

Geographical research of tourist facilities in Tsalka Municipality

Aleksandre Inashvili^A

Giorgi Abramishvili^B

Email: aleksandre.inashvili758@ens.tsu.edu.ge ^A, giorgi.abramishvili750@ens.tsu.edu.ge ^B

Department of Geography, Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University 3 I.
Chavchavadze Avenue, Tbilisi, 0179, Georgia

The Municipality of Tsalka, with an area of 1,050.6 km², consists of one town, three small urban-type settlements, and 40 villages distinguished by interesting geographical conditions and rich cultural heritage. In all of these settlements, there are interesting and important natural and historical-architectural monuments. Altogether, they provide a rich resource for sustainable development.

Students of the Department of Geography of the Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences of TSU, within the framework of the 2025 student scientific project “Geographical Research of the Landmarks of Tsalka Municipality”, conducted a geographical assessment of the tourist resources (historical and natural landmarks) of Tsalka Municipality, which, to some extent, will fill the existing gaps, contribute to increasing the awareness of the settlements of the municipality and the development of various types of sustainable industries. Even though Georgia is the richest country in historical and geographical monuments and various natural resources, the existing literature on these issues regarding thematic and individual municipalities is very scarce. As a result of the research, various versions of the origin of the names of the settlements of Tsalka Municipality, traditions, legends, common surnames, characteristics of geographical locations (rivers, lakes, fields, mountains, valleys), churches-monasteries, megalithic fortresses and menhirs, as well as the historical past and modern geographical features, were studied.

Tsalka Municipality has great tourist potential. It is represented by a diverse cultural heritage and natural attractions, and the special traditions of hospitality characteristic of the residents of Tsalka Municipality of different nationalities are the best conditions for the development of tourism in this territory. Tsalka Municipality is inhabited by 4 main ethnic groups: Georgians, Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Greeks. Over the past 200 years, the ethnic composition of the municipality has changed dramatically. Since the second half of the 18th century, Tsalka Municipality has been almost uninhabited. The only population was in the settlement of Rekha. In 1829-1832, the Russian Empire settled Armenians and Turkish-speaking Greeks expelled from the Ottoman Empire in Tsalka. Greeks were the majority until 1991. According to the 2002 census, Armenians were already in the majority. According to the 2014 census, Georgians gained the ethnic majority.

The territory of Tsalka Municipality was one of the main centers of the Trialeti culture, best known for Kurgan burials (burial mounds). Archaeologists discovered rich and well-built mounds from the 3rd millennium BC here, which belonged to tribal leaders and noble aristocracy, while the smaller and poor mounds belonged to the ordinary population.

