



Introduction

This report presents basic characteristics of international travel to Georgia for the period of year 2018. 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.

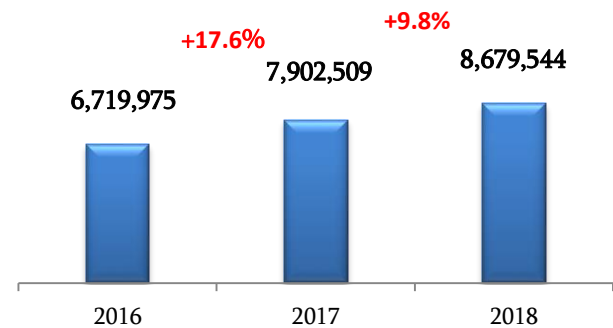
Significance of International Travel

International travel generates significant economic activity and employment in the world. Its direct contribution to World GDP and employment in 2017 was US\$ 2.6 trillion and it supported 118 million jobs. Taking account of its combined direct, indirect and induced impacts, total economic contribution in 2017 was US\$ 8.3 trillion in GDP, 313 million in jobs; US\$ 882 billion in investment; and US\$ 1.5 trillion in exports. This total contribution represents 10.4% of World GDP in 2017, 1 in 10 jobs, 4.5% of total economy investment and 6.5% of world exports.¹

International Traveler Trips

International traveler² trips in Georgia have been growing rapidly in recent years. In 2018, they reached a record number of 8,679,544, representing an annual growth rate of 9.8%.

Figure 1: International Traveler Trips by years



In 2018 the number of international visitor³ trips to Georgia amounted to 7,203,350. The majority of trips conducted by international visitors (excluding nonresident citizens of Georgia), 77.3% (5,196,808), were from neighboring countries. Only 22.7% (2,006,542) were from other countries. Azerbaijan was the leader in terms of international visitor trips – 1,424,610 (an increase of 9.5%), while Russia occupied first place in terms of growth (+269,700). The highest growth in the number of trips by Russian visitors was registered in September (+40,454) and October (+32,590).

¹ Economic Impact of Travel and Tourism 2018. 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.

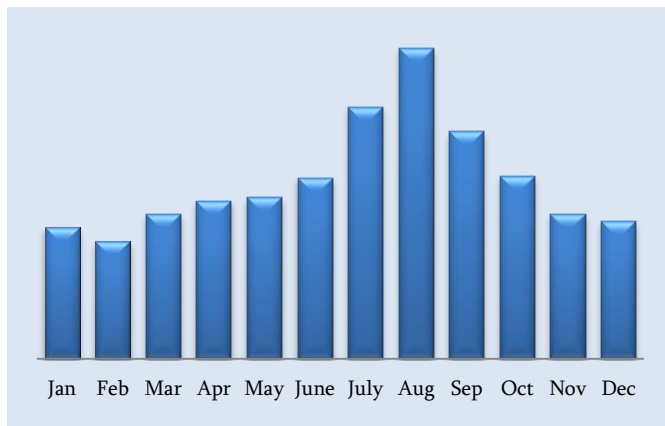
There was also a significant growth in the number of trips by Azerbaijan (+123,054), Turkish (+91,279) and Israeli (+41,882) visitors. This growth was primarily the result of new direct flights, press trips and marketing campaigns administered by the Georgian National Tourism Administration.

Table 1: International Visitor Trips Top 5 Countries

Country	2017	2018	Change %
Azerbaijan	1,301,556	1,424,610	+9.5%
Russia	1,135,057	1,404,757	+23.8%
Armenia	1,287,168	1,268,886	-1.4%
Turkey	1,007,276	1,098,555	+9.1%
Georgia (nonresident)	456,132	476,389	+4.4%

The most popular season among international visitors is summer. During this season, the number of trips was 2,492,924 (June: 606,792; July: 845,588; August: 1,040,544), which accounted for 35.6% of all trips (Figure 2).

Figure 2: International Visitor Trips by Month



The largest share of international visitor trips in Georgia, 5,314,984 (73.8%), were by land transport, followed by 1,788,417 (24.8%) by air transport. Trips by sea and rail were 32,471 (0.5%) and 67,478 (0.9%), respectively. The busiest border was Tbilisi International Airport, which saw 1,402,157 trips in 2018, amounting to 19.5% of all trips to Georgia. This was followed by Sarpi (the Turkish border) at 18%, and Kazbegi (the Russian border) at 15.7%.

Table 2: International Visitor Trips by Borders

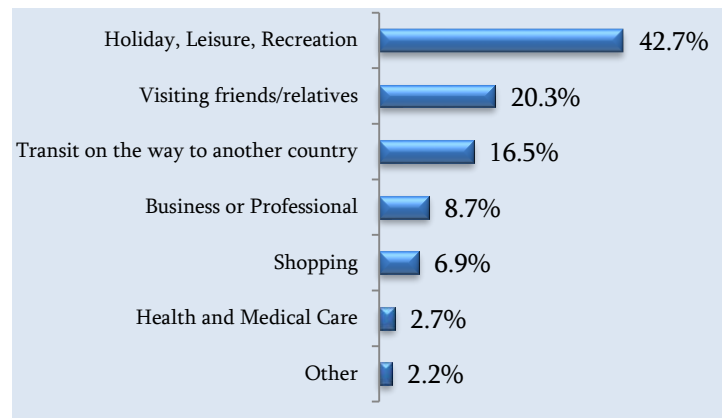
Border Type	2017	2018	Change %
Land	4,958,039	5,314,984	+7.2%
Air	1,439,689	1,788,417	+24.2%
Railway	53,416	67,478	+26.3%
Sea	31,686	32,471	+2.5%

A total of 66% (4,756,820) trips included at least one over-night stay, which by definition is a tourist trip. 34% were day trips (2,446,530).

What are the main purposes of international visitors?

International visitors most often travel for holiday, leisure or recreation purposes (42.7%). Other frequently observed visiting purposes include visiting friends or relatives (20.3%), transit (16.5%), business/professional trips (8.7%) and shopping (6.9%). Only 2.2% of visitors reported other purposes (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Purpose of Visit



More than half (51.2%) of visits during summer were made for holiday, leisure and recreation, in contrast with the winter period (January, February), when only 31.7% traveled to the country with this purpose. Compared to other periods, visiting friends/relatives is more frequent (30.9%) in the winter period.

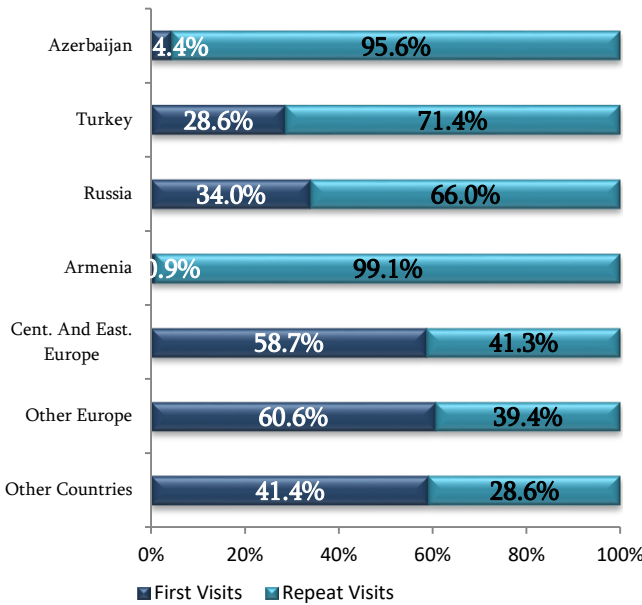
What is the share of the first time visits?

Out of the total visits, 72.9% were repeat visits and 27.1% traveled to Georgia for the first time. Thus, Georgia had up to 1,949,053 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 (95.6%), Turkey (71.4%) and Russia (66%). In contrast, for many Europeans or residents of other countries, it was their first visit to Georgia (Central and Eastern Europe – 58.7%; other Europe – 60.6%; other countries – 71.4%) (Figure 4).

The highest share of first-time visits was observed in the period July – August (14.9% and 17.6%), while in February only 3.3% first-time visits were registered.

Figure 4: Visit Practice



How long do they travel for?

Visitors' average duration of stay was 4.2 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 6.3 nights in Georgia.

Duration of stay was high for visitors from Europe (Central and Eastern Europe-7.7 nights, Other Europe 8.3 nights) and other country (7.2 nights) categories (Table 3).

The duration of stay was highest in September (5 nights) and shortest in November (3.2 nights).

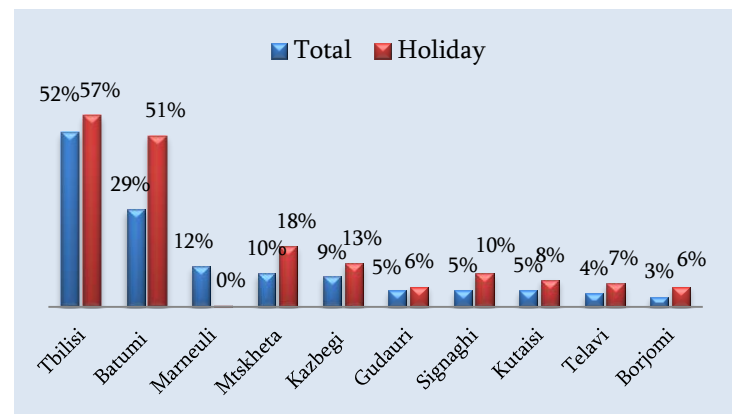
Table 3: Duration of Stay

Country of residence	Average Overnights
Azerbaijan	2.5
Turkey	1.6
Russia	6.3
Armenia	1.8
Cent. And East. Europe	7.7
Other Europe	8.3
Other Countries	7.2

What cities and regions do international visitors visit?

More than half (52.3%) of international trips were made to the capital city of Georgia, followed by 29% trips to Batumi. Other destinations were less visited. Among them Marneuli was the most popular (11.7%). Some other widely visited destinations were the following: Mtskheta (9.9%), Kazbegi (8.9%), Gudauri (4.9%), Signaghi (4.8%), Kutaisi (4.6%), Telavi (3.7%) and Borjomi (3.4%) (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Most Visited Destinations

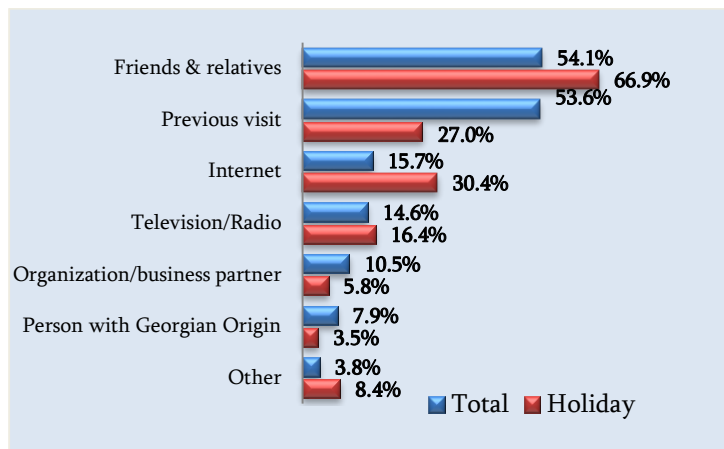


Most international trips on the regional level were made to the seaside region Adjara 30.4%, Mtskheta-Mtianeti was next with 19.5% and Lower Kartli 16.6%. Other regions with significant number of visits were Kakheti 8.6%, Samtskhe-Javakheti 8.2% and Imereti 5%.

What sources did international visitors use to find information?

Prior to traveling to Georgia, international visitors used various sources for obtaining information. 54.1% learned about the country from their friends or relatives, while 15.7% obtained information from the internet. More than a half of the visitors (53.6%) 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 73.1%, while 39.9% obtained information on Georgia from the internet (Figure 6).

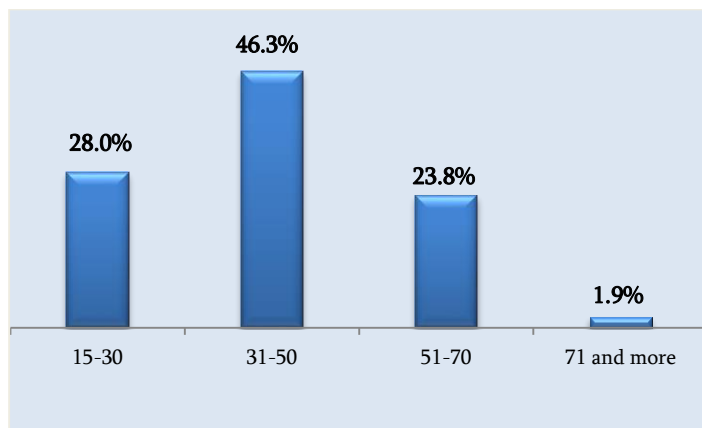
Figure 6: Information Sources



What is the age and sex profile of international travelers?

The majority of the visitors surveyed were male (male – 60.3%; female – 39.7%). Visitors between 31-50 years old were the largest age group (46.3%) (Figure 7).

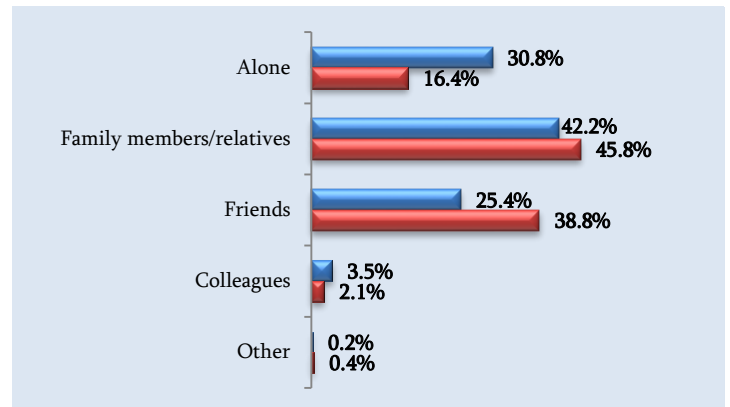
Figure 7: Age Groups



Who do international visitors travel with?

30.8% 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 (42.2%). Up to 25.4% of visitors were accompanied by friends (Figure 8).

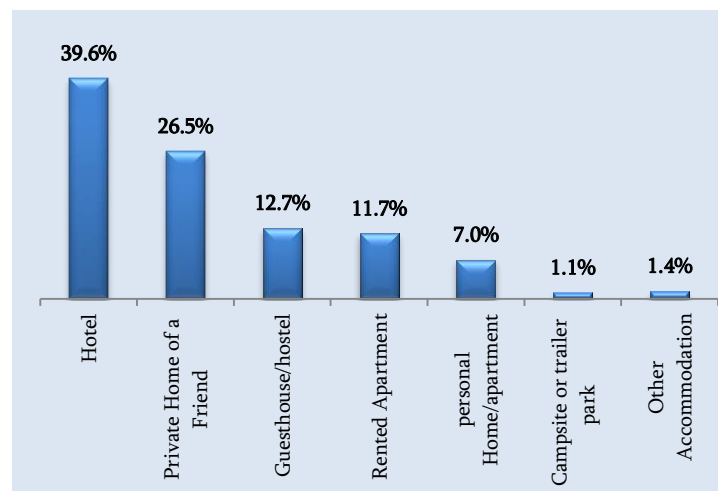
Figure 8: Persons Accompanying on Trip



What accommodation types do they use?

Total nights spent by international visitors were 30,183,344. The most nights were spent in hotel 39.6%, while 26.5% of the nights were spent in friends and relatives house. Other types of accommodation are less utilized by international visitors (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Accommodation



During the summer period the highest share of visitors (43%) stayed in the hotel. Significant share chose friends and relatives house (21.6%) and guesthouse/hostel (14.3%).

How much do international travelers spend?

Total expenditure by international visitors during the estimation period was over 7.9 billion GEL and the average expenditure per visit was GEL 1,099.1.

The largest shares of visitors' expenditure go on served food and drinks (28.6% of total expenses) and Accommodation (23.4% of total expenses). 18.1% of expenditure was made on Cultural and Entertainment Services and only 13.6% 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	2,266,881.1	28.6%
Accommodation	1,854,514.2	23.4%
Cultural and Entertainment Services	1,434,705.2	18.1%
Shopping	1,074,094.3	13.6%
Domestic Ground Transportation	560,769.3	7.1%
Other Expenditure	726,539.9	9.2%

Visitors from “Other Countries” had the highest spending pattern and spend on average 2,357 GEL, followed by residents from “Other Europe” 2,337. Among the neighboring countries, the residents of Russia had the highest average expenditure (1,326 GEL), while residents of Azerbaijan spent only 385 GEL on average, which is the lowest indicator (Table 5).

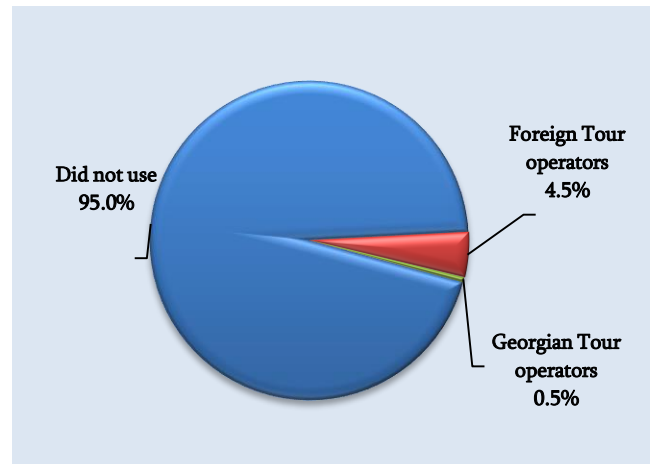
Table 5: Average Expenditures by Countries

Country Of Residence	Average Expenditure (GEL)
Azerbaijan	385
Turkey	923
Russia	1,326
Armenia	540
Central and Eastern Europe	1,888
Other Europe	2,337
Other Countries	2,357

How many trips are part of tourist package?

Majority of international trips (95%) were conducted without utilizing tourist package. In total 804.9 million Gel was spent on tourist package expenditures in 2018 (Figure 10).

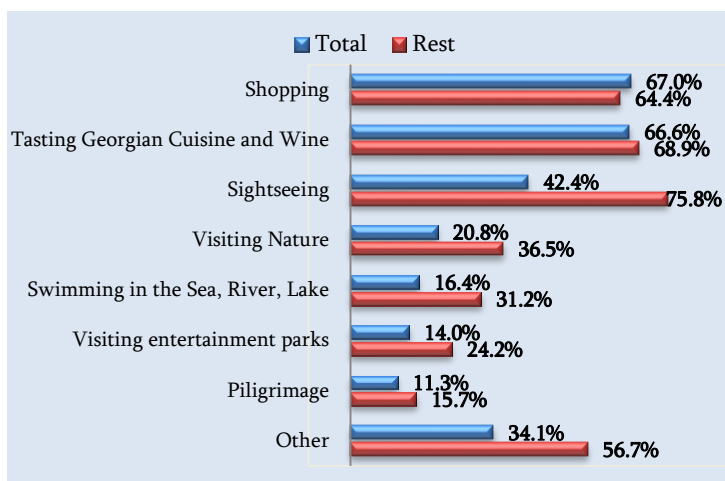
Figure 10: Utilization of a Tourist Package



What are the popular activities and attractions?

Among the activities undertaken by visitors were: shopping (67%), tasting Georgian cuisine (66.6%) and sightseeing, visiting cultural and historical heritage, museums (42.4%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Activities



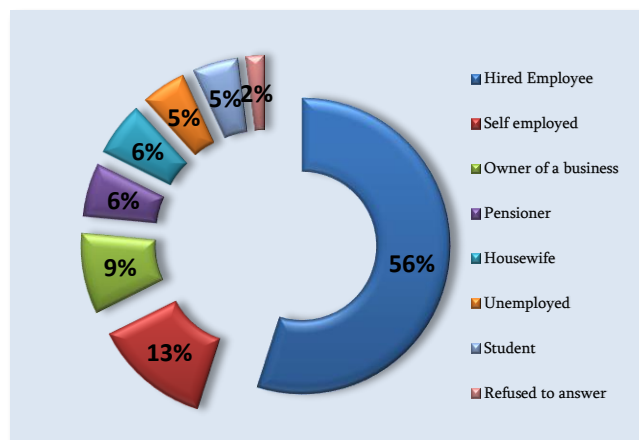
How satisfied are international visitors?

With regard to general satisfaction, 53.9% was very satisfied with the visit, 34.1% was satisfied and only 1.5% did not answer the question.

Who are international visitors by occupation?

Majority of international trips were conducted by hired employees (55.5%), followed by self-employed (without employed persons) 12.9% and Owners of a business (which employs others) visitors 8.7% (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 counties 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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