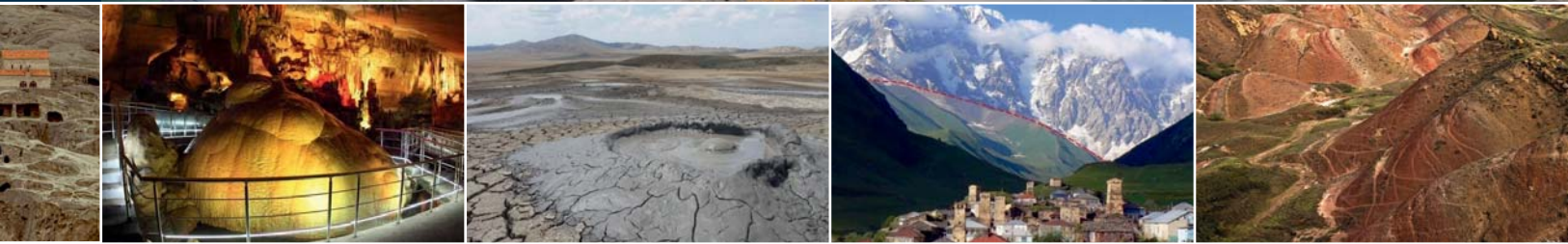


Geoheritage, Geoparks and Geotourism



Irakli Gamkrelidze · Avtandil Okrostsvavidze ·  
Kakhaber Koiava · Ferando Maisadze



# Geotourism Potential of Georgia, the Caucasus

History, Culture, Geology,  
Geotourist Routes and Geoparks

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# **Geoheritage, Geoparks and Geotourism**

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Kakhaber Koiava • Ferando Maisadze

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History, Culture, Geology, Geotourist Routes  
and Geoparks

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ISSN 2363-765X ISSN 2363-7668 (electronic)  
Geoheritage, Geoparks and Geotourism  
ISBN 978-3-030-62965-6 ISBN 978-3-030-62966-3 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-62966-3>

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*We dedicate the presented work to  
The 95th anniversary of the  
establishment of Aleksandre Janelidze Institute  
of Geology, founded in 1925  
at the Tbilisi State University by the  
leadership of academician Aleksandre  
Janelidze—the founder of the  
Georgian geological school.*

*Irakli Gamkrelidze*

*Avtandil Okrostsvaridze*

*Kakhaber Koiava*

*Ferando Maisadze*

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## Preface

Georgia is a country with an ancient history, rich culture, various geographical areas and good geological outcrops. The book provides a more extensive geological and brief geographic, historical and cultural overview of this country and is aimed at increasing and developing the country's geotourism potential and joining to UNESCO Global Geopark Network.

Georgia is located in the mountain area, which is known as the Caucasus from ancient times. It borders Russia to the north along the Greater Caucasus Ridge, Azerbaijan to the east, Armenia to the south and Turkey to the southwest. Its west margin borders the Black Sea. Georgia is 69,500 km<sup>2</sup> in area; its population is nearly 4 million. Representatives of more than 10 nations and nationalities live in it. About 86.8% of the population are Georgians.

The territory of Georgia includes the Transcaucasian intermountain area, the southern slope of the Greater Caucasus and a big part of the Lesser Caucasus. Because of its accessible terrain and good climate, the Caucasus intermountain depression is the most favorable natural corridor between Black and Caspian Seas, as well as Europe and Asia. It is protected from cold air masses invasion by the Greater Caucasus Range from the north, and hot and dry air masses—by the Lesser Caucasus from the south. This segment of the Caucasus is notable for its favorable climatic conditions for development of bio-populations, including humans, which is the reason that the area has been inhabited by early Hominids since Early Pleistocene (Dmanisi Hominids site –1.81 Ma). In addition, numerous Paleolithic age humans' occupations are discovered here, which means that the area has been widely inhabited by people from the Late Pleistocene.

We, the authors of this book all our life study the geological structure of Georgia, the Caucasus and adjacent areas of the Alpine-Himalayan orogenic belt. For many years, we introduced our foreign colleagues to the unique geology of Georgia, which determines the presence here of very interesting geotourism objects—geotourist routes and potential geoparks.

Because of the small area, it is possible to become familiar in Georgia with the whole spectrum of rocks during several days. For example, only one day is enough to see both Precambrian relicts (Dzirula massif) and Quaternary volcanoes (Abul-Samsari Range). Also, during a day, one can get to know the whole cross section of the collisional zone starting from the Fold system of the Lesser Caucasus (from Tbilisi) and ending with megastructure of the Greater Caucasus (Kazbegi region).

Georgia provides an opportunity to see the Greater Caucasus glacier-covered alpine gorgeous mountain peaks; footprints of Cretaceous dinosaurs at Sataplia; Borjomi and Tskaltubo mineral water deposits; beautiful landscape of Gareja semi-desert, built up of Miocene sedimentary layers; glacier-capped fascinating Quaternary volcano Kazbegi and many other interesting geological objects. But the diversity of geologic objects is not the only reason to be fascinated by Georgia. It is also home to significant paleoarchaeological, archaeological and historic sites that can be visited concurrently during the geological tours.

**Acknowledgements** We would like to express our gratitude to our colleague Dr. Eteri Kilasonia for technical assistance and Lika Kvaliashvili for linguistic corrections.

We are very grateful to the staff at Springer, in particular Dr. Alexis Vizcaino and Karthik Raj Selvaraj, for their help and support. We also would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive suggestions.

Irakli Gamkrelidze  
Avtandil Okrostsvaridze  
Kakhaber Koiava  
Ferando Maisadze



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