



SVANETI

TOURISM

DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY &

ACTION PLAN

***SVANETI
TOURISM
DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY &
ACTION PLAN***

PREPARED FOR UPPER AND LOWER SVANETI



ევროკავშირი
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GRETA

მწვანე ეკონომიკა: მდგრადი საბითო ტურიზმი და ორგანული სოფლის მეურნეობა
GREEN ECONOMY: SUSTAINABLE MOUNTAIN TOURISM AND ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

საქართველოში / IMPLEMENTED



ავსტრიის
განვითარების
საბანდო

SUBMITTED TO:

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Austrian Development Agency
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Disclaimer:

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SUBMITTED BY:

*Caucasus Consulting Group LLC
Vano Vashakmadze, Director/co-founder
Tbilisi, Georgia*



In a Joint Venture with:

*Solimar International Inc.
Chris Seek, Chief Executive Officer
Washington, D.C., USA*

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Nature

Culture



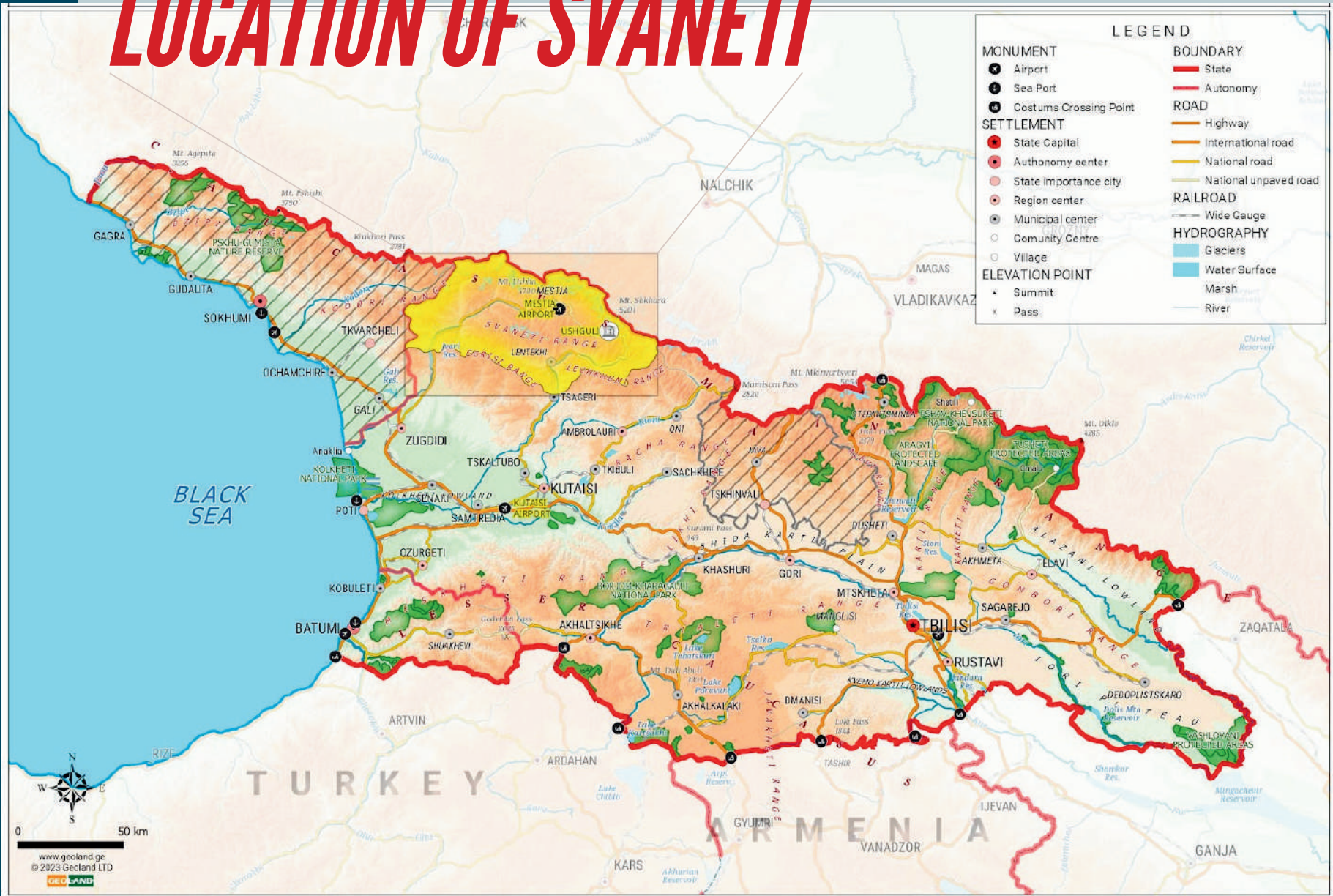
Adventure



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2019-2023 Green Economy: Sustainable Mountain Tourism and Organic Agriculture (GRETA) project is being implemented by The Austrian Development Agency (ADA), with the financial support from the Delegation of the European Union (EU), Government of Sweden and the Federal Government of Austria. This project aims to:

- improve the business environment for organic agriculture and sustainable mountain tourism
- create new and improved income opportunities in sustainable mountain tourism and organic agriculture
- and strengthen the capacity of stakeholders active in these sectors.

As an activity under the GRETA project, the drafting of a Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan (“the Plan”) for the region of Svaneti was assigned to the joint venture of Caucasus Consulting Group LLC and Solimar International Inc in January 2023. The full document is designed to be utilized by stakeholders in the Svaneti region to advocate for themselves and to coordinate actions between public and private sector at municipal, regional and national levels. The information can also be used to attract development aid and government funds to improve infrastructure and municipal services, and with that, create conditions to insure sustainable development and competitiveness of the Svaneti region.

In May 2023, the research and analysis (phase 1) for the Strategy and Action Plan was completed, entailing desk and field research, stakeholder consultations with local government, tourism entities, businesses, and residents in Svaneti. This effort produced a comprehensive 100-page document with the Situation Analysis of the region's tourism industry, capturing visitor trends and demographics, infrastructure, challenges, and attractions for both winter and summer seasons. The analysis served as a foundation for the tourism development vision, strategy, objectives and action plan.

Phase 2, another 100+ page document that is summarized in this publication, acts as a comprehensive roadmap for the future development of Svaneti as a world-class mountain tourism destination. It is structured with five strategic objectives followed by interventions and an action plan matrix with responsible parties, estimated budget and timelines, as well as key performance indicators. This work reflects information about a wide range of factors that directly or indirectly impact tourism development: geographic, political, marketing, urban planning, public services and infrastructure, cultural heritage, resorts, economic statistics and more. The subject of the Plan is not only the tourism centers, but focused on overall opportunities in the target municipalities, linked with the neighborhood regions, remote valleys, villages and less visited areas, and on new products that can be developed within 1-5 years. The ultimate goal is to maximize the economic and social benefits of tourism while preserving the region's unique cultural and natural heritage.

DESTINATION OVERVIEW

SVANETI IS A BREATHTAKING DESTINATION THAT COMBINES THE STUNNING NATURAL BEAUTY OF THE CAUCASUS AND ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES WITH RICH SVAN HISTORY AND CULTURE.

Situated in the Western part of Georgia on the southern slopes of the Great Caucasus mountain range, Svaneti is considered the highest and the most populated place in the Caucasus mountains. The region is home to some of the most dramatic mountain landscapes in Europe, including the highest peak in Georgia, Mount Shkhara (5,193 m), the mysterious white pyramid of Mt. Tetnaldi (4,858 m), and the iconic two-horn summit of Mt. Ushba (4,710 m). During the winter months, adventure seekers can hit the slopes at the nearby ski resorts or explore off-piste surrounded by towering peaks; while in the summer they can embark on challenging treks through lush forests, along winding rivers, and past cascading waterfalls; and all throughout year experiencing centuries old traditions and hospitality of the local communities.

The cultural heritage of Svaneti is of great value not only to Georgia but also to the world. Many small hall churches contain treasures of Georgian art and spirit, including engraved and painted icons, carved wooden doors, illuminated manuscripts, elaborate crosses, and wall paintings. Additionally, Svaneti is home to approximately 200 medieval defense towers. In 1971, the Ushgul-Chazhash Nature Reserve was created to preserve the Svan architecture. In 1996, Ushguli (a community of four mountain villages) was included on the World Heritage List as a cultural-architectural monument of unique outstanding value, with subjects of magic and cult still alive in the ethnographic existence of the Svans. Foodies will also find plenty to love in the region, with its traditional dishes like Kubdari, Chvishtari, honey and cheese produced by local farmers.

THE DESTINATION IS DIVIDED INTO UPPER AND LOWER SVANETI, WHICH ARE SEPARATED BY THE SVANETI RIDGE, WHERE TWO MAIN PASSES ARE LOCATED - LATPAR AND ZEKAR PASSES.

Zemo Svaneti (Upper) encompasses the municipality of Mestia, which is the largest municipality in Georgia by territory. The town of Mestia serves as the municipality's center, which includes 17 administrative units. According to the latest available data from 2021, approximately 9,500 people reside in the municipality of Mestia, 1,900 residents in the town of Mestia and the rest living in 11 communities and 153 villages.

Lentekhi municipality one of four within the Racha-Lechkhumi and **Kvemo Svaneti (Lower)** region, and one of the smallest municipalities by population in Georgia. Lentekhi serves as the municipality's center and comprises 55 settlements, one township, and 54 villages. According to the latest available data, approximately 4,200 people reside in the Lentekhi municipality among 7 communities, with a population decrease by 50% in the past decade.

	Zemo Svaneti	Kvemo Svaneti
Annual Average Temp	5.7°C	9.4°C
Coldest Temp (January)	-6.4°C	-1.8°C
Warmest Temp (July)	16.4°C	20°C
Annual Rainfall	1035mm	1240mm
Population (as of 2021)	9.500	4.200
Altitude	Mestia: 1.500m	Lentekhi: 760m

OUR VISION

To create a thriving and sustainable tourism industry that establishes Svaneti as a globally recognized and sought-after destination offering exceptional winter and summer experiences for adventure-seeking travelers, which brings economic prosperity to the region while preserving its unique cultural heritage and natural beauty.



This tourism development vision is further defined by the following 5 strategic objectives, which provide the broad goals or desired outcomes that the destination aims to achieve over a specified period. These objectives serve as guiding principles for decision-making and resource allocation in order to enhance the destination's overall competitiveness, sustainability, and attractiveness. They were developed from the destination's vision, stakeholder input, and an analysis of market trends and competitive landscape by a panel of industry experts.

The next level of detail in the plan offers strategic interventions or initiatives, which are the specific actions, projects, or programs implemented to support the achievement of the strategic objectives. These interventions are designed to address key challenges, seize opportunities, and bring about positive changes in the destination. They serve as the practical steps that contribute to the realization of the destination's strategic vision. Strategic interventions or initiatives can vary depending on the specific needs and characteristics of a destination, but typically include infrastructure development, product diversification, marketing and promotion, capacity building, sustainability initiatives, stakeholder collaboration, and destination branding and positioning. Each of these topics are considered in the following sections.

By implementing this Tourism Development Strategy, we will position Svaneti as a world-class destination for winter and summer activities, offering unforgettable experiences to visitors from around the globe.

Improve infrastructure and public services for a better living and recreation environment **OBJECTIVE 1.0**

This goal involves utilizing natural and man-made resources to support the local economy sustainably, focusing on initiatives like secure municipal services, urban planning, energy supply, transportation, water management, and waste disposal. The strategy aims to integrate tourism while respecting cultural heritage, addressing climate change, and maintaining authenticity. Innovation in mobility and public services is also crucial for accessibility, and collaboration among stakeholders is emphasized to ensure a thriving environment that supports both the local community and tourism industry. This integrated approach seeks to guarantee reliable resources, promote sustainability, and preserve the region's unique identity and natural beauty.

1.1 Urban and land use planning to preserve the region's unique historic settlements and urban architecture as a key attraction for visitors.

The conservation, preservation, and development of the urban environment fall under the purview of urban planning and land-use planning documents, along with their enforcement regulations, to be endorsed and approved by the Municipalities. While Mestia municipality possesses such planning documentation, its approval is pending. Lentekhi municipality lacks an urban planning document, making its development essential to enhance the urban landscape, attract visitors, and ensure sustainable development. The elaboration of these documents requires input from a multidisciplinary group of experts.

1.2 Tourism infrastructure development in accordance with the urban plans and development investment

Creating essential amenities like ski lifts, energy supply, accommodations, dining, and recreational spaces is the aim of this initiative. Given limited local capacities, effective coordination among investment planners, developers, infrastructure authorities, and municipalities is pivotal. The responsible organization should ensure adherence to international mountain tourism best practices and stewardship. In Mestia, priorities include finalizing Seti square's construction, linking urban development with the Museum and ski-lifts, and enhancing road connections to Tetnuldi ski station. For Lentekhi, the focus is on rehabilitating the Museum, evaluating a new ski area, and revitalizing Makhashi village. These efforts, alongside the Shikhareshi airport construction, aim to integrate Svaneti into the national tourism network.



1.3 Establish a sustainable energy supply, addressing conflicts between public and private interests regarding electricity usage

The local community, situated along the Enguri river watershed, benefits from free electricity generated by the Enguri Hydro Power Plant (HPP), leading to the need for a revised energy subsidy system. To stabilize consumption and payments, a combination of fixed subsidies with commercial tariffs is needed. Improvements to energy networks and the integration of small and medium-scale hydroelectric plants for municipal and private use are recommended. Subsidizing residential energy and implementing varied tariffs for commercial and non-commercial users are also vital steps. The pre-feasibility study for a natural gas supply infrastructure further enhances the region's energy sustainability.

1.4 Enhance regional roads, access and connectivity

The region faces challenges in prioritizing investment needs while considering tourism development and socio-economic requirements of communities. This involves improving access to tourist sites, ski facilities, valleys, and villages like Mazeri, Adishi, and Nakra. Additional attention is placed on stimulating investment in hospitality businesses and socio-economic regeneration in remote valleys. The state's rehabilitation of the Zugdidi-Jvari-Estia-Lasdil road is a national priority. In Mestia, reliable road conditions are vital for tourism growth, especially during winter, while improving internal roads can expand access to neighboring tourist regions. In Lentekhi, prioritizing key locations and feasibility studies are recommended to attract private sector interest and investment, including the possibility of re-establishing alpine camps.

1.5 Develop public transportation to improve accessibility and benefit both locals and tourists

Currently lacking public options, this initiative draws inspiration from successful European destinations like Stubai Valley, highlighting the value of public-private collaboration. A well-organized public transport system, potentially included in ski passes, can extend tourism operations to farther areas and communities. The example of Tetnuldi ski lifts and Mestia demonstrates the potential impact. In Mestia, circular routes and regular minivan/bus services can connect key destinations, while a regional circular route can link Upper and Lower Svaneti, enhancing accessibility during peak tourism seasons. Lentekhi is poised to benefit as well, offering transport options for visitors exploring villages along the Tskhenistkali and Lakhamula rivers.



1.6 Improve national and international access to Svaneti

The region's connection to Georgia relies on the Zugdidi-Mestia road and the Tskhenistskali River route, both presenting challenges and requiring maintenance. The construction of a tunnel connecting Upper and Lower Svaneti is a significant project planned by the government to enhance connectivity. Additionally, reassessing the economic viability of re-establishing an airport in Chikhareshi/Lentekhi is recommended, with the potential for small airplane flights connecting major airports to Mestia and potentially Chikhareshi/Lentekhi in the future, following the success of Mestia Airport's subsidized year-round flights. This approach is seen as an opportunity for increased international visitor access with higher economic returns.



1.7 Address water supply and wastewater issues

While Mestia town has a proper water supply system, other areas, including popular tourist spots, rely on untreated spring water systems. Urgent attention is required, and targeted investments through public funds via the national-level state company UWSUC or municipal-level MDF are recommended. Upgrading Mestia's water supply system is a priority due to insufficient flow and water quality challenges. Wastewater treatment is also crucial; a wastewater treatment plant contract for Mestia is being renegotiated. Most Svaneti communities use artisanal water systems, with only a few having wastewater treatment units. Urgent wastewater treatment solutions are needed for numerous villages, including Ushguli, Kala, Adishi, Mulakhi, Ipari, Tsvirmi, and others. Similar challenges exist in Lentekhi, where water supply and wastewater treatment require attention for towns and villages along the central highway. State procurement initiatives are underway for improving water supply systems, highlighting the critical need for water and wastewater infrastructure development.

1.8 Address solid waste management challenges

Current waste disposal involves long distances to distant landfill sites, posing difficulties due to inaccessibility. The region's waste management, in alignment with the National Regional Strategy, uses a waste transfer station without establishing regional landfills, involving municipal services in waste removal. Urgent tasks encompass improving waste removal efficiency through road development, providing technical equipment, and personnel training. Key actions include implementing separate municipal waste collection, promoting waste separation education, and introducing Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for eco-friendly product design. The Waste Management Company plans new transfer stations in Mestia and Tsageri municipalities, aiming to enhance waste management, decrease transportation distances, and reduce operational costs.



OBJECTIVE 2.0

ENHANCE SVANETI'S UNIQUE SELLING PROPOSITION BY CREATING WORLD CLASS TOURISM PRODUCTS

This strategy proposes developing top-tier offerings to attract adventure-seeking tourists while showcasing the cultural and natural heritage of the Svan people. Initiatives encompass off-piste skiing promotions, ski trail expansion, hosting international events, revitalizing historic areas, heritage trails, and connecting communities via equestrian, biking and hiking trails. Svaneti's ski resorts, Hatsvali and Tetnuldi, offer exceptional off-piste skiing, with plans for new trails and a ski-touring network. International events like the Guide's Marathon enhance the region's reputation and industry collaboration. The creation of heritage and adventure trails, along with hospitality and entertainment improvements, ensures a memorable stay for visitors. These efforts position Svaneti as a world-class adventure tourism destination, catering to diverse market segments and providing unforgettable experiences amid its unique cultural and natural landscapes.

2.1 Promote unlimited off-piste skiing opportunities around Tetnuldi ski-area

Unlike many developed ski resorts that restrict skiing beyond groomed slopes, Svaneti's ski resorts offer the freedom to explore. Hatsvali and Tetnuldi, with modern lifts and quality groomed slopes, provide an exceptional experience. Hatsvali features a "home run" winding through the forest, set to expand with new slopes connecting to Mestia. Tetnuldi, known for its captivating mountain landscape, attracts freeride enthusiasts and experts, spanning from 2200 to 3200 meters. Planned development by the Mountain Resorts of Georgia includes a new gondola station connecting Mulakhi village with the ski resort, further enhancing exploration and adventure possibilities in the area.

2.2 Develop new ski trails around existing resorts (Tetnuldi and Hatsvali) and beyond

Recognizing the growing popularity of ski-touring in Europe and North America, Svaneti seeks to tap into this trend by creating an expansive network of ski trails connecting valleys and resorts. Ski-touring enthusiasts, who constantly seek novel adventures, provide an opportunity for the region to establish affordable cabins, mountain huts, and accommodations along the trails, enhancing the experience. Spring to early summer is a prime season for ski-touring, bridging the gap between winter and summer. Ski-touring festivals and competitions can engage amateur athletes and capitalize on Svaneti's unique advantage of offering cross-runs connecting the upper and lower valleys, strengthening the region's appeal as an adventure destination.

2.3 Host international winter festivals and sporting events

This event strategy underscores the importance of collaboration with the Destination Management Organization (DMO) to facilitate networking and industry exchange. Svaneti has successfully organized Freeride World Tour (FWT) events, standing out as the sole destination outside the Alps and Japan to host these events. To solidify its status as a top freeski destination, Svaneti implements measures like on-site emergency rescue systems, qualified staff, mountain guides, and local organizing committees, supported by the government, national organizations, NGOs and international donors. Svaneti will host the Guide's Marathon, an acclaimed 7-day challenge for Certified Adventure Guides, in 2025, elevating Georgia's adventure tourism profile. Additional initiatives, such as the Guide's Competitions and Svaneti Hiking Festival organized with Highlander, contribute to positioning Svaneti as a premier adventure tourism hub, attracting enthusiasts and professionals globally, and reinforcing its reputation in the industry.



2.4 Develop a “heritage trail” that retraces historical events and folk festivals

This is a distinctive concept merging adventure travel with historical depth, capturing the essence of the region's past. Rooted in Svaneti's ancient heritage, the community's language, architecture, and cultural traditions thrive through religious holidays, folk festivals, and memorial events held in remote mountain sites. The initiative aims to create a thematic heritage trail interconnecting these significant locations, synchronized with the festival calendar to provide an immersive experience. One potential theme involves tracing the routes of renowned mountaineers who conquered Caucasus peaks during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, adding a compelling layer to Svaneti's rich history.

2.5 Revitalize historic villages and heritage sites for living history experiences

Moving beyond architectural preservation to cultivate vibrant living history encounters, this approach involves maintaining conservation while infusing vitality through genuine stories of the region's centuries-old inhabitants, distinctive dwellings and iconic towers. By organizing folk events, artistic festivals, culinary masterclasses, and cultural activities, immersive "living history" experiences can be offered, firmly establishing Svaneti as a destination rich in captivating narratives. Success hinges on prioritizing urban heritage sites with proper conservation status and active community participation, with Lahili and Lanchvali in Mestia exemplifying ideal opportunities for such revitalization efforts.

2.6 Connect historic communities “from valley to valley” with new equestrian, mountain biking and hiking trails

Currently, 80% of Svaneti's visitors use cars for travel between Mestia and Ushguli, leading to congestion and limited experiences. "From valley to valley" proposes an alternative, combining off-road drives with day-long hiking, trekking, and horseback riding along historic pathways connecting valleys without the main highway. Tours focus on villages with lodging capacity, catering to those interested in moderate activities like 4-5 hour day hikes. Local guides help design accessible trails, promoting this unique selling point for enriching visitor experiences. Svaneti's parallel valleys linked by historic routes provide opportunities for equestrian, biking, and hiking adventures.

2.7 Develop new regional trails connecting Svaneti, Samegrelo, Racha

This initiative aims to connect Upper and Lower Svaneti by developing new regional trails that traverse the Svaneti ridge via foot, horseback, bike, or 4WD vehicles. Despite historical and geographic divisions between these regions, the strategy seeks to reunite them into a cohesive destination. Ongoing road rehabilitation projects are set to improve connectivity between Ushguli and Lentekhi, creating a 4-5 day tour of Svaneti with varied travel modes. Shorter one or two-day journeys by foot, horse, or bike, integrated with 4WD travel, offer opportunities to cross the Svaneti ridge. Local guides have contributed to meticulously mapping and marking these trails.

2.8 Secure partners to promote concept of "guide-trail-hut-rescue"

Promoting the "Guide-Trail-Hut-Rescue" framework is an essential foundation for developing appealing, competitive, and secure adventure travel products. Based on the successful collaboration seen in Alpine countries between trail planners, guides, hut owners, and rescuers, the strategy seeks to establish partnerships among these groups. The initial focus is on popular trails, involving assessment of demands, ensuring safety, and bringing together various experts, including trail planners, guides, marketing specialists, and emergency services.

2.9 Enhanced hospitality and improved standards of accommodations, quality of food and entertainment

Svaneti should enhance its hospitality based on the concept of "Hosts and Guests" relationship, while also improving standards of accommodation, mountain huts, food quality, and entertainment offerings. Accommodation options should be diversified and comfortable, including traditional guesthouses and cozy mountain huts. Svaneti's culinary scene will be elevated by highlighting local ingredients and traditional recipes, offering visitors an authentic taste of the region. Cultural performances, storytelling sessions, and outdoor activities like horseback riding and guided hiking tours will provide entertainment and showcase the vibrant arts and folklore of Svaneti. By prioritizing safety and rescue measures, Svaneti aims to offer an exceptional and memorable hospitality experience that emphasizes the unique connection between hosts and guests.



OBJECTIVE 3.0

ESTABLISH A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION PROGRAM FOR MOUNTAIN TOURISM PROFESSIONALS

This objective aims to enhance the competitiveness of mountain tourism professions, improve the quality of services, and position Svaneti as a leading adventure tourism education hub. The plan includes setting up an adventure tourism school, creating professional education frameworks, obtaining international trainer accreditation, and implementing skills development programs for local businesses in the hospitality and transport sectors. This initiative recognizes the significance of training and education in delivering safe, high-quality, and enjoyable tourism experiences, which are essential for meeting the rising demand for adventure tourism services and ensuring the long-term success of Svaneti as a mountain destination. Collaborating with educational institutions, industry associations, and experienced professionals, Svaneti seeks to offer a range of training programs, workshops, and continuous development opportunities to ensure that guides and professionals possess the necessary skills, knowledge, and expertise. This investment in workforce development is crucial for enhancing visitor experiences, promoting sustainability, and boosting economic growth in the region.

3.1 Open an Adventure Tourism School branch in Mestia

The Adventure Tourism School (ATS), with a history dating back to the 1990s, has played a crucial role in educating local youth to become leaders in adventure tourism. Establishing a branch of ATS in Mestia, known as "ATS West Point," aims to enhance accessibility to adventure tourism education in Svaneti and surrounding regions. This proposed expansion has received support from key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, Skills Agency, Mountain Tourism Association, and more. The branch will offer a wide range of adventure tourism programs, providing formal education through a comprehensive Adventure Skills Pathway. ATS West Point aims to bridge educational gaps in rural areas, particularly for girls, and unlock opportunities in adventure tourism professions by offering specialized courses like Trekking Guide, Ski Guide, Rock Climbing Guide, Equestrian Tour Guide, and more. This initiative contributes to the region's long-term sustainability by addressing the need for qualified adventure tourism professionals and empowering local youth to pursue successful careers in the field.

3.2 Establish a Future Guides summer schools and Adventure Tourism Leader program

The program's primary focus is to provide essential adventure tourism skills, encompassing Risk Management, Outdoor Skills, Navigation, Leadership, and Teamwork. Technical expertise in adventure disciplines like Rock Climbing, Hiking, Canyoneering, Cycling, and more will also be offered. Collaborations with private companies and public organizations will support this initiative, fostering grassroots development of adventure skills in Svaneti. This approach aims to create a resilient guiding industry, reduce long-term training costs, and expedite the growth of certified professionals, enhancing the region's quality and diversity. By equipping Svaneti's youth with these skills, the initiative contributes to the area's long-term success as a premier adventure tourism destination, with an estimated enrollment of 100 students annually, a significant portion continuing their adventure tourism vocational education.

3.3 International accreditation of qualified trainers in adventure tourism education

To address the growing demand for adventure guides in Svaneti's tourism industry, ATS is striving to establish partnerships with respected international organizations like IFMGA and UIMLA to facilitate engagement with expert professionals from abroad. This collaboration aims to bridge the resource gap between the educational and commercial sectors by infusing the adventure tourism training process with valuable knowledge and skills from international experts. Securing funding is pivotal to compensate trainers' fees and bolster the Adventure Tourism Education at ATS West Point, contributing to the sustainable growth of the industry. Considering the student-trainer ratio for different activities, a target of at least 15 Guide Experts within a 5-year timeframe is set to meet diverse specialization demands. This initiative aims to ensure the availability of qualified trainers to support the surging interest in adventure tourism education.

3.4 Establish a multi-source financing mechanism for adventure guide training

In the realm of formal professional education in Georgia, funding primarily originates from state budget allocations, government agencies, public-private partnerships, and initiatives like the Ministry of Education & Science and Vocational Skills Agency. The Voucher System, managed by the Ministry of Education, offers full coverage for specific diploma courses, while the Vocational Skills Agency supports training and retraining programs. This system involves co-financing from both sectoral private enterprises and TVET providers. Additionally, donor and international aid organizations and diplomatic missions contribute to funding a range of Skills Industry programs, focusing on TVET promotion, gender equality, and support for vulnerable communities. While private sector involvement constitutes about 10% of TVET funding, potential for increased participation exists, indicating room for growth and development in Georgia's formal professional education landscape.



3.5 Promote mountain guiding professions through guide offices and enhanced services

This initiative seeks to motivate certified guides to establish a network of regional guide offices, delivering competitive services through internationally certified adventure guides. These offices will be crucial visitor resources, providing vital information on trail and mountain conditions. Collaboration with the local Destination Management Organization (DMO) is good for destination promotion, and guide offices can actively engage in international adventure tourism events to bolster these efforts. Leveraging their expertise and local insight, guide offices will also facilitate coordination with rescue services, huts, and trail managers, playing a central role in the region's adventure tourism landscape.

3.6 Enhance safety and risk management in mountain operations

Prioritizing safety in mountain operations is paramount for adventure tourism, necessitating a comprehensive strategy encompassing Policy, Institutional, Corporate, and Field dimensions. To bolster safety and risk management in Svaneti, an adventure tourism destination, collaborative efforts between ATS West Point, the DMO, and stakeholders are essential. The establishment of a concise non-formal training course on Safety and Risk Management by ATS West Point, tailored for tourism professionals, aims to enhance knowledge and skills. A safety awareness campaign, initiated by the DMO, targets stakeholders for active engagement in implementing safety measures. To facilitate crucial discussions and actions, an Adventure Tourism Forum will be formed, engaging the Mayor's Office, Guide Office, GNTA, MTA, and the Skills Agency. This platform addresses policy, legal frameworks, regulations, safety infrastructure, and more, ensuring Svaneti's reputation as a secure and appealing adventure tourism destination.



3.7 Support skills development for local hospitality and transport businesses

Local hospitality providers, including hotel, transport, and catering business owners, often have limited personnel, mainly consisting of family members. It is crucial to support their skills development and enhance their capabilities. Addressing local drivers' interpretation skills and knowledge of overland touring through language courses can significantly improve their performance and expand opportunities. Collaborating with the Skills Agency, GNTA, and stakeholders, Tetnaldi TVET College will assess skill gaps and design tailored training programs for providers, preserving authenticity to enhance visitor satisfaction and promote positive word-of-mouth for Svaneti.

3.8 Enhance the resort and trails management workforce

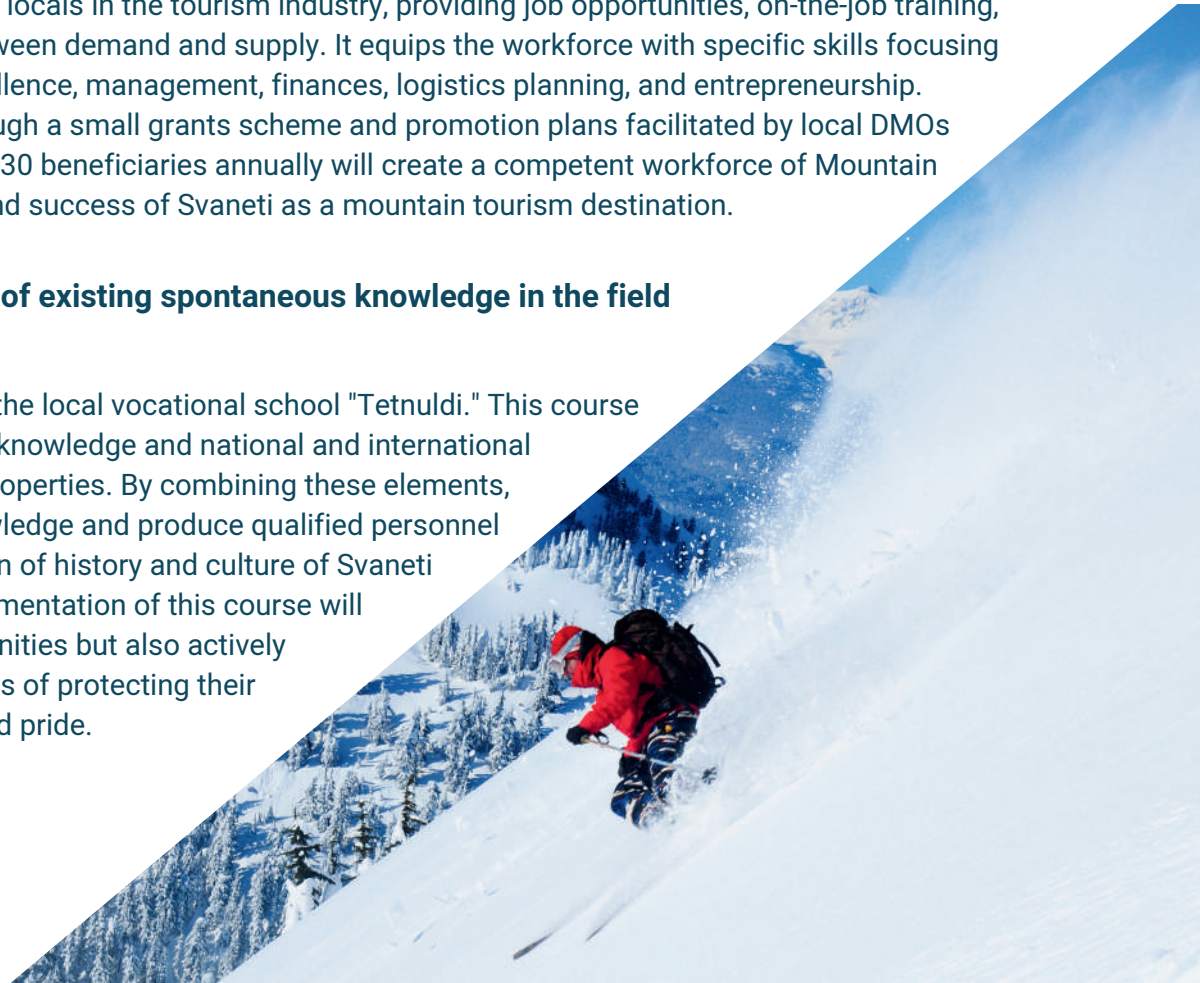
Ski resort personnel training programs, focused on cable car maintenance, snowcat mechanics, and box office operations, should be established through collaboration among Mountain Trails Agency, Tetnuldi College, and ATS West Point. Special emphasis should be given to training for overnight huts and mountain lodge personnel, strategically located and connected through trans-regional pathways and animal-drawn transportation. Additionally, a certificate course for Trail marking and maintenance should be developed to train specialists for trekking routes, benefiting local communities by creating job opportunities and increasing expertise in trail development. Adventure Guides, familiar with the environment and business operations, should be prioritized for training.

3.9 Mountain Host Campaign - a tailored vocational training program

The program trains Mountain Hosts and addresses the demand for high-quality service and authentic local experiences. This initiative offers an interim solution by engaging locals in the tourism industry, providing job opportunities, on-the-job training, and continued education to bridge the gap between demand and supply. It equips the workforce with specific skills focusing on sustainable tourism principles, service excellence, management, finances, logistics planning, and entrepreneurship. Successful graduates will receive support through a small grants scheme and promotion plans facilitated by local DMOs and stakeholders. Over five years, selecting 20-30 beneficiaries annually will create a competent workforce of Mountain Tourism Hosts who contribute to the growth and success of Svaneti as a mountain tourism destination.

3.10 Institutionalization and formalization of existing spontaneous knowledge in the field of cultural heritage

A new training course should be introduced at the local vocational school "Tetnuldi." This course will serve as a bridge between local traditional knowledge and national and international standards of valorization of cultural heritage properties. By combining these elements, the course will ensure the preservation of knowledge and produce qualified personnel who will be responsible for proper interpretation of history and culture of Svaneti to enhance experience-based travel. The implementation of this course will not only create additional employment opportunities but also actively involve the local youth and others in the process of protecting their own culture, fostering a sense of ownership and pride.





Promote Svaneti in the Global Adventure Market

OBJECTIVE 4.0

To promote Svaneti in the global adventure market, this strategy focuses on comprehensive marketing plans, online presence, storytelling campaigns, influencer engagement, collaboration with tour operators, and participation in adventure travel exhibitions. The goal is to establish a strong destination brand identity, differentiate from competitors, and attract specific market segments by emphasizing unique value propositions. Collaboration between the regional DMO and the national partner GNTA is essential to align marketing efforts and leverage GNTA's expertise. Online visibility through a dedicated website and engaging content, along with partnerships with influencers, tour operators, and travel agents, will extend Svaneti's reach. The strategy aims to position Svaneti as a premier adventure tourism destination by effectively targeting audiences seeking authentic experiences.

4.1 Create an Effective Annual Marketing Plan

Creating a 1-year marketing plan for Svaneti involves evaluating past marketing activities, brainstorming with tourism professionals, and benchmarking against other DMOs. Collaboration between Svaneti DMO and Imereti DMO is crucial due to the significance of Kutaisi International Airport. The plan should prioritize target markets, emphasize unique stories, and highlight Svaneti's natural beauty and adventure offerings. The Svaneti DMO, in consultation with key stakeholders, should draft the plan, aligning it with national tourism strategies and obtaining approval from a steering committee for transparency and effective implementation. This plan will guide strategic marketing efforts to attract visitors, foster tourism growth, and ensure a thriving industry in the region.

4.2 Develop and Maintain the Svaneti website

Developing and maintaining a comprehensive Svaneti website is essential for effective promotion. This platform should offer abundant information on local businesses, accommodations, attractions, events, and captivating storytelling. It needs to feature a user-friendly interface for residents to access essential resources and for visitors to showcase Svaneti's distinct offerings, such as its landscapes, cultural heritage, and adventure possibilities. The Tyrol website could serve as a valuable prototype for this endeavor.

4.3 Enhance the Online Presence of Svaneti

To bolster Svaneti's online presence, employ a strategic approach encompassing various online channels alongside offline contacts and partnerships. Engage with online travel platforms like Viator, Expedia, and GetYourGuide to tap into the global adventure-seeking traveler market. Collaborate with review networks such as Tripadvisor and Trustpilot to build credibility through positive traveler feedback. Utilize social media platforms including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to share captivating content and foster a community. Establish a dedicated YouTube channel to showcase Svaneti's beauty and activities. Lastly, nurture offline contacts and partnerships for referrals and collaborative ventures within the industry.

4.4 Create Svaneti Visitor Guide and Map

The guide should offer insights into the region's history, culture, attractions, accommodations, dining, and outdoor activities, while also including practical details like transportation and safety guidelines. The map should accurately depict landmarks, hiking trails, and points of interest. By providing these resources, visitors can plan their itineraries and navigate the region effectively, contributing to a more fulfilling Svaneti experience. Distributing these materials at key locations will ensure easy access for travelers.

4.5 Implement a Storytelling Marketing Campaign

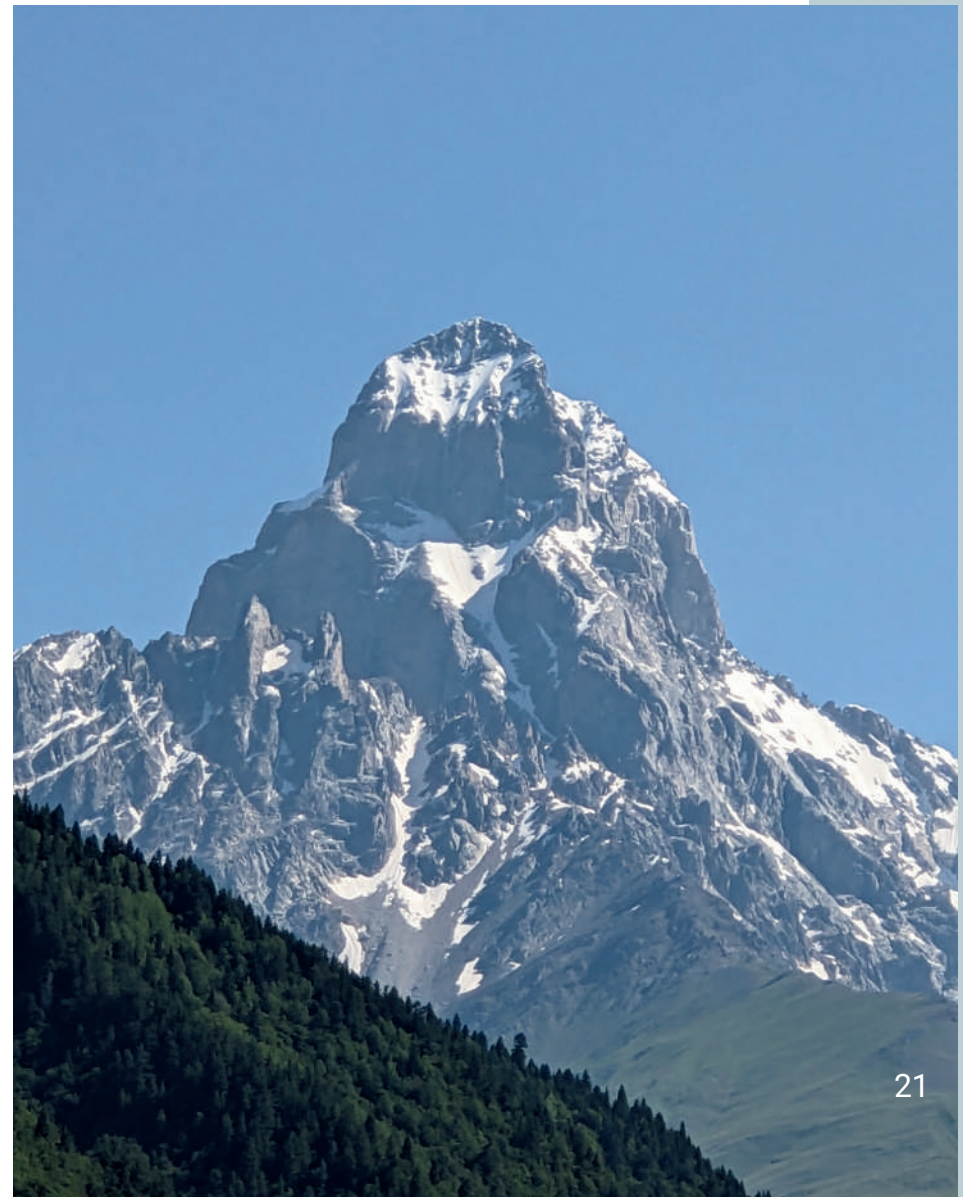
To showcase Svaneti's unique charm and cultural heritage, implementing a storytelling marketing campaign that crafts compelling narratives will emphasize the region's history, traditions, and local experiences. This approach engages audiences emotionally and encourages them to explore Svaneti. The campaign should leverage various platforms like social media, websites, blogs, and videos, using captivating visuals and well-crafted stories. Highlighting aspects such as breathtaking landscapes, vibrant festivals, folklore, and historical mountaineering expeditions can resonate with potential visitors. Collaborations with local storytellers and artists will infuse authenticity into the campaign, deepening its impact and connection with audiences.

4.6 Engage Content Creators and Influencers

By actively involving content creators and influencers in the marketing strategy and by partnering specifically with those who align with Svaneti's values and target audience, the region can leverage their creativity and reach to effectively promote its offerings. These collaborations can encompass sponsored trips for content creation, enabling influencers to share authentic and captivating experiences through photography, videos, blog posts, and social media updates that resonate with their followers.

4.7 Collaborate with Tour Operators and Travel Agents

To maximize and amplify the promotion of Svaneti's unique adventure travel offerings, the DMO should prioritize forging strategic partnerships with established tour operators and travel agents. By collaborating and working together with these industry experts, the DMO can design and promote adventure itineraries and packages that showcase Svaneti's unique offerings, ensuring seamless experiences for travelers. The collaboration could involve organizing study tours and inviting DMOs from Alpine countries for experience sharing. Collaborating with wholesalers opens distribution channels, while retail sector travel agencies can feature Svaneti in their brochures, reaching a wider audience of potential travelers.



4.8 Participate in Adventure Travel Trade Shows and Exhibitions

Active participation in renowned adventure travel trade shows and exhibitions is a standard practice for destinations and will amplify Svaneti's global presence in the adventure travel market. These platforms offer unique opportunities to enhance visibility, establish vital connections, and effectively showcase Svaneti's distinct offerings. Prioritizing engagement with key markets such as the United Kingdom, leveraging historical ties and media outreach, can attract British travelers. Participation in events like the World Travel Market in London enables direct interactions with British tour operators and travelers. In addition, captivating Germany and Northern Europe with Svaneti's blend of modern adventure and ancient culture necessitates participation in exhibitions like ITB in Berlin. Through proactive involvement in these events, Svaneti can effectively position itself, attract diverse travelers, and elevate awareness and interest in the region.

4.9 Launch Targeted Travel Theme Campaigns

European travelers seeking distinctive and untouched destinations may be captivated through focused DMO campaigns centered around themes such as: mountaineering, agritourism, gastronomic tourism, extended vacations, and exploration. Agritourism packages can spotlight Svaneti's rustic allure and agricultural heritage, offering farm stays, interactive encounters, and farm-to-table dining experiences for those desiring authentic connections with local culture. Culinary campaigns can showcase Svaneti's local cuisine, featuring traditional dishes, culinary events and masterclasses and partnerships with local eateries and producers to engage travelers with a passion for unique gastronomy. Positioning Svaneti as an immersive extended vacation destination can appeal to European travelers seeking in-depth exploration through extended stays, diverse activities, and cultural interactions. Lastly, promoting Svaneti's pristine landscapes and hidden gems can pique the interest of adventurers searching for unspoiled and off-the-beaten-path experiences. By crafting these thematic campaigns, Svaneti can attract a diverse range of European travelers and solidify its allure as a distinctive and captivating destination.





OBJECTIVE 5.0

Implement Efficient Destination Management Practices

The final objective of the strategy emphasizes the implementation of efficient destination management best practices in Svaneti. This objective acknowledges the importance of a well-functioning destination management organization (DMO) in developing and executing tourism strategies for destinations. It involves capacity building and enhancement of the region's DMO, ShanLand, to ensure effective coordination and collaboration among various stakeholders and to facilitate the majority of the initiatives in this Plan.

BENCHMARK DESTINATIONS

TIROL, AUSTRIA


A UNION OF MUNICIPAL TOURISM ASSOCIATIONS



Tirol Werbung, an official state-owned tourism marketing entity, plays a pivotal role in positioning Tirol as a desirable global mountain destination. Working in tandem with local businesses, tourism partners, and regional authorities, its core mission is to highlight the region's diverse attractions, from alpine landscapes and outdoor sports to cultural heritage, gastronomy, wellness, and events. It employs a variety of marketing strategies, encompassing public relations, advertising, digital marketing, and participation in international travel trade shows. Alongside its marketing functions, the DMO provides valuable support and resources to local tourism businesses, including market insights, networking opportunities, marketing tools, and promotional aid for their products and services. While Tirol Werbung focuses on marketing, sales, communications, and branding, individual destination management for specific areas within Tirol is managed by smaller municipal DMOs, including Innsbruck. These municipal DMOs collaborate through the Union of Tirol Tourism Associations (Verein der Tiroler Tourismusverbände), with coordination facilitated by the Tirol Tourism Board (TTB), comprised of representatives from the Tirol Region, the Chamber of Commerce of Tirol, the Union of DMOs (VTT), and the head of Tirol Werbung as a co-opted member.

TRENTINO, ITALY

THE DMO HEADQUARTERS AND ITS REGIONAL DEPARTMENTS




Trentino Marketing, established in 2015 under Trentino Sviluppo SpA, serves as the key tourism marketing organization for Trentino, Italy, collaborating closely with regional offices across the province's four areas. Unlike Tirol, Trentino's smaller size eliminates the need for a separate union of area DMOs. Instead, direct communication between regional offices and Trentino Marketing's headquarters in Trento ensures efficient coordination among the 11 represented destinations.

This structure facilitates innovative marketing campaigns, events, and initiatives that enhance the visitor experience and promote the region's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and unique offerings on a global scale. Through its strategic vision and collaboration with regional offices, Trentino Marketing continues to strengthen Trentino's position as a leading tourist destination, captivating the hearts and imaginations of travelers from around the world.

GRAND MASSIF, FRANCE

CORPORATION AND GOVERNMENT LED DESTINATION MANAGEMENT



The Grand Massif consists of renowned French mountain resorts celebrated for their stunning landscapes and skiing opportunities. Its management falls under Compagnie Des Alpes (CDA), a public-private partnership model company where the French government holds a notable 35% stake through Caisse des Dépôts et Consignations (CDC). This exemplifies the French resort management model, where corporations, partly state-owned, are key players. Regulatory frameworks are set by the national government, with centralized institutions issuing directives to ensure consistency and adherence to standards.

Unlike other benchmark destinations in northern Italy, Switzerland, or Austria, the Grand Massif's tourism offices have limited authority, with significant influence held by larger corporations and the national government. The French model emphasizes collaboration among major corporations, the state, local communities, and centralized institutions, solidifying the Grand Massif's status as a top-tier destination while preserving natural resources effectively.



ShanLand - Svaneti DMO

*A DMO is like a conductor in an orchestra.
It brings together all the different players in the
tourism industry and helps them to work together
to create a better experience for visitors.*

- Tourism New Zealand

ShanLand holds the responsibility of comprehensive tourism planning and promotion, aiming to attract visitors and boost the region's economy while preserving its environmental, social, and cultural assets. As a vital element of sustainable tourism management, DMOs like ShanLand should engage local communities to ensure mutual benefits between tourism stakeholders and residents. This strategic plan underscores the significance of involving diverse stakeholders such as local communities, businesses, tourists, government bodies, and environmental organizations. By including these voices and perspectives, the Plan aims to foster support, ownership, and successful implementation of destination development strategies.

While the government takes charge of public services and infrastructure development outlined in Strategic Objective 1, the Svaneti DMO is poised to lead or facilitate public-private partnerships for the remaining objectives. To do so effectively, the DMO's capacity and resources must be strengthened. This entails defining an appropriate DMO model within Georgia's legal framework, consulting legal experts, and devising an implementation roadmap covering organizational structure, governance, funding, and operational guidelines. By streamlining processes, adopting best practices, and enhancing coordination with strong public-private partnerships under the guidance of the Svaneti DMO, the region's commitment to preserving its unique history, landscapes, and heritage will continue to receive international recognition, benefiting local communities through job creation, heritage preservation, and environmental protection.

5.1 Enhance the professional capacities of the DMO Staff

Enrolling DMO staff in specialized training programs, covering areas such as tourism marketing, sustainable practices, digital marketing, and customer service, ensures access to the latest industry knowledge. This equips staff with the skills to make informed decisions, adapt to evolving visitor needs, and perform their roles more effectively. Engaging in international conferences fosters networking, knowledge-sharing, and exposure to global destination management practices, inspiring innovative ideas and enhancing professional capabilities. Additionally, the guidance of an experienced international DMO professional serving as a volunteer mentor offers valuable insights and expertise, aiding local staff in overcoming challenges and further strengthening their capacities.

5.2 Collect Visitor and Service Provider Data for Analysis

Effective destination management relies on comprehensive data collection and analysis, a role crucially fulfilled by the DMO. However, Georgia's tourism data, primarily sourced from national reports, lacks granularity and municipal-level insights. To overcome this, the DMO should collaborate with a technology firm to outsource tailored data collection, with a detailed Terms of Reference (TOR) defining project scope, objectives, and responsibilities. Further, a centralized server-based GIS solution should be established to collect and update real-time information on infrastructure and attractions at the local level. This empowers local DMOs to provide accurate data for decision-making, benefiting businesses, stakeholders, and tourists alike. Open-source technologies offer cost-effectiveness and long-term sustainability, elevating destination management practices in Svaneti.

5.3 Increase operational efficiency of DMO Svaneti

AA strategic approach is vital during the DMO developmental phase. Clear objectives should be established through short, medium, and long-term goals, forming the basis for a comprehensive 4-year action plan. This plan should detail activities, budgets, timelines, and solutions for potential challenges. Legal experts should be consulted to ensure transparent governance aligned with international best practices. Quarterly or biannual goals should be derived from the action plan, guiding the DMO's progress. Proper recruiting of skilled professionals is pivotal; new positions should be defined, described, and filled based on identified needs. Expansion beyond the municipal center is recommended to engage remote areas, achieved through small offices or representatives. Moreover, the DMO should foster partnerships to maximize tourism products in these regions, facilitating collaboration among stakeholders and supporting product development to contribute to Svaneti's sustainable tourism growth.



5.4 Define the destination brand and its positioning at national and international levels

The Svaneti DMO should ensure consistent branding across communication channels, collaborating with local businesses that share brand values to offer exceptional experiences. Identifying suitable markets, aligning with GNTA's priority markets, considering capacity constraints, consulting GNTA representatives, and integrating target markets into the action plan are key steps. By adopting these measures, the DMO can strategically identify and attract markets aligned with Svaneti's offerings, focusing on exclusive experiences and high-quality services within the region's capacity limitations. Collaboration with GNTA ensures a coordinated approach, while integration into the action plan enhances the strategic focus, contributing to sustainable tourism growth in Svaneti.

5.5 Destination management network and partnership between public and private actors


To strengthen stakeholder relationships, ShanLand can assess its resources, build a network of diverse stakeholders, identify key players, determine stakeholders' needs, and facilitate collaboration. By evaluating human and financial capacities, the DMO can understand its role within the tourism sector. Building a comprehensive stakeholder network connects businesses, organizations, and individuals, fostering collaboration. Identifying major and minor players offers an overview of the tourism landscape. Understanding stakeholders' crucial needs through surveys or workshops allows tailored efforts. As a mediator and coordinator, the DMO can facilitate problem-solving and enhance its value. By actively fulfilling this role, the DMO strengthens its influence, coordinates joint initiatives, and drives collective growth in Svaneti's tourism industry.




ACTION PLAN MATRIX

The following action plan matrix provides a more condensed and detailed view of the strategy, outlining the 121 specific steps required to achieve the 41 interventions for the 5 strategic objectives. The full Action Plan Matrix is available online and includes the responsible lead entity, estimated timeline, budget, KPIs and the results expected from the intervention. It is a tool used to catalyze implementation providing a roadmap that guides the coordinated efforts of various stakeholders towards the successful execution of the Plan.

Area Icon Key:

Zemo (Upper) Svaneti = 

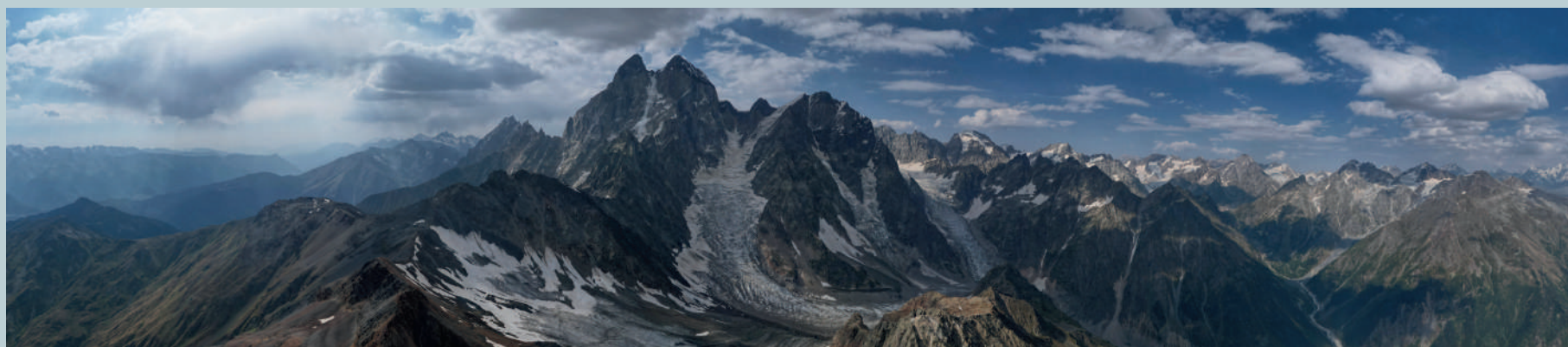
Kvemo (Lower) Svaneti = 

Entire Destination = 

1.0 Improve infrastructure and public services for a better living and recreation environment

Initiative	Action / Task	Area
1.1 Urban and land use planning to preserve historic settlements	Finalize the Urban and Land Use Plans for the Mulakhi town and Ushguli communities. The urban planning documentation for Ushguli has already been completed three years ago and has been submitted to UNESCO.	^
	Prepare and obtain approval for Urban and Land Use planning that covers the entire administrative territory of Mestia and Lentekhi Municipalities.	~
	Create a basic master plan and inventory for architectural and historical monuments as part of the Urban Planning Documents.	~
1.2 Tourism infrastructure development in accordance with urban planning and development investment	Coordinate the intentions of stakeholders and developers, while adhering to rules and regulations that reflect tourism development priorities.	~
	Mestia township center Seti: Complete the construction of the buildings and convert them into visitor service facilities, allocating space for the DMO visitors' center	^
	Feasibility study for the new year-round ski area: Mestia-Qoluldi Lakes-Chaladi glacier, covering a distance of up to 8.6 km.	^
	Construction of the ropeway (gondola) Mulakji-Tetnuldi, distance of 3 km	^
	Design and construct a recreation area/spa, and fun park near the airport	^
	Feasibility study for Lentekhi - Mt. Chutkharo ski/mountain resort (development plan for a large 4-season resort)	v
	Rehabilitate and adapt the existing historic-ethnographic museum for visitors interpretation center	v
	Prepare a feasibility study for the Zeskho alpine camp, design the Ailama alpine camp, and undertake the reconstruction of the historical village of Makashi.	v
1.3 Sustainable and quality energy supply	Plans for the development of new summer adventure tourism products and businesses such as ziplines, rafting and kayaking, camping, etc.	v
	Conduct study for new opportunities for winter heliski and heli/ski-touring	v
	Adopt an energy supply system tailored to the specific needs of tourism and residents, considering factors such as consumption patterns, residents and commercial users tariffs, and evaluating various technical and economic solutions.	^
	Conduct a feasibility study to increase the share of renewable energy, focusing on contributions and efficiency of small and medium-sized hydroelectric power plants (HHP)	~
	Increase energy efficiency for municipal buildings, domestic needs and private businesses	~
	Conduct a feasibility study, environmental and economic impact assessment for the construction of a natural gas supply infrastructure.	~

Initiative	Action / Task	Area
1.4 Roads and regional connectivity	Rehabilitation of state road Zugdidi-Jvari-Mestia-Lasdili with ongoing maintenance works	↯
	Reconstruction of Ushguli - Zagaro pass-Tsana road.	^
	Lentekhi interstate roads 102 km, 58 km paved form Lentekhi to Tsana, rehabilitation portion 44 km.	∨
	Lentekhi central road to villages, paved total 28 km.	∨
1.5 Public transportation	Enhance public transport utilization and establish car-free zones in both the town and resort areas.	^
	Arrange a circular and internal public transport of Mestia-Langer for both locals and tourists.	^
	Establish a bus station (public-private) in Mestia for tourist destinations	^
1.6 National & international access	Provision of Mestia Airport with modern navigation systems; Increase number of flights to minimum 2 per day.	^
	Conduct feasibility study for the construction of a new airport in Chikhareshi/Lentekhi to assess technical and economic rationality.	∨
1.7 Water supply & wastewater	Upgrade water supply and treatment system for Mestia municipality in 15 communities along the central road.	^
	Rehabilitation of WS and WWS systems for big communities along the main road for community centers (Mestia 16, Lentekhi 6)	↯
1.8 Solid waste management	Set up a small waste transfer station in Mestia municipality near the village of Lakhani.	^
	Kutaisi solid waste integrated management framework - set up a waste transfer station in Tsageri municipality, which will serve Lentekhi and Tsageri municipalities.	∨
	Waste separation awareness education to public gradually introduced	↯



2.0 Enhance Svaneti's unique selling proposition by creating world class tourism products

Initiative	Action / Task	Area
2.1 Promote unlimited "off-piste" skiing opportunities around Tetnudi	Design and mapping off-piste ski runs around ski-resort	~
	Install avalanche safety, alarm and rescue system	~
	Include off-piste ski opportunities & maps in destination marketing efforts	~
2.2 Develop new ski trails around existing resorts (Tetnudi and Hatsvali) and beyond	Produce and distribute ski-touring trail maps	~
	Design and build guidelines to define number, location and investment for the overnight huts and shelters	~
	Develop and establish functional rescue system	~
2.3 Host international winter festivals and sporting events	Contract multi-year hosting agreements with Freeride and Highlander.	^
	Search and submit hosting proposals for other international events.	^
	Develop calendar to host annual sport fests and events	~
2.4 Develop a "heritage trail"	Develop the Caucasus Mountain Explorers trail (research, planning, producing, marketing)	~
	Ideate other heritage trail themes to develop and promote	~
2.5 Revitalize historic villages and heritage sites for living history experiences	Organize and promote thematic performances, interpretation and storytelling experiences.	^
2.6 Connect historic communities & valleys with new equestrian, mountain biking and hiking trails	Conduct maintenance to reactivate historical "village to village" trails	~
2.7 New regional trails connecting Svaneti, Samegrelo, Racha	Connect Upper and Lower Svaneti with 3 most scenic trails, mark trails	~
	Connect historic communities & valleys with new equestrian, mountain biking and hiking trails	~
2.8 Secure partners to promote concept of "guides-trails-huts-rescue"	Create an affordable scheme to establish regional mountain emergency rescue response	~
2.9 Improved standards of accommodation, mountain huts, quality of food and entertainment	Enhance gastronomic experiences and hospitality standards	~
	Develop a concept of "Mountain Host"	~

3.0 Establish a workforce development education program for mountain tourism professionals

Initiative	Action / Task	Area
3.1 Open an Adventure Tourism School branch in Mestia	Manage grant funding from USAID/industry led skills program, contributor GESP, RDA	^
	Complete design and construct building "West Point"	^
	Create the Adventure Skills Pathway: ATS West Point's Professional Education Framework	^
	Replicate adventure tourism programs in West Georgia	~
3.2 Future Guides Summer Schools and Adventure Tourism Leader Program	Develop a formal program "Adventure Tourism Leader" to Middle and High School pupils.	~
3.3 International accreditation of qualified trainers in adventure tourism education	Mountain Guide Program accredited by IFMGA (International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations)	^
	Trekking Guide Program accredited by UMILA (International Union of Mountain Leaders)	^
3.4 Establish a Multi-Source Financing Mechanism for Adventure Guide Training	Develop public-private cooperation mechanisms to generate funds from public, private and donor resources and ensure stability of financing youth education from grassroots training to graduation of TVET courses	~
3.5 Promote Mountain Guiding Professions through Guide Offices and Enhanced Services	Open an Adventure Guide's portal to select and book certified adventure guides	~
3.6 Enhance Safety and Risk Management in Mountain Operations	Develop a training course focusing on Safety and Risk Management	~
	Initiate a safety awareness-raising campaign targeting key stakeholders	~
	Establish an Adventure Tourism Forum	^
3.7 Support Skills Development for Local Hospitality and Transport Businesses	Assess of the skills gap among local hospitality providers	~
	Tailor training programs to the needs of the hospitality providers and offer courses locally	~
	Offer language and interpretation courses for overland tour drivers	~
	Develop authenticity-supporting vocational training program - Mountain Host and train young men and women from remote villages of Svaneti	~
	Institutionalize and formalize existing spontaneous knowledge in the field of cultural heritage via developing new TVET program - Regional Cultural Guide	^
3.8 Enhancing Destination and Trails Management	Design mechanisms to ensure a proper maintenance of the destination places and trails	~

4.0 Promote Svaneti in the Global Adventure Market

Initiative	Action / Task	Area
4.1 Create an Effective 1-year Marketing Plan	Conduct a comprehensive evaluation of previous marketing activities	✔
	To optimize investment organize annual meetings with tourism professionals	✔
	Review and benchmark destination marketing plans from other DMOs	✔
	Create partnership with other DMOs, especially with Kutaisi DMO	✔
	Draft marketing plan and share it with the public	✔
4.2 Develop and Maintain the Svaneti website	Develop a comprehensive website with a user-friendly interface	✔
	Provide detailed information on local businesses, accommodations, attractions, and events.	✔
	Maintain the website with regular updates and fresh content (events calendar)	✔
4.3 Enhance the Online Presence of Svaneti	Collaborate with online travel marketplaces and OTAs (Online Travel Agency)	✔
	Utilize review networks like Tripadvisor to build credibility	✔
	Engage with a diverse audience on social media platforms through targeted campaigns	✔
	Regularly upload high-quality videos and optimize for search visibility - create dedicated channel on Youtube and Tiktok	✔
4.4 Create Svaneti Visitor Guide and Map	Develop a visually appealing and comprehensive visitor guide.	✔
	Design an accurate and user-friendly map of Svaneti	✔
	Distribute the visitor guide and map at strategic locations	✔
	Provide a digital version of the visitor guide, regularly update, and incorporate captivating visuals.	✔
4.5 Implement a Storytelling Marketing Campaign	Craft compelling narratives that highlight the region's unique charm and cultural heritage	✔
	Incorporate different stories such as the first European adventurers and mountaineers to create attractive experiences and tourism offers	✔
	Collaborate with local storytellers, artists, and content creators	✔
4.6 Engage Content Creators and Influencers	Identify content creators and influencers aligned with Svaneti's brand values and target audience	✔
	Collaborate with content creators and influencers through sponsored trips	✔
	Encourage content creators and influencers to produce stunning photography and videography	✔

4.0 Promote Svaneti in the Global Adventure Market

Initiative	Action / Task	Area
4.7 Collaborate with Tour Operators and Travel Agents	Forge strategic partnerships with established tour operators and travel agents	~
	Develop and curate adventure travel itineraries with tour operators	~
	Organize study tours and invite DMOs from Alpine countries to share experiences	~
4.8 Participate in Adventure Travel Trade Shows and Exhibitions	Engage with publications and media outlets in different European countries	~
	Position Svaneti as a modern skiing and adventure destination with rich cultural heritage in Germany and Northern Europe	~
	Participate in exhibitions such as ITB Berlin or World Travel Market	~
4.9 Launch Targeted Campaigns: Mountaineering, Agritourism, Food Tourism, Extended Vacations, and Exploration	Launch agritourism campaigns showcasing Svaneti's rural charm and agricultural traditions.	~
	Promote food tourism campaigns highlighting Svaneti's gastronomic offerings	~
	Position Svaneti as an ideal destination for extended vacations	~
	Emphasize Svaneti's unspoiled nature and off-the-beaten-path experiences	~
4.10 Implement Brand Guidelines	Ensure consistent use of the brand and visuals across all communication channels	~
	Collaborate with local businesses to align their services and experiences with the Svaneti DMO brand	~



5.0 Introduce Efficient Destination Management Practices

Initiative	Action / Task	Area
5.1 Enhance the professional capacities of the DMO Staff	Enroll in professional development learning programs for DMO staff	✔
	Recruit an international DMO professional volunteer to provide mentoring	✔
	Attend international conferences organized for DMO professionals	✔
5.2 Collect Visitor & Service Provider Data in GIS Format for Analysis	Desk research: gather, sort and analyze available tourism data and statistics of Svaneti Region	✔
	Outsource a technology / research vendor through a RFP & TOR project management process for implementing a GIS system and gathering new Svaneti specific data	✔
	Create a Server-Based GIS system: Develop a centralized server-based GIS system that facilitates the storage, management, and analysis of geographic data related to tourism infrastructure and facilities.	✔
	Define Components of the GIS System administrative module, Statistics Module, Map Basement, Public User Interface	✔
	Data Collection and Maintenance and train DMO staff to execute direct functions. DMO staff can regularly add new information and make necessary changes.	✔
	Cost Optimization: Opt for open-source technologies to minimize costs. Utilize PostgreSQL with the PostGIS module as a reliable database for storing spatial data, and employ QGIS for data input and manipulation.	✔
5.3 Increase operational efficiency of DMO Svaneti	Develop a 4-year action plan	✔
	Define Quarterly or Biannual Goals	✔
	Recruit Motivated and Professional Personnel	✔
	Expand Presence Beyond the Municipal Center	✔
	Foster Partnerships and Utilize Tourism Products	✔
5.4 Define positioning at national and international levels	Execute brand guidelines and design a clear brand book using results of the branding assignments.	✔
5.5 Destination management network and partnership between public and private actors	Conduct quarterly meeting with the founders and partners	✔
	Initiate and facilitate functioning of the "svaneti tourism forum" - network of public-private partners	✔

Caucasus Consulting Group is a Georgian based consulting firm established in 2005 with the purpose to support international teams by contributing local expertise and practical knowledge needed for the successful implementation of large international projects. Successful planning of Tourism Development Strategies and Destination Management needs a complex approach, that is why CCG mobilizes experts covering infrastructure, energy, natural environment and socio-cultural aspects.

Solimar International is a global sustainable tourism and marketing firm based in Washington DC that has worked in over 60 countries over the last 20 years. Solimar's mission is to assist businesses, travelers, and destinations develop and connect to Sustainable tourism experiences that support environmental conservation, celebrates local culture, and enhances the lives of local residents.



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