskhoveli Cathedral, built in the 11th century and one of the most important churches in Georgia. It is believed to be the burial place of Christ's robe. It features beautiful frescoes and intricate stone carvings. The Jvari Monastery, which dates back to the 6th century. This monastery overlooks Mtskheta on a hill. It is one of the oldest examples of Georgian architectural style and offers stunning views of the confluence of the Aragvi and Mtkvari rivers.

Gori Cathedral (Gori Castle): Dating back to the 9th century, it is an important religious site and a significant part of the heritage.

Bardani Monastery: Located in the village of the same name, Bardani Monastery houses a church built in the 16th century. This site is less well-known, but reflects the rich monastic traditions of the region.

Nikozi Monastery: Founded in the 7th century, this complex is located near the village of Nikozi. It has a beautiful church, known for its frescoes and architectural details.

Tsilkani Church, dedicated to Saint George, is a 10th-century church, known for its unique frescoes and its architectural design, reflecting the traditional Georgian style.

The historic church-monasteries of Shida Kartli not only serve as religious centers, but also testify to the rich cultural, artistic and architectural heritage of Georgia. Many of these places have significant historical and artistic value, reflecting the evolution of Georgian architecture and the historical context in which they were built. Visitors to Shida Kartli often get acquainted with the region's living history, beautiful landscapes and deep spiritual traditions.

The Kvemo Kartli Plain is located at an altitude of 265-350 m above sea level. The plain is surrounded by hills. In Kvemo Kartli, we find ancient volcanic flows that descend into the Khrami and Mashavera gorges. Between Kvemo and Shida Kartli is the Tbilisi Basin, which is an extended valley of the Mtkvari River. The basin is bordered from the west by the branches of the Trialeti Range. To the east, the Tbilisi Basin gradually passes into the Iori Plateau. This region is interesting not only for its

richest material culture (there are about 650 historical monuments), but also for its rare landscapes and natural and climatic conditions, which are one of the conditions for the development of cultural tourism. [1] Kvemo Kartli, located in the eastern part of Georgia, is rich in historical and cultural heritage, distinguished by many ancient churches, monasteries and architectural complexes. This region has a diverse history, influenced by various cultures and empires, which is reflected in its religious architecture. Here are some notable historical churches, monasteries and architectural complexes in Kvemo Kartli:

Bardavisi Monastery: Located near the village of Bardavi, this 12th-century monastery complex houses a church dedicated to Saint George. It is known for its frescoes and inscriptions, which reflect the artistic traditions of the period. The peaceful environment of the monastery enhances its historical significance.

Built in the early 5th century, the Sioni Church of Bolnisi is one of the oldest stone churches in Georgia and is famous for its unique architectural style. It features impressive stone carvings and ancient inscriptions in Georgian, linking it to the early Christian period.

Samshvildi Fortress is an ancient site that includes the remains of churches and other buildings. Situated on a hill overlooking the Kura River, it dates back to the early Middle Ages and provides important information about the historical significance of the region.

St. George Church in Tsilkani: Although Tsilkani is generally associated with the Shida Kartli region, this site is close to the borders of Kvemo Kartli. Built in the 10th century, the church is known for its rich frescoes and intricate architecture, which is exemplary of the medieval Georgian style.

St. Nino Monastery in Bolnisi, dedicated to Saint Nino, the patron saint of Georgia, who played a crucial role in the Christianization of Georgia in the early 4th century. The site includes a church-monastery complex that has undergone various renovations over the centuries and still retains its historical essence.

The Hetferdi Church dates back to the 14th century and is an important example of the region's medieval architectural style, reflecting elements characteristic of Georgian churches.

The Zhinvali complex houses several churches and buildings dating back to the Middle Ages, reflecting the historical significance of the area and its evolution over time.

The churches and monasteries of Kvemo Kartli are important not only for their religious significance, but also for their architectural beauty and historical context. Many of these sites have undergone preservation efforts, allowing visitors to appreciate their historical and cultural values. The diverse influences on the architecture of Kvemo Kartli reflect Georgia's broader historical narrative,

making the region a rich field for historians, archaeologists, and tourists to explore. These sacred sites continue to serve as places of worship and reflection, attracting visitors interested in both spirituality and history.

The rather diverse relief of Outer Kakheti is known as the Iori Plateau, its maximum height reaches 1200 m. The plateau is built of sandstones, clays and conglomerates. From the north, the Iori Plateau is bordered by a strip of hills, which gradually turns into the Saguramo and Gombori ranges. From the south, the Iori Plateau is bordered by the Davit-Gareja (desert) and Eldari (Vashlovani) ranges. We should also note the tourist importance of the Vashlovani protected area. Which is called the "Georgian savannah" because of its similarity to the African landscape. This effect is even more intense at sunset - you will not believe that you are in Georgia. This is a place whose tranquility is protected by the Gyurzes, and the exoticism is represented by the pre-Asian leopard Noah. Here, on the limestone rocks, there are fossilized bones of a southern elephant and shells of prehistoric mollusks. The latter date back to the time when this area was covered by the sea. All this is one of the attractive factors in terms of tourism development.

The spread of natural-territorial complexes is associated with two main factors: thermal conditions and humidity. The bottom of large river valleys, due to constantly high humidity, is covered with floodplain forests.

Currently, the landscape of the Iveria Valley is almost completely developed. A large area here is occupied by apple and Other orchards, vineyards, gardens, grain and technical crops. Agriculture is connected with irrigation systems. A network of artificial canals is widely used.

The history of the development of the Iverian Plain landscape goes back thousands of years. The external appearance of this landscape is very different from the primitive one. The Iverian Plain landscapes include the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, which occupies an area of up to 300 km². In Tbilisi, almost all the characteristics of the original landscape have been changed - relief, climate, inland waters and soils. The plant and animal world has been practically destroyed. Within the city, engineering structures, transport communications, pollution sources and waste accumulation centers that are "alien" to the natural landscape are presented.

Thus, Tbilisi is a specific, urban landscape, where natural conditions are completely regulated by human activity.

Conclusion: In this work, I tried to clearly show the diversity of the relief of Eastern Georgia, historical and cultural monuments and their tourist values. My country has great potential in terms of tourism development, because here, due to its geographical location, both in the Western and Eastern

regions of Georgia, there are many natural monuments, as well as untouched natural and geographical complexes, which are concentrated in protected areas and reserves and are taken care of by the state. We should also definitely mention those historical monuments and churches and monasteries that attract a large number of tourists.

Visitors can visit these areas and monuments at any time of the year, which is facilitated by the climate of our country. In this regard, quite important forms of tourism are developing significantly, such as ecotourism, agrotourism, scientific, historical and cognitive tourism.

Visit my country and you will be truly amazed by what you see . . .

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"Science, Education and Innovations in the context of modern problems" Journal

ISSN (pe): 2790-0169 / 2790-0177

DOI- 10.56334/sei/8.3.58



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