

Market-Oriented Sustainable Tourism Development in Protected Areas of Georgia

Georgian Tourism Association (GTA) received funding under Ecological Awards Program in 2009 and in 2010.

Under Eco-Awards 2009 Program, Georgian Tourism Association implemented a project aimed at facilitating market-oriented, participatory sustainable tourism for Protected Areas (PA) in Georgia. The project was implemented in Algeti, Vashlovani, Lagodekhi, Kintrishi and Mtirala nature preserves and was carried out in close partnership with the Agency of Protected Areas (APA).

Currently, potential of the Protected Areas for attracting international and as well as local tourists is not fully realized, as relevant services and accommodation facilities are still underdeveloped. The information about existing

services and facilities is not properly provided to potential visitors. Local residents around the selected PAs also lack awareness on benefits from PAs in general, and possibilities to get additional income through sustainable tourism activities.



*Photo by: Georgian Tourism Association
Marking Touristic routes*

Project Objectives:

- Increase knowledge of local stakeholders about practical tourism needs and realistic approaches to tourism, which will translate into increased quality of tourism products and services;
- To develop attractiveness and educational potential in selected Protected Areas through various means;
- To create and promote practical information about existing/potential sustainable tourism in Georgia, as well as conservation concepts for an international and domestic public.

Implemented Activities and Results:

- To increase the awareness of different available touristic services, educational workshops/seminars were provided to the administrations of the targeted protected areas, also local community representatives and guesthouse owners. The workshops were held in Mtirala, Algeti and Vashlovani national parks.
- For popularization of the Kintrishi, Mtirala, Vashlovani and Lagodekhi Protected Areas, video clips were produced, shortened versions of which were posted on the internet (see the links: <http://www.tourism-association.ge/> <http://www.youtube.com/user/georgiantourism#p/u>).
- The project envisaged close cooperation with the local schools and as a result, eco-camps were set up in the Algeti, Vashlovani and Lagodekhi natural reserves. The main activities at the camp included creating tourist infrastructure, such as plotting out and marking footpaths in the woods for tourists, cleaning up litter and installing trash bins. During the camps the children were also provided seminars on how to live in nature without damaging it. The eco-camps lasted for four days.
- Touristic infrastructure was created in the least developed Algeti PA; an outhouse was built and a picnic area, as well as a small footbridge was set up. Also, a bilingual information board with the map of the area and touristic routes was installed.



Photo by: Georgian Tourism Association

- Under the project a new product: horse riding tour (two routes) was created. The horses for the tours belong to local residents of Algeti and are rented out, thus, providing additional sources of income for the locals. According to the existing statistics, more than 100 visitors used this service in 2010.
- To improve the service of horse riding tours, five saddles were purchased, which were transferred to the ownership of the local park ranger. The funds received from renting of the saddles were used not only for routine maintenance, but also for purchasing an additional horse, so that the Park is ready for increased demand on horse riding tours.
- A database of family guesthouses was compiled and placed on the organization's web-page and on www.travel-tbilisi.com to enable the access to the booking facilities for international orders.
- Various informational materials were prepared, printed and disseminated, namely, touristic map of Algeti National Park (bilingual- Georgian and English), brochure on school-camps and photo documentation of the workshops

Project Duration

April, 2009 – November, 2009

Donors and Partners

The following project was implemented within the framework of the Eco-Awards 2009 Program. Eco-Awards Program is initiated and financed by BP, on behalf of its oil and gas co-venturers (BTC Co. SCP Co.) and administered by Eurasia Partnership Foundation (EPF).

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