



Introduction

This report presents basic characteristics of international travel to Georgia for the period of 2015. 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.

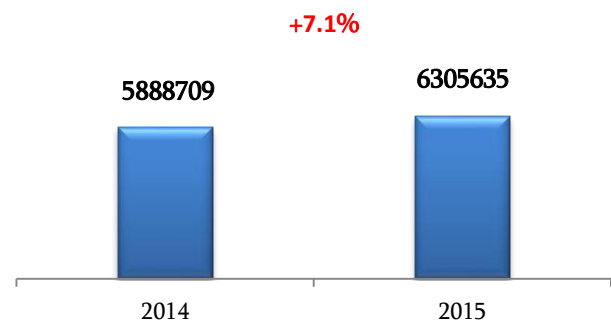
Significance of International Travel

International travel generates significant economic activity and employment in the world. Its direct contribution to World GDP and employment in 2015 was US\$ 2.2 trillion and it supported 108 million jobs. Taking account of its combined direct, indirect and induced impacts, total economic contribution in 2015 was US\$ 7.1 trillion in GDP, 284 million in jobs; US\$ 775 billion in investment; and US\$ 1.3 trillion in exports. This total contribution represents 9.8% of World GDP in 2015, 1 in 11 jobs, 4.3% of total economy investment and 6.1% of world exports.¹

International Traveler Trips

International traveler² trips in Georgia have been growing rapidly in recent years. In 2015, they reached a record number of 6,305,635, representing an annual growth rate of 7.1%.

Figure 1: International Traveler Trips by years



In 2015 the number of international visitor³ trips to Georgia amounted to 5,255,999. The majority of trips conducted by international visitors (excluding nonresident citizens of Georgia), 86.9%, were from neighboring countries. Only 13.1% were from other countries. Armenia was the leader in terms of international visitor trips - 1,191,777 (an increase of 11.8%), while Russia occupied first place in terms of growth (+111,737). There was also a significant growth in the number of trips by Azerbaijan (+52,775), Israel (+16,793) and Belarus (+9147) visitors. This growth was primarily the result of new direct flights, press trips and marketing campaigns administered by the Georgian National Tourism Administration.

¹ Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism 2016. Annual Update. World Travel and Tourism Council

² 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.

³ 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.

Table 1: International Visitor Trips Top 5 Countries

Country	2014	2015	Change %
Armenia	1,065,970	1,191,777	+11.8%
Azerbaijan	1,103,408	1,156,183	+4.8%
Turkey	1,136,703	1,074,065	-5.5%
Russia	651,282	763,019	+17.2%
Georgia (non-resident)	482,038	441,260	-8.5%

The largest share of international visitor trips in Georgia, 4,435,284 (84.4%), were by land transport, followed by 737,660 (14%) by air transport. Trips by rail and sea were 47,046 (0.9%) and 36,009 (0.7%), respectively. The busiest border was Sarpi, which saw 1,179,163 trips in 2015, amounting to 22.4% of all trips to Georgia. This was followed by Tsiteli Khidi (the Azerbaijan border) at 18.6%, and Sadakhlo (the Armenia border) at 16.8%.

Table 2: International Visitor Trips by Borders

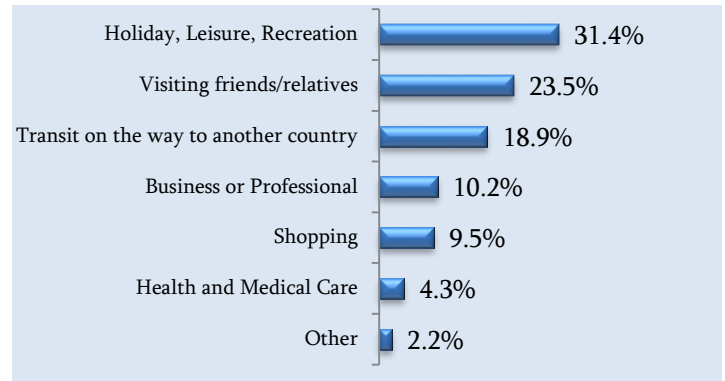
Border Type	2014	2015	Change %
Land	4,273,195	4,435,284	+3.8%
Air	639,919	737,660	+15.3%
Railway	50,767	47,046	-7.3%
Sea	40,450	36,009	-11.0%

A total of 57.3% (3,011,663) trips included at least one over-night stay, which by definition is a tourist trip. 42.7% were day trips (2,244,336).

What are the main purposes of international visitors?

International visitors most often travel for holiday, leisure or recreation purposes (31.4%). Other frequently observed visiting purposes include visiting friends or relatives (23.5%), transit (18.9%), business/professional trips (10.2%) and shopping (9.5%). Only 2.2% of visitors reported other purposes (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Purpose of Visit

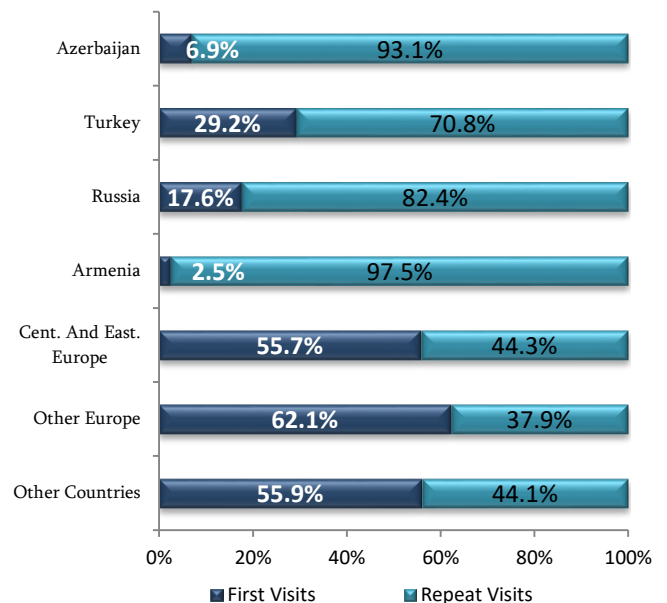


What is the share of the first time visits?

Out of the total visits, 81.4% were repeat visits and 18.6% traveled to Georgia for the first time. Thus, Georgia had up to 976,771 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 (97.5%), Azerbaijan (93.1%), Russia (82.4%) and Turkey (70.8%). In contrast, for many Europeans or residents of other countries, it was their first visit to Georgia (Central and Eastern Europe – 55.7%; other Europe – 62.1%; other countries – 55.9%) (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Visit Practice



How long do they travel for?

Visitors' average duration of stay was 3.4 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 5.3 nights in Georgia (Table 3).

Duration of stay was high for visitors from Europe (Central and Eastern Europe – 7.5 nights, Other Europe 9 nights) and other country (9 nights) categories.

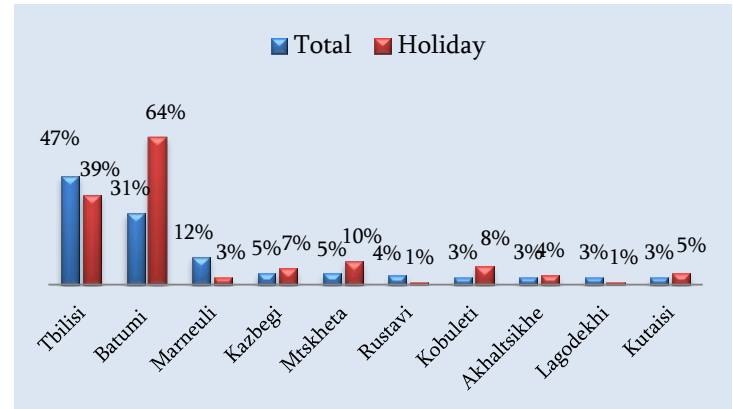
Table 3: Duration of Stay

Country of residence	Average Overnights
Azerbaijan	2.7
Turkey	2.1
Russia	5.3
Armenia	1.3
Cent. And East. Europe	7.5
Other Europe	9
Other Countries	9

What cities and regions do International visitors visit?

47.4% of international trips were made to the capital city of Georgia, followed by 30.7% trips to Batumi. Other destinations were less visited. Among them Marneuli was the most popular (12.3%). Some other widely visited destinations were the following: Kazbegi (5.2%), Mtskheta (4.9%), Rustavi (3.8%), Kobuleti (3%), Akhaltsikhe (2.9%), Lagodekhi (2.6%) and Kutaisi (2.6%) (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Most Visited Destinations

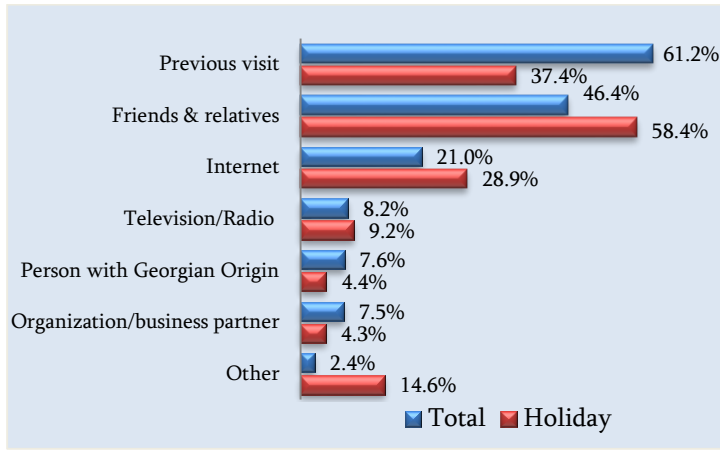


Most international trips on the regional level were made to Tbilisi 47.4%, seaside Ajara was the next with 32%, Lower Kartli 19.6% and Mtskheta-Mtianeti 10.5%. Other regions with significant number of visits were Samtskhe-Javakheti 8.2%, Kakheti 5.9% and Samegrelo – Upper Svaneti 3.5%.

What sources did international visitors use to find information?

Prior to traveling to Georgia, international visitors used various sources for obtaining information. 46.4% learned about the country from their friends or relatives, while 21% obtained information from the internet. 61.2% of the visitors 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 63%, while 38.2% obtained information on Georgia from the internet (Figure 5).

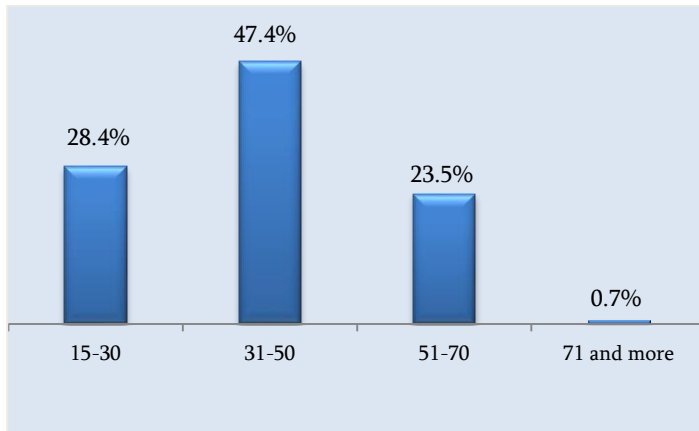
Figure 5: Information Sources



What is the age and sex profile of international travelers?

The majority of the visitors surveyed were male (male – 68.6%; female – 31.4%). Visitors between 31-50 years old were the largest age group (47.4%) (Figure 6).

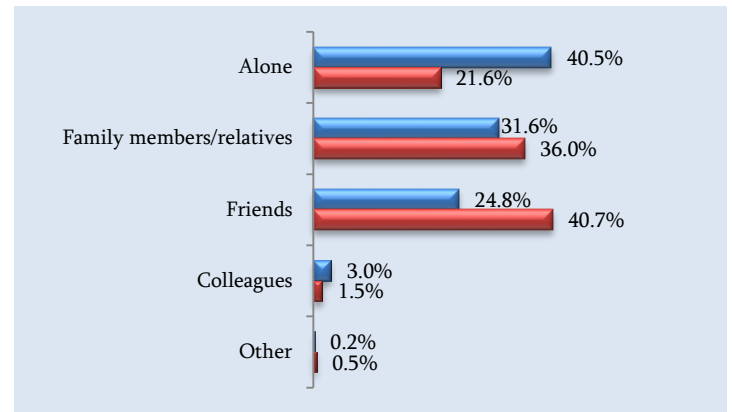
Figure 6: Age Groups



Who do international visitors travel with?

40.4% 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 (31.6%). 24.8% of visitors were accompanied by friends (Figure 7).

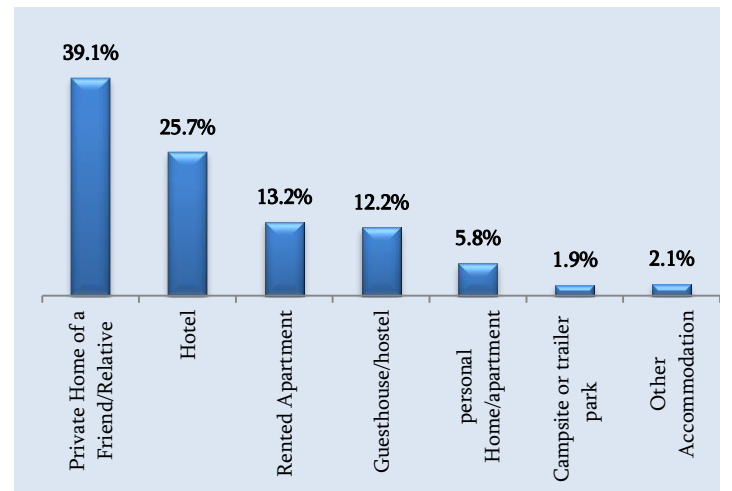
Figure 7: Persons Accompanying on Trip



What accommodation types do they use?

Total nights spent by international visitors were 17,725,492. The most nights were spent in private house of friend or relative 39.1%, while 25.7% of the nights were spent in hotel. Other types of accommodation are less utilized by international visitors (Figure 8).

Figure 8: Accommodation



How much do international travelers spend?

Total expenditure by international visitors during the estimation period was over 4.06 billion GEL and the average expenditure per visit was GEL 772.1.

The largest shares of visitors' expenditure go on served food and drinks (24.1% of total expenses) and on accommodation (19.8% of total expenses). 16.7% of expenditure was made on cultural and entertainment services and only 11.9% 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	978,176.7	24.1%
Accommodation	802,702.5	19.8%
Cultural and Entertainment Services	676,694.8	16.7%
Shopping	484,007	11.9%
Domestic Ground Transportation	268,088.9	6.6%
Other Expenditure	848,538.3	20.9%

Visitors from "Other Countries" had the highest spending pattern and spend on average 1,781.5 GEL, followed by residents from „Other Europe" 1,788.7. Among the neighboring countries, the residents of Turkey had the highest average expenditure (1,152.4 GEL), while residents of Azerbaijan spent only 420.8 GEL on average, which is the lowest indicator (Table 5).

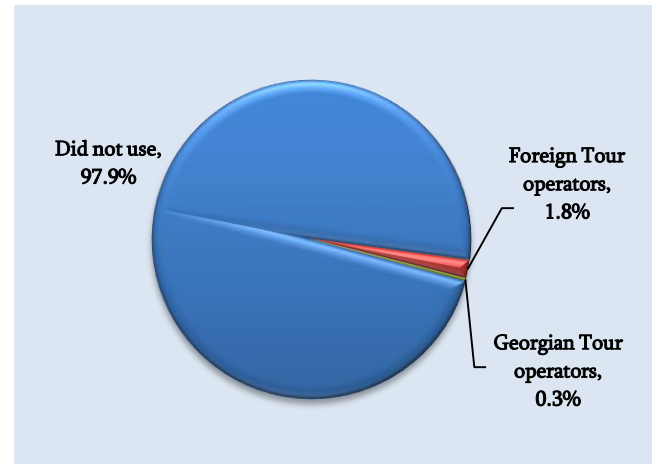
Table 5: Average Expenditures by Countries

Country Of Residence	Average Expenditure (GEL)
Azerbaijan	420.8
Turkey	1,152.4
Russia	720.6
Armenia	516.7
Central and Eastern Europe	1,128.1
Other Europe	1,788.7
Other Countries	1,781.5

How many trips are part of tourist package?

Majority of international trips (97.9%) were conducted without utilizing tourist package. In total 220.6 million Gel was spent on tourist package expenditures in 2015 (Figure 9).

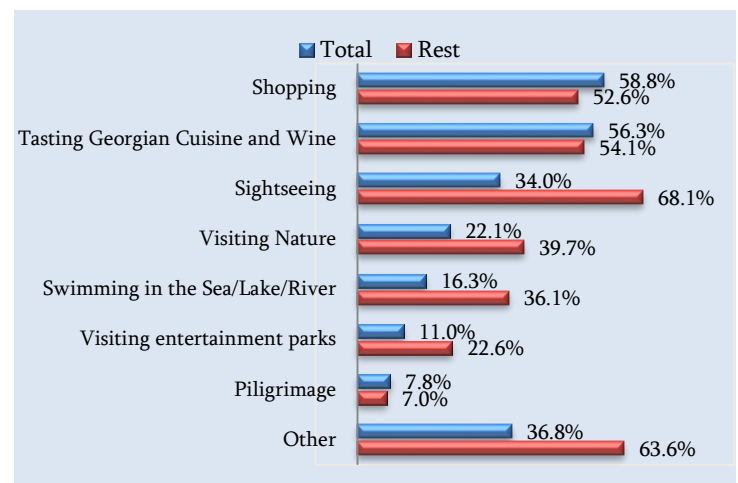
Figure 9: Utilization of a Tourist Package



What are the popular activities and attractions?

Among the activities undertaken by visitors were: Shopping (58.8%), tasting Georgian cuisine (56.3%) and sightseeing, visiting cultural and historical heritage, museums (34%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Activities



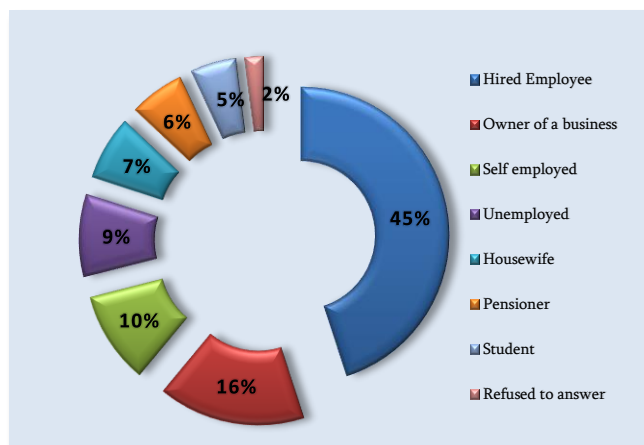
How satisfied are international visitors?

With regard to general satisfaction, 53.7% was very satisfied with the visit, 35.8% was satisfied and only 0.7% did not answer the question.

Who are international visitors by occupation?

Majority of international trips were conducted by hired employees (44.8%), followed by Owners of a business (which employs others) 15.8% and self-employed (without employed persons) visitors 10.2% (Figure 11).

Figure 11: 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.

This report was prepared by the Research and Planning Department of Georgian National Tourism Administration.

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Report is uploaded on the website of Georgian National Tourism Administration: www.gnta.ge