

Natural Disasters in Georgia and Tourism

Giorgi Dvalashvili

E-mail: giorgi.dvalashvili@tsu.ge

Department of Geography, Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences,
Iv.Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, 0179, Tbilisi, I.Chavchavadze #3

Due to environmental changes, countries and certain domains worldwide are switching to an adaptation mode. This means that if a country wants to develop tourism, it should take into consideration risks and hazards of natural disasters. So that if a disaster takes place, the country be able to offer tourists alternative infrastructure, move them to another touristic object, evacuate them if needed, move to a secure place and let them leave the country safely.

Various natural hazards which take place in Georgia are hindering tourism business. It is difficult to anticipate whether touristic season will be failed in different population centers, though often problems are far-reaching. National Tourism Administration and different governmental agencies have to perform serious work in order to neutralize the situation, material damage is often big.

A few natural disasters had negative influence on tourism development in 2015. Should be noted Tbilisi flood of June 13, which apart from big losses, hindered tourists' arrival in the region. Also must be mentioned natural hazards that took place in different periods of time: heavy snow, blizzard, avalanches in Mtskheta-Mtianeti, floods and freshets in Western Georgia, severe storms on the Black Sea coast, and landslides in mountainous regions.

We must especially note natural events in Kakheti region on August 21, 2015. There were landslides on several sections of Pshaveli-Abano-Omaló auto-road, what caused interruption of vehicle movement from Tusheti to the lowland for a few days. Because of bad weather, tourists had been moved from Omalo with helicopter, Omalo folk festival was called off, and reservations were canceled in dozens of Tusheti hotels. As a result of this event Tusheti population lost thousands of Lari.

Touristic objects have no plan on how to act in case of natural hazards, some of them have no phone connection, difficult tourist trails are not monitored, neither are they marked. Visitor of Georgia must have information about hazardous areas.