

This leaflet was produced under the project Implementation of Selected Measures from the Management Plan for the Tusheti Protected Landscape, supported by the Czech Development Agency (www.czechaid.cz) and carried out by the Czech Nature Conservation Agency (www.nature.cz) and the Kikoni National Park Administration (www.kikoni.cz).



Be aware of!

- Many activities are limited or forbidden by the Regulations of the Protected Areas, especially:
- a) access for visitors to certain (sacred) places;
 - b) hunting, fishing, camping, making fire, changes or any damage to historical buildings, etc.;
 - c) picking plants or catching animals.

Shepherd dogs. Along nearly all tourist trails in Tusheti there are several grazing areas which are guarded by dogs. When passing by, you can manage well if you take into consideration the following advice:

A shepherd dog is a guardian of its owner's property - that is a shepherd's hut, a cow herd or a sheep flock. Thus, it is not recommended to enter any place where you may see any of these. The dog is not after people, it just fulfils its commitments. If you maintain some distance and do not try to invade its territory, the dog will just bark and watch. It will keep distance and will not attack or get overaggressive. But there can be some more complicated situations. For example, the path may run directly through a grazing area not giving other option than entering it. Cow herds are usually watched by one or two dogs only, while sheep flocks are accompanied by shepherds, too. When meeting dogs, you should be able to show you are prepared and "dangerous" too, but nothing more. Any aggression or attempt to fight the dog can lead visitors into serious problems. Dogs are better attackers than humans. Just take a solid stick and collect stones and throw them in the direction of the dog (not directly at it), and meanwhile try to pass the herd quickly into neutral lands. Dogs usually do not see what you have in your hands, but when you bend over to pick up a stone that action is unmistakably perceived as if you were dangerous. The dog will run keeping distance and giving you time to walk away. If you cannot cope or you are too much afraid, call for a shepherd. He is usually somewhere near the sheep flock and will help you! With cow dogs you mostly have to cope on your own, but here the dogs are generally less dangerous than sheep dogs.



Do not go into a shepherd's place if you do not see anyone, even when there are no dogs around. Dogs can let you go in but they will not let you go out until the owner comes.

Behaviour and traditions. Traditions are to be respected in mountainous Georgia even more strictly than in the lowland. Certain forms of behaviour which are acceptable elsewhere in Europe and Tbilisi (capital of Georgia) are not quite welcome in the Caucasus. Of course, respecting the hospitality rules no one will protest straight away, but it also depends on situations, the individuals and the nature of generally unwelcome acts. So, sometimes it can cause you problems.

Some unwritten rules of the Caucasian traditional code of behaviour are as follows:

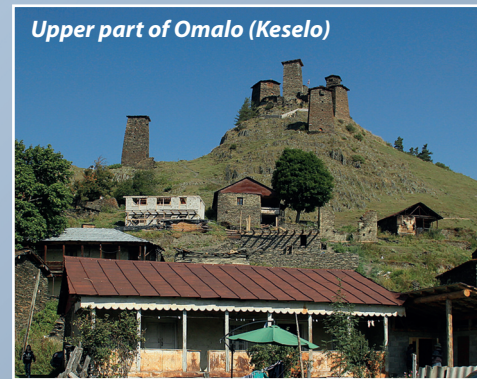
- try not to bath naked in water near a road or in the middle of a village, where anybody can see you. It is completely unacceptable for locals.
- to receive an invitation from local people is polite and shows your respect, but be aware of excessive drinking, especially when you are invited by shepherds and cow herders. They are usually very glad to have guests as they rarely meet people there.



- some traditional behaviour restrictions for men and women are very common in Tusheti. During festivals, women and men sit apart at a festive table. Women are not allowed to participate in sacred rituals that take place in the shrine (called khati) or to step inside its territory, which is usually several square meters around the shrine. Shrines can be situated inside or outside the village. There are several shrines in each village. The boundary of a shrine is often denoted with stones but may not be visually marked at all. When you arrive in a village, ask where sacred places are and do not break the women taboo. Showing respect to local beliefs will spare you unpleasant experience with locals. They believe that breaking this taboo (as well as any other kind of taboos) destroys natural balance and something happens - e.g. some drastic changes in weather are to be awaited, rainstorms, etc. If a taboo is broken in many places and many times, it can bring complete loss of balance and a disaster.

Did you know that

- there are well preserved ancient virgin pine forests in Tusheti? The age of the oldest trees is well over 400 years. You can see them below Ghele or above the village of Kumelaurta along the trail heading for the village of Khiso.
- if you are lucky you can observe three species of vultures?
- the number of people living throughout the year in Tusheti was about 10,000 at the beginning of the 20th century? Nowadays, only some 10-20 people stay in the whole Tusheti in winter time, completely isolated from the rest of the world for 7 months.



- one stone tower served as a shelter for 20 people and 50 sheep in case of enemy's invasion?
- the lowest point of Tusheti is at the Tusheti Alazani River (called Andis Koyu in Daghestan) at the border with Russia at the elevation of 1 510 m a.s.l.?

Accommodation

Due to limited space, only some tips for accommodation in larger villages are listed below. These are just examples that may be used in case of emergency or changes in weather conditions in the mountains. For the full list of accommodation, see www.tushetipl.ge. Generally, all local guesthouses offer very modest but sufficient conditions for the mountains. Bed, shower and hospitality are a must after a long day wandering. Nevertheless, space, view, food or location can make difference giving advantage to certain sites over the others.



View and space for long evening seats are crucial for comfort in these small houses. So do not pay much attention to room space but look around if there is place to make fire, an improvised café with an open view, or indoor lobby for rainy days. Fresh food and good cuisine are very important! Food is transported to Tusheti. You can have locally grown cucumbers and even tomatoes only in Omalo, in certain guesthouses which have their own greenhouses.

Mirgvela Aleksii Itiuridze
Tel.: +995-597 066 000, +995-599 636 103
mirgvela@yahoo.com
Number of bathrooms: 8
Number of rooms: 10
Maximum number of guests: 25
Prices: optional
Breakfast: 10 GEL
Lunch: 10 GEL
Dinner: 15 GEL
Night stay only: 20 GEL
Special services: location at the crossroads of Pirikiti and Gometsari gorges, hiking, horseback and jeep tours
Discount: children and big groups
Language: English, Russian
Driver: + 995-592 002 002

Lasharai Vepkhia Rainauli
Tel.: +995-551 440 007
Number of bathrooms: 8
Number of rooms: 10
Maximum number of guests: 24
Prices: fixed
Night stay with 3 meals: 80 GEL
Night stay with 2 meals: 70 GEL
Night stay only: 35 GEL
Special services: best standards at best prices; nice café, best cook; you get what you pay for!
Language: Russian, English

Hostel Tishe Eteri Markhvaidze
The cheapest stay in Omalo
Tel.: +995-599 905 337
Mountain.life@mail.ru
Maximum number of guests: 13-15
Night stay only: 15 GEL
Breakfast: 10 GEL
Dinner: 15 GEL (vegetarian 10 GEL)
Special services: best shop providing unusual array of goods for Tusheti
Language: Russian, English
Driver: contact the guesthouse owner. Also for organizing inner tours

TUSHETI PROTECTED AREAS

Tusheti

PROTECTED AREAS



Dear visitors,
getting basic information about the Tusheti region and to orient yourself in the area.

Introduction of Tusheti

Tusheti is one of the most beautiful places in Georgia. Due to its geographical position, there are only few access points. You may drive an off-road vehicle (road from Pshavet to Omalo) or use a trail for hikers only (from the village of Ghele across the Atsuta Pass to the Pshavet-Western Gate of Tusheti (from Pankisi Valley to Gometsari Gorge), which is marked only in some parts today. Please, bear in mind that due to its remoteness and difficulty, the last two access points demand good physical condition and hiking experience.

Thanks to the remoteness of the region the Tushetan community has had its freedom for centuries and still preserves its unique customs and traditions. The Tushs have strong relations to their region and home villages, and with their customs, way of life and the environment they are inseparable part of Tusheti.



Tourist trail system

The marked tourist trails you will find in this leaflet were prepared as part of development cooperation supported by the Czech Development Agency in cooperation with the Czech Nature Conservation Agency and the Kikoni National Park Administration (Czech Republic). The trail system implemented in Tusheti was inspired by a number of European approaches (mainly from Czechia, Germany and Poland). It has been under development since 2015 and fully usable since mid-2017.

Visitors easily orient themselves using marked trails identified by colours - in the map as well as in the field (incl. signposts).

Colours of trails:

- Yellow colour:** low difficulty, usually along roads or easy horizontal paths
- Red colour:** medium difficulty (i. e. steep slopes, demanding terrain)
- Blue colour:** highest difficulty requiring excellent physical condition, special skills and equipment (no blue trails marked in Tusheti until 2017)

The map only shows trails available and recommended in 2017 while the system is to be enlarged by adding new parts in the future.



Historical values of Tusheti are mostly represented by architectural monuments, which may be found all around. In general, local architecture includes many types of human settlements, religious sites (various types of old shrines as well as churches built in the 19th century). All of them are located in the protected area (see below). Excellent examples of well preserved traditional architecture and structures of a typical Tusheti village are to be found in Patsma, Darto, upper part of Omalo or Dochu, and other beautiful places.

Historical structures in or near some villages are protected as historical/cultural heritage monuments.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS:
Tusheti Protected Landscape Administration
Official address: Tusheti, Village Omalo,
Address in winter: Akhmeta, Chokokashvili St. 48
e-mail: tushetipl.ge
e-mail: tushetipa@yahoo.com
Cell phone number: +995-599 105 837
Tusheti Protected Areas Administration
(responsible for the Tusheti SNR and NP)
www.apa.gov.ge/en/protected-areas/cattestone/
e-mail: tushets-dacil-terfonlebi-administrada
e-mail: gobakuridze@gmail.com
Giorgi Bakuridze: +995-577 101 892
Sofia Rainauli: +995-577 101 891



Omalo-Illurta-Bukhura-Gogritsa-
Distance: 47 km, 13.5 hours
The recommended trip will take you to the eastern part of the Gometsari Valley, the largest and longest valley in Tusheti. The first kilometres (Omalo - Dochu, Dochu - Omalo) are marked along the main road. The core part of the trip is Illurta - Bukhura - Gogritsa - Dochu. Illurta is an interesting place with the second largest church in the region - the Church of Saint George. Bukhura is one of many abandoned villages. From Bukhura to Gogritsa, you will go through a typical birch forest formed by regular snow avalanches. Gogritsa is a remarkable village built on the summit of a hill, overlooking the Gometsari Valley. Here you will probably have the most spectacular view down to the valley. Gogritsa is recommended for your overnight stay. The path from Gogritsa to Dochu will first lead you steadily down to the river and then up a steep slope to Dochu. This village is characteristic with fairly large houses on very steep slopes forming a unique combination of cultural and natural heritage.

Omalo-Darto-Ghele meadow-Omalo

Distance: 32 km, 10 hours
The round trip leads you from the Omalo Plateau to the Pirikiti Valley and back to Omalo. You will come to Darto, the most beautiful (and tourist) place in Tusheti. From Darto, the trail continues to Chigho, a tiny village located on the southern slope. In the eastern part of the Pirikiti Valley, Chigho is recommended as a place for an overnight stay not only because it is in a remote and quiet place but also because it is half way. Nearby, you can also visit the central Tushetan shrine of Lashari. From Chigho, the trail goes back to the other side of the valley to the Ghele meadow and back to Omalo. Another option is to continue from Chigho to Omalo through Diko and Shenako.

2 DAY TRAILS

Omalo-Shenako-Omalo
Distance: 6.5 km and 2 hours from Kveino (Lower)
A few guest houses or small restaurants/caféterias. The village of Darto is the most beautiful and preserved cultural point in the whole Tusheti. Located in the Pirikiti Valley, the trip from Omalo to Darto opens breathless views of the landscape as well as opportunities to experience traditional architecture in the village. In Darto, you can find some guest houses or small restaurants/caféterias.

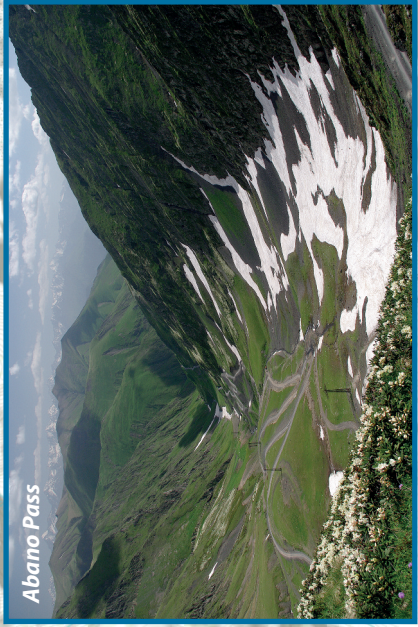
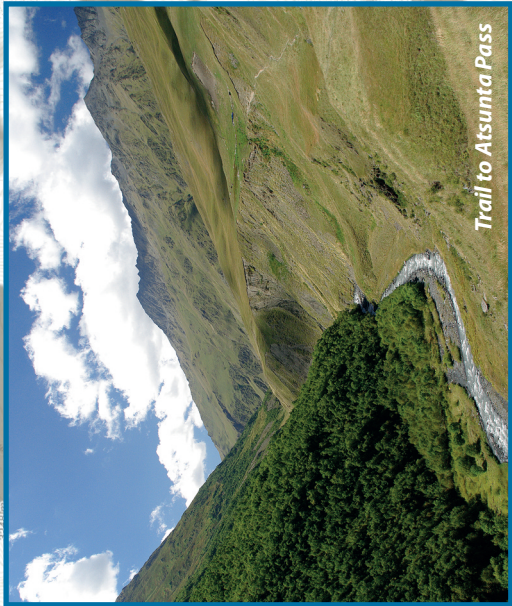
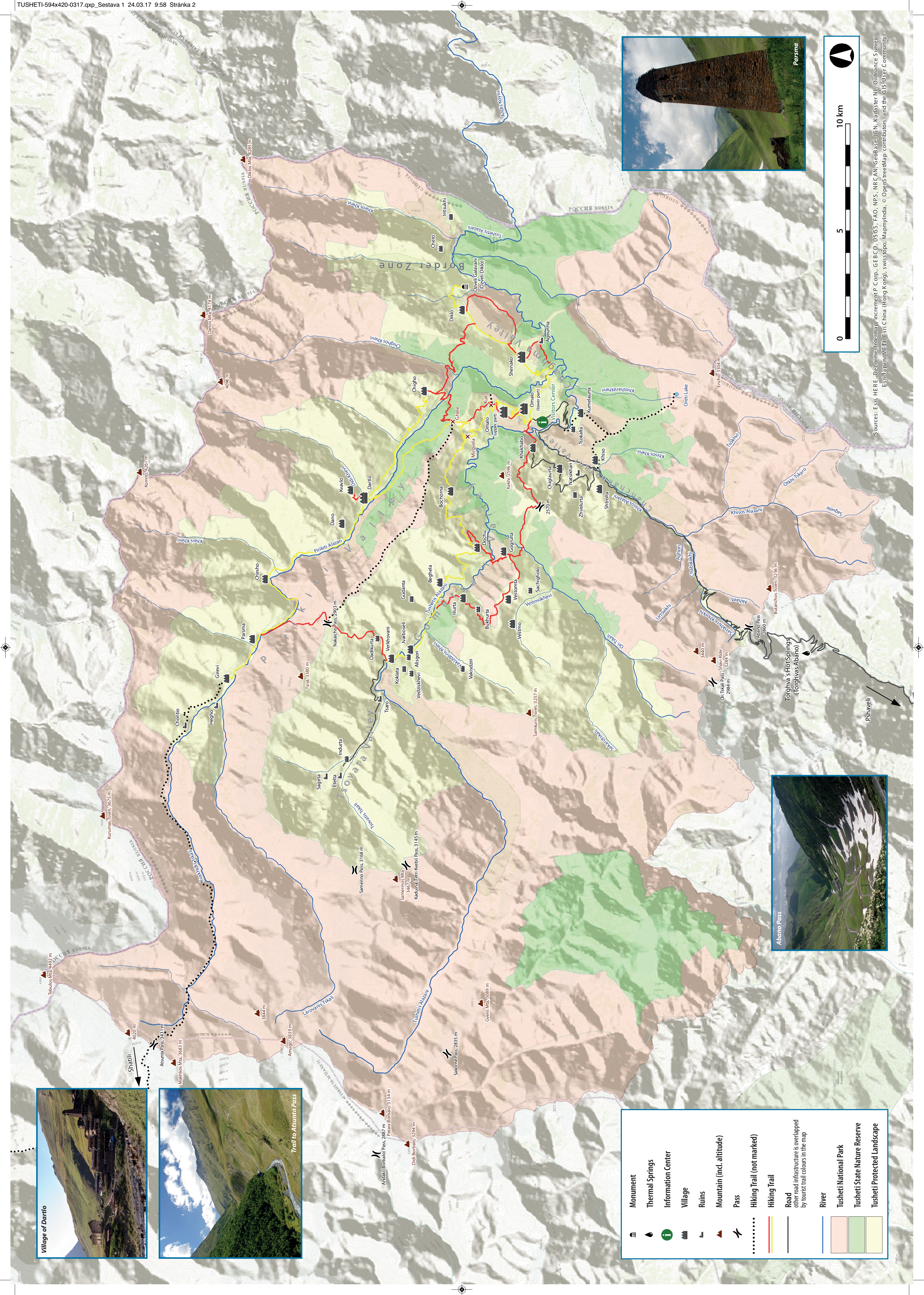
Omalo-Darto-Omalo

Distance: 13 km and 3.5 hours from Kveino (Lower)
The village of Darto is the most beautiful and preserved cultural point in the whole Tusheti. Located in the Pirikiti Valley, the trip from Omalo to Darto opens breathless views of the landscape as well as opportunities to experience traditional architecture in the village. In Darto, you can find some guest houses or small restaurants/caféterias.

1 DAY TRAILS

Tusheti State Nature Reserve (SNR): natural places where direct human influences are completely excluded, regularly managed areas, including settlements and road infrastructure.

Tusheti National Park (NP): an area left to natural processes, and



Monument

Thermal Springs

Information Center

Village

Ruins

Mountain (incl. altitude)

Pass

Hiking Trail (not marked)

Hiking Trail

Road
other road infrastructure is overlapped
by tourist trail colours in the map

River

Tusheti National Park

Tusheti State Nature Reserve

Tusheti Protected Landscape

Monument

Thermal Springs

Information Center

Village

Ruins

Mountain (incl. altitude)

Pass

Hiking Trail (not marked)

Hiking Trail

Road
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River

Tusheti National Park

Tusheti State Nature Reserve

Tusheti Protected Landscape

Sources: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, Geobase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan (METI), Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, MapmyIndia, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community