



## Introduction

This report presents basic characteristics of international travel to Georgia for the period of year 2016. The data is provided by National Statistics Office of Georgia.

The sphere of the main interest of the report includes trips for holiday, business, visiting friends and relatives (VFR) purposes, expenditure during the trip and other reasons.

## Significance of International Travel

International travel generates significant economic activity and employment in the world. Its direct contribution to World GDP and employment in 2016 was US\$ 2.3 trillion and it supported 118 million jobs. Taking account of its combined direct, indirect and induced impacts, total economic contribution in 2016 was US\$ 7.6 trillion in GDP, 292 million in jobs; US\$ 806 billion in investment; and US\$ 1.4 trillion in exports. This total contribution represents 10.2% of World GDP in 2016, 1 in 10 jobs, 4.4% of total economy investment and 6.6% of world exports.<sup>1</sup>

## International Traveler Trips

International traveler<sup>2</sup> trips in Georgia have been growing rapidly in recent years. In 2016, they reached a record number of 6,719,975, representing an annual growth rate of 6.6%.

**Figure 1: International Traveler Trips by years**



In 2016 the number of international visitor<sup>3</sup> trips to Georgia amounted to 5,392,816. The majority of trips conducted by international visitors (excluding nonresident citizens of Georgia), 81.9% (4,065,631), were from neighboring countries. Only 18.1% (897,842) were from other countries. Armenia was the leader in terms of international visitor trips – 1,152,234 (decrease of 3.3%), while Iran occupied first place in terms of growth (+107,914). The highest growth in the number of trips by Iran visitors was registered in September (+23,883) and August (+21,942). There was also a

<sup>1</sup> Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism 2017. Annual Update. World Travel and Tourism Council

<sup>2</sup> International traveler is someone who moves between different geographic locations for any purpose and any duration. It excludes foreign citizens who are Georgian residents and includes Georgian citizens who are foreign residents.

<sup>3</sup> An international visitor is a traveler taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any purpose (business, leisure or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited. The usual environment of an individual, a key concept in tourism, is defined as the geographical area within which an individual conducts his/her regular life routines. For defining the usual environment in Georgia, travelers conducting eight or more trips are excluded from the data.

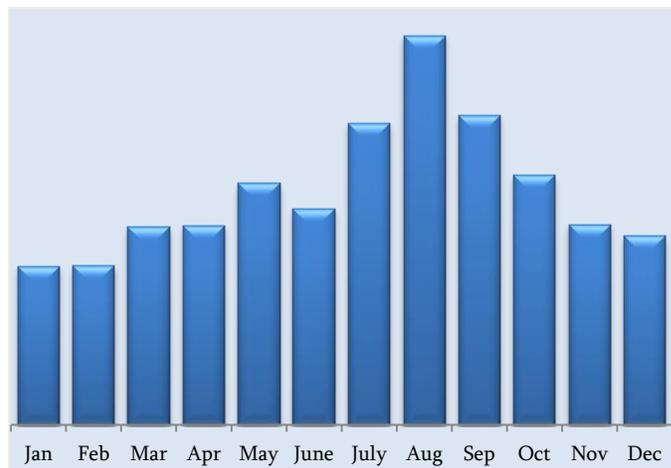
significant growth in the number of trips by Russian (+86,246), Israeli (+29,959) and Ukrainian (+24,286) visitors. This growth was primarily the result of new direct flights, press trips and marketing campaigns administered by the Georgian National Tourism Administration.

**Table 1: International Visitor Trips Top 5 Countries**

Country	2015	2016	Change %
Armenia	1,191,777	1,152,234	-3.3%
Azerbaijan	1,156,183	1,075,820	-7.0%
Turkey	1,074,065	988,312	-8.0%
Russia	763,019	849,265	+11.3%
Georgia (non-resident)	441,260	429,343	-2.7%

The most popular season among international visitors is summer. During this season, the number of trips was 1,739,136 (June: 414,228; July: 578,494; August: 746,414), which accounted for 32.2% of all trips (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: International Visitor Trips by Month**



The largest share of international visitor trips in Georgia, 4,313,163 (80%), were by land transport, followed by 998,762 (18.5%) by air transport. Trips by rail and sea were 44,801 (0.8%) and 36,090 (0.7%), respectively. The busiest border was Sarpi (the Turkish border), which saw 1,084,367 trips in 2017, amounting to 20.1% of all trips to Georgia. This was followed by Tsiteli Khidi (the Azerbaijan border) at 16.4%, and Sadakhlo (the Armenia border) at 16.2%.

**Table 2: International Visitor Trips by Borders**

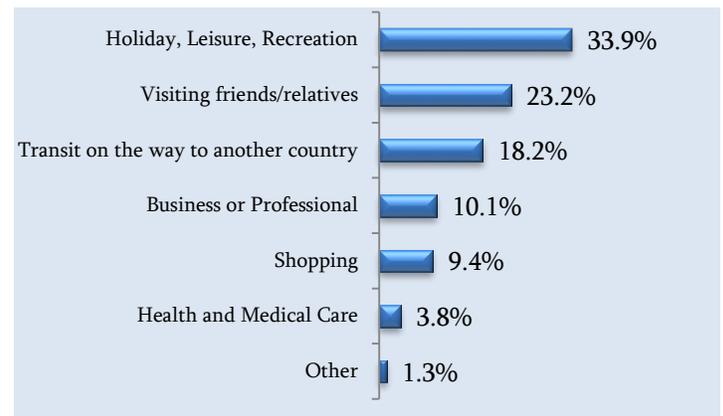
Border Type	2015	2016	Change %
Land	4,435,284	4,313,163	-2.8%
Air	737,660	998,762	+35.4%
Railway	47,046	44,801	-4.8%
Sea	36,009	36,090	+0.2%

A total of 62.8% (4,069,354) trips included at least one over-night stay, which by definition is a tourist trip. 37.2% were day trips (2,413,476).

**What are the main purposes of international visitors?**

International visitors most often travel for holiday, leisure or recreation purposes (33.9%). Other frequently observed visiting purposes include visiting friends or relatives (23.2%), transit (18.2%), business/professional trips (10.1%) and shopping (9.4%). Only 1% of visitors reported other purposes (Figure 3).

**Figure 3: Purpose of Visit**



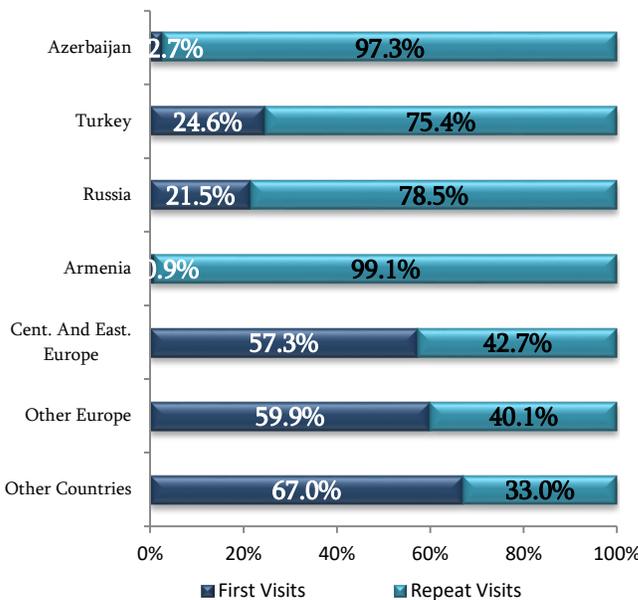
40.5% of visits during the summer period were made for holiday, leisure and recreation, in contrast with the winter period (January, February), when only 26% traveled to the country with this purpose. Compared to other periods, visiting friends/relatives is more frequent (25.7%) in the winter period.

### What is the share of the first time visits?

Out of the total visits, 81% were repeat visits and more than one third traveled to Georgia for the first time. Thus, Georgia had up to 1,047,998 new visits within the period covered.

Most of the neighboring country residents have traveled to Georgia before. The highest share of repeat visits was observed among the residents of Armenia (99.1%), Azerbaijan (97.3%), Russia (78.5%) and Turkey (75.4%). In contrast, for many Europeans or residents of other countries, it was their first visit to Georgia (Central and Eastern Europe – 57.3%; other Europe – 59.9%; other countries – 67%). The highest share of first-time visits was observed in the period August-September (15.2% and 15.3%), while in February only 3.3% first-time visits were registered (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Visit Practice**



### How long do they travel for?

Visitors' average duration of stay was 3.9 nights and varied by country of residence. Visitors from neighboring countries tended to stay for short periods except visitors from Russia, who spent on average 5.8 nights in Georgia (Table 3).

Duration of stay was high for visitors from Europe (Central and Eastern Europe-8.9 nights, Other Europe 10.6 nights) and other country (11.3 nights) categories.

The duration of stay was highest in the summer season period of 4.8 nights and shortest in March 2.8 nights.

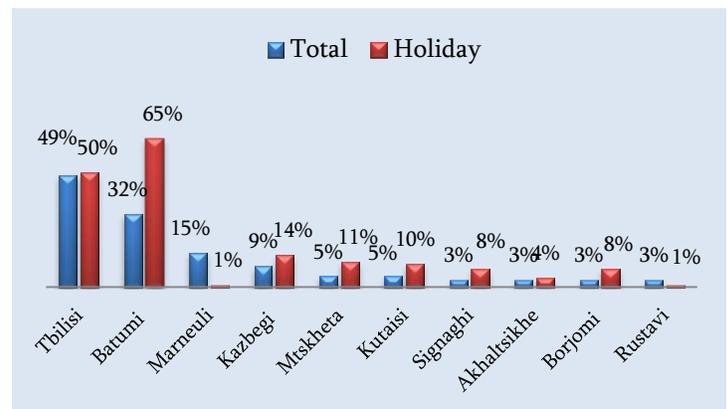
**Table 3: Duration of Stay**

Country of residence	Average Overnights
Azerbaijan	1.9
Turkey	2.1
Russia	5.8
Armenia	1.3
Cent. And East. Europe	8.9
Other Europe	10.6
Other Countries	11.3

### What cities and regions do international visitors visit?

Nearly half (49%) of international trips were made to the capital city of Georgia, followed by 32% trips to Batumi. Other destinations were less visited. Among them Marneuli was the most popular (15%). Some other widely visited destinations were the following: Kazbegi (9%), Mtskheta (5%), Kutaisi (5%), Signaghi (3%), Akhaltsikhe (3%), Borjomi (3%) and Rustavi (3%) (Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Most Visited Destinations**

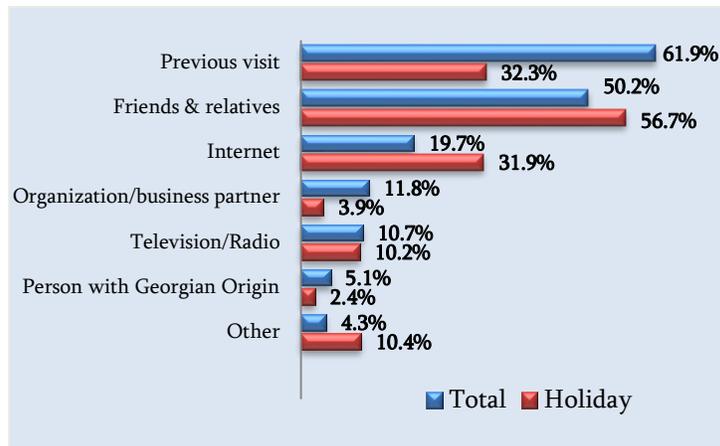


Most international trips on the regional level were made to the seaside region Adjara 33%, lower Kartli was next with 20% and Mtskheta-Mtianeti 14%. Other regions with significant number of visits were Samtskhe-Javakheti 10%, Kakheti 7% and Imereti 5%.

### What sources did international visitors use to find information?

Prior to traveling to Georgia, international visitors used various sources for obtaining information. 50.2% learned about the country from their friends or relatives, while 19.7% obtained information from the internet. More than a half of the visitors (61.9%) obtained information about the country from their previous visits. As expected, first time visitors used more information sources prior to the trip. “Friends and relatives” was most frequently applied information source 61%, while 43% obtained information on Georgia from the internet (Figure 6).

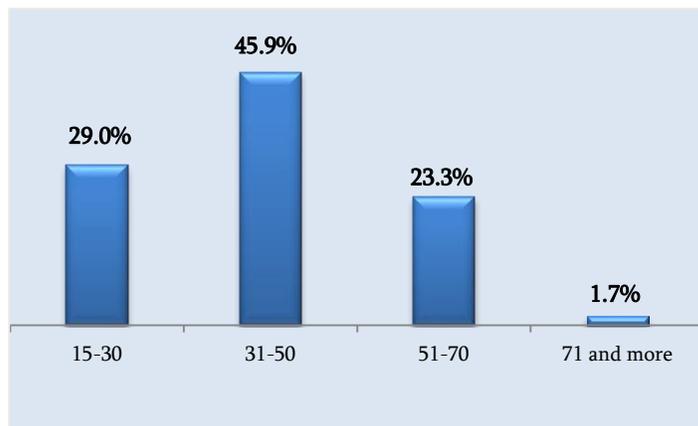
**Figure 6: Information Sources**



### What is the age and sex profile of international travelers?

The majority of the visitors surveyed were male (male – 64%; female – 36%). Visitors between 31-50 – 34 years old were the largest age group (46%) (Figure 7).

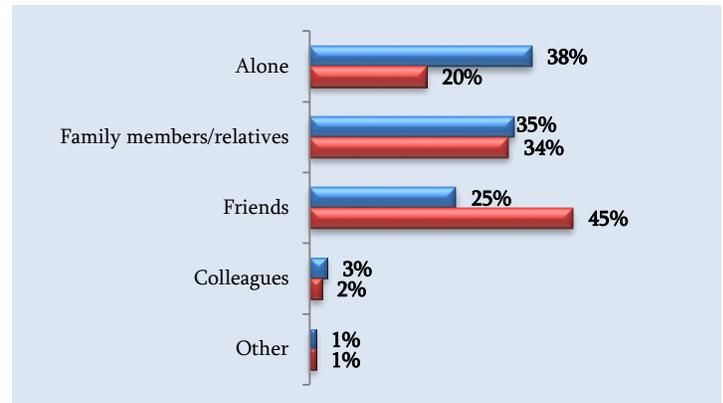
**Figure 7: Age Groups**



### Who do international visitors travel with?

38% of the international trips were made alone to Georgia, while others had at least one companion during the trip. A typical companion is a family member/relative (35%). Up to 25% of visitors were accompanied by friends (Figure 8).

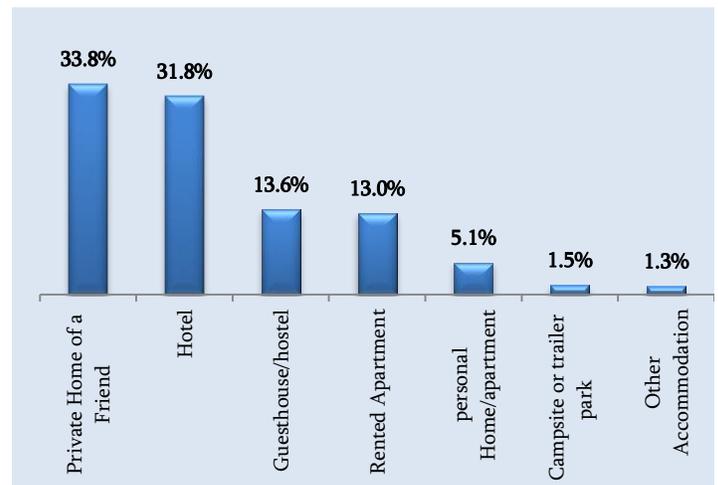
**Figure 8: Persons Accompanying on Trip**



### What accommodation types do they use?

Total nights spent by international visitors were 20,738,980. The most nights were spent in friends and relatives house 33.8%, while 31.8% of the nights were spent in hotel. Other types of accommodation are less utilized by international visitors (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Accommodation**



Though in the summer period the highest share of visitors came for visiting friends and relatives (33.9%). Significant share 31.9% stayed in hotels and rented accommodation 15.4%.

### How much do international travelers spend?

Total expenditure by international visitors during the estimation period was over 4.4 billion GEL and the average expenditure per visit was GEL 812.

The largest shares of visitors' expenditure go on served food and drinks (24% of total expenses) and Accommodation (24% of total expenses). 18% of expenditure was made on Cultural and Entertainment Services and only 15% was spent on shopping. Detailed breakdown of expenditures is given below (Table 4).

**Table 4: Expenditures**

Expenditure Components	Total Expenditure GEL (Thousand GEL)	Share of Total Expenditure
Served Food and Drinks	1,050,628	24%
Accommodation	1,027,485	24%
Cultural and Entertainment Services	800,937	18%
Shopping	637,567	15%
Domestic Ground Transportation	319,101	7%
Other Expenditure	543,953	12%

Visitors from "Other Countries" had the highest spending pattern and spend on average 2,225 GEL, followed by residents from "Other Europe" 1,635. Among the neighboring countries, the residents of Turkey had the highest average expenditure (1,040 GEL), while residents of Azerbaijan spent only 347 GEL on average, which is the lowest indicator (Table 5).

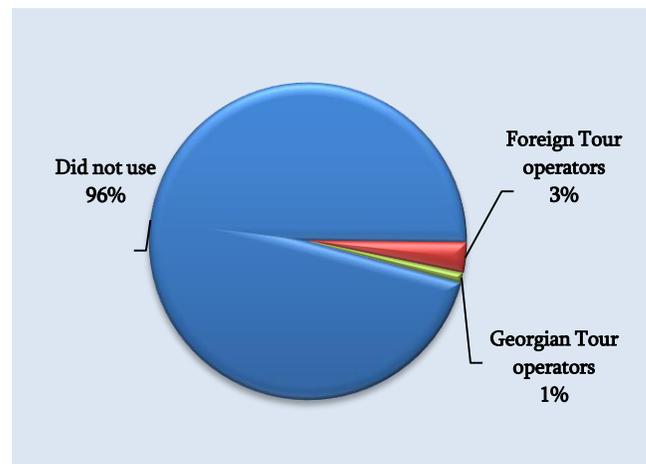
**Table 5: Average Expenditures by Countries**

Country Of Residence	Average Expenditure (GEL)
Azerbaijan	347
Turkey	1,047
Russia	941
Armenia	371
Central and Eastern Europe	1,436
Other Europe	1,635
Other Countries	2,225

### How many trips are part of tourist package?

Majority of international trips (96%) were conducted without utilizing tourist package. In total 422 million Gel was spent on tourist package expenditures in 2016 (Figure 10).

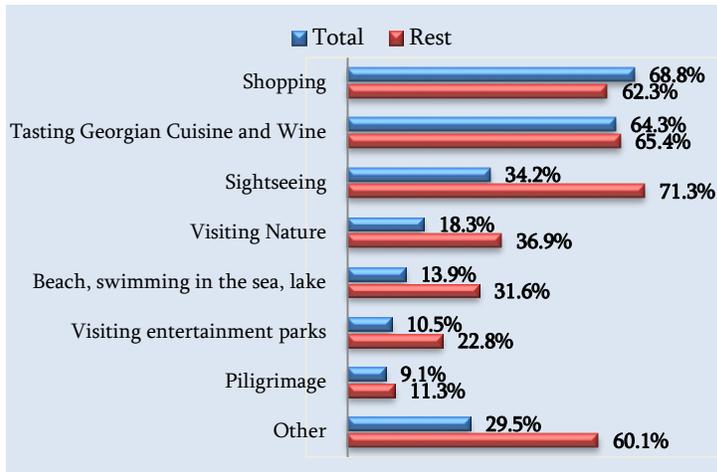
**Figure 10: Utilization of a Tourist Package**



### What are the popular activities and attractions?

Among the activities undertaken by visitors were: Shopping (68.8%), tasting Georgian cuisine (64.3%) and sightseeing, visiting cultural and historical heritage, museums (34.2%) (Figure 11).

**Figure 11: Activities**



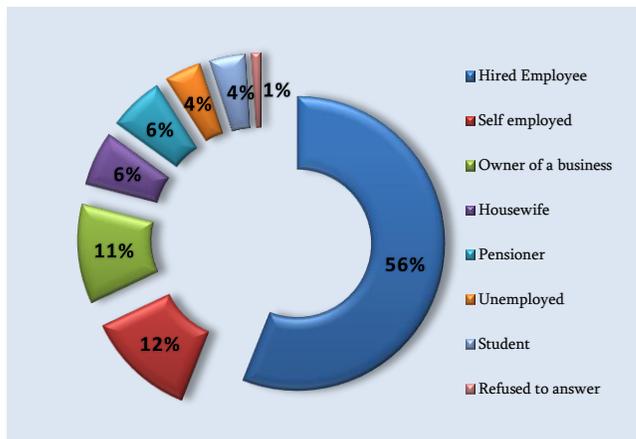
**How satisfied are international visitors?**

With regard to general satisfaction, 55% was very satisfied with the visit, 33% was satisfied and only 1% did not answer the question.

**Who are international visitors by occupation?**

Majority of international trips were conducted by hired employees (49.2%), followed by Owners of a business (which employs others) 13.2% and self-employed (without employed persons) visitors 11.5% (Figure 12).

**Figure 12: International Visits by Occupation**



**Methodology**

This report is based on the survey data provided by National Statistics Office of Georgia. The data was gathered via a survey using quantitative research techniques based on the

recommendations of the United Nations World Tourism Organization.

Interviews were conducted with international visitors aged 15 years or older who were leaving Georgia. The interviews took place at the checkpoints of each type of border (land, airport, railway and port).

**Table 6: Sample Size by Borders**

Type	Border	Sample Size
Airport	Airport Tbilisi	1572
Airport	Airport Batumi	240
Airport	Airport Kutaisi	300
Land	Sarpi	4392
Land	Vale	252
Land	Ninotsminda	432
Land	Sadakhlo	1488
Land	Tsiteli Khidi	1752
Land	Tsodna	504
Land	Kazbegi	1068

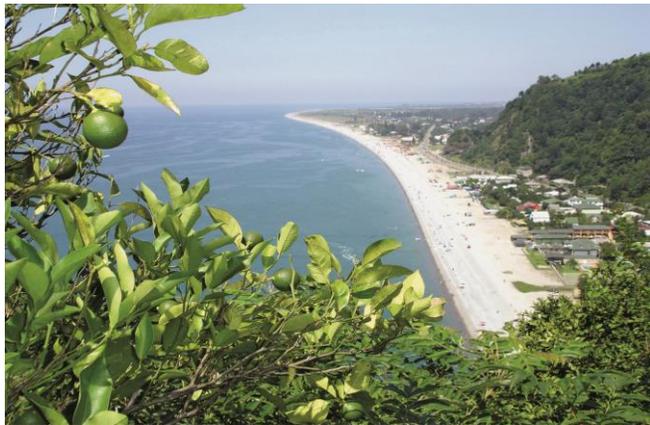
The document reports statistics of data gathered through 12,000 interviews. A stratified systematic sample method was applied to select respondents. The border checkpoint type was taken as a stratification variable. Data of border checkpoints was provided by ministry of internal affairs, information-analytical department. The final sampling unit was a resident of a foreign country aged 15 years and over. A brief description of the methodology is summarized below:

**Table 7: Description of Survey Methodology**

Survey method	Quantitative research
Survey technique	Face to face interviews
Survey areal	Georgia
Target group	International visitors aged 15 years or older
Sample size	12,000 respondents
Duration of interview	10-12 minutes

The data according to the country of residence is analyzed separately for neighboring countries – Turkey, Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. Other countries are grouped in three categories – Central and Eastern Europe, Other Europe and Other Countries.

In the category “Central and Eastern Europe” are grouped the following countries: Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.



In the category “Other Europe” the following countries are grouped: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Malta, Norway, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Those countries that were not placed in any of the above mentioned groups, due to small samples, were consequently grouped as “Other” Countries.

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