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Task report on Testing tourist entrance fees development system and/or alternative revenue generation schemes



UNDP/GEF project “Catalyzing Financial Sustainability of Georgia’s Protected Areas System” (00070382)

Testing site-level revenue generation mechanisms in Tusheti PAs

Prepared by

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The views expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations or UNDP.

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1 Introduction

Tusheti Protected Areas (PAs) is not only the largest PA in Georgia but also the most complex one. In order to enhance the management effectiveness and the financial sustainability of Tusheti PA it is necessary to develop self-financing schemes in addition to receiving state funding from the central budget. The Project Implementation Team (PIT) in close consultations with Tusheti PAs management, Agency for Protected Areas (APA) and other interested parties has developed a report on entrance fee and/or other alternative finance mechanisms for Tusheti PAs¹.

The main focus of this document is on revenue generation from sustainable tourism and thus, its major goal is as follows: ***Ensuring long-term and sustainable revenue generation from tourism sector for Tusheti PA.***

Following strategic objectives serve to achieve the above goal:

- Introduction of a simple and easy-to-implement fee system for various tourism activities (e.g. for using picnic and camping sites, etc);
- Piloting of entrance fee (ticket) scheme in Tusheti PA;
- Diversification of tourist trails and development of new attractive tourist products (e.g. thematic or combined wildlife tracking tours)²;
- Increase in revenues generated by specific tourist services or infrastructure (e.g. camping areas);
- Issuing concessions;
- Introduction of a fee on carrying out research or other special events³.

The following activities were planned for implementation of pilot project on entrance fees:

Activity #1: Development of an enabling environment for introducing an entrance fee scheme:

Action #1.1. Elaboration of legal basis

Action #1.2. Collaboration with municipal government

Action #1.3: Setting the base rate for entrance fee

Action #1.4: Survey of tour operators/travel agencies

Activity # 2: Carrying out of information and awareness raising campaigns on introducing entrance fee scheme

Activity # 3: Printing, production and distribution of tickets

Activity # 4: Development of a minimum necessary infrastructure

Piloting of entrance fee scheme has been rescheduled for future implementation in agreement with the major beneficiary and UNDP. At the same time, it has been decided to carry out preparatory works, including additional assessments in 2011 in order to clarify uncertainties related to the introduction of entrance fee system. All of this was believed to facilitate the decision-making process

¹ Development of Entrance fee and/or other alternative finance mechanisms for Tusheti PA, NACRES, 2012

²Task report on Establishing wildlife watching tours for visitors, NACRES 2011 (UNDP/GEF)

³Marketing and Tourism Development Sub-Plan for Tusheti Protected Area, NACRES, 2010, GEF/UNDP

by the beneficiary regarding the adoption of entrance fee ticket system in Tusheti PA. In addition to this, it has been decided to carry out awareness activities for major stakeholders including local communities, municipal government, tour operators, etc.

2 Development of enabling environment for introducing entrancing fee scheme

2.1 Attitudes of Local Communities

During field works, the PIT talked to various groups of local population on the concept of entrance fee, including local villagers, owners of guest houses and horses and as well as to other members of the community. Up to 30 persons were consulted on this matter, of which the absolute majority remembered the period of Tusheti PA entertaining the entrance tickets. Almost all respondents had expressed their negative attitude towards applying such a scheme to Tushetians or to other Georgian citizens visiting villages of their ancestors or friends and relatives in Tusheti. It should be mentioned that the consultations with locals were conducted in an unstructured and informal way. However it can be assumed that the negative attitudes toward introducing entrance fees for Tusheti PA prevails among Tushetian.

2.2 Cooperation with Local Municipal Government

While implementing each project component, the PIT facilitated cooperation between Tusheti National Park and Protected Landscape. Akhmeta municipal government, the administrative body of the Protected Landscape was always represented at project working meetings⁴. More specifically, the Akhmeta Governor was an active participant of all meetings organized within the project framework.

During the workshop organized in Kvemo Alvani under the Tusheti PA marketing and tourism development sub-plan component⁵, the possibility of introducing entrance fee system for achieving financial sustainability of Tusheti PAs was mentioned to the municipal government and other local stakeholders for the first time. In addition, the attendees heard the results of visitors' survey carried out in summer 2011.

On 27 January 2012, a meeting with Mr. Koba Maisuradze, Akhmeta Governor was organized to discuss entrance fee issues in greater details (please refer to Appendix 1). The governor welcomed the idea of introducing such system. However, he also expressed the concern that this measure could reduce the number of visitors and trigger negative attitudes among local population. The project team explained that existing studies, field experience and available information would help planning of entrance fee system in a way to avoid decrease in visitors flow on the one hand, and dissatisfaction of local population, on the other hand. Mr. Koba Maisuradze expressed his willingness to further cooperate with Tusheti Park administration and APA on adopting and managing entrance fee scheme.

⁴Meetings and workshops on facilitating cooperation between local businesses and population, NACRES, 2010

⁵ Report on Marketing and Tourism Development Sub-Plan for Tusheti PAs, NACRES, 2011

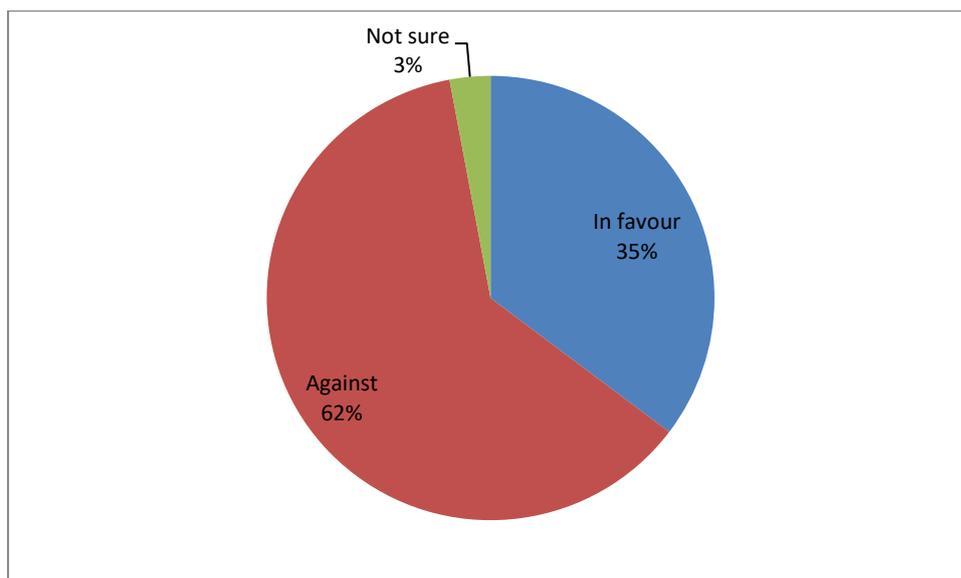
2.3 Visitors' Survey

By the 2011 summer tourist season, a questionnaire for visitors' survey was elaborated in cooperation with APA and the park administration. Such measure was planned under the Marketing and Tourism Development Sub-Plan (Action 27: permanent opinion polls of visitors). The objective of the visitors' survey was to learn and take into consideration tourists opinions in PAs management⁶. The questionnaire was developed in English and Georgian targeting both local and foreign visitors. It comprised special questions on introducing entrance ticket system, ticket price and payment modality. Tusheti PAs administration and Tusheti Tourism Association "Tusheti Guide" distributed this questionnaire among guest houses, by the end of the touristic season collected completed forms (34 Georgian and 99 English forms) and sent to NACRES for further processing and analysis.

Below is given a summary of visitors' survey on entrance fee:

❖ Survey of Georgian visitors (34 Respondents)

Distribution of opinions among Georgian visitors regarding setting up of entrance ticket system is as follows:



An approximate price of entrance tickets was not indicated by those Georgian visitors (62%) who provided negative answer son setting up entrance fee system; Only 8 out of total respondents providing positive answers named the price range acceptable for them. Of these respondents, four thought that the price should not exceed 10 GEL. 1 GEL was named as a minimum price and 100 GEL – as a maximum price (1 respondent).

It is noteworthy to mention that the majority of the respondents (21, 62%) regardless of their attitude towards introducing entrance tickers noted that they would visit Tusheti PA even if the entrance tickets are introduced next year; 11 respondents (32%) provided negative answers and 2

⁶Report on Marketing and Tourism Development Sub-Plan for Tusheti PAs, NACRES, 2011

(6%) restrained to answer the question. Only 7 respondents noted that they have visited other PAs with entrance fees. Of these, 2 have indicated the location (country) and the price:(1) Sataplia - 6 GEL and (2) USA – 40 USD.

Sixty of the Georgian respondents (47%) thought it was acceptable to introduce mandatory entrance fee for foreigners and voluntary payments for local visits, while 17 respondents (50%) were against such scheme; 1 respondent restrained him/herself to answer the question.

It is noteworthy to mention some comments of respondents on differential fee system⁷:

Comments in favour:

„It is acceptable to introduce such scheme for foreign visitors, but for locals it not acceptable“.

Marine Partaneishvili, 55 years old

„Foreign tourist defines in advance how to spend his/her money. In your home land, why should you pay for visiting your own nature?“

Maia Bidzinashvili, 48 years old

Comments against:

„Fee should be paid by both foreign and local tourists. It is unfair to have differential fee system“

Tiko Laganashvili, 14 years old

„ Such division is a discrimination“.

Ana Margvelashvili, 36 years old

❖ **Survey of Foreign Visitors (99 respondents)**

Sixty two of foreign visitors (63%) were for introducing entrance fee for proper operations and maintenance of Tusheti PAs and 23 were against (23%). 14 respondents (14%) restrained themselves to answer the question.

Price range proposed by the respondents varied from 1 to 100 USD. After excluding the extreme results the average price was USD 10 and maximum price was USD 22-23⁸.

⁷Report on Marketing and Tourism Development Sub-Plan for Tusheti PAs, NACRES, 2011

⁸This amount is equal to 16 and 36-38 GEL using the official exchange rate at the time this report was prepared.

Seventy seven respondents (68%) expressed willingness to visit Tusheti in case an entrance fee system is introduced from the next year, 10 (10%) responded negatively and the majority of the remaining respondents (22) did not answer the question at all and few commented that they were not sure.

Of all respondents, 54 (55%) had visited PAs with entrance fees. 48 (49%) respondents thought that it is acceptable to introduce entrance fee for foreign visitors and to have voluntary payment for Georgian visitors. 30 (30%) respondents are against setting-up such a system. 21 respondents (21%) restrained themselves from answering the question.

Below are some comments on introducing differential entrance fee system⁹:

Comments in favour:

“It would be useful to know how foreign visitors payments, either entrance fees or voluntary donations will be used”
Gurjith Sing (UK)

„This is beautiful country and for me as for foreign visitor local rules would be acceptable”
Julia Fender (Germany)

„...Because foreign visitors have higher incomes than Georgians. However, fee rate should be calculated carefully and revenues should stay in the park and should not go to Tbilisi”
Sonya (France)

„Georgians should have the right to visit every site of their country for free. I agree to pay entrance fee as a foreign visitor”
Alex Kinsley (USA)

“Local municipalities have such system in California. This is right, because the land “belongs” to locals”
Fran Weld (USA)

„It is acceptable. But, it would be more correct Georgians to pay a symbolic sum in order to express their respect to the park”.
Coney Roosevelt (USA)

Comments against:

“ There should be no difference. Everbody should pay the same amount if he/she visits the PA”.
Christopher Trenton (US)

„In Israel, entrance to all national parks costs 7 USD. If you pay for conservation, there should not be any difference between locals and foreigners”.

⁹Report on Marketing and Tourism Development Sub-Plan for Tusheti PAs, NACRES, 2011

Anna Astrahan (Israel)

„I don't like the fact that my documents would be checked to identify my citizenship“

Raphal Stanilevic (Poland)

„Everybody should pay, because everybody damages the nature and uses its natural resources; nature belongs to the global community, regardless of the nationality of the person“.

Chachulski (Poland)

Among all respondents, 25 (25%) answered that they visited national parks with differential fee system; 48 (49%) responded negatively and 26 (26%) restrained to answer the question.

Of all respondents, 71 (72%) indicated that they would still plan a visit to Tusheti if they had known about presence of the entrance fee. Only 7 respondents (7%) responded negatively and 21 respondents (21%) restrained themselves to answer the question.

2.4 Survey of Tour Operators/Travel Agencies

A special questionnaire was elaborated for Georgian tour operators with the purpose to learn their opinion and attitudes toward introducing entrance fee to Tusheti PAs (please refer to Appendix 2). All tours operators (30) having any relationship with Tusheti PA were asked to complete the questionnaire. Only six companies agreed to cooperate.

For 4 tour companies introducing the entrance fee scheme was acceptable on the grounds that the revenues generated would serve for better preservation and maintenance of the park. Two companies were against such scheme on the grounds that the park administration has state financing and other sources of revenues to operate and maintain the park and preserve the nature. Furthermore, four companies thought that there would not be any negative impact on tourists flow, while the other two thought differently. In their opinion, if the entrance fee system is introduced, it should be allowed to purchase tickets by either cash or electronic transfers and either in Tbilisi or in the Park. However, most companies appear to prefer electronic transfers.

Regarding the ticket price, tour companies thought that it should not exceed USD 25 for foreigners and 25 GEL for locals.

More detailed results of the survey of tour companies are given in Appendix 3.

3 Analysis and Recommendations

Introduction of Entrance Fee System

Making a decision on introducing entrance fee (ticket) system is an exclusive right of the Georgian government (first of all, the prerogative of the APA). In case such decision is made, based on studies conducted to date it is advisable to introduce a differential fee system as a first step, with foreign

visitors purchasing entrance tickets and Georgians entering the park free of charge. Voluntary contributions by Georgian may be also tested.

Based on the outcomes of consultations with local communities, the Tush population is against introducing the entrance fee for locals and other Georgians. Such opinion is shared by most Georgian visitors (62%). On the other hand, the majority of foreign visitors is for introducing the ticket system. Moreover, the large part of such respondents is for setting-up a differential fee system (49% are for, 30% - against, 21% restrained). It seems that the foreign visitors know well the entrance fee scheme, its role and importance for operations, maintenance and development of PAs and therefore, it is more acceptable for them to have such system. However, there are respondents among both Georgians and foreigners who consider adoption of a differential fee system unacceptable on the grounds that it is discriminatory for foreign visitors. It is possible that this particular group of foreign visitors had limited experience of travelling outside the developed world. The differential pricing system (when the foreign visitor pays and the local does not), in general, is not a common mechanism for developed countries. On the other hand, it is widely practiced in the developing world due to the following two factors: 1) simple marketing calculation: the majority of foreign tourists is ready and is able to pay more than the local citizen. If the fee base rate is set at the level of the willingness to pay and the affordability of local population, the PA may lose significant amount of revenues; 1) establishing lower tariffs for local citizens promotes enhancement of conservation conciseness and education.

Taking into consideration the recent studies and ground works, it would be no surprise for tour companies to introduce the entrance fee system in Tusheti PAs. In fact, four of the surveys tour operators did not have any objection against such scheme, provided that a flexible system is introduced.

Regardless of above mentioned, introducing of differential pricing scheme may damage current aspirations and image of Georgia and therefore, it is necessary to discuss the political aspects of this issue among the relevant circles.

Ticket Price

In 2011, Mr. Olaph Malver, international project consultant suggested to set entrance ticket price at 40 GEL. Respectively, he considered this base rate acceptable for foreign visitors¹⁰. This assumption was supported by the 2011 foreign visitors' survey. The price range proposed by respondents varies from 1 USD to 100 USD. After neglecting the extreme outliers, the average minimum price is 10 USD and the maximum – 22-23 USD, which equals to 36-38 GEL.¹¹

As mentioned above, the majority of Georgian visitors are against introducing the entrance tickets. Therefore, only few of them indicated acceptable price range, the range: 9-25 GEL.

¹⁰Report on Marketing and Tourism Development Sub-Plan for Tusheti PAs, NACRES, 2011

¹¹Report on Marketing and Tourism Development Sub-Plan for Tusheti PAs, NACRES, 2011

As per travel companies, ticket prices should not exceed 25 USD for foreign visitors and 25 GEL for Georgians.

Stemming from the above, if the entrance fee is introduced in the Tusheti Protected Areas, the price could be set at 20-23 USD for foreign visitor, which would be acceptable by both the visitors and tour operators. It is recommended to continue visitors surveys each year after the introduction of fee system, and then to adjust the fee base rate accordingly.

Ticketing system

Regarding the entrance tickets, the ticketing system of Galapagos Pas could be used as a model. There the payment/electronic transfer receipt is used as a ticket¹². With exercising similar system, Tusheti PA could save ticket printing and production money. By spreading out the information among visitors and tour operators on the ticket price, the receipt would show the amount to be paid by the visitor or the tour operator, which will make the relationship between the visitor(s), cashier and the controller transparent. This system will also be beneficial for Georgian visitors, given the price to be paid by them on a voluntary basis will appear on the receipt.

Recommendations for Follow-up

For successful introduction and implementation of the PA entrance ticketing system it is important to carry out the following initial steps:

- Further consultations with Akhmeta Municipal Government on setting up ticketing system should be carried out and the relevant decision should be made.
- Subsequently, the issue of developing relevant legal basis (e.g. memorandum of understanding between the administration of protected landscape and the APA, the Minister's decree, etc.) for introducing entrance tickets, setting up a concrete model/mechanism for ticket sale and distributing the revenues may be put on the government's agenda and the issue should be agreed upon with all relevant government entities.
- In case the decision on introducing the ticketing system for foreign visitors in Tusheti PAs is made:
 1. Entrance fee may be set at 35 GEL;
 2. The receipt for either cash payment or electronic purchase order may be used as a ticket.
 3. It is necessary to put bilingual information banners on the main road to Tusheti, close to the park administration, Atsunta pass with indication of the ticket price and the spots, where the visitor could pay the entrance fee.
 4. An aggressive information campaign should be carried out on introducing ticketing system in Tusheti PAs. The following message should be delivered to local inhabitants and visitors: setting-up of entrance fees would significantly improve the

¹²http://www.galapagosonline.com/Galapagos_Natural_History/National_Park/Galapagos_Park_Fee/Galapagos_Park_Fee.html

financial sustainability of Tusheti PAs; the payment made by each visitor will be used for conservation of biodiversity and preservation of important ecosystems for future generations;

5. Cash payments for purchasing tickets should be made at central entrance point, near the Samkhevi Station and at the visitor's centre. Tickets should be checked at the same spots.
6. Necessary infrastructure, ticket selling booths/counters and checkpoints may be organized by the Samkhevi Station.

Appendix 1. Minutes of the Working Meeting with Representatives of Akhmeta Municipal Government

Date and Venue: Akhmeta, 27 January 2012

Participants:

Koba Maisuradze – Akhmeta Municipal Governor

Alexandre Mailashvili – Head of the Akhmeta Municipal Sakrebulo (municipal council)

Rusudan Jugashvili – Head of the Public and Media Relations Service, Akhmeta Municipal Government

ShorenaChapurishvili – The member of local NGO coalition

Giorgi Chkheidze – Project coordinator, NACRES

Purpose: facilitation of cooperation between the Akhmeta municipal government and the APA; discussion of the issue of setting-up entrance ticketing system for Tusheti PAs.

Discussion:

Mr. Giorgi Chkheidze has presented the concept of introducing entrance ticketing system in Tusheti PAs and has explained all potential benefits out of setting this scheme. The presentation has been followed by a discussion of the issue. More specifically:

Mr. Koba Maisuradze has put following questions:

1. Will not the number of visitors decline as a result of introducing entrance tickets?
2. Will not it trigger negative attitudes and protects among owners of guest houses, providers of various tourist products and services and local inhabitants?
3. Who will collect fees and where?

The project coordinator has explained the following:

1. A number of studies and discussions have been carried out to address the issue; In addition, experts opinions have been solicited (Report on Marketing and Tourism Development Sub-Plan for Tusheti PAs, NACRES, 2011, visitors' survey). Based on these documents, we can assume that introduction of ticketing system will not bring about decrease in tourists flow
2. Intensive works have been carried out on raising awareness of local populations, including trainings, working meetings, etc. The project has established strong communication lines with all stakeholders, which continues to date. All important issues are addressed in close consultation with them. And, the local population is informed on possibility of introducing ticketing system for Tusheti PA. Additional consultations have to be carried out during piloting of entrance fee system. Presumably, local communities will have negative attitudes towards ticketing system, if it targets Georgian citizens in addition to foreign visitors.

3. Regarding the collection of fees, the most feasible place is Samkhevi Ranger's station. However, this issue together with the issue of responsible entity for fee collection has to be further discussed and agreed upon.

4. Mr. Koba Maisuradze has outlined that the Tusheti Protected Landscape and the local municipality would support the idea provided it would not reduce the number of visitors and would not result in dissatisfaction of local population; Akhmeta municipality during the testing phase would not take any revenues from selling the tickets and it would be acceptable to retain all the revenues in Tusheti National Park. The municipal government would cooperate with APA and park administration towards benefiting the National Park, Protected Landscape and local population.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire for Survey of Tour Operators/Travel Agencies

This survey is carried out by NACRES under the framework of UNDP/GEF project: "Developing Local Mechanism for Increasing Revenues for Tusheti PAs"

Greetings! We wish to improve visitors' service in Tusheti, in order for each visitor to have a good time and keep unforgettable memories over Tusheti. At the same time, our responsibility is to protect the unique nature of Tusheti PAs and to maintain the healthy environment in it. We need your help. Please fill in the following questionnaire. Your opinion is very important to us!

1. Organization's name: _____

2. Address/phone: _____

3. E-mail address _____

4. Which services listed below do you offer to visitors?

Hiking Camping

Horse riding Wildlife tracking

Other (please specify) _____

5. How do you distribute information on Tusheti tours?

6. What do your clients like most about Tusheti?

7. Who are the major users of services offered by you in Tusheti, foreign visitors or Georgians?

Please indicate percentage share of each

Foreign visitors ----- % Georgian visitors -----%

If possible please indicate the country of origin of foreign visitors

8. Do you offer tours in those PAs that have entrance fees?

Yes _____ No _____

In case of positive answer please indicate the PA (in or outside Georgia) and price paid per visitor:

9. Do you support the idea of introducing entrance tickets (entrance fees) in the Tusheti National Park for the purpose of better preservation and maintenance of the park?

Yes _____ No _____

In case of positive answer, please indicate the tentative price of the ticket:

Minimum: _____ Maximum: _____

10. Would you accept the idea of introducing entrance tickets for foreign visitors and voluntary payments for Georgian citizens? Yes _____ No _____

Please justify your opinion: _____

In case of positive answer, please indicate tentative price of the ticket

for foreign visitors: Minimum: _____ Maximum: _____

In case entrance fee is set for Georgian visitors please indicate the price of the ticket:

Minimum: _____ Maximum: _____

11. Do you think you will lose visitors in case entrance fee system is introduced from the next year?

Yes _____ No _____

12. In case the entrance ticketing system is introduced please provide your opinion about the concrete place, where the tickets should be sold.

Possible options:

- a) APA (Tbilisi, electronic transfer method)
- b) Park administration (In the park or in Alvani/Omalo, cash payment modality)
- c) At the entrance to the Tusheti PAs, from Akhmeta(central entrance) or from Atsuntapass (In the PA, cash payment modality)
- d) Other (please specify)

13. In your opinion, what should be changed (improved) in Tusheti in terms of visitors service and nature conservation? _____

Thank you very much!

Appendix 3: Results of Survey of Tour Operators/Travel Agencies

An electronic form of the questionnaire was sent to 30 tour operators: info@georgicatravel.ge; online@caucasustravel.com; inanycase23@yahoo.com; info@exploregorgia.com; info@09travel.ge; info@royalltraveling.com; info@worldtour.ge; info@argotour.ge; info@berika.ge; info@exotour.ge; info@freshtravel.ge; viatravel@viatravel.ge; gegenava.akaki@yahoo.com; infobigfoot@yahoo.com; info@dsttravel.ge; info@elitetour.ge; info@fresh-travel.ge; info@georgiantour.ge; info@georgianholidays.com; manana@georgianholidays.com; info@intertour.ge; info@adventure.ge; medeatour@yahoo.com; georgia@tikatours.com; info@travelshop.ge; info@vanillasky.ge; travel@travelland.ge; info@vanillasky.ge; visitgeorgia@geo.net.ge; info.asttravel@gmail.com

Only 6 companies out of 30 travel agencies expressed their interest in filling in questionnaires: Fresh Travel (info@fresh-travel.ge); Exotour (info@exotur.ge); Wild Georgia (inanycase23@yahoo.com); Intertour (info@intertour.ge); AST-travel (info.asttravel@gmail.com) and Visit Georgia (visitgeorgia@geo.net.ge). Others have noted that are not interested in Tusheti and do not wish to participate in the survey.

An overview of results

4. Which services listed below do you offer to visitors?

All six travel agencies offer hiking and horse riding. In addition, five companies offer camping and one company – jeep tours. Regarding the wildlife tracking, none of the companies offers it to visitors.

5. How do you distribute information on Tusheti tours?

Four tour operators distribute their information via internet, one company also uses touristic exhibitions, one operator has restrained itself to answer the question.

6. What do visitors like the most?

The most attractive thing in Tusheti is wild nature (landscapes), followed by birds and animals (2 respondents), villages (1 respondent), hospitality (1 respondent), horses (1 respondent)

N.B. Each respondent could provide several answers to this question

7. Who are the major users of services offered by you in Tusheti, foreign visitors or Georgians? Please indicate percentage share of each

Foreign visitors ----- % Georgian visitors -----%

If you have information, please indicate the country of origin of foreign visitors

Out of all 6 respondents, 3 noted that their customers are only foreigners, 1 company noted that its customers are both Georgians (50%) and foreigners (50%), 1 company noted that the largest group of its customers is foreign visitors (80%) and the rest – Georgians (20%). 1 company restrained itself

to answer the question. Regarding the percentage share of the countries of origin of visitors, only one company has responded to the question. Czechs are the largest group (70%), followed by Polish (20%) and Israeli visitors (10%).

8. Do you offer tours in those PAs, which use entrance fees?

In case of positive answer please indicate the PA (within or outside Georgia) and the price is paid per visitor:

Only 1 company offers tours to Sataplia caves, which uses entrance fee.

9. Do you support the idea of introducing entrance tickets (entrance fees) in the Tusheti National Park for the purpose of better preservation and maintenance of the park?

Out of all respondents, four provided positive answers and 2 – negative answers.

Comments of opponents:

„We think that the entrance ticketing system is not a correct solution. It is preferable to have paid camping areas“
Exotour

„It is unacceptable to introduce any fee for Tusheti. It is just an illusion that this mechanism will help us take better care for Tusheti. There is the Department of PAs and it has its own budget..“
Visit Georgia

10. Do you accept the idea of introducing entrance tickets for foreign visitors and voluntary payments for Georgian citizens?

Out of all respondents, two responded positively and four – negatively.

Comments noting to mention:

„If we request the foreign visitor to pay for the preservation of the national park, similar approach should be applied to the Georgian visitor“.
Intertour

„It is possible to have haft price or significant discount for Georgians“
AST-Travel

„All should pay. However, Tush population should have a choice. If the park introduces entrance fees, it should take care of its property, repair and rehabilitate bridges, camping areas, toilets. We agree to pay the fee, but the park service should be of high quality“
Wild Georgia

11. Will you lose visitors in case the entrance fee system is introduced from the next year?

Out of all respondents, four noted that they would not lose customers as a result of introduction of entrance fees, while the remaining two have confirmed this.

12. In case the entrance ticketing system is introduced please provide your opinion about the concrete place, where the price for the ticket has to be paid

Possible alternatives:

a)APA (Tbilisi, electronic transfer method)

ბ) Park administration (In the park or in Alvani/Omalu, cash payment modality)

ც)At the entrance to the Tusheti PAs, from Akhmeta(central entrance) or from Atsuntapass (In the PA, cash payment modality)

დ) Other – Please indicate the alternative

Only 1 respondent restrained itself to answer the question. The rest provided following answers:

„ all three (a), (b)(c)options should be allowed, because tour agencies prefer to pay through electronic wire and visitors – by cash“.

„Both cash payment and electronic transfer should be allowed“.

„Rangers’ house, before the village Khiso should be a place where the ticket has to be purchased, because all the roads, including road from Khevsureti go through this place. Both cash and electronic transfer modalities should be allowed. It is necessary to get a receipt from the cash machine controlled by tax authority“.

Two companies gave the preference to the option a).

13. In your opinion, what should be changed (improved) in Tusheti in terms of visitors service and nature conservation:

„Law enforcement should be strengthened, in order to prevent killing of wild and Bezoar goats and bears. This year we saw a number of wild animals and foreign visitors liked them much. Wildlife may become the major attraction to tourists. Maps and information booklets should be readily available at visitors’ centre. It is necessary to clean up all tourist trails. All bridges should be rehabilitated. Visitor’s centre should improve its service and should have a good coffee (the style is not changed)

Wild Georgia

„It is necessary to arrange camping areas and shelters fo rangers the same way it is in Borjomi-Kharagauli National Reserve“

Egzotour

„For this it is necessary to meet and discuss the issue“

Visit Georgia

„It is necessary to develop relevant infrastructure, provide electricity, organize sanitation infrastructure; the service provided by guest houses, local population and guides should be improved (establishing English language courses would be useful)

Ticket price:

Four companies provided their opinions on ticket price, including Fresh-travel, Intertour, Wild Georgia and AST-travel. Two others restrained themselves from responding.

In accordance with tour operators, the price for entrance tickets should be maximum 25 USD for foreign visitors and, minimum 1 GEL and maximum 25 GEL for Georgian visitors.