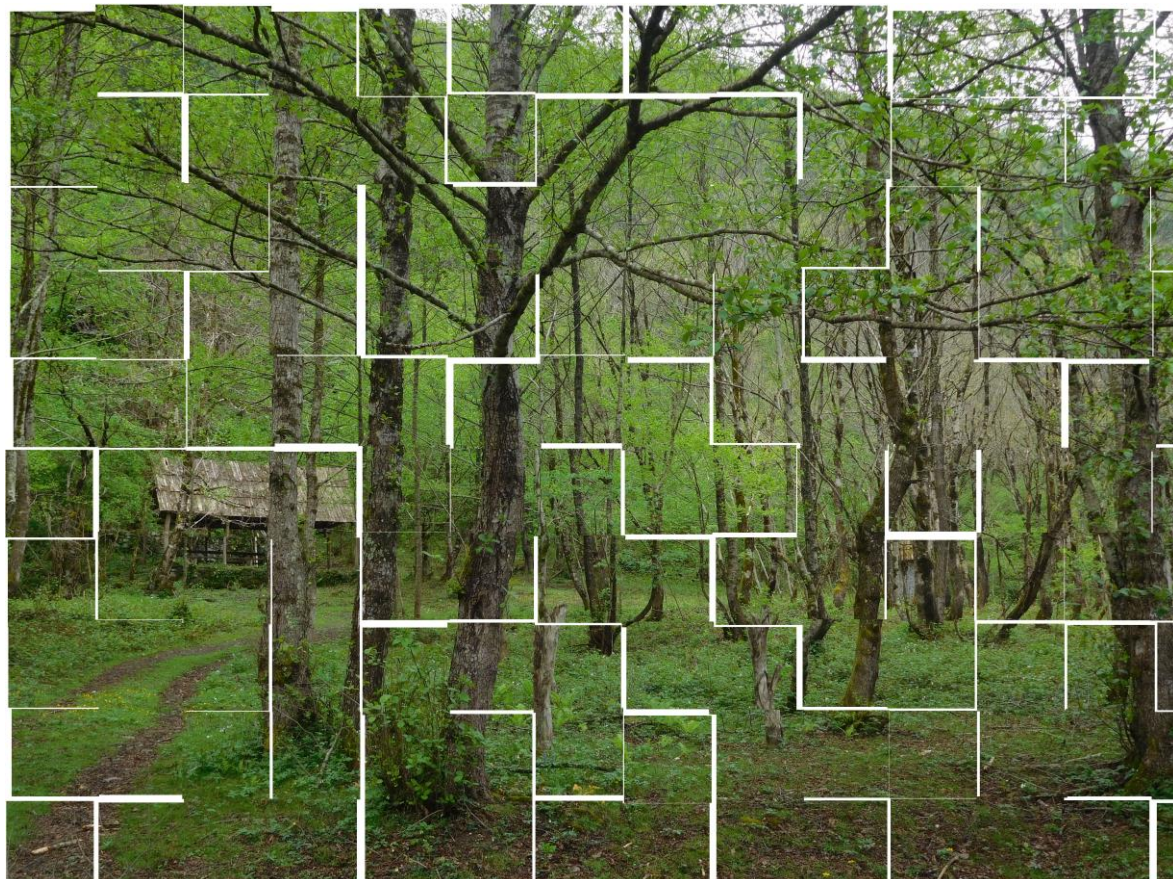


KINTRISHI PROTECTED AREAS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN



PROVISION OF SERVICES FOR ELABORATION OF ADJARA PROTECTED AREAS SYSTEM SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION

UNDP-supported and GEF-financed Project:

**Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region's
Protected Areas**

November 2016

KINTRISHI PROTECTED AREAS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The strategy was elaborated by HIDRIA Ciencia, ambiente y desarrollo S.L. with support from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Georgia, and the Agency of the Protected Areas of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of Georgia.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author/s and do not necessarily represent those of the United Nations or UNDP.



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

APA	Agency of Protected Areas
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CNF	Caucasus Nature Fund
DTR	Department of Tourism and Resorts
FPA	Financial Participatory Approach
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GITOA	Georgia Incoming Tour Operators Association
GMGA	Georgian Mountain Guides Association
GTA	Georgian Tourism Association
GNTA	Georgian National Tourism Administration
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KPA	Kintrishi Protected Areas
KFA	Kintrishi Protected Areas Friends Association
MICE	Meetings, incentives, conferencing and exhibitions
MNP	Machakhela National Park
MTNP	Mtiralala National Park
MoENRP	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
PAs	Protected Areas
SPPA	Support Programme of Protected Areas
TJS	Transboundary Joint Secretariat
TTOO	Tour Operators
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kintrishi Protected Areas together with Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks are priority conservation areas to preserve the Colchic forest endangered ecosystem. Kintrishi Protected Areas were established in 1959 as a Strict Nature Reserve to protect relict forest and endemic species. In 2007, the Protected Landscape was established on basis of the Nature Reserve.

Developed under the UNDP program *“Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region’s Protected Areas”*, the *“Ajara Protected Areas System Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Plan of Action”* seeks to provide a pragmatic strategy and plan for increasing sustainable revenues derived from tourism without negatively affecting the conservation objectives of the Protected Areas in the Ajara Region.

The *Kintrishi Protected Areas Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020* is aimed at providing guidelines for the proper development of sustainable tourism within the boundaries of the protected area and its support zone. In order to achieve this purpose, the plan evolves around five specific objectives:

1. To define and create additional marketable services and activities in the Park for defined market segments.
2. To attract visitors, locals and foreigners, by offering a variety and high-quality nature and culture-based tourism products.
3. To improve the cooperation levels among stakeholders.
4. To build the capacities of stakeholders involved in the tourism activity in aspects related to environmental values and tourism hospitality.
5. To preserve and enhance Kintrishi Protected Areas (KPA) natural resources.

In order to achieve these objectives, an extensive research and consultation process was carried out, involving two fieldwork visits to assess KPA existing resources and tourism values and potential products and services that could be developed. The information was presented to the stakeholders for its validation and the comments received were incorporated in the elaboration of the final document of the Strategy and Action Plan.

As a result of a preliminary assessment of the administrative and human resources, tourism attractions, services and values of the KPA, the following constraints and opportunities were identified as the most important to be considered in the Strategy and Action Plan:

CONSTRAINTS	OPPORTUNITIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively poor tourism experience. • Lack of adequate accessibility to the park. • Ongoing construction of hydropower infrastructures as part of a hydropower plan that is currently being developed. • High seasonality for tourism activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich landscape and ecological diversity, including unique flora and fauna and mountainous landscapes. • Adjacent to Mtirala National Park. • Proximity to Kobuleti, an important coastal destination. • Various tour operators available in the region. • Support Programme for Protected Areas in the Caucasus (SPPA).

The preliminary assessment was completed with a detailed SWOT and TOWS analysis to identify the main strengths and vulnerabilities of tourism development in KPA has to offer, which can be synthesized as follows:

- » **Untouched wilderness**
- » **Mountainous landscape**
- » **Kintrishi River Gorge**

These three important characteristics establish the **core elements** for the development of tourism products in the KPA. The main tourism products identified to have a good potential to be developed are:

- a) **Tourist trails and associated infrastructures.** Tourist trails connect points of interest within the protected area, allowing communication among rural communities and offering tourists a way to appreciate and enjoy the natural and cultural values. Two main priorities were identified regarding existing and potential trails: i) to improve existing trails (Both Tree Stand Trail; and Yew and Tbikeli Lake trail); ii) to develop new trails. Regarding the development of new tourism trails, there was suggested to create an educational trail based on an elevated boardwalk that runs along the forest allowing visitors to experience the forest closely while preserving landscape beauty and reducing the impact. Another option was to develop the Ajara Protected Areas combined trails, that would connect Machakhela and Mtirala National Parks with Kintrishi Protected Areas to create a “Colchic Forest thematic Route. A route was suggested based on existing and ancient trails.
- b) **Facilities and infrastructures around the visitor shelter.** This installation offers a good space to develop recreational and educational activities that would contribute to diversify the services offered. The proposed infrastructures and facilities include: educational facilities such as a Nature Classroom, a children adventure playground area, fireplaces for camping sites; and accommodation facilities based on new tourism developments, such as “glamping huts”.
- c) **Tourism business** based on services provided by local communities and small companies to meet the needs of tourists and visitors of the protected area. Some of the business opportunities evaluated included: guesthouses and accommodation services, catering places and food processing activities to improve marketing options for local products.

The tourism potential of the proposed tourism products was evaluated according to their attractiveness and competitiveness, by performing a multicriteria analysis. As a result of the analysis the product that showed more potential for being developed was the **improvement of the existing trails**. The estimated benefits derived from tourism trails improvement and development of activities linked to them add up to 20.069 Gel.

Considering the results of the preliminary assessment of the park and the proposed products and vision projected for the KPA, the **Tourism Strategy and Action Plan** pursues the achievement of the following five **GOALS**:



A total of five **STRATEGIC LINES** were defined comprising a series of activities to be developed in order to achieve those GOALS. The following chart summarizes the *Kintrishi Protected Areas Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020* proposed to implement the strategy and to achieve the expected outcomes.

Strategic Line 1: Management and Governance	
OBJ. 1.1. The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a mechanism to coordinate tourism development in Adjara Protected Areas by 2017.	
ACTION	DESCRIPTION
1.1.1	Assist and actively participate in the development of multistakeholder platform at regional level (Regional Advisory Council).
1.1.2	Establish collaboration alliances with potential partners.
OBJ. 1.2. A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural resources is defined and implemented by end of 2019.	
ACTION	DESCRIPTION
1.2.1	Develop a study on the carrying capacity visitor management in Kintrishi Protected Areas.

1.2.2	Elaborate and implement a Visitor Impact Monitoring System.
1.2.3	Elaborate and conduct a visitor satisfaction survey.

Strategic Line 2: Capacity Building

OBJ. 2.1. Build capacities and skills of PA's staff in sustainable tourism, environmental issues and business planning.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
2.1.1	Design and implement a training programme for PA's staff.
2.1.2	Organize study tours for rangers/PA's staff.

OBJ. 2.2. Increase local communities' knowledge about PA's environmental values and tourism related issues.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
2.2.1	Design and implement a training program for local communities.
2.2.2	Organize study tours for community members.
2.2.3	Design a training programme about organic agriculture and product packaging for local farmers /producers.

Strategic Line 3: Local communities' development

OBJ. 3.1. Tourism service providers associated to Kintrishi Protected Areas comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2020.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
3.1.1	Assess quality service level of local providers of accommodation and catering facilities.

OBJ. 3.2. At least, three new local businesses are developed and running by year 2020.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
3.2.1	Assess and support new potential business in the communities of the support zone.

OBJ. 3.3. Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Protected Area administration by 2020.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
3.3.1	Conduct scientific research to identify main cultural assets in Kintrishi Protected Areas and its support zone.

Strategic Line 4: Infrastructures and Services Development

OBJ. 4.1. By 2017, accessibility to Kintrishi Protected Areas has improved.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
4.1.1	Sign an agreement with Road Department to improve the access road to Kintrishi Protected Areas.
4.1.2	Design and install road directional signs.
4.1.3	Identify a suitable area for car parking

OBJ. 4.2. Existing trails are improved and attract and increasing number of visitors by 2018.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
4.2.1	Design and build new infrastructures around the Visitor Shelter.

4.2.2	Design and implement new facilities to improve the existing trails.
OBJ. 4.3. New and sustainable tourism infrastructures and services that allow visitors to explore and enjoy Kintrishi Protected Areas are developed by 2019.	
ACTION	DESCRIPTION
4.3.1	Design and develop a new educational trail.
4.3.2	Develop complimentary water-based activities.
4.3.3	Plan and develop new accommodation options inside the Protected Area.
4.3.4	Develop complementary water-based activities
4.3.5	Plan and develop new accommodation options inside the Protected Area
OBJ. 4.4. A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Ajara Protected Areas is fully operational by 2019.	
ACTION	DESCRIPTION
4.4.1	Develop a trail that joins Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala National Park.
OBJ. 4.5. By 2020, a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.	
4.5.1	Design and implement an environmental education and interpretation program for local and visitors.
4.5.2	Design a volunteer program in coordination with universities and regional education centres.

Strategic Line 5: Marketing and Promotion

OBJ. 5.1. Kintrishi Protected Areas will be known at national and international level by 2020.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
5.1.1	Elaborate and implement an annual Operational Marketing Plan.
5.1.2	Participate in the creation of the Ajara Protected areas membership card.
5.1.3	Organize a calendar of events to increase visibility of the Protected Areas.
5.1.4	Design and produce new promotional material that includes new products, routes.
5.1.5	Organize fam-trips with local and national tour operators to promote new activities developed.
5.1.6	Organize fam-trips with hotels.

OBJ. 5.2. Information related to Kintrishi Protected Areas is easy accessible through new technologies.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
5.2.1	Create a visitor friendly tourism website for Kintrishi Protected Areas optimized for search engines.
5.2.2	Create downloadable multimedia trails and include detailed information on Ajara Protected Areas in the Gobatumi app.
5.2.3	Define and implement a social media strategy using different channels.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. BACKGROUND

Georgian protected areas play a key role in biodiversity conservation and also offer an excellent recreational opportunity to enjoy Georgia's diverse nature. The promotion of ecotourism and other forms of sustainable tourism are seen as a tool for increasing the financial sustainability of the Georgian Protected Areas system, and it has become a priority for the Agency of Protected Areas (APA).

Over the last years, APA and the Ministry of Environmental Protection, in a coordinated manner with International Donors, have made important efforts to develop tourism infrastructures and services in and around Protected Areas (PA's) to attract visitors. However, tourism as a major management issue for protected areas, it has to be carefully planned to ensure its long-term sustainability.

The UNDP project *"Expansion and Improved Management Effectiveness of the Adjara Region's Protected Areas"* is designed to enhance the management effectiveness, bio-geographical coverage and connectivity of Protected Areas of the Ajara Autonomous Region of Georgia in order to better conserve the globally unique Colchic Forest.

The *"Strategy for Tourism Development in Protected Areas in Georgia"* elaborated in 2015, contributed to establish the guidelines for the *"systematic, controlled and synergic development of the tourism activities in protected areas"* with the aim of bringing benefits to the administration and local communities.

Under the UNDP program, the elaboration of *"Ajara Protected Areas System Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Plan of Action"* seek to provide a pragmatic strategy and plan for increasing the sustainable revenues that can be derived from tourism without negatively affecting the conservation objectives of the Protected Areas in the Ajara Region.

The *Ajara Protected Areas Strategy and Action Plan*, which has been recently elaborated, provides an overarching strategy for Ajara Protected Areas that aims at achieving major goals related to sustainable tourism development and it is the framework in which the *"Kintrishi Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan"* has been developed.

Kintrishi Protected Areas was established in 1959 as a Strict Nature Reserve to protect relict forest and endemic species. In 2007, the Protected Landscape was established on basis of the Nature Reserve.

Kintrishi Protected Areas along with Mtirala National Park and Machakhela National Park form a chain of protected area units established to conserve the Colchic forest of the region. However, each protected area has its own particularities that should be further enhanced and promoted.

2.2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PLAN

The **overall purpose** of the *Kintrishi Protected Areas Strategy and Action Plan* is to provide the guidelines for the proper development of sustainable tourism within the boundaries of the protected area and the support zone.

The **general objective** of the *Strategy and Action Plan* is:

- » To sustainable develop tourism in the Kintrishi Protected Areas through the enhancement of existing tourism services and an extended range of services that promote the natural and cultural values of the area, contribute to provide a meaningful experience to visitors and provide an understanding of the importance of conservation.

The **specific objectives** of this *Strategy* are:

- » To define and create additional marketable services and activities in the Park for defined market segments.
- » To attract visitors, locals and foreigners, by offering a variety and high-quality nature and culture-based tourism products.
- » To improve the cooperation levels among stakeholders.
- » To build the capacities of stakeholders involved in the tourism activity in aspects related to environmental values and tourism hospitality.
- » To preserve and enhance Kintrishi Protected Areas natural resources.

2.3. GENERAL APPROACH

The approach of this *Strategy and Action Plan* follows the principles of the Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism and Action Plan. The **guiding principles** of the *Strategy* are:

- » **CO-ORDINATION:** Increasing the levels of co-ordination and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders to achieve an integrated destination approach. The participation of Kintrishi Protected Areas in the Regional Advisory Council, in which the three Ajara Protected Areas, together with other relevant stakeholders will be involved, is essential to develop common actions towards increasing their visibility.
- » **PARTICIPATION:** Kintrishi Protected Areas, with the support of SPPA project, is leading the creation of structures such as the Advisory Council or the Kintrishi Protected Areas Friends Association. These structures are aimed at increasing the governance level of the Parks,

involving other stakeholders in decision making and it should be the model for the other Protected Areas.

- » **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:** Through tourism development, it is expected to increase the financial resources of the PA's, so they would be less dependent of external funds. Cost-effective options will be recommended to ensure a sustainable economic income that can be allocated to conservation and management efforts of the PA's.
- » **CONSERVATION:** Achieving sustainable tourism requires constant monitoring to ensure that environmental impacts such as waste pollution or environment degradation are minimized. In addition, environment education and interpretation will be also a way to increase awareness and better communicate the importance and values of the PA's.
- » **VISITOR SATISFACTION:** Sustainable tourism aims at ensuring a high level of tourist satisfaction and a meaningful experience, providing quality tourism services, raising awareness about environment and conservation issues and promoting sustainable practices.

In addition, are especially aimed for Kintrishi Protected Areas:

- » **WILDERNESS**, Kintrishi Protected Areas presents an untouched and pristine nature that should be preserved and enhanced. It is an opportunity for those who want to escape from urban areas and enjoying being in contact with nature.

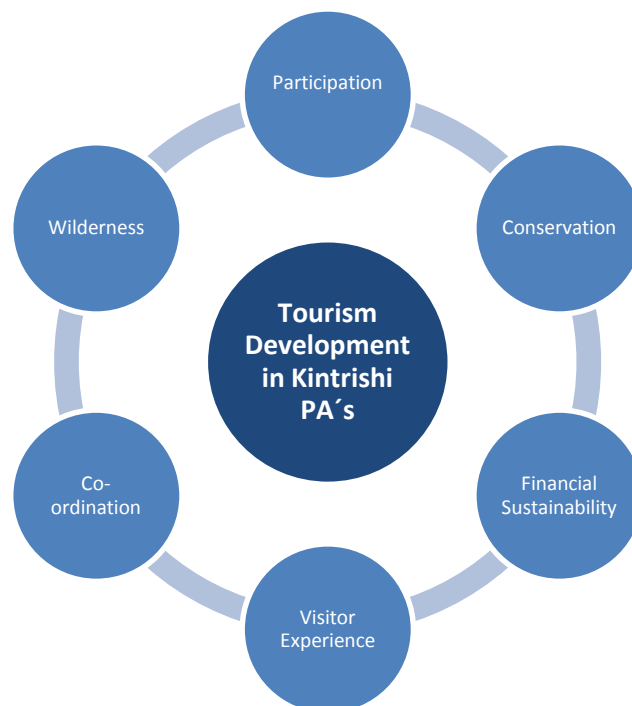


Figure 1: Guiding Principles of the Kintrishi Protected Areas Strategy and Action Plan.

2.4. METHODOLOGY

The *Kintrishi Protected Areas Strategy and Action Plan* the Park area has been developed based on extensive research and consultation. Fieldwork was conducted between 7th and 17th April to carefully assess existing and potential tourism products and services. Structured interviews were held with key stakeholders such as Kintrishi Protected Areas administration staff, local tourism service providers, regional tourism administration, national experts, etc.

The strategy validation process was organized in two stages, on the first stage a workshop with stakeholders (park administration, NGO's, Municipality, Department of Tourism, etc.) was held in Chakvi, on September 27th 2016, the second and final validation workshop was held in Tbilisi October 17th October 2016. Comments to the draft Strategy and Action Plan were incorporated to the Strategy for the elaboration of the final version of the *Kintrishi Protected Areas Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020*.



Figure 2: Steps for Elaboration of the Kintrishi Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan

3. KINTRISHI PROTECTED AREAS AND SUPPORT ZONE

3.1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The Kintrishi Protected Areas belong to the Municipality of Kobuleti, in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, the protected areas include the Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve, established in 1959 and the Kintrishi Protected Landscape established in 2007, comprising a total area of 13.893 hectares. Kintrishi Nature Reserve and Protected Landscape spread around the breath-taking gorge of the Kintrishi river and its surrounding valley. The area is located between the village of Tskhemvani and the Khino mountains. The lower border of the protected area stretches at 250 m above sea level, whereas the upper border reaches on alpine pastures up to 2,500 meters above sea level.

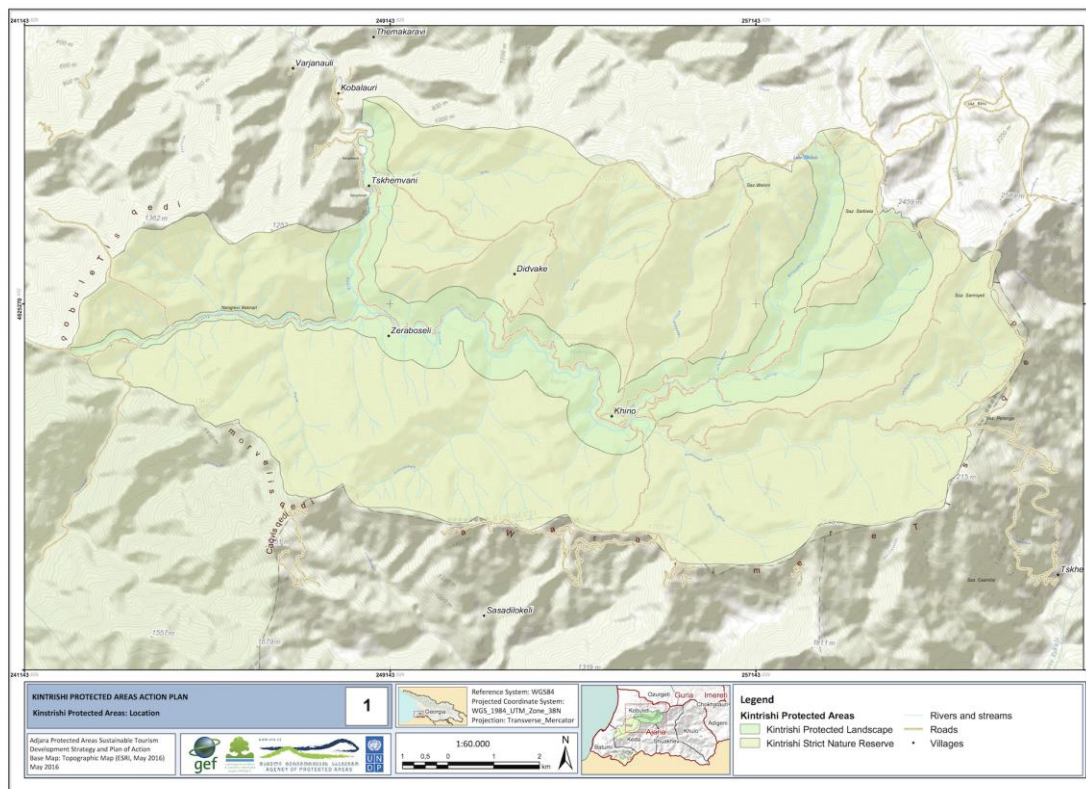


Figure 3: Kintrishi Protected Areas Location Map.

The Kintrishi Nature Reserve borders with the Kobuleti forest administration on the North, the Shuakhevi municipality on the East, the Keda municipality on the South and the Mtirala National Park on the South-West. The protected area is only 25 kilometres away from Kobuleti and 20 km from Batumi, both of them popular destinations among tourists, especially during summer season. According to tourism data collected in 2014, 310.000 tourists visited the region in summer. However, only 3,896 tourists (equivalent to 1.25 percent of total) visited the Kintrishi Protected Areas (“Eco-tourism development strategy”, TJS).

The location of Kintrishi Protected Areas, between the Black Sea and the Achara-Imereti Mountain System influences its climate, characterized by a high level precipitation that reaches up to 3,000 mm a year, and an average temperature that ranges from 4°C in January to 24°C in August. In addition, the altitudinal variability of the Kintrishi valley allows for the presence of a great variety of species of flora and fauna, adapted to different environmental conditions present within the protected area.

Kintrishi Nature Reserve has a rugged relief characterized by deep gorges formed by the Kintrishi river and its tributaries, including the rivers Kehnara, Peranga, Mamedaghi, Didghele, Misanatisghele, which has a beautiful waterfall of 30 meters high, as well as the rivers Bolkvadzebisghele and Chrdila, the latter with a two-step waterfall of 70 meters high. The higher mountains host the Tbikeli lake, the total area of which do not exceed 1,5 ha. Only lake Tbikeli is located within the protected area, the other one is beyond its borders.

About 80 percent of Kintrishi Protected Areas are covered with forest, including the unique ecosystem of the Colchic forest, a type of mixed temperate forest characterized by the abundance of relict species of the Tertiary period. The humid gorges present in this region, covered by protective heavy snow in winter, have prevented Tertiary flora remnants from degradation which affected the similar vegetation of exposed areas, thus helping to preserve this unique biome. Today, the Colchic forest is considered an endangered ecosystem that has been historically affected by over-logging and other activities that caused an important decrease in its surface and the replace of the primary forest species by other secondary species, leading to changes in the original ecosystem. The Kintrishi Protected Areas, along with the National Parks of Machakhela and Mtirala, and the Camili Biosphere Reserve in Turkey, form an ecological corridor of protected areas established to protect the Colchic forest.

Colchic river gorges are characterized by a considerable amount of heterogeneity of natural conditions, resulting in the combination of Colchic relict forest including sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*), Colchic box trees (*Buxus colchica*), oak trees, yew trees and coniferous forest. Forest communities with *Buxus colchica* as undergrowth are common in the region, and the older examples of box trees that can be found within the boundaries of Kintrishi protected areas exceed 300 years old. These forests include an understory of evergreen shrubs with a great number of endemic species such as endemic azaleas (*Rhododendron ponticum* and *Rhododendron caucasicum*), and eight species of flora included in the IUCN Red List of endangered species, including: *Abies nordmanniana*, *Taxus baccata*, and *Buxus colchica*. In the way from the village of Khino to the village of Didvake, old giant yew tree (*T. Baccata*) stands can be found, which has been considered by scientists as 30-40 centuries old.

These rich forests are home for various species of big mammals such as the Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*) and the chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*), found mostly in alpine and sub-alpine zones above 1.000 meters. These are including in the IUCN Red List of threatened species, along with other species of fauna present in the Kintrishi protected areas, including: *Salmo labrax*, *Mertensiella caucasica*, *Ommatotriton ophryticus*, *Bufo verrucosissimus*, *Darevskia clarkoru*, *Vipera kaznakovi*,

Aquila nipalensis and *Lutra lutra*. Other species of small mammals, endemic insects and interesting amphibians complete the rich biodiversity of the Kintrishi complex of protected areas.

Kintrishi Protected Areas are not only rich in biodiversity but also have an important cultural and historical heritage that is worth mentioning. The presence of medieval stone bridges is one of the most remarkable attractions, like the Tamari bridge located over the Kintrishi river, in the village of Tskhemvani. This bridge belongs to the Rustaveli period (XI-XII) and owes its name to a legend. Other monuments include St. Giorgi church in Tskhemvani, and the Khinotsminda church ruins in the village of Khino, which belongs to the VIII-IX centuries and it was characterized by masonry construction techniques with signs of a relatively late Georgian basilica.

Local settlements in Kintrishi include 3 families living permanently in the area of the park and 20 families that live there in summer (from April to November). Local families' livelihood is mainly based on livestock grazing, fishing, wild fruit and berry collection, extraction of timber for fuel and construction, and provision of some visitor services.

Kintrishi Protected Areas offer visitors the possibility to enjoy two recreational trails; the first one is a 1,5 hour-trail known as the "Tamara arch bridge" trail and it is 1,2 km distance from the Tamara -or Tamari- bridge to an area with old box-tree stands more than 10 meters high close to a beautiful waterfall in the Kintrishi river. The second is a two-day trail known as "Yew and Lake Tbikeli" trail, which is 37 km long, starting from the Tskhemvani Visitor Shelter to the village of Khino, where there is a picnic spot close to the ruins of the Khinotsminda church. From that point, the trail runs for 12 kilometres ascending through an untouched chestnut and beech forest up to the Tbikeli lake, located at an altitude of 2.000 meters.

Part of the cultural richness of Kintrishi are several festivals that attract many visitors to the area, such as the Kintrishi Gorge Fest held in September, involving the four villages of Kobuleti, Chakhati, Khino and Kokhi, which present a photo exhibition reflecting their rural traditions and handicrafts.

Despite its many attractions and its natural and cultural diversity, the protected areas of Kintrishi still need some improvements in order to attract a larger number of visitors, especially regarding access to the protected areas, as well as infrastructures and services available for tourists.

3.2. SOCIOECONOMIC FRAMEWORK

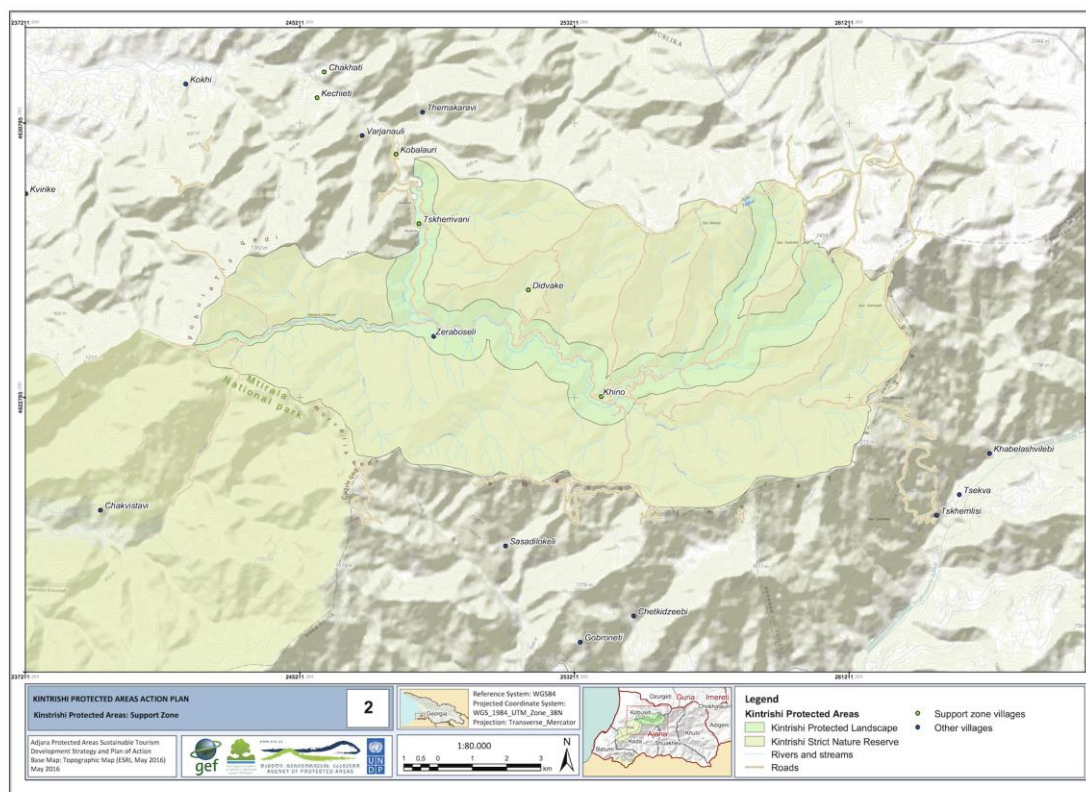


Figure 4: Map of Kintrishi Protected Areas Support Zone. Source: HIDRIA

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

There are 7 villages in Chakhati settlement / community coming under the support zone of Kintrishi protected areas, belonging to Kobuleti municipality. Out of them, three settlements (Didvake, Tskhemvani and Khino) are within the borders of the territory of Protected areas, while the remaining 4 villages (Kobalauri, Chakhati, Okhtomiand Kechieti) are located outside its borders.

At present, 323 families live in Chakhati commune and its permanent population amounts to 1.175 people. Part of the population of Chakhati community leaves the villages during the winter period and moves to the villages located in the lower zone of Kobuleti Municipality. Total number of population, which do not leave their houses during winter period amounts to 192 families, 668 people.

TERRITORIAL UNITS	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS	NUMBER OF ACTUAL POPULATION	PERMANENT POPULATION
Chakhati	179	637	652
Didvake	3	9	9
Varjanauli	12	42	42
Kechieti	40	134	134
Kobalauri	8	35	35
Okhtomi	38	136	148
Tkemakaravi	4	8	8
Salkhino	27	94	94
TOTAL CHAKHATI COMMUNITY	311	1.095	1.122

Table 1: Demographic data of Kintrishi Protected Areas support zone. Source: Black Sea Eco Academy

One of the main social problems is the high level of migration in Chakhati communities due to unemployment. Population is moving from Kintrishi gorge to the cities in search for the job and finally stay there.

Before the establishment of Kintrishi Public Reserve (1959), the ravine of the River Kintrishi used to be one of the most densely settled sites with its traditional culture and agriculture (plant raising, cattle breeding and bee keeping).

Nowadays, the local settlements could be met only on the territory of the protected landscape and they comprise several settlements of former communities (Khino, Tserakveti, Katamuri, Didvake, Meskhikedi, Zeraboseli and Ckhemvana), from which only several households are living there for the whole year; while most of the families live seasonally (only in summer: for April-November period).

The population that temporarily uses the protected areas of Kintrishi mainly comprises of the settlers from the villages of the lower part of the river Kintrishi (villages: Kobuleti, Khucubani, Chanati and others) that on their side tend to be the permanent inhabitants of the areas with their predecessors who used to live here before the establishment of the Reserve.

ECONOMIC DATA

According to existing data, the most important economic activities in the support zone of the Kintrishi Protected Areas are:

» Agriculture

The key source of income for the population of villages located in the support zone of Kintrishi protected areas is the agriculture. The key agricultural fields are: fruit production (at present hazelnut occupies the significant place in the local agricultural production), vegetable production, livestock husbandry and bee-keeping. Major part of produced agricultural goods is for self-consumption (subsistence farming); however, part of the products is sold at Kobuleti, Khaki and Batumi markets. The main income of the population is selling nuts and tangerines.

» Livestock farming

Traditional activity of the gorge is animal husbandry. Most of the farmers have cattle but with small amount as locally there are few pastures and only several big farmers leading nomadic cattle husbandry.

The farmers leading nomadic cattle are taking the cattle above Khino mountain, to Kintrishi meadow, for this they are using 30 km territory of protected area, for which special permit is issued by administration of protected territories.

The activities of the permanent and temporary inhabitants in the protected landscape area comprise cattle grazing, limited fishing, wild fruit and berry collection extraction of necessary amount of timber (mainly wood timber, stake and supplementary material for constructions).

» Beekeeping

It is a traditional activity in Chakhati community. During chestnut flowering period they are allowed to take the bees to the protected area, thus supporting this high quality, ecologically pure honey production. The influence of protected areas on beekeeping activity is positive. The beekeepers are able to produce high quality honey and, accordingly, beekeeping has a relevant development potential- in case touristic business further promote its commercialization.

» Tourism

Tourism sector is traditional for Ajara, specifically for Kintrishi gorge. The tourists are moving along the river Kintrishi and mainly bypass the support zone settlements. The walking tour currently active for tourists, containing the sightseeings of Uthkhovari and Tbikeli is of high level of difficulty and not everyone is capable of reaching it. Construction of road to Khino mountain and development of better touristic route will make the sightseeings accessible for tourists and accordingly will increase their visits.

BASIC INFRASTRUCTURES

The difficult and damaged roads from Kobuleti represent a significant problem faced by Kintrishi Protected Areas; the roads are often blocked during the winter period. The central road to some villages in Chakhati community (Khino, Tskhemvani and Didvake) is ground and accordingly emergency services such as ambulances cannot reach the villages on time.

According to data provided by Black-Sea Eco Academy in their report *“The profiles of Communes of Support Zone of Mtirala and Kintrishi Protected Areas”* most population in Chakhati do not have centralized and permanent water supply, centralized sewage system, heating or even gas supply. They use firewood for heating. Similar situation happens in Khino where only a few families live there, mostly in summer.

The drinking water supply system is not in a good condition in the community and population is supplied with water from the natural springs. During the winter, mostly in Khino, Tskhemvani and Didvake, the water supply system is often frozen, creating major problems for the local population. The electricity supply network is also a significant problem for the villages, there are frequent breakages and population is left without electricity. Two of the villages, Khino and Didvake, located inside the PA have no power supply at all and practically the whole population leaves the villages during the winter months (only 3 households stay in Didvake out of 15).

Several households living inside Kintrishi protected areas and Monastery of Khino are supplied with firewood by Protected Areas administration, and outside the perimeter of protected area, population is supplied by Forestry Farm.

Waste management is an issue in the area, since there is no waste collection service, and the waste is thrown in ravines.

There is no mobile communication network accessible in the mountainous villages, making communication of local population with the external world even more difficult.

The access to some of these basic services to the local community providers is essential not only to improving their living conditions but also to enhance their opportunities to offer some quality services to potential visitors.

4. ASSESSMENT OF THE AREA

4.1. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

4.1.1. Management system

ADMINISTRATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES

Kintrishi PA is centrally organized as administration unit of APA. It is open for visitors throughout the year. The administration new building in the center of Kobuleti is under reconstruction and planned to be opened in autumn (supported by Kobuleti municipality and SPPA/KfW funds).

Kintrishi PA has team of 11 including: 5 management and administration (1 head of security staff; 1 resource management specialist; 1 visitor service specialist, 1 accountant) and 6 Ranger staff.

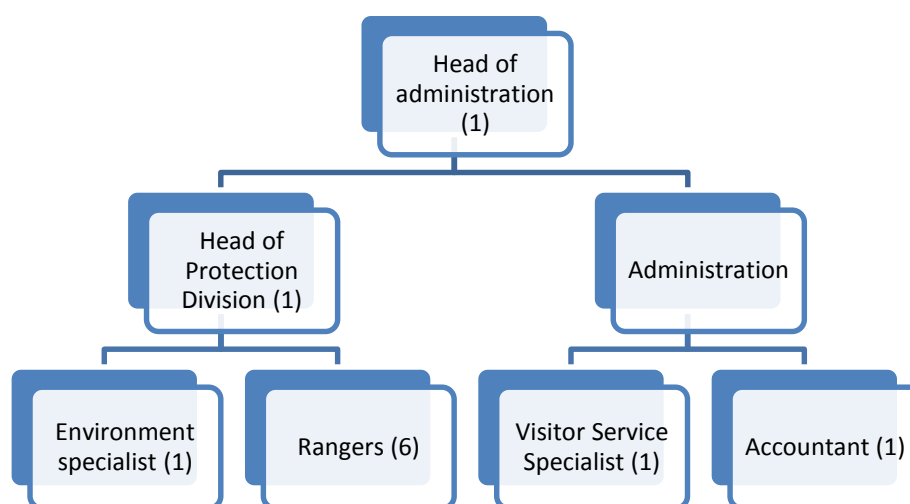


Figure 5: Organization chart of KPA. Source: KPA administration

BUDGET

Adjara Protected Areas budget depends on three main sources: state budget, international organizations and tourism related sources.

Funds from tourism-related sources for Kintrishi PA are low, as tourism activities are limited and not well developed¹.

¹ More details on tourism activities economic income can be found in section 4.4.1

The annual state budget of Kintrishi PA is part of total annual state budget of APA. In addition, Kintrishi Protected Areas receives additional funds from CNF and SPPA.

SOURCES OF INCOME	2014	2015
State Budget	80.418	77.833
CNF	139.836	24.383
SPPA	102.925	263.300
TOTAL	323.179 Gel	365.516 Gel

Table 2: Kintrishi Protected Areas budget. Source: KPA administration

4.1.2. Existing Management Plan

The “*Support Programme for Protected Areas*” (SPPA), a KfW financed project is supporting the development of Kintrishi Protected Areas along with other three Parks in Georgia. The project related investments for Kintrishi will enable the protected areas to design a management plan, to improve capacities of their staff, and develop sustainable tourism and infrastructure, including visitor centres and walking trails. The investments also support socio-economic developments in local communities living near the protected areas. The SPPA is also supporting a new demarcation process in order to provide the National Park status to the area.

The park administration is currently working on management plan. In the framework of the SPPA/KfW program detailed six-year management plan will be elaborated by the end of 2016-beginning of 2017.

The Park’s Action Plan for 2016 includes: investigation and definition of new patrol routs, and prepare treks, trainings for rangers, inventory of the property, assessment of eco-systems, scientific research – compilation of “Wildlife Chronicles”, complete the information about relict flora and Red List, monitoring of bear, Lynx, salamander and other species; eco-educational activities; collaboration with local municipalities and other stakeholders; organization of introduction courses, meetings with village schools and implementation of special thematic programs for junior rangers, and organization of Green Calendar Events. Provide APA regularly with visitors’ statistics.

4.1.3. Governance and other participatory structures

REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Kintrishi Protected Areas administration is a member of new established Advisory Council that was created in order to increase the local capacity, motivate and enhance the linkages between municipalities, the park administration and local communities, facilitate the sustainable development of the park and local community involvement in management process. It supports also a process to delegate and make decisions on regional level (essential step for de-concentration of APA). The Regional Advisory Council was initiated by SPPA project.

Kintrishi Advisory Council meets 4 times per year. There are 14 members in the council from different institutions including head of Friends' association and the head of Kintrishi PA.

KINTRISHI PROTECTED AREAS FRIENDS ASSOCIATION

Kintrishi Protected Areas Friends Associations (KFA) have been established in 2015 under the framework of the *“Support Programmed for Protected Areas”*, as a non-governmental, non-profit, membership-based organization.

The main goals of the Associations are:

- ✓ Preservation and protection of biodiversity of the PAs;
- ✓ Eco-tourism development;
- ✓ Involvement of stakeholders in the management, protection and development of PAs;
- ✓ Socio-economic development of the PA support zone villages;
- ✓ Promotion of nature conservation and PAs.

The establishment of this Association also enables Kintrishi Protected Areas to get some financial resources to provide activities and services that cannot be realized with regular budget of the Protected Area. Main financial resources at this moment is donation (mainly from SPPA project) and projects funding.

KFA has two members so far (the head of association and head of Kintrishi PA administration). They are working on documentation on membership issues.

The KFA provides administration with trainings in development of management and action plans, including: support administration in capacity building, support local community through small grant project development (through Financial Participatory Approach), marketing (they are filming Kintrishi with Ajara TV), organizing eco-camps, make exchange programs with other PA such as Algeti, Kazbegi.

They have also supported the production of leaflets and promotional material, *see figure 6*.



Figure 6: Promotional material produced with the support of KFA. Source: KPA

With the small grant projects already supported local initiatives in four villages: Khino, Zeda Boseli, Tskhelvani and Chakhati) such as:

- **Apiculture:** 15 farmers got 10 families of bee for business development. They will be granted with necessary equipment to “develop product from farm to market”.
- **Agriculture:** supported purchasing tractors, rehabilitation of small bridges to have better access to the cultivated lands, preparation of guesthouses, playgrounds, equipment of ritual halls etc.
- **Tourism:** some locals have also received funds to spend on conditioning their home for receiving guests.

4.1.4. Zoning

Kintrishi complex of protected areas is comprised by the Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve and the Kintrishi Protected Landscape. The following table summarizes the characteristics of the two categories of protected areas.

CATEGORY OF PA	YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT	TOTAL AREA (HA)	% OF TOTAL AREA
Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve	1959	10.703	77
Kintrishi Protected Landscape	2007	3.190	23

Table 3: Categories of Protected Areas included in the Kintrishi complex

According to Georgia's Law on the System of Protected Territories, a Strict Nature Reserve, corresponds to the current category of a State Reserve, which is defined in Article 4 of the Law as a reserve established "in order to preserve the nature, natural processes and genetic resources in a dynamic and untouched state".

The Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve was established to protect the relict forest and endemic species of flora and fauna present in the Kintrishi gorge. The activities that are permitted in the reserve include: scientific research, educational activities and nature observation and monitoring activities.

A Protected Landscape, however, is specifically aimed at "protecting nationally important, aesthetically distinctive, natural landscapes, or those of natural/cultural character, established as a result of harmonious relation of humans and nature, as well as to protect living nature and to conduct recreational/tourist and traditional economic activities" (Article 8). This harmonious relation between man and nature is patent in the multiple historical and cultural manifestations present in the Kintrishi protected landscape, such as beautiful medieval arch bridges that surrounded by well-preserved relict forests, do nothing but contribute to enrich the natural beauty of this landscape.

The following map shows the two categories of protected areas of Kintrishi.

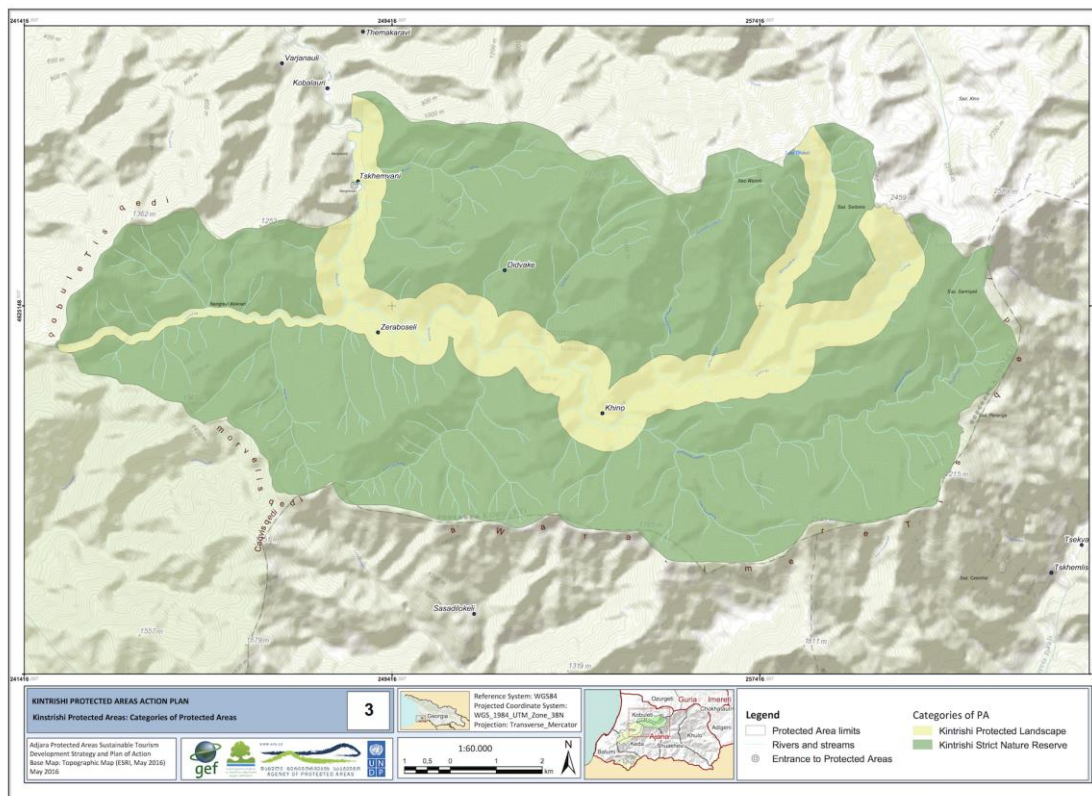


Figure 7: Kintrishi Protected Areas Complex. Source: HIDRIA

4.2. ASSESSMENT OF THE ATTRACTIONS AND SERVICES OF KINTRISHI PROTECTED AREAS

For the formulation of the tourism strategy, the initial step consists in the compilation of the natural (identification of flora and fauna species, geographical assets, etc.) and cultural features as well as information about current infrastructure available to determine the best areas for the tourism activity and development.

4.2.1. Description of Key Features of the Area

The location of Kintrishi Protected Areas between the Black Sea and the mountain system of Achara-Imereti creates complex and diverse relief. The forested mountain area of Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve (altitude 2.596 m above the sea level) is characterized by deep gorges formed by Kintrishi River and its tributaries. It was first established and declared officially as a Kintrishi Strict Nature Reserve in 1959 (IUCN Category I), and Protected Landscape in 2007 (IUCN category V)

Kintrishi Protected Areas covers an area of 13.893 ha., characterized by relict Colchic forest with presence of rare, threatened and endemic species. APA envisages an extension of the area by approximately 2000 ha. towards Mount Peranga and to give it the status of national park. The area is not defined yet. Demarcation process is under development (supported by SPPA programme).

The protected areas of Kintrishi cover two climatic zones: 1) humid climate with cold winter and long hot summer; 2) humid climate with cold snowy winter and short summer. The rugged surface of the complex relief of the protected areas of Kintrishi and deep gorges cause frequent changes of climatic elements.

The inner mountainous part is characterized with quite warm summer. The lowest temperature on the reserve territory is in January, February and March. The warmest months are June, July and August. The average temperature in August is +24 degree, in January +4 degree. The average annual precipitation on the protected areas do not drop below 200 mm and grows with altitude and reaches 3,000 mm.

PHYSICAL FEATURES

The Kintrishi Protected Areas are characterized by a complex and diverse topography. Most of the territory is characterized by mountains and gorges. The main water artery of the area, the Kintrishi River, originates from the mountain Khino and flows into the Black Sea.

The tributaries of the Kintrishi river are Kheknara, Peranga, Mamedaghi, Didghele, Misanati stream (on which there is a 30 m height cascade), the Bolkvadze t and Chrdila (with a two-step 70 m height waterfall).

High up in the mountains at the altitude of 2.200 m there are 2 small lakes –Tbikeli and Sidzerdzali, the area of which does not exceed 1.5 ha. The first of them is directly located on the territory of the reserve, the other one is beyond its border.



Figure 8: Mountainous landscape and Lake Tbikeli. Source: HIDRIA/KPA

The protected areas of Kintrishi are covered with yellow brown forest and brown forest acid soils, mainly with beech trees and beech-chestnut trees, also in small quantities fir-silver fir trees with mixing up of beech trees.

BIOTIC FEATURES

» FLORA

The territory of the state reserve of Kintrishi has quite a rich vegetative cover. The flora of Kintrishi protected areas is rich with endemic plants of Adjara, evergreen shrubs, ferns and lianas. Kintrishi protected areas' dendroflora (trees, shrubs) accounts 102 species. 46 species of trees, 4 species of bushes and 8 species of lianas can be found there

The relicts of this zone are the following: Pontiac oak (*Quercus pontica*), Medvedev birch (*Betula medwedewi*), yew tree (*Taxus baccata*), Colchias bladdernut (*Staphylea colchica*), butcher's-broom, oriental persimmon, common horse chestnut (*Castanea sativa*).

Peculiarity of Adjarian climate is also reflected on plants of the Kintrishi gorge. For example, myrobalan plum (*Prunus vachuschtii*) gives fruit twice a year – in summer and winter. Caucasian bilberry (*Vaccinium arctostaphylos*) maintains its leaves for nearly ten months. Pontiac oak which in high mountains loses its leaves in winter time, is practically evergreen in the lower belt. Ç

The composition of forests of the protected areas of Kintrishi is diversified. The biggest part of the area is covered with beech tree forests, chestnut trees, hornbeam trees, oak trees, fir-silver trees. Also lime trees, hazelnuts, alder trees, absinthes, cherry laurel absinthes, Pontic rhododendron and Caucasian rhododendron.

Apart from the above mentioned species in the sub-forest, there can also be found relict *Rhododendron Ungernii* Trautv., buxus, sorbus, bilberry, azalea, blackberry, *Rhododendron caucasicum*, hazelnut and others, from lianas Colchis Ivy, sarsaparilla, and clematis.



Figure 9: Examples of main flora species in KPA. Source: Georgian Biodiversity Database and other web based sources.

Colchian boxwood is on the verge of extinction, a fungal disease (pathogenic fungus *Cylindrocladium Buxicola*), known as the boxwood burn, defoliated most of the boxwood plantings in Western Georgia. Massive drying of Colchian boxwood observed in the entire range of its natural habitat, and that is a great damage from both an environmental and a cultural and economic point of view.

» FAUNA

The ornitho-fauna of the reserve is rich with predator birds, such as: small eagle, buzzard, hawk, sparrow-hawk, also night predators as the horned owl, scops owl and eagle owl. There are also other birds in Kintrishi, such as: hoopoe, woodpecker, raven, thrush and oriole and such rare birds, as Caucasian grouse (*Tetrao mlokosiewiczi*) and Caspian Snowcock (*Tetraogallus caucasicus*). These

two species are included in the “Red List” and are very interesting for birdwatchers together with the predator birds.

From small mammals in Kintrishi there are the following animals: mole, least weasel (*Mustela nivalis*), Caucasian squirrel (*Sciurus anomalus*), hare (*Lepus europaeus*), fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), badger (*Meles meles*), wild cat (*Felis silvestris*). In the reserve the otter (*Lutra lutra*) population is not studied well, though this animal has been seen many times in the gorge.

Predator animals present in the reserve are the brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), the population of which is quite stable. In the reserve and its adjacent territory, the wolf (*Canis lupus*) or the lynx (*Lynx lynx*) are rarely observed. From the hoofed animals in the reserve forests the roe inhabits (*Capreolus capreolus*), higher at the boundary of alpine and subalpine zones the chamois (*Rupicapra rupicapra*) inhabits. In the past boars were observed entering from Chaqvi region.

As for amphibians there have been recorded Caucasian salamander (*mertensiella caucasica*), Malaysian water lizard (*triturus vittatus*), natural toad (*Hylidae arborea*), and Malaysian and lake frogs. In Kintrishi there are found three kinds of lizard and several species of snake. These are: *Natrix natrix* and *Natrix tessellata*, *Coronnella austriaca* and *Vipera Kaznakovi*. The rivers and streams of the reserve are rich with trout (*salmo fario*). In the downstream of the Kintrishi River the carp and *Chalcalburnus chalcoides* are often found.



Figure 10: Examples of existing fauna in Kintrishi Protected Areas. Source: Georgian Biodiversity Database and other internet-based sources.

4.2.2. Evaluation of existing infrastructures and services available

ACCESIBILITY AND TRANSPORTATION

Kintrishi Protected Areas is located 25 km away from Kobuleti and 42 from Batumi. The road from Kobuleti to Kintrishi, especially the last 9 km, is in bad condition and needs to be repaired. This situation is a constraint for further tourism development, as the journey to visit Kintrishi Protected Areas is long and unconformable.



Figure 11: Condition of the access road to KPA and signage. Source: HIDRIA

The construction of a hydropower plant is also affecting the road worsening the current situation. The circulation of loaded lorries is also obstructing road traffic in the area.

Transportation system to the area is difficult. Access to the area is possible by taxi (it costs around 80 Gel from Kobuleti). Minibuses depart from Kobuleti up to Chakhati. There are no regular buses up to the Protected Area. The difficult access is also preventing tour operator to further promote this area.

The signage system from Kobuleti is inexistent. There are no references to the Kintrishi Protected Areas, which also difficult the access to visitors.

VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Existing tourism infrastructure (state funded) already provides a good basis for hospitality service development in the area. Kintrishi Protected Areas counts on a Visitor Centre, camp sites, trails with some tourism facilities, etc. The visitor infrastructure available is described below:

» ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

Kintrishi Protected Areas administration building is located in the Forest Administration Office in Kobuleti. A new modern building is currently being built in the centre of Kobuleti, nearby Georgian Palace Hotel and is supported by Kobuleti municipality and SPPA/KfW funds.

The new location is more convenient, as it is located in one of the main roads of Kobuleti. It is expected that the building will be ready for the end of 2016. The new administration will be a three-storey building that will host the offices of the administration, a reception area and also a guesthouse in the third floor.



Figure 12: On the left picture, the current location of the administration building of KPA. On the right, the render image of the future administration building. Source: HIDRIA

In the territory of the Protected Area there are several Visitor Facilities that are analysed in more detail in this section. The following map provides an overview of the existing visitor facilities:

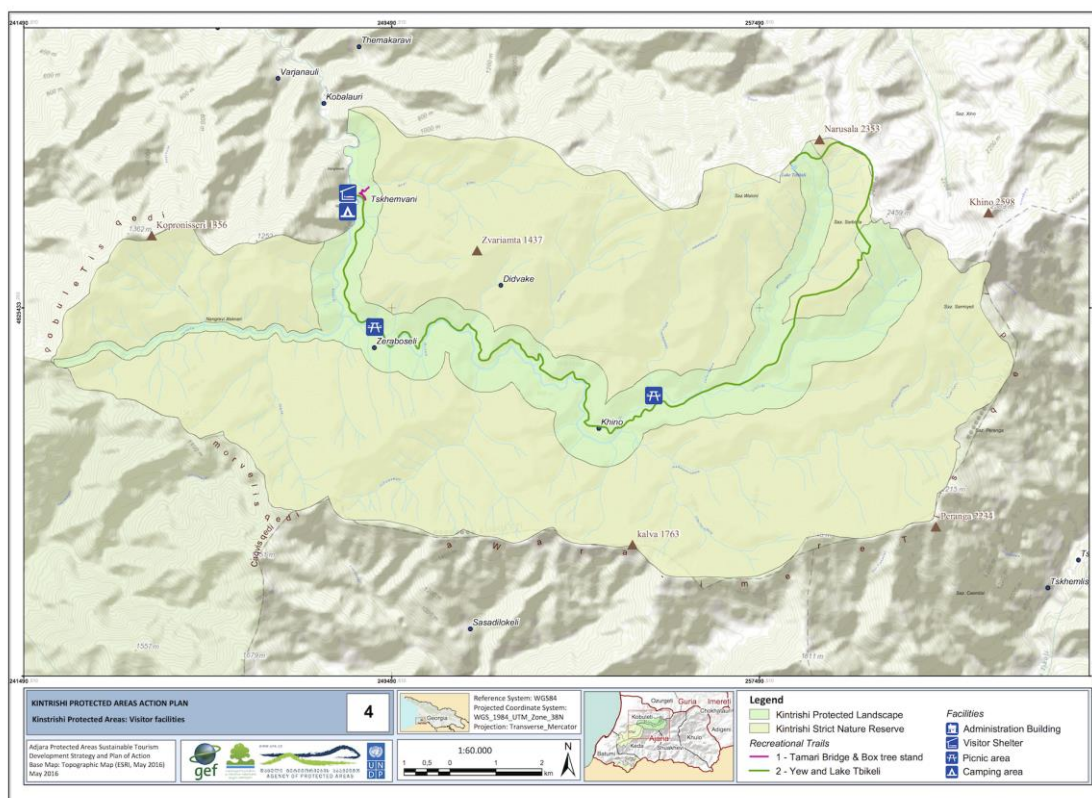


Figure 13: Map of visitor facilities of Kintrishi Protected Areas.

» RANGER/VISITOR SHELTER

There is a ranger/visitor shelter with two guest rooms, kitchen, and WC near the Protected Area entrance, in Tskhemvni village (Kobuleti municipality). The shelter is equipped with solar system. The visitor shelter is in good condition.



Figure 14: Visitor facilities in Kintrishi PA. Source: HIDRIA

Recreational area around the cottage is suitable for visitors, as well as a picnic and camping places (cost per person 5 Gel), outdoor WC. The price is 15 GEL p/p.



Figure 15: Camping and other facilities around the visitor shelter. Source: KPA

» TRAILS

Kintrishi has two **trails** available for tourists:

1. **Tamara arch bridge and Box-tree Stand:** 1.200 m. Difficulty: easy

The main sightseeing of this route is the arched stone bridge on the Kintrishi River, located just before Park entrance. This bridge is regarded as a monument of the Rustaveli epoch.

After passing by the visitor shelter the trail heads to Tskhemvani St. Giorgi Church (2005) and then continues to old box-tree stands. The Rushavi River flows along the box-tree stands and at the end of the trail.



Figure 16: Main sightseeing in the route 1 in Kintrishi. Source: HIDRIA

The trail is only 1,2 km long and it is easy. It gives a first impression of the Park to visitors however it has limited educational or even recreational purpose. Some information boards are available in the area informing visitors about the Park, zoning routes, and specific information about the bridge or the box trees. However, there are no signages along the trails pointing directions or diversions. And the information board available along the route is in very bad condition and needs to be repaired.

At the time of the visit (April), this trail presented a bad condition, even it was not possible to access to the river as a fallen tree shut down the path. It would be recommended that regular monitoring

of this trail is conducted as this route is accessible all year round, and should be kept in good condition.



Figure 17: Images on the Box tree area. Source: HIDRIA

The Box Trees in the area are affected by fungus disease and as consequence the trees are drying affecting this environment and the beauty of this route.

This hiking activity can be combined with picnicking at the Visitor Shelter.

In the following table the positive aspects and the aspects that should be improved are summarized:

POSITIVE ASPECTS	ASPECTS TO BE IMPROVED
Interesting attractions	Limited educational objectives
Existing information boards.	Trail maintenance
	Limited expenditure by tourists (picnic)
	Limited visitors' length of stay
	Limited directional signage

2. Yew and Lake Tbikeli: length: 37 km. Duration 2 days. Difficulty: High

The route starts from the Visitor shelter and the main sightseeing's are old yew trees (probably 30 or 40 centuries old).

The trail heads to Khino village where the ruins of the Khinotsminda Church can be visited. In the area there is a resting place and also some local houses that offer accommodation to visitors (*see section 4.3.2*). However, the level of accommodation offered is quite low.

From here visitors should continue to Lake Tbikeli through untouchable chestnut and beech forest. The lake is located at an altitude of 1.900 – 2.000 meters. The distance from the ruins to the lake is 12 km, and the elevation is about 1.000 metres. This hike can take about 9 hours (return).

Along the route, some facilities are located. There are two picnic areas (*see figure 17*), the first one presents a bad condition and needs to be repaired urgently. The area in which this picnic area is located is very nice however, some cleaning actions are needed.



Figure 18: Facilities located along the route. Source: HIDRIA

The trail is in good condition, especially up to Khino. The consultant team could not hike up to Lake Tbikeli as during the assessment phase the area was covered by snow. However, according to several sources consulted, the route is quite difficult and lack on indications. Appropriate route marking is urgently needed.

There are not official figures on the number of people that take this route, however, it can be said that the number is rather low as this route is difficult, especially from Khino.

Most of the hikers that go to the Lake drive up to Khino and then hike to the lake. They do the hike in one day, which is exhausting for most of the people. A refuge or a hut, in which hikers could sleep close to the mountain top, would make it easier and more accessible.

Additionally, this route should be clearly marked and some works related to the installation of steps or ladders should be assessed.

If improvements are made this route has a great potential due to the beauty of the environment. Moreover, there are opportunities to extend the route and increase the attractiveness for trekkers.

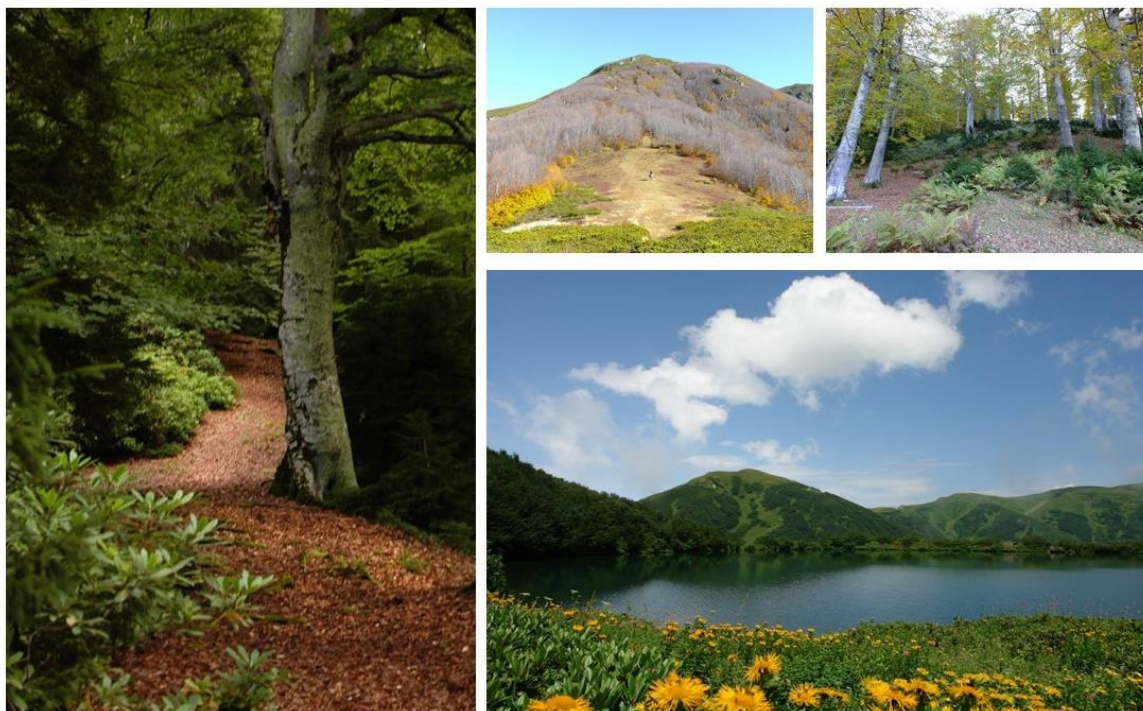


Figure 19: Sections on the Lake Tbilisi Route. Source: KPA

POSITIVE ASPECTS	ASPECTS TO BE IMPROVED
Interesting natural and cultural values	Limited educational objectives
Untouched nature	Infrastructure maintenance (recreational areas)
Most part of the trail is in good condition	Limited directional signage
	Improvement of trail in some sections

Based on the existing infrastructures, the main recreational activities that can be done in Kintrishi Protected Areas are:

- a) Hiking/Trekking in the mentioned paths
- b) Horse riding
- c) Camping
- d) Picnicking

4.2.3. Description and evaluation of environmental education programs/volunteer programs

Kintrishi Protected Areas counts on an Environmental Education Program with the objective of raising their environmental awareness and popularizing Protected Areas and specifically, Kintrishi Protected Areas, to involve them in environmental issues and to maintain their care for a healthy vital environment.

The **Environmental Education Program** includes:

- **Outdoor seminars in the Park territory and Presentations** The KPA administration offers lectures, seminars and excursions in the Protected Areas. In addition, KPA administration organizes activities such as eco-camps, young ranger program, cleaning actions or event intellectual games. They visit mostly the Tamara arch bridge and Box-tree Stands.

In 2015, 1.115 children, 111 teachers and 35 schools participated in these programs. In the first semester of 2016 were 103 children.

- **Celebration of environmental-related international days.** Among the days they celebrate are: World Forestry Day (21st March), World Water Day (22nd March), International Day National Parks and Reserves (from 19-24 April), Earth Day (22nd April) World Environment Day (5th June), World Animal Day (4th October), etc. During these celebrations several activities are organized such as: cleaning-up actions, Green Actions, presentations, environmental related games,



Figure 20: Images of some of the environmental related activities carried out by KPA administration. Source: KPA administration.

Kintrishi Protected Areas does not offer any **volunteer programme** yet. In 2015, the Park applied for a Peace Corp Volunteer but the action did not succeed. The intention is to try it again for 2016.

4.3. DESCRIPTION OF THE SUPPORT ZONE

4.3.1. Natural and Cultural resources in the adjacent areas

Kintrishi gorge is located in the historical “Land of Achara”² and several cultural manifestations are to be found in the area. Kintrishi has an interesting and long history, although Kintrishi gorge is not well investigated.

Results of archaeological research was published in 1987 by D. Bakradze “*Archaeological trip to Guria and Ajara*”. As a result of archaeological excavations, even older pre-Christian monuments have been discovered in this territory. Famous excavations were conducted in Village Khutsubani (1944. by A. Ioseliani) and village Kokhi (1958. by V. Akhvlediani), that revealed artefacts from IX-II cc. Small buildings with short descriptions are published by A. Katamadze “*Kintrishi Gorge*”.

The Colchicum settlements remains of the third-second millennium B.C., and the ruins of iron mining have been discovered.

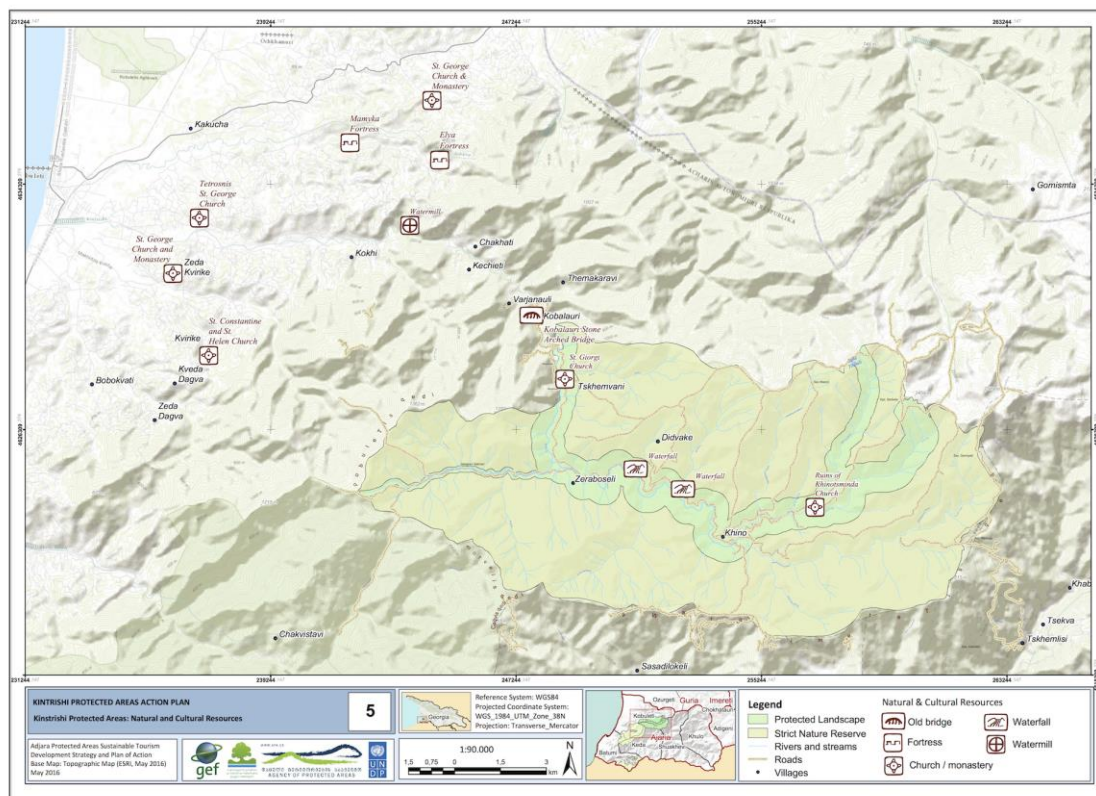




Figure 21: Location of the main natural and cultural resources in the area. Source: HIDRIA

There are important cultural sites around Kintrishi PA. Arch bridge in village Kobalauri in 20 km from Kobuleti; Tetrosnis Church in village Khutsubani in 5 km distance from Kobuleti, on historical Kobuleti-Khino trade road that connected to area to the main road Georgia - Byzantium. Petra

² Caucasus Nature Fund. Legends of Nature



Castle in Tsikhisdziri, between Kobuleti and Batumi. Upper Kvirike Church (XIX) built by Greeks - in 10 km distance from Kobuleti. St. Maryam church in village Dagva (by Georgian and Greeks) in 8 km distance from Kobuleti.

The area has also some well-preserved stone arched bridges from 11th-12th century


BRIDGES		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
TSKHEMOVANI BRIDGE Village Tkhemvani,	Arched bridge of cut stone. Located over Kintrishi river and close to entrance of Kintrishi Protected Areas. Tskhemvani Bridge is dated back to XII cc. right side of the bridge is built on artificial pillar, and the left side is natural cliff. The length of the bridge is 20 m. The bridge is 20 m long, and 2,75 m. wide.	
KOBALAURI STONE ARCH Village Kobalauri	Located over Kintrishi river. According to the legend it was built in XII c on the order of the Tamar.	


Especially important are the religious buildings. In the settlements adjacent to the reserve, Christianity was introduced in the first century by the missionary, Andrew. Other important monuments are St. Nino Church nearby Didvake village, John Baptist church in village Khino.

RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
RUINS OF JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH OF KHINOTSMINDA	<p>John the Baptist church of Khinotsminda is located in 44 km from Kobuleti. The name of the village "salkhino" means "Feast, celebration" in English. According to the legend King Tamara (12th century) with nobles had a rest and feast in this village and village was named as a "Salkhino". Over time, the "Sal-khino" was changed in "Khino".</p> <p>At this time only ruins are preserved from the church. The height of fragments are 2-3 meters. Construction equipment and masonry character of the building indicated VIII-IX centuries the church was built.</p> <p>Today, Khino church is under the auspices of the Patriarchate</p>	
ST. GIORGI CHURCH Tskhemvani Village	<p>The church started functioning in 2005. This was the place to run the church, which was destroyed during the Ottoman invasion. It as rehabilitated by locals in 1999 and now is Patriarchate disposal. Here, visitors can visit the ancient wine pitchers.</p>	
ST. GEORGE CHURCH MONASTERY (XV-XVI) Village Chekhedana	<p>Built by Gurieli's family, renovated in 1992-1996. On 6 May the monastery celebrates St. Georgia's day</p>	
ST. GEORGE CHURCH MONASTERY (XX c) Village Kvirike	<p>The Monastery was built in 1980 based on old XII century church by Greeks. The church celebrates November 16th.</p>	<p>PICTURE NOT AVAILABLE</p>

<p>St. CONSTANTINE AND ST. HELEN CHURCH (1898-1910 YEARS) Village Kvirike</p>	<p>Cross Dome church built by Pontus Greeks. The church celebrates June 3.</p>	
<p>TETROSNIS ST. GEORGE CHURCH Village Khutsubani</p>	<p>Here in V-VI c was placed St. George monastery complex. It has a great role in the development of Christianity in Georgia. This place after Khino was one of the popular and respectful area not only by people in Khintrishi but in neighbour areas as well. The church celebrates 6 of May. Nearby the river there are also ruins of rectangular structure (tower); Jame fortress (1923), arch bridge and stone presses (5X2 m), from XI-XII centuries;</p>	

Other cultural sites include: Elia Fortress (Achkvistavi) and Mamuka fortress (Alambari). These two villages area outside the support zone of Kintrishi Protected Areas, however, are interesting areas to be developed and included in some historical – cultural tour.

FORTRESSES		
NAME OF PLACE / LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	PICTURE
<p>ELYA FORTRESS Achkvistavi</p>	<p>Located on mount Elia, near the village Chakhati. According to legend it was built to control the road to Adjaratskali gorge from Talakha. The building could be from 13th -14th century. The area has also religious significance.</p>	 <p>Source: Source: Cultural Heritage Preservation Agency of Ajara</p>

<p>MAMYKA FORTRESS Alambari</p>	<p>The fortress is located on mountain “tsikhiskeli”. It belonged to noblemen Mamuka Tavdgiradze. The fortress was destroyed during the earthquake in 1959. Now exists ruins of about 47 sq. metres.</p>	
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4.3.2. Analysis of business in the support zone: lodges/accommodation, restaurants, shops

There are a few tourism-related businesses along the way to Kintrishi Protected Areas that offer their services to local and visitors. Rural houses in the villages are very poor and cannot be used as accommodation, lack of appropriate sanitation facilities or even electricity.

Catering facilities are very limited; locals do not have experience in offering catering services or providing picnic lunch boxes to the visitors.

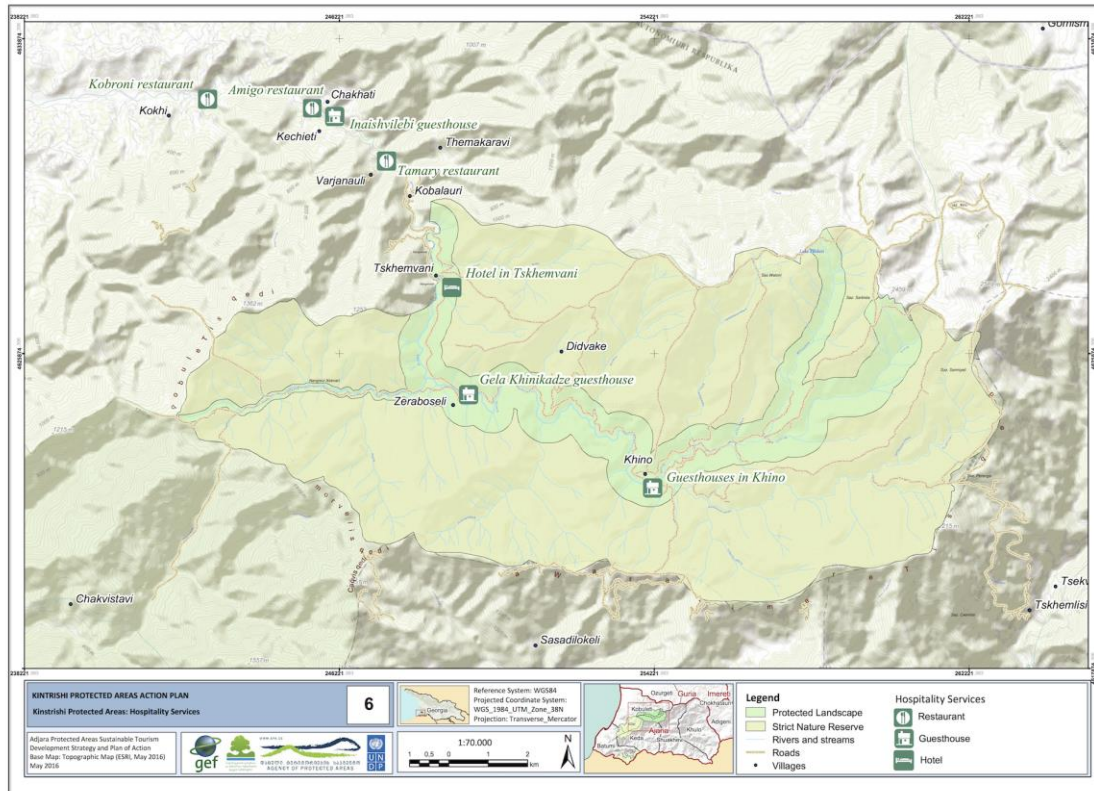



Figure 22: Hospitality businesses in the Support Zone of Kintrishi Protected Areas. Source: HIDRIA

ACCOMMODATION


The current accommodation offer in the support zone of Kintrishi Protected Areas is very limited, only a few options are available. Kintrishi Protected Areas, with the funding of the SPPA program and the Advisory Council, are supporting the development of some local initiatives, some of which are related to tourism businesses.

The accommodation available is reduced to a hotel and several guesthouses. The main accommodation provider is a Hotel, recently opened, and located close to the Protected Areas entrance. This hotel offers a mid-range accommodation, and it also has a restaurant available.

NAME NOT DEFINED YET	
Location: Tskhemvani village	
Description: Recently built recreational complex. The complex includes three nice cottages, one hotel/guesthouse with restaurant for guests.	
Contact: Tel: +995 593 26 30 69 Zurab Khinikadze	

INAISHVILEBI GUESTHOUSE	
Location: Chakhati Village	<p>PICTURE NOT AVAILABLE</p>
Description: There is a rural guesthouse with simple/basic conditions in Kintrishi gorge, nearby Inaishvilebi Lake with 2 rooms / 4 beds. Host provide catering and transportation service and excursions. Price for overnight is 15-20 GEL per person.	
Contact: Tel: +995 593 43 40 90	

Villagers inside the protected area offer also some guesthouse accommodation:

GELA KHINIKADZE GUESTHOUSE (to be developed)	
Location: Zeraboseli village	
Description: This house is not occupied by its owners, that only come in May. The objective can be to convert it into a guesthouse. The owner got small grant from SPPA project to improve quality.	
Contact: Tel: +995 555 22 12 03 Gela Khinikadze	

Local villagers in Didvake offered accommodation for those visitors willing to visit Tbikeli Lake. The quality of services was far from standards and there are not operational anymore.

GUESTHOUSES KHINO VILLAGE (under renovation works)	
Location: Khino	
Description: Local villagers in Khino offer accommodation for those visitors willing to visit Tbikeli Lake. The quality of services is far from standards. Locals are willing to get engaged in tourism activities and have the desire to apply for funds to improve quality. The owner got small grant from SPPA project to improve quality, and the house is going under complete renovation	
Contact: Tel: +995 557 26 52 81 Merab Beridze	

Source: SPPA


There is not information available on these businesses either in the DTR page or even at APA website.


RESTAURANTS

Some restaurants are available in the support zone of the Park, however all of them are located in the main road to the Kintrishi Protected Areas. Most of the restaurants only offer their services during the tourism season. There are not catering places on the Protected Area territory.

Family-run catering places are located along Kintrishi River in Chakhati, Kobuleti villages. They are operational in July - August, established in 2013-2014.

RESTAURANT/ACCOMMODATION KOBRONI	
Location: Kokhi village	
Description: The restaurant has fish as speciality. The restaurant owns also a trout farm. The area around the restaurant should be cleaned and improved. In summer 2016 they will be offering 6 rooms <i>*Note: This restaurant is outside the support zone but it is a traditional and known restaurant in the area.</i>	
Contact: Tel. +995 595 51 79 71 Email: gobroni@gmail.com	

RESTAURANTE CAFÉ AMIGO	
Location: Chakhati village	
Description: Catering place located at the bank of river Kintrishi. The place operates only during summer months. According to latest visits seems that the place has been abandoned.	
Contact: Tel: 558 41 20 20 Eldar Takidze	

TAMARI BRIDGE RESTAURANT	
Location: Varjanauli	
Description: Small catering place located at the Kintrishi river bank. The restaurant has fish as speciality.	
Contact: Tel. +995 558 47 20 20 / 591 95 72 30 Eldar Takidze	

4.4. ANALYSIS OF TOURISM DEMAND

4.4.1. Existing tourism demand

There is an increasing interest in Kintrishi Protected Areas that has its reflection in the number of visitors. Visitor figures has increased over the last years, according to figures provided by Kintrishi Protected Areas administration, the growth of tourist from 2013 to 2015 was almost 12% (see table 5); although the number of visitors in 2015 represent a 3,5% less that in the previous year.

Month	2013	2014	2015	2015 (Georgian)	2015 (Foreign)
January	24	6	41	34	7
February	33	22	31	26	5
March	24	146	106	104	2
April	222	278	286	277	9
May	474	573	190	140	50
June	421	457	482	382	100
July	698	766	931	816	115
August	822	916	937	828	109
September	351	365	389	369	20
October	185	197	164	153	11
November	110	133	136	121	15
December	-	37	65	27	38
TOTAL	3.364	3.896	3.758	3.277	481

Table 4: Number of visitors to KPA, per months, according to origin. Source: KPA

Visitors are mainly individual domestic travellers, most of the foreign visitors come from Russia or Ukraine (76%), and other neighbouring countries.

The “high season” for visiting Kintrishi Protected Areas is from May to September, being July and August the peak months for visitation.

According to the figures of the first semester of 2016, there is a higher interest of Central and Southern Europeans, mostly from Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Czech Republic, France, etc. These markets have a great potential due to their interest in nature-based activities.

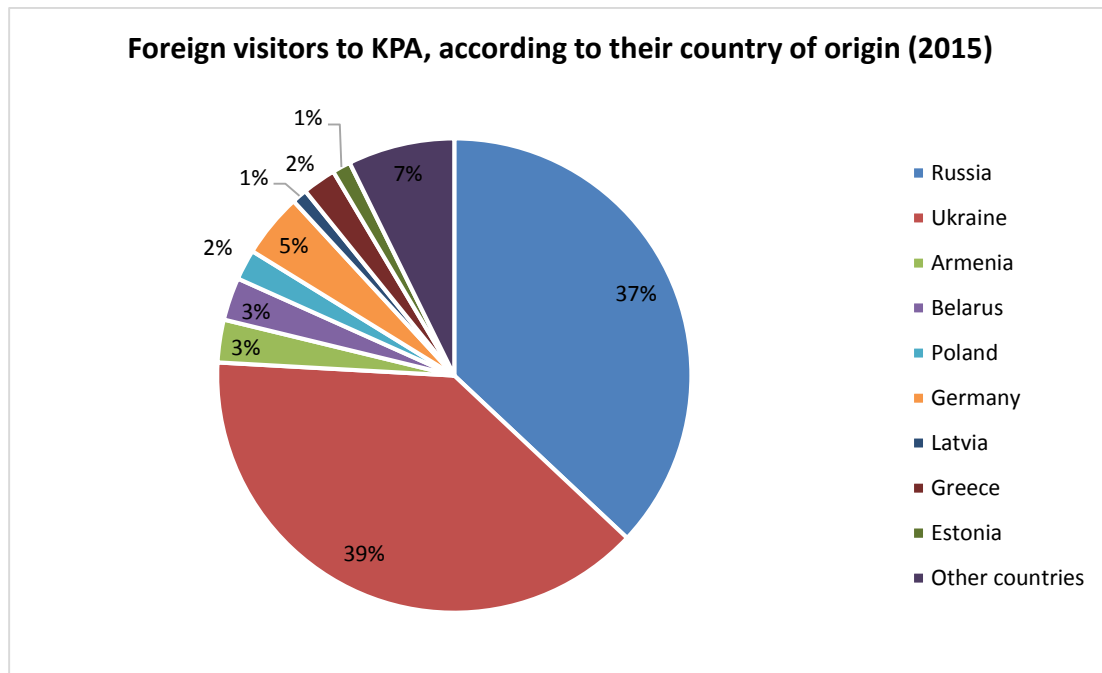


Figure 23: Distribution of foreign visitors, according to their country of origin (2015). Source: KPA

The highest number of travellers visiting Kintrishi PA are one day visitors and small group travellers. Most visitors to Kintrishi PA visit the area with friends or relatives.

According to existing statistics, the main motivation to visit the Protected Area is related to biodiversity or wilderness 55%, followed by discovery the cultural heritage or recreation.

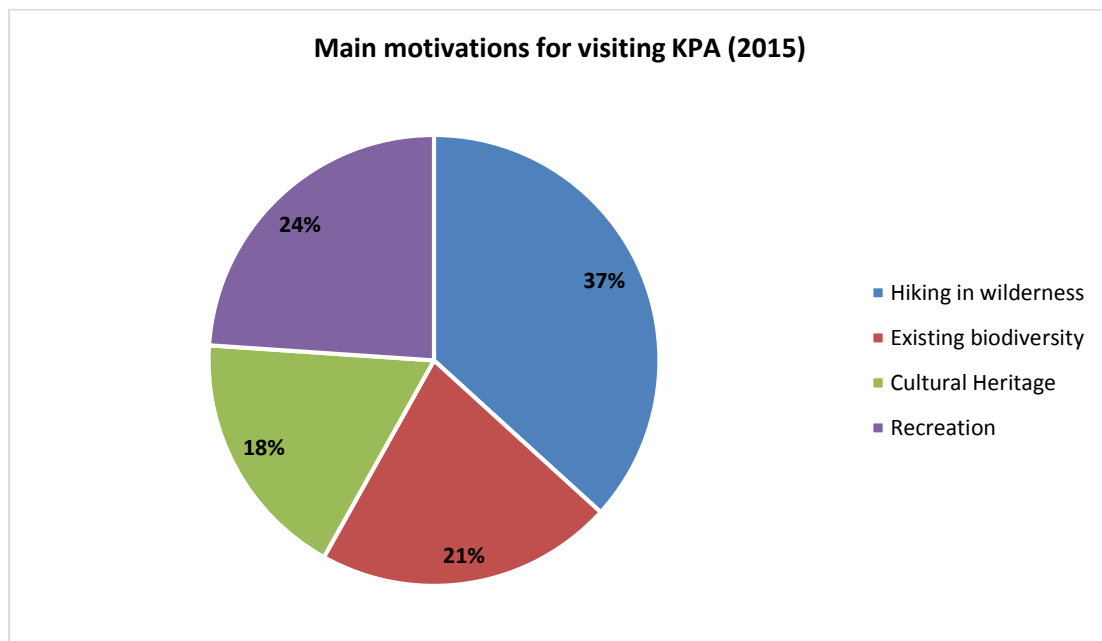


Figure 24: Main motivation to visit KPA - 2015. Source: KPA

Regarding the satisfaction level of visitors, according to surveys collected in 2015, the existing tourism infrastructures need to be improved. However, 52% of total respondents affirm to be satisfied with the services offered by the Protected Area.

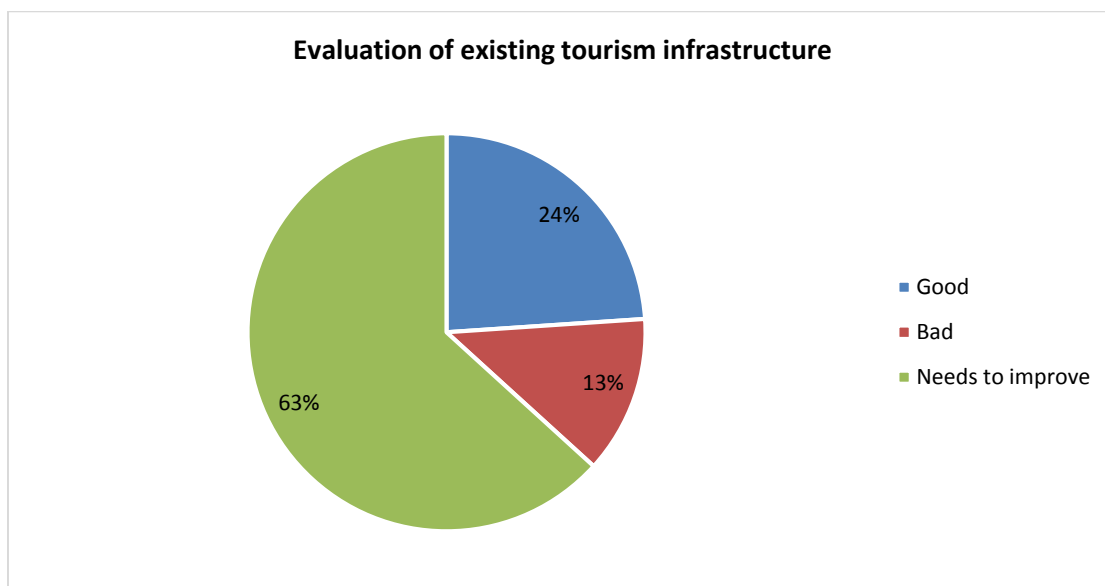


Figure 25: Evaluation of existing tourism infrastructure. Source: KPA

The distance, the lack of adequate tourism activities and products and limited promotion are some of the factors that are limiting the visitation level in Kintrishi Protected Areas. The chart above shows how a majority of visitors (63%) are demanding better infrastructures. Since a vast majority of visitors have decided to visit the Park for hiking and recreational purposes, the proposed infrastructures should be in line with this demand.

With regards to income level from tourism services and activities, the total amount collected in 2015 was 878 Gel representing a decrease of 30% in comparison with 2014. Visitor's shelter and camping related services are main sources of income for the Protected Area.

In the following table is summarized the amount collected according to the different services and activities offered by the Protected Area.

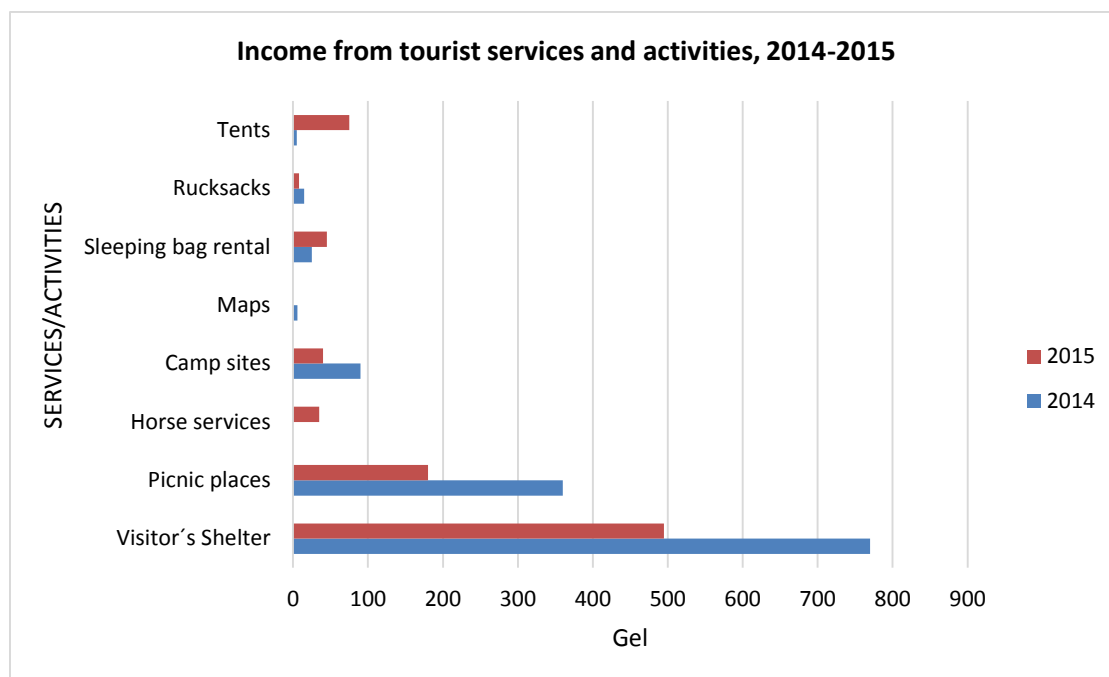


Figure 26: Income from tourism services and activities (in Gel) collected by KPA 2014-2015. Source: KPA

The amount collected by the administration is quite low, due to the limited services offered. Improving and increasing the services and activities offered by the Protected Area can help to increase this income, but also to extend the number of days visitors stay in the area, and therefore also increasing their level of expenditure.

The Park has a system to collect visitor data however, the system needs to be improved in order to be more efficient and increase the quality of the data obtained.

In addition to visitor number and origin they have a satisfaction survey, in which some information is requested additional data from visitors should be gathered to improve such as: *number of nights spending in the area, type of accommodation selected, if they have visited the area before, etc.*

4.4.2. Trends affecting consumer behaviour

According to UNWTO, in 2004 ecotourism was growing three times faster than the global tourism industry as a whole. This trend has continued over the last years confirming a relevant consumer attraction, and this market share will grow over next years.

Most of the tourism target groups have a greater environmental awareness, this trend is also affected by: a) the need for personal health and wellbeing; b) tourists are interested to learn more about the natural and cultural heritage of the destinations they visit seeking for live-enriching experiences; c) a higher level of education is associated with an increased level of educational (outdoor) activities.

The growth of interest in sustainable tourism and ecotourism reflects a rising tide of social concern about the quality of the natural environment and the effect of tourism. Nature-based tourism and ecotourism are recognized as being particularly conducive to enriching and enhancing the standing of tourism, provided they respect the natural heritage and local populations and are in keeping with the carrying capacity of the sites.

In addition, there are other general tourism trends that should be taken into account:

- » Tourists are more **physically and intellectually active** now than previously. There is a trend to being more adventurous on holiday, seeking in trying out new activities, including different outdoor sports as well as walking and cycling. The desire of learning while travelling is also demanding educational activities and experiences related to PA 's through interpretation centres, educational/interpretive paths, etc.
- » **Environment, attractive landscapes** and healthy nature are becoming more important in the decision process. People's concern about environmental issues and sustainability is generating "greener" life styles and, therefore, there is a growing demand for destinations with higher environmental standards.
- » Demand for **unique experiences** and authenticity.
- » **New technologies and internet use** are changing the way people travel and experience the visitation. Social media, peer ratings, user-generated blogs are concepts completely integrated in the tourism industry. Moreover, the extensive use of mobile devices such as smartphones or tables to obtain travel information demands websites suitable for access from mobile device, travel apps for getting all relevant information of the destination, etc.

4.4.3. Potential Tourism markets

Ecotourists are divided according to the following market segmentation typologies from a **behavioural perspective**:

1. **Hard ecotourists or dedicated ecotourists**, which are travellers with strong environmental attitudes who prefer to travel in small groups. They are physically active and enjoy challenging activities such as trekking, kayaking, cycling, etc. They make their own travel arrangements in order to make it a real life experience.
2. **Soft ecotourists** are those travellers who like ecotourism and traditional holidays. They prefer to travel in larger groups and require some level of comfort.

Other authors also identify a third group:

3. **Casual nature tourists**, those that come into close contact with nature only incidentally while in a holiday trip.

These two last groups might be the group into a higher percentage of Ajara PA's visitors fall.

According to their **origin**:

1. **DOMESTIC MARKET**, as we have already presented the domestic market is and will be the predominant market in the future. Very little is known about the local Georgian national market for domestic travel, except that they tend not to be so active, not to travel in large groups beyond friends and relatives and to spend less on local accommodations and other services.

We differentiate two main segments within the domestic market:

- a. **Weekenders- day-trippers**, are mostly families that visit the PA with recreational purposes, they go for picnic and soft activities. They usually travel with children, so activities should be designed also for them. The majority will stay with local families and friends.
 - b. **Long weekend and multi-day visitors** (from Tbilisi and other Georgian cities). This group demands higher standard visitor facilities. Interested in natural and historical attractions.
2. **INTERNATIONAL MARKET**, most important markets are the **neighbouring countries**: Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Armenia. A relative high number of Armenians spend summer holidays with a family in Ajara (around 80.000 – 100.000), this market is especially interested in nature and would appreciate to visit the project PA's. Require good access, safety and high standards of visitor facilities and services.

Apart from these traditional markets, the international market has potential to be further targeted:

- The **European market** is also an important market for ecotourists, especially Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, which are the strongest nature and eco-tourism markets. These markets are motivated by high-quality experience to lesser-known destinations.

Existing tourism demand shows how the presence of European market and neighbouring countries is gaining presence, although the figures are still quite low. Further efforts should be made to increase presence in neighbouring markets (Russia, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan, Turkey), in addition, the European market, should be also an important target.

4.5. MARKETING AND PROMOTION

The marketing and promotion actions of Kintrishi Protected Areas are very limited due unavailable economic resources. The Protected Area, thanks to donors support count on some printed material to be distributed among visitors,

Most of the promotion is done through the Facebook profile, in which they publish some interesting posts; however, the management of this profile should improve by providing more interesting information regarding the activities that can be done, etc.

Since the existing guesthouses are not available all year round and their quality is very low, they are not promoted at all.



Figure 27: Kintrishi Protected Areas promotional material. Source: KPA

APA and DTR are the organizations promoting the area. An analysis of the efforts developed by these organizations is summarized below:

AGENCY OF PROTECTED AREAS (APA)

In the Agency's official website there is information available about Kintrishi Protected Areas, including an introduction to the general data related to the area, how to get to there the trails available as well as the list of the services and fees.

The information is very basic and not very attractive. Contact data of the visitor specialist and the link to the Facebook profile are also provided.

APA organized and participates in different events in order to promote the Protected Areas as, for example, the participation in International Tourism Fairs (ITB in Berlin) or the 18th International Tourism Fair in Tbilisi.

The best promotional material presented at travel fairs by APA are "Legends of Nature" (published by TJS/KFW). However, all materials mentioned above are lack of practical travel information. They do not contain useful info about service providers, tour packages/product that can be organized both by locals and by travel agencies.

The presence in international fairs should be encouraged, especially in those specialized tourism fairs that provide a space for responsible tourism, ecotourism or adventure tourism.

In the following table, are proposed some of the interesting tourism fairs that can count on APA presences:

LOCATION	NAME	WEBSITE
Berlin (Germany)	ITB	http://www.itb-berlin.de/en/
Eggleston UK	Birdfair	http://www.birdfair.org.uk/
Hamburg (Germany)	Reisen	http://www.reisenhamburg.de/
Hannover (Germany)	ABF Fair for active leisure	http://www.abf-hannover.de/abf_daten_fakten_en
London (UK)	World Travel Market (Responsible Tourism Day)	http://www.wtmlondon.com/
Munich (Germany)	F.RE.E	http://www.free-muenchen.de/
Poznan (Poland)	Tour Salon	http://www.tour-salon.pl/en/
Stuttgart (Germany)	CMT	http://www.messe-stuttgart.de/en/cmt/
Trier (Germany)	Sport, Freizeit, Reisen	http://www.sfr-trier.de/
Utrecht (Netherlands)	Vakantiebeurs	http://www.vakantiebeurs.nl/en/Exposant.aspx

Table 5: List of International travel fairs. Source: HIDRIA

For the presence in these events to be successful, it should be organized well in advance (for instance in summer –previous year). Important tasks for the adequate preparation of APA and other interested parties in international travel fairs:

1. Select local/national tour operators offering tourism products in PA to participate in the Fair (share counter costs with them, around 10% for collaboration)
2. Book the space in the selected fair/travel event
3. Organize a presentation event.
4. Invite international tour operators to presentation session (at least 3 months in advance. TTOO data base should be obtained at Georgian embassies.
5. Prepare some specific programs and B2B agendas
6. Participate in organized sessions

7. Design and prepare promotional stand and materials (brochures, merchandising, etc.)
8. Create a data base of contacts

After the fair, it is important to gather the feedback as a potential source of information about areas for improvement, interesting markets, etc.

In addition, APA organizes each year “awareness raising” campaigns within the domestic market: eco-educational courses- seminars, meetings with students, events such as Green Calendar Events - planting of trees open lessons, eco-tours, eco-camps, cleaning the waste, etc. This experience has been implemented in Ajara PAs.

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND RESORTS -

As the organization responsible for tourism development in Ajara region, the DTR promotes activities related to Kintrishi Protected Areas. In the official tourism website (www.gobatumi.com) information related to the Protected Area can be found. However, this information is very limited.

The DTR do not have leaflets available for Kintrishi Protected Areas. However, the Protected Area is promoted on most of the promotional brochures and leaflets published. The DTR organizes several press and tour operators’ trips (national and international) but they focus on other areas.

The DTR has also an eco-map in which main attractions and services are marked, but existing resources in Kintrishi do not appear. DTR does not organize specific tours to this area.

4.6. ANALYSIS OF THE MAIN CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

4.6.1. Constraints for tourism development in Kintrishi Protected Areas

- **Inadequate institutional capacity to operate effectively and efficiently:**
 - Kintrishi Protected Areas administration has limited resources in terms of human and financial resources to implement not only conservational goals but also to focus on tourism development.
 - Core competencies of PA workers (especially rangers) are not adequately defined and do not respond to organizational needs in relation to environmental education and tourism.
 - Skills of administration in hospitality and tourism areas are limited, and should be enhanced for attending adequately existing and future demand.
- **Relatively poor tourism experience:**
 - Lack of diverse tourism products. The only activities available are hiking and camping. There is no interpretation.
 - Limited offer of accommodation and restaurants in the area. The existing offer has low quality.
- **Accessibility:**
 - Roads infrastructure to access the Park is uncomfortable, and public transportation system unreliable and inadequate, providing a challenge for tour operations and also for individuals that do not have a private car to visit the PA's.
- **Hydropower development**
 - The on-going construction of a hydro power plan on the Kintrishi river can have an important environmental impact that may affect to the tourism development in Kintrishi Protected Areas. It is expected that the Hydro power plant will be ready by the end of 2016
- **Short-tourism season:**
 - Although Kintrishi Protected Areas are open all year round, visitation to the areas occurs between May and September, being August the month with higher number of visitors.

4.6.2. Main Opportunities and Competitive advantages of Kintrishi Protected Areas

Kintrishi Protected Areas has many opportunities to be exploited for the development of tourism in and around PA's and create diverse economic options for the adjacent communities.

- **Rich landscape with ecological diversity:**
 - Kintrishi Protected Areas host a rich biodiversity with unique flora and fauna and an attractive mountainous landscape with high mountains and an attractive lake.
 - Bird watching areas. Kintrishi Protected Areas is one Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA G005) area according to BirdLife criteria.
 - Designation as a National Park and extension of the boundaries towards Mount Peranga.
- **Proximity to Mtirala National Park:**
 - Kintrishi Protected Areas shares boundaries with Mtirala National Park. The proximity to Mtirala makes feasible the development of a combined route that can also include Machakhela National Park. Moreover, this connecting path follows a traditional and existing route that connected both areas.
- **Proximity to Kobuleti:**
 - Kobuleti, as a coastal destination, receive thousands of visitors every year. Attract a percentage of the visitors to the coastal areas can increase significantly the number of visitors of PA's, as well as it may contribute to increase the length of stay of those tourists visiting the area.
- **Tour Operators:**
 - There is an important number of TTOOs operating in Ajara, they have important international contacts and experience dealing with visitors. TTOOs should be involved in PA's management in order to contribute to the definition of market-oriented products and experiences.
 - Nature tourism is a growing segment in Georgia and also in Ajara. Some specialized companies start of offer products directly linked to Protected Areas such as: Will Horn,
- **Support Programme for Protected Areas in the Caucasus (SPPA):**
 - Kintrishi Protected Areas, together with Algeti and Kazbegi and Pshav-Khevsureti, are supported under the KfW funded project "*Support Programme for Protected Areas in the Caucasus*". This year-long programme has planned to invest 8,25 million euros in

these protected areas and their support zone in order to enhance their natural resources, management and the socio-economic situation of the rural communities.

5. SWOT AND TOWS ANALYSIS

The SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) determines the external and internal situation of tourism development in Kintrishi Protected Areas. The TOWS is a complimentary tool that helps generating strategic options, taking advantage of the opportunities, minimizing the impact of weaknesses and reducing the threats.

	STRENGTHS	PLAY STRENGTHS
MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good cooperation with other Ajara PA's administrations. • Support of SPPA Project. • Regional Advisory Council. • Kintrishi Protected Areas. Friends Association (KFA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively participate in participatory structures such as the Regional Advisory Council. • Involve the community in tourism-related activities. • Promote regular meetings to decide on priority actions to be developed in KPA. • Promote the adhesion to the KFA.
MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open all year round. • Close to Kobuleti and Batumi. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop winter activities to extend the tourism season. • Design promotional activities to attract Batumi and Kobuleti visitors. Also agreements with tourism operators.
LOCAL COMMUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest and motivation to open guesthouses/catering places. • Hospitable communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the creation of local enterprises and build their skills in customer service and business planning. • Involve the community in tourism-related activities.
CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant cultural sites (arch bridges, monastery, etc.) • Mountainous area (high mountains such as Mount Peranga). • Lake Tbilveli. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and promote cultural heritage of the area. • Develop interpretive routes and new trails that promote these natural values. Promote trekking activities. • Develop interpretive routes and new trails that promote these natural values.

CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of singular trees (box trees) and Interesting fauna • Combination of Colchic forest with subalpine vegetation. • Cultural and spiritual values. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop interpretive material related to fauna and flora. • Develop interpretive material about the special particularities of the landscape. • Develop activities that promote the area as an area for relaxation, being in contact with nature and the inner self.
TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of tourism activities (hiking, trekking, horse riding, etc.). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversify existing activities. Increase their quality.
TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES AND FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor's shelter in good condition. • Two trails already developed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase services provided in the visitor shelter (local catering, offer locally produced products as jam, etc. • Improve existing trails by developing interpretive content. New facilities.
TOURISM DEMAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing number of visitors. • Friends of Ajara PA Card. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer quality services and activities to increase visitor repetition. • Promote the card among local providers in the area.

	WEAKNESSES	REDUCE WEAKNESSES
MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of cooperation with DTR and GNTA. • Limited staff skills related to sustainable tourism, languages • Lack of management plan. • Limited revenues derived from tourism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in the Regional Advisory Council • Design training for KPA administration in tourism related skills. • SPPA project is already working in developing a management plan. • Create new products that can increase visitation level and income.
MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road to access the Park in bad condition. • Lack of road signs. • Poor regular public transport to KPA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sign agreement with Road Department to improve accessibility to the area. • Develop a sign system, in conjunction with DTR and Ajara Protected Areas, • Establish agreements with transportation providers to increase transportation frequency to the Park, especially during high season.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of hospitality skills, and knowledge of foreign languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a training programme for local communities.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low level of engagement of local communities towards tourism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance their participation in the newly created governance structures.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poverty level, socio-economic condition of local population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create new economic opportunities for locals, by supporting entrepreneurs and employment.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local communities in the PA do not receive any benefit from tourism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create new economic opportunities for locals, by supporting entrepreneurs and employment.
CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cultural and natural resources not adequately promoted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop sustainable activities to promote the natural and cultural resources.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of interpretive material to promote the values of the Protected Area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop comprehensive educational and interpretive material to promote the protected area.
TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited availability of hospitality services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the creation of new hospitality services. .
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality of tourism providers is low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement trainings to build the capacity of tourism providers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited linkages with local/private service providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage participation of local communities in the existing governance structures.
TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES AND FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some of the facilities/infrastructure are in bad condition (ex. Panels, picnic areas). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement activities to improve existing tourism infrastructures.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of signage along the road. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design, develop and locate a signage system for the KPA.
TOURISM DEMAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most visitors are one day visitors, limited expenditure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the number of services, activities available to increase the visitor's length of stay.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of English speaking guides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize foreign language training courses for local community members and guides.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited tourism promotion. Lack of funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an annual marketing operative plan with different traditional and digital actions to increase awareness on the Protected Area.

	OPPORTUNITIES	ENHANCE THE OPPORTUNITIES
MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extension of the Protected Areas towards Mount Peranga. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop new trails in the new areas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demarcation of the Protected Area as a National Park. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the marketing activities to promote the designation as a National Park.
CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linkage to Silk road. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research about the Silk Route and participate in the international network of the Silk Road
TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Combined promotion of Ajara PA's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actively participate in the development of a common promotion with other Ajarian protected areas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interest of TTOO 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize fam-trips for TTOO to present new products/trails developed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecotourism and nature-based tourism is a growing segment worldwide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a range of tourism products oriented to specific ecotourism market.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing interest of tourist in environmental and sustainability issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure conservation and biodiversity values of the area. Maintain high-quality level of nature-based products.
TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURES AND FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New administration building to be inaugurated in Kobuleti. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take advantage of the new location to better promote the Protected Area and increase its visibility. Inauguration event should include hotels /tour operators to start establishing cooperation links.
TOURISM DEMAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends of Ajara PA's Card. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the adhesion to the card among local tourism providers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth of the hard adventure tourist (biking, trekking, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote new types to activities and tourism products (brochures, establishment of agreements with TT.OO, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecotourism and nature-based tourism is a growing segment worldwide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop quality tourism activities oriented to this market.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing interest of tourist in environmental and sustainability issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop quality tourism activities oriented to this market.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Familiar tourism. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop educational and recreational activities oriented to all kind of publics.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TTOO interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organize fam-trips for TTOO to present new products/trails developed.

	THREATS	NULLIFY THREATS
MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline in economic support from International Donors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversification of income sources (fees, services, etc).
MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Congestion of cars in the area of the Visitor Shelter. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the public system of transportation to the PA/ Habilitate an area for parking.
LOCAL COMMUNITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migration of locals due to limited economic opportunities in the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support locals to diversify economic income. Tourism as a complementary income.
CULTURAL AND NATURAL RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Degradation of natural spaces and biodiversity by high levels of visitation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor visitor impact and regulate the areas that can be visited.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydropower station development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforce the elaboration of a mitigation plan and ensure some corporate social responsibility action to mitigate impact is implemented.
TOURISM DEMAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International political instability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a marketing campaign to promote the country and its peaceful environment.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shift in visitor preferences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collect visitor data and preferences. Adapt tourism products to changes in behaviour and preferences.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic crisis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer high-quality experience

6. POTENTIAL TOURISM SERVICES AND FACILITIES – BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

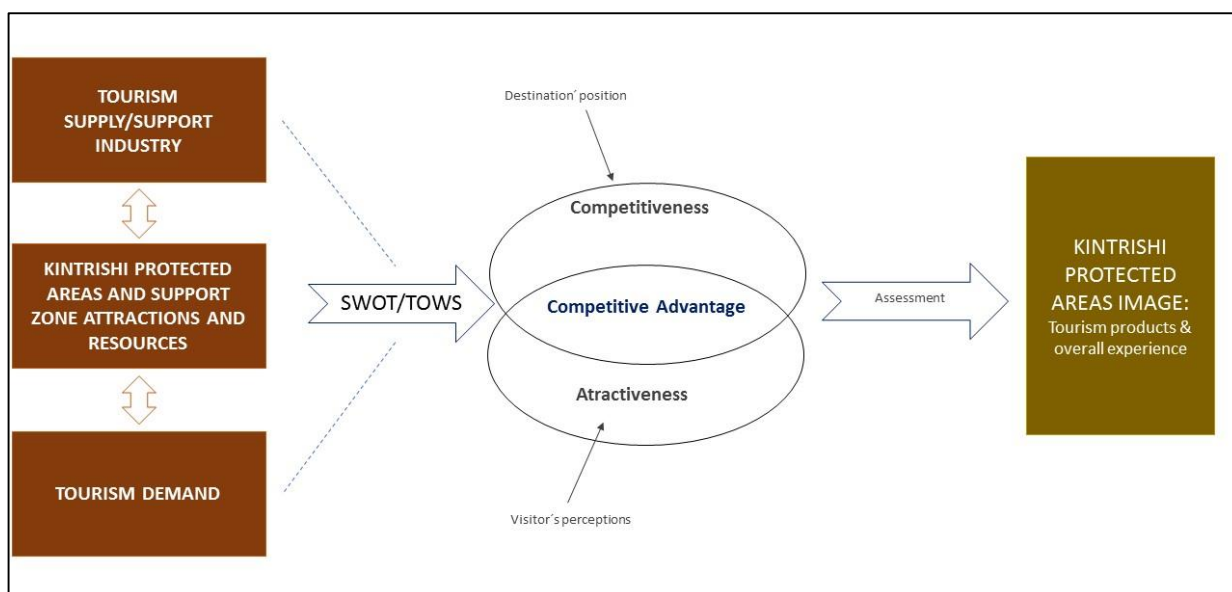
The assessment of the tourism resources and services carried out and the identified strengths and opportunities for Kintrishi Protected Areas serve as the basis to identify how these resources have to be promoted in order to maximize their potential in a sustainable way. That is, identifying the most feasible activities to be developed and the tourism markets to be aimed to.

The special features of Kintrishi Protected Areas that distinguishes Kintrishi from the other areas, and provide the **competitive advantage** are:

- » Untouched wilderness
- » Mountainous landscape
- » Kintrishi River Gorge

These aspects should be the core elements of Kintrishi Protected Areas infrastructure and product development, and this should also be defined in a way that tourists enjoy the unique natural and cultural resources.

Kintrishi Protected Areas has an important number of outstanding natural values that are the main tourist attractions, therefore the **focus should be to develop tourism activities related to relax and experiencing the greatness of nature and being in close contact with it.**



In the following sections, the most feasible tourism activities and services will be identified and carefully, qualitative and quantitative, assessed.

6.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE POTENTIAL TOURISM SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURES TO BE DEVELOPED

Although tourism has some development in the area, based on the assessment carried out, much potential remains untapped.

Expanded recreational opportunities could address international trends related to bike tourism, hard adventure tourism or even healthy lifestyles and well-being.

Based on existing natural and cultural assets (competitive advantage) and prevailing tourism trends the potential tourism services and facilities that can be developed in Kintrishi Protected Areas would be:

a) ***Tourist trails and associated infrastructures:***

Tourist trails connect points of interest within the protected area, offering tourists a way to appreciate and enjoy the natural and cultural values associated with the route.

The recommended actions related to tourist trails focus on two main aspects:

I. IMPROVE EXISTING TRAILS

Kintrishi Protected Areas counts already with two trails, as it has been described in *section 4.2.2*, These existing trails provide a good basis to further develop tourism in Kintrishi Protected Areas these trails should be enhanced to increase their visitation level, and especially the trail number 2 (Yew and Tbikeli Lake).

- » **Trail no. 1: Box Tree Stand.** Most of the improvements needed in this trail are related to: signage and interpretation. This trail could be combined with other facilities to be proposed for the area.
- » **Trail no. 2: Yew and Tbikeli Lake.** This is a long trail, and the it should be improved in order to facilitate nature lovers to explore it by:
 - Marking the way in an appropriate way.
 - Identify works needed to ensure visitors safety
 - Provide additional accommodation options (refuge/hut in the mountain area)
 - Design and implement interpretive material for the route.
 - Identify additional routes to extend this trail and allow visitors to explore the surrounding mountainous area (Mount Peranga, etc.)

In addition, this trail could be extended to other interesting areas such as Mount Peranga.

Currently, the Yew and Lake Tbikeli trail is intended to be for hiking and horse riding. Biking is also possible, at least to Khino. Bicycles could be provided in the Visitor Shelter for visitors.

II. DEVELOP NEW TRAILS

» Educational Trail – Educational route on the tree top

It is intended to be a short walk (preferably circular) for all types of visitors to learn and experience nature in close contact with it. In order to habilitate this trail, an elevated boardwalk is needed. This boardwalk should be constructed in the middle of the trees, as it would allow visitors to look at the lush forest from above, offering forest view from a new perspective. The boardwalk can also offer birdwatching opportunities.

Educational and interpretive signs should be located along the trail would inform visitor about the interesting features of the area: the forest ecology, tree species, bird species, etc.

More information is provided in *Action 4.3.1*

» Ajara Protected Areas combined trail.

Kintrishi Protected Areas shares boundaries with Mtirala National Park, and trail shall be developed to connect both areas. This area would be further connected to Machakhela National Park creating the “Colchic Forest Route” that will connect the 3 protected areas associated to the Colchic Forest in Ajara.

According to different sources there was an ancient path that connected both areas, this path should be explored and developed.

b) Facilities and infrastructures around the visitor shelter

The visitor shelter area offers a great space to develop some recreational and educational facilities, to complete and diversify the services offered. The proposed infrastructures and facilities include:

I. EDUCATIONAL AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

» Nature Classroom

This proposed educational facility aims at providing an outdoor learning and educational space, in which students of the municipality and the region can participate in practical activities to discover the protected area and its values. A comprehensive educational programme should be developed, together with teachers, the Ministry of education, Ministry of Environment, APA, etc.

The main target group for this facility is schools and pupils.

This classroom would be the location for the celebration of workshops and practical trainings to increasing school children understanding on Kintrishi Protected Areas natural environment. Several leisure, recreational and cultural activities can be offered such as: “*meet the trees*”, “*alpine and sub-alpine habitats*”, “*how a tree works*”, “Relict species” or even learn how to prepare an herbarium, etc. Even this classroom can be used for developing a programme for junior rangers, an eco-camp, etc.

This area has been conceived as a simple construction, to avoid high maintenance costs, equipped with small exhibition area/panels and one open space in which practical activities can be organized (with tables, chairs and selves). It is recommended that this building, as the Visitor Shelter, functions with solar energy.

» **Children adventure playground area**

Close to the nature classroom a small children adventure playground area can be developed. In this playground area, children can get engaged in physical play, including, a ropes course, rope bridges, slides, swings, etc. This adventure playground should be designed with sustainable materials.

It would be a recreational area for those children visiting the Nature Classroom, and also for those children visiting the Protected Area with their families.

» **Picnic/Fire place**

Some fireplace can be constructed in the area of the camping site. The place has to be carefully selected to ensure safety. The fireplace would be for public use against a fee, this fee should include wood. The removal of wood from the national Park should be forbidden.

II. ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

» **“Glamping Huts”**

As it has been mentioned, there are limited accommodation options in Kintrishi Protected Areas. In order to attract a segment of people interested in discovering nature without resigning from the comfort, it is recommended to locate some “luxury huts” in the area. This kind of accommodation called “glamping” is a worldwide trend in natural areas.

These huts would be intended for those families/couples that want to scape for urban areas and enjoy a few days in a pristine environment, practising outdoor activities and enjoying local food.

This is not a priority investment, however, it is to be considered to be an innovative type of accommodation that can create some important economic revenues, as this huts should be rented for high prices.

In order to facilitate management of these infrastructures, it should be rented to a third party (for instance, members of the local communities).

c) **Tourism business:**

It refers to the services that can be provided by local communities and small companies to meet the needs of tourists visiting the protected area (accommodation, catering, information, etc.). These include as well services that provide new interests and products that enrich visitors' experience and, at the same time provide new sources of income for local communities and the administration (local products market, guided tours, transportation, etc.).

Among the identified business opportunities are:

- » **Guesthouses/accommodation services.** The accommodation offer in the area is still very limited. Some additional guesthouses could be developed; it is especially interesting that new guesthouses offer some kind of agrotourism offer (showing rural traditions, organic production, etc.)
- » **Catering places.** Catering places available are also limited. Some more local catering offering traditional dishes should be developed.
- » **Food processing.** It would be interesting to train some locals to **produce and pack food** to be offered to those visitors staying in the Visitor Shelter/Huts and even those staying in the camping. Among the products that can be offered are: bread, khachapuri, jam, honey, fruits, nuts, cheese, butter, etc.), so visitors would not need to bring all the food with them, and will have the opportunity to taste local food. This service should be announced in the Visitor Shelter, administration building, etc.

6.2. DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE POTENTIAL TOURISM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

6.2.1. Qualitative assessment of tourism potential

The proposed interventions are oriented to improve and diversify the services and activities that are currently being offered in Kintrishi Protected Area. In order to identify the most suitable and priority investments, and the ones that are more likely to contribute to sustainable tourism development in the protected area, a qualitative assessment of each proposed investment should be elaborated.

This **qualitative assessment** method includes several criteria that evaluates its attractiveness and competitiveness. The proposed criteria take into account the natural, cultural and socioeconomic attributes of the suggested services and facilities. The following chart summarizes the criteria that were used in the analysis:

(a) Attractiveness criteria:

Name of criteria	Description
1. Natural values enhancement	<i>Level of conservation and value of natural resources and the environment where the new proposed infrastructure is located, and its contribution to maintain preserve and/or enhance those values.</i>
2. Cultural, traditional and historical values enhancement	<i>Linkage of the proposed investments with cultural or natural resources. It promotes local traditions and products.</i>
3. Scenic and recreational value	<i>Presence of significant and recognizable landscapes. Visual beauty of the areas that includes mountains, lakes, coasts, mountains, etc.</i>
4. Educational value	<i>The proposed infrastructure promotes the knowledge and understanding of the natural and cultural resources and its appreciation.</i>
5. Singularity	<i>Presence of any interesting value that makes it attractive. It is an innovative infrastructure</i>
6. Carrying capacity	<i>Capacity to support a significant number of visitors, due to its dimensions and capacity for noise absorption and screening, avoiding impact in flora and fauna.</i>
7. Complementary services	<i>Current availability of infrastructures that allow access to the area, minimizing the works and the intervention on the spaces.</i>

(a) Competitiveness criteria:

Name of criteria	Description
1. Enhancement of PA core values	<i>Contribution to increase awareness and to promote the image of the protected area highlighting its core values and defining characteristics.</i>
2. Local business opportunities	<i>Capacity to generate opportunities for local communities to develop business (from catering services to accommodation and other complementary services for tourist.</i>
3. Attract new demand segments	<i>Capacity and suitability of proposed facility to match important demand segments (families, adventure tourists, birdwatchers, etc.)</i>
4. Compatibility with environmental protection and conservation	<i>Compatibility with conservation of endangered species and natural values of the park (it does not threaten conservation of native trees or species or increase fragmentation of natural habitats significantly).</i>
5. Employment opportunities	<i>Capacity to create new employment opportunities, directly and indirectly.</i>
6. Simplicity to condition and maintain	<i>Low resources requirements for preparation (ground works and infrastructures) and maintenance to guarantee a proper use of the trail by tourists.</i>
7. Seasonality	<i>Potential use of the infrastructure throughout the year contributing to deseasonalisation and diversification of the tourism offer.</i>

Each of the above criteria was assessed using a numeric range corresponding to the level of compliance with each criterion. Scores for attractiveness and competitiveness are combined in order to obtain a total score that reflects the tourism potential of the facility/infrastructure.

The following value ranges will apply to the proposed criteria:

CRITERIA	BAD	REGULAR	GOOD
<i>Natural values enhancement</i>	1-4	5-8	9-12
<i>Cultural, traditional and historical values enhancement</i>	1-4	5-8	9-12
<i>Scenic and recreational value</i>	1-2	3-4	5-6
<i>Educational value</i>	1-2	3-4	5-6
<i>Singularity</i>	1	2	3
<i>Carrying capacity</i>	1	2	3
<i>Complimentary services</i>	1	2	3
Total attractiveness			1-45
<i>Enhancement of PA core values</i>	1-4	5-8	9-12
<i>Local business opportunities</i>	1-3	4-6	7-9
<i>Attract new demand segments</i>	1-3	4-6	7-9
<i>Compatibility with environmental protection and conservation</i>	1-2	3-4	5-6
<i>Employment opportunities</i>	1	2	3
<i>Simplicity to condition /maintain</i>	1	2	3
<i>Seasonality</i>	1	2	3
Total competitiveness			1-45

The total score obtained with this assessment can be used as a basis to compare the different alternatives and to set a priority of actions for the development of the one that has a greater potential to contribute to achieving the objectives established for Kintrishi Protected Areas.

**Note: The route to Mtirala National Park has not been evaluated as this route has a great potential due to the unique opportunity that offers in creating a combined route for the three Ajara PA's.*

The matrix below summarizes the results of the assessment for each services and facility proposed according to the method described above.

EVALUATION MATRIX

EVALUATION CRITERIA		1. EXISTING TRAILS IMPROVEMENT AND EXTENSION				2. EDUCATIONAL TRAIL				3. NATURE CLASSROOM				4. GLAMPING			
ATTRACTIVENESS	Natural values enhancement (1-12)	11	10	12	10	12	6	12	10	10	7	9	8	5	6	6	3
	Cultural, traditional and historical values enhancement (1-12)	10	3	10	9	9	3	8	7	11	3	9	9	3	2	7	5
	Scenic and recreational values (1-6)	5	6	5	5	6	4	6	6	3	5	4	3	5	6	4	4
	Educational value (1-6)	4	4	5	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	1	2	1	1
	Singularity (1-3)	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	1	3	1	1	2	3	3	2
	Carrying capacity (1-3)	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2
	Complimentary services (1-3)	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2
COMPETITIVENESS	Enhancement of PA core values (1-12)	9	8	11	10	10	8	11	9	11	11	10	10	4	6	6	5
	Local Business Opportunities (1-9)	9	2	8	7	8	6	7	6	5	6	5	4	7	7	7	6
	Attract new demand segments (1-9)	7	5	7	8	8	9	8	7	8	6	6	5	8	8	8	8
	Compatibility with environmental protection and conservation (1-6)	4	6	5	6	5	3	5	5	6	5	6	6	4	4	4	3
	Employment opportunities(1-3)	3	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2
	Simplicity to condition / maintain (1-3)	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	3	2	1	2	1
	Seasonality (1-3)	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	1	2
TOTAL SCORE	TOTAL INDIVIDUAL SCORE	73	55	75	70	74	56	73	66	72	61	69	64	49	53	55	46
	TOTAL COMBINED SCORE	68,3				67,3				66,5				50,8			

6.2.2. Estimation of the Economic Benefits of the Potential Tourism Products and Services

Most of the proposed investments can have tangible and intangible benefits for Kintrishi Protected Areas and also for the support zone.

In this section, an analysis of the estimated costs and benefits are presented for each of the major investments planned:

» IMPROVEMENT AND EXTENSION OF EXISTING TRAILS

This action is regarded as one of the priority actions in order to develop tourism in the area. The Yew and Tbikeli Lake is one of the main attractions of the Protected Area. This trail provides visitors the opportunity to enjoy the great nature and landscape of Kintrishi. In addition, the trail crosses some important natural and cultural assets such as Yew trees, Khino church, Lake Tbikeli, chestnut forest, etc.

The investments needed to improve the trail are not high and an important percentage of the works needed can be carried out by Kintrishi Protected Areas administration staff.

It is expected that the improvement of this trail and the extension to Mount Peranga, increases the number of visitors that select this trail. An important market segment, as the adventure travellers may be attracted by this trail.

The direct economic benefit from this action would be related to the services offered. It is recommended that guiding services (see *Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan*) and biking are offered.

Since there are not official figures related to the visitors that take the trail no. 2, it has been estimated that if the trail is improved at least 25% of total visitors (940 visitors³) would take this trail and some of the services associated to it. Equally, we have estimated the potential market for each one of the proposed activities.

The **assumptions** considered in this calculations are:

- It has been assumed that guiding services would be available for hiking activities. However, it has been also assumed that only a small percentage of people (20%) would require these services (at least during first year, due to language barrier and other constraints).
- It has been estimated a percentage for the total visitors that would get engaged in the different activities (estimated share of market demand). For most adventure travellers that

³ Based on 2015 official figure of total visitors.

would hike without guiding, only the potential purchase of maps, rental of sleeping bags and other items has been estimated.

The potential income raised is presented in the following table:

ACTIVITIES/PRICE (Gel)	ESTIMATED SHARE OF MARKET DEMAND	DIRECT BENEFITS (Gel)	INDIRECT BENEFITS
Guiding – 15 Gel	20%	2.820	Employment opportunities (guiding) Purchase of brochures. Expenditure in local accommodation and restaurants.
Biking – 45 Gel	25%	10.575	Expenditure in local accommodation and restaurants.
Horse riding – 35 Gel	10%	3.290	Expenditure in local accommodation and restaurants.
Accommodation /rental/maps (15 Gel)	24%	3.384	Expenditure in local accommodation and restaurants
TOTAL		20.069	

Table 6:: Summary of estimated potential benefits from improvement of existing trails in Gel. Source: HIDRIA

As it can be seen in the table the potential economic benefit of activities is high, although the figures have been calculated with a small market.

» EDUCATIONAL ROUTE ON THE TREE TOP

The development of an elevated boardwalk that allow visitors to discover and enjoy the forest of Kintrishi Protected Areas represents a high investment. Not only for the scale of the infrastructure needed but also because it requires the experts' assessment to identify the most suitable location for the construction of this infrastructure, to conduct and impact assessment to ensure that negative impacts are minimized.

However, this infrastructure can represent the “honeypot” for Kintrishi Protected Areas, especially for those markets that are not willing to engage in hard outdoor activities (families, one-day visitors, etc.).

This infrastructure would provide “soft ecotourists” the opportunity to enjoy of being immersed in Kintrishi's nature and learn about its main natural values almost all year round. It is key in the development of this trail to develop interpretive panels that transmit the intrinsic values of the Colchic forest, the relict species, the biodiversity associated to them, etc.

The construction of similar infrastructures in other areas has increased the interest on the areas. A close example is Okatse Canyon, where a hanging trail with panoramic views has been recently constructed.

According to existing figures Okatse Canyon was visited by 25.500 tourists during (January - July 2016); and last year total number of visitors was 44.527, which is expected to be exceeded this year.

Based on this figures and the entrance fee charged to visitors (7 Gel/4 Gel students), this investment can be amortized in less than 15 years.

The total cost of the Educational Route on the Tree Top can be around **3.500.000 Gel**. An entrance fee should be charged to access to the trail. However, it is not expected that the infrastructure can be amortized in less than 20 years, as number of visitors should be limited.

For this trail, a carrying capacity assessment should be carried out to define the daily maximum number of visitors. It is important to establish clear limitations to (1) maintain the level of quality of the experience; (2) to avoid excessive pressure on the Protected Area. Special care should be focus on limiting the access to vehicles to the Protected Area.

This infrastructure can bring other indirect benefits, as it can create new economic opportunities for the locals living in the area, and also will increase the awareness about the importance of the Protected Area.

» **NATURE CLASSROOM**

The nature classroom has been proposed based on the social benefits/learning opportunities that it would bring. The creation of this classroom is expected to increase children nature appreciation.

In addition, this building can be used by administration staff to provide information to visitors.

Environmental education at early stages will help children to become more aware about the country's natural heritage and more conscious about environmental issues. Conservation of natural resources will be a key issue in the future, and the preparation of children is fundamental for them to be environmental stewards. Environmental education is one of the primary roles of protected areas. The nature classroom would fill existing gaps in this area.

The proposed nature classroom would be a simple wooden infrastructure of about 90m² with two differentiated areas, (1) an area for exhibition and for the celebration of indoor nature related activities, and (2) an additional space (smaller) for the provision of visitor information. Toilets should be also available.

Around the nature classroom grounds a plot should be available for the preparation of an organic vegetable garden. The growth of vegetables should be part of the outdoor activities that can be organized with school children in the nature classroom.

It is not expected that cost would exceed 130.000 Gel.



Figure 28: Examples of an area for gardening (left and example of the building for nature classroom. Sources: growingcreatinginspiring.blogspot.com/ <http://www.chantryoak.com/LogCabinClassroom.html>

7. STRATEGIC PLAN

7.1. VISION, MISSION AND GOALS.

This strategy sets forth a vision, mission and goals for Kintrishi Protected Areas, laying out the strategic areas of focus for the next five years.

The **VISION** of the Kintrishi Protected Areas is: *“By 2020, Kintrishi Protected Areas will be widely recognized for its pristine and wilderness environment and the quality of its services, and the conservation is ensured through an increasing awareness of the importance and significance of the area. Local communities understand its importance and actively participate in its promotion and preservation”.*

The **MISSION** of Kintrishi Protected Areas is to enhance the protection and conservation of the Colchic Forest and disseminate its natural values by promoting educational and recreational activities that contribute to nature enjoyment and understanding.

» GOALS

Based on the established vision, the goals of the *Kintrishi Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan* are:



7.2. STRATEGY

This medium-term strategy, aimed for the period 2016-2020, establishes five Strategic Lines with their objectives to meet the overall goals and to contribute to the vision of the Kintrishi Protected Areas. Setting clear, measurable, specific, relevant and achievable objectives is important for a successful Strategy.

Strategic Line 1: Management and Governance

- **OBJ. 1.1.** The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a mechanism to coordinate tourism development in Ajara Protected Areas by 2017.
- **OBJ. 1.2.** A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural resources is defined and implemented by end of 2019.

Strategic Line 2: Capacity Building

- **OBJ. 2.1.** Build capacities and skills of PA's staff in sustainable tourism, environmental issues and business planning.
- **OBJ. 2.2.** Increase local communities' knowledge about PA's environmental values and tourism related issues.

Strategic Line 3: Local communities development

- **OBJ. 3.1.** Tourism service providers associated to Kintrishi Protected Areas comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2020.
- **OBJ. 3.2.** At least, three new local businesses are developed and running by year 2020.
- **OBJ. 3.3.** Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Protected Area administration by 2020.

Strategic Line 4: Infrastructures and Services Development

- **OBJ. 4.1.** By 2017, accessibility to Kintrishi Protected Areas has improved.
- **OBJ. 4.2.** Existing infrastructures are improved and attract and increasing number of visitors by 2018.
- **OBJ. 4.3.** New and sustainable tourism infrastructures and services that allow visitors to explore and enjoy Kintrishi Protected Areas are developed by 2019.
- **OBJ. 4.4.** A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Ajara Protected Areas is fully operational by 2019.
- **OBJ. 4.5.** By 2020, a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.

Strategic Line 5: Marketing and Promotion

- **OBJ. 5.1.** Kintrishi Protected Areas will be known at national and international level by 2020.
- **OBJ. 5.2.** Information related to Kintrishi Protected Areas is easy accessible through new technologies.

8. ACTION PLAN

STRATEGIC LINE 1: MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Effective management will be the engine of tourism development in the Kintrishi Protected Areas, it is therefore crucial to establish an adequate structure for the successful implementation of the *Strategy* and the achievement of the set goals. This structure should be participative, involving a broad range of relevant stakeholders such as regional government, municipalities, local communities, etc.

Governance is an essential concept to ensure protected areas sustainability. A key issue for governance includes ensuring participation of all stakeholders in decisions that affect them and consensus building.

Kintrishi Protected Areas is receiving support through the SPPA (*Support Programme of Protected Areas*) to increase its governance levels. In 2015, a Regional Advisory Council in which major stakeholders are integrated has been established; and more recently, in 2016, the NGO Friends of Kintrishi Protected Areas. Both structures play a key role in integrating stakeholders in decision-making, and therefore, making the protected area more sustainable.

Management is also responsible for providing a meaningful experience for visitors, by ensuring the quality of the activities available and the natural environment. Regular monitoring should be conducted to identify any negative impact from tourism activity. In addition, measure visitor satisfaction is key to address any potential weakness that may occur in the Protected Area.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a mechanism to coordinate tourism development in Ajara Protected Areas by 2017

Action	Assist and actively participate in the development of multistakeholder platform at regional level (Regional Advisory Council).	1.1.1
Justification Kintrishi Protected Areas, together with Mtirala National Park and Machakhela National Park, form a chain of protected areas to conserve the unique Colchic Forests in Ajara Region. Protected areas that offer a great opportunity to develop recreational activities for visitors to enjoy this particular nature. In order to better coordinate the tourism development efforts, an Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan has been defined. In the framework of the strategy, a multistakeholder platform, in which the main stakeholders are involved, has been recommended.		
Description The Department of Tourism and Resorts of Ajara has recently established a Regional Advisory Council, this structure can play a key role in increasing the cooperation level between PA administrations, DTR and other relevant stakeholders. The RAC unites representatives of private sector and municipalities and facilitates public and private dialogue on the tourism issues.		

<p>This existing structure should work as a platform to discuss tourism related issues at regional level, and to agree in joint actions to be developed in the different protected areas towards a common goal, to improve visitation level in the region, providing a meaningful experience for visitors, and improving the quality of life of local communities.</p> <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas administration staff should be actively involved in this structure and participate in the decision-making process.</p> <p>The representative/s of the Park would have following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Report and inform stakeholders at Protected Area level about decisions taken. - Include the agreed actions in the annual plans and implement them. 			
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in RAC meetings • Administrative work (collaboration in the agenda, minutes of meeting, etc.). • Define common actions that should be considered in the Ajara PA's management plans. • Reporting. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	An agreed Annual Operating Plan for tourism development in Ajara PA's, which is successfully implemented.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	<p>Ajara Environmental Department</p> <p>Municipalities of Ajara</p> <p>Ajara PA's administrations/APA</p> <p>Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, etc.)</p> <p>Local Communities</p> <p>NGOs</p>		
COORDINATOR	DTR		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ At least two meetings are held annually. ✓ An annual plan for common actions is elaborated containing at least two common actions per year. 		
EXECUTION TIME	2016-2020	PRIORITY	<p>HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>LOW <input type="checkbox"/></p>
BUDGET	300 Gel/year		

Action	Establish collaboration alliances with potential partners	1.1.2
<p>Justification</p> <p>Tourism industry is complex and contains different fields of economy such as transport, food industry, hospitality etc. The establishment of strategic alliances or cooperation agreements can facilitate the achievement of set goals.</p> <p>It is recommended that Kintrishi Protected Areas administration establishes strong linkages with stakeholders/representatives both public and private sector.</p> <p>Especially relevant partners are: Ajara Department of Tourism and Resorts, Shota Rustaveli University, accommodation providers in Kobuleti, transportation providers, etc.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>One of the main stakeholders of the Protected Area is DTR, which is responsible for promoting the Region. Although the Regional Advisory Committee will provide a framework for cooperation with DTR, it is</p>		

<p>important to develop specific agreements for the development of Kintrishi Protected Areas. Relevant aspects are: capacity building for local tourism providers/ development of tours, promotional activities in the tourism information centres, improve the information available in their website, etc.</p> <p>Kobuleti hotels and other hospitality providers in the municipality are relevant partners in order to promote the Protected Area. Cooperation agreements should be established with tourism providers to become information points of the Protected Area. Also big enterprises should be the focus in this action, incentive activities could be developed in Kintrishi; with tour operators to develop different tour packages, transportation companies play also an important role for bringing visitors to the area, and providing basic information.</p>			
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential partners and arrange cooperation agreements • Organize workshops for better cooperation and understanding with identified partners • Follow-up on established agreements and monitor results. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Better cooperation mechanisms among stakeholders.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	DTR Kobuleti Municipality Shota Rustaveli University Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, transport, etc.) Tourism associations Local Communities NGOs		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2019 at least three alliances with potential partners should be signed.		
EXECUTION TIME	2018-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	450 Gel/year		

OBJECTIVE 1.2: A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural resources is defined and implemented by end of 2019.

Action	Develop a study on the carrying capacity visitor management in Kintrishi Protected Areas	1.2.1
<p>Justification</p> <p>Protected Areas' role includes, on the one hand to ensure the protection of natural and cultural resources, and on the other hand to facilitate public use and enjoyment. For the sustainable development of tourism in protected area, the balance between these two goals has to be achieved. Directly related to this is the concept of carrying capacity, that has been defined as <i>"the maximum amount of visitors that can be at the same time in the tourist destination without causing negative effects on the physical, economical and socio-cultural values of society/community and without causing a (considerable) decrease</i></p>		

<i>in visitors' satisfaction" meaning, the number of tourists that can be managed by a protected area without negatively affecting the natural resources or even the local communities.</i>			
<p>Description</p> <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas has two figures of protection, Strict Reserve and Protected Landscape. The latter figure was established in 2007 to recognize the presence of the population within the protected area boundaries. In addition, is in this area where most of the tourism activities take place.</p> <p>The expansion of the tourism activities might have an impact on the natural resources that should be prevented by effectively measuring where the visitation limits have to be established.</p> <p>The carrying capacity should be defined based on the natural and cultural values and visitors potential impact. This study should be complimented with the visitor impact monitoring and the assessment of potential impacts of tourism on local population. All this information is basic to define the necessary measures to reduce the negative impact caused by the tourism activities. The preventive and corrective measures to be taken include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Producing leaflets on codes of conduct for visitors, - Adequate facilities and services for visitors, - Set limit to the number of visitors per day - Etc. <p>Another aspect that should be taken into account is the number of vehicles that can manage the area. Kintrishi Protected Areas, has limited space available for car parking. Administration should define clear limits to the car that can have access to the park, and where exactly should park. In addition, regular public transportation system should be available for visitors to access to the area.</p>			
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct a study for the evaluation of the optimum standing capacity (Carrying capacity). • Identify measures to reduce the negative impact caused by the tourism activity. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	An effective visitor management system is established		
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA DTR		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2018, a technical assistance (i.e. University/private company) to conduct the study of the carrying capacity.		
EXECUTION TIME	2018-2019	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	19.000 Gel		

Action	Elaborate and implement a Visitor Impact Monitoring System	1.2.2
<p>Justification</p> <p>Monitoring is one of the most important elements to the success of tourism development in PAs. The consequences of visitor use for natural resources is a concern in parks and protected areas. Therefore, the knowledge of visitor impacts (at social, economic and environmental level) is basic for the</p>		

sustainability of tourism in the Kintrishi Protected Areas. Furthermore, monitoring visitor's use is essential to keep management informed to take measures, if needed, to address identified issues.

Description

In order to monitor tourism development and its impacts, it is necessary to identify a set of indicators that will allow the analysis of the tourism situation. The indicators will detect changes that occur and will facilitate decision-making by the PA's staff. The indicators should include data related to:

- Visitor satisfaction (with tourism activities, environmental issues, etc.)
- Local community satisfaction
- Evolution of visitor's numbers
- Evolution of economic revenues (monthly and annual) from tourism activities and fees
- Number of incidents
- Volume of waste produced
- % tourists using public/private transportation
- % of habitats being affected by tourism infrastructure and facilities
- Number of people from local communities actively involved in tourism

The benefits of establishing a good set of indicators include:

- Lowering risks and costs
- Identification of emerging issues – allowing preventive actions
- Identification of impacts – allowing corrective actions when needed.
- Performance measurement of the implementation of the Strategy and its objectives
- Greater accountability, providing credible information for wise decision-making.

Several stakeholders/organizations should be involved in the collection of data. This data should be recorded annually and presented to all stakeholders. The results should be carefully analysed in order to determine appropriate management options (corrective measures, etc.).

PA's administration staff should work on the definition of the indicators and the elaboration of the baseline analysis. Data from reports elaborated by SSPA and UNDP related projects should be used as useful information for the baseline.

Rangers should play an active role in the measurement of indicators. Local communities should also be involved, especially those inside the PA's. Specific training to conduct the monitoring should be developed in order to ensure that this monitoring is conducted according to clear guidelines.

This monitoring should start from 2018 and afterwards the monitoring should be systematic and periodic (2020 and onwards). It is recommended that at least the monitoring is conducted every two years. This period should be reduced if the number of visitors increases substantially. The results of the monitoring are relevant inputs for the study on the carrying capacity of the Park, and should be revised carefully.

Some of the aspects to be monitored and to be completed with the visitor satisfaction survey (*see action 1.3.3*).

Activities included

- Identify a set of indicators to be measured.
- Elaborate a baseline report.
- Conduct the Visitor Impact Monitoring.
- Elaborate a report analysing the results achieved and present it to relevant stakeholders.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define (if needed) corrective measures to be introduced. Evaluate the monitoring programme 		
EXPECTED RESULTS	A system for monitoring the visitor impact is defined and conducted regularly.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA KPA Staff (rangers, visitor's specialist, etc.)		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ In 2017, the indicators to be measured and the baseline have been defined.		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2018/ 2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	6.500 Gel		

Action	Elaborate and conduct a visitor satisfaction survey	1.2.3
<p>Justification</p> <p>In order to offer quality products and a positive experience to visitors it is important to understand and identify the profile of the visitors, their motivations and perceptions of the services offered by the Park and surrounding communities.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas already has a visitor's survey, however it should be improved in terms of requested information from visitors and also in terms of number of surveys collected.</p> <p>In 2015, 3.758 tourists visited the area, however only 115 surveys were collected. This means that only 3% of total visitors fulfilled the survey, so gathered data are not representative of visitors received.</p> <p>Visitor registration process has to be revised and improved in order to ensure more effectivity. These surveys should be available in the different hotels and guesthouses associated to the Protected Area.</p> <p>Besides the type of information to be collected has to include much more information to have a more specific profile of visitors, as for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Place where they are accommodated - Other relevant places visited - the quality of visitor facilities, - the quality of access - the quality of the products offered, - overall quality of the visit. <p>The results of the survey are essential to identify weak aspects of the tourism offer. This information should be use to define corrective measures.</p> <p>An example of this survey is provided in Annex 1.</p>		

Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the existing visitor satisfaction survey • Conduct the survey • Analyse the results • Identify corrective measures if needed 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Visitors are satisfied with the services offered and their quality level.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	DTR KPA Tourism service providers (hotels, guesthouses, etc.)		
COORDINATOR	APA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By 2017, a survey to measure visitor satisfaction in KPA is designed and it is available for tourists. ✓ At least 60% of annual registered visitors complete the survey 		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	1.100 Gel		

STRATEGIC LINE 2: CAPACITY BUILDING

Strengthening the capacity of the Protected Areas' staff and local communities on themes related to the protected areas can have a positive impact in behaviour changing. It is important to provide community members a solid environmental knowledge on the natural values of the PAs, so it can be ensured that they get committed to their conservation.

The training sessions should include topics as: the importance of the protected areas, in terms of their role in biodiversity conservation and the sustainable socioeconomic development for the community.; the sustainable use of natural resources, climate change resilience, etc.

In addition, capacity should be built in tourism relates issues (hospitality, languages, etc.). Tourism is a service industry, and the quality of the visitor experience is largely determined by the quality of service and personal interaction experienced at destination, therefore the development of quality interactions with PA's staff and local service providers is an important element of the tourism destination.

A relevant issue to take into account in relation to capacity building, is the relevance of partnerships. Forming partnerships with local NGO's, academic institutions and private sector means that the PA's can make use of their experience, knowledge and skills to promote training and educational programmes (for instance: ELKANA, Shota Rustaveli University in Batumi, Hotels and Restaurants Association, etc.).

OBJECTIVE 2.1. Build capacities and skills of PA's staff in sustainable tourism, environmental issues and business planning

Action	Design and implement a training programme for PA's staff.	2.1.1
Justification To contribute to the effective sustainable tourism management in the project PA's, it is important to strengthen PA's staff in tourism related issues. Capable, competent and skilled staff is key to the successful delivery of results. Protected Areas require well-trained, equipped and motivated rangers to provide security to visitors, confront existing threats such as inappropriate use behaviour, illegal hunting, etc. These challenges demand trained rangers in skills on topics related to resource management, safety and rescue procedures, law enforcement, building and maintaining protected area infrastructures, tourism and hospitality, etc.		
Description To establish structured capacity building program within the protected area system, and professional evaluation tools for APA staff, the administration is developing training modules with close cooperation with SPPA project experts. Modules are based on assessment of training needs (2013) and Capacity		

Building Plan for PoWPA implementation in Eastern Europe⁴ by ProPark Foundation⁵. One of the main objectives of the plan was establishment of systematic program of capacity development and professional development for all protected area personnel, linked to national occupational standards.

APA with SPPA decided to build training modules on rangers' needs, starting on common baseline for all ranger staff, as they are core staff of PAs of Georgia. Tourism and recreation are not in their prime responsibilities, however some activities such as guiding tourists and giving instructions to visitors are within their duties and this is considered in training topics. Some modules will consider introductory courses for new recruits on main specialist topics relevant to their position. These courses will build a basic foundation of skills and knowledge among specialist staff and are likely to include: Biodiversity conservation; tourism and recreation and Community development.

Elaborated modules will be implemented (used) individually for each PA, based on concrete needs of each PA's personnel. It is also planned to encourage and advise universities of Georgia to develop high-level modules and courses on PA topics, which can be open to PA staff.

PA occupations can be standardizing by the working group that will be established under the MoEdu (the institution that officially registers occupations) according to existing procedures and by the involvement of The National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement.

Training modules are being elaborated within SPPA project and will be launched in 2017.

Apart of mentioned above, assessment of training needs in tourism & hospitality made by project staff revealed the most needed topics.

	PA Director	PA administration staff
Ecotourism principles and nature-based tourism	X	X
Hospitality and customer care/service		X
Environmental Interpretation		X
Interpretation and communication / guiding	X	X
PR and Marketing	X	X
Communication technology and information	X	X
Languages (English)		X
Project writing	X	
Business planning	X	

It is highly recommended that visitor specialists at PA administrations get training in tourism and marketing, especially for online marketing, tour product development and packaging.

⁴ Eastern Europe, defined as the scope of this project is comprises the following 24 countries: Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine (priority countries), Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Kosovo, Lithuania, FYR Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland and Turkey (secondary countries).

⁵ ProPark Foundation facilitated the preparation of through national working group in Georgia. The project "Capacity Building Plans for Efficient Protected Area Management in Eastern Europe" has been implemented with the support of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BfN) in 2013-2016.

Rangers working in protected areas are not asked for specific skills to occupy their position, a learning programme should be designed and implemented for rangers to better define their role and their responsibilities. Some of the aspects that should be covered by the training modules aimed for rangers are:

- Working with local communities. Local communities living in PA's have direct influence in the conservation of PA's. Relation between local communities and rangers should be friendly.
- Infrastructure and trails
- Interpretation and environmental education
- General Hospitality and tourism
- Protection and enforcement
- Emergency response (safety procedures)
- Foreign languages
- Monitoring

All mentioned above are considered in structured capacity building program within the protected area system, (APA/SPPA project).

Activities included

- Define training curricula for the PA's members.
- Identify potential trainers/experts in the Region.
- Establish an annual training calendar.
- Implement training modules.

EXPECTED RESULTS	KPA administration staff is fully trained in relevant issues		
AGENTS INVOLVED	KPA Kobuleti Vocational Education Training Centre NGOs Kobuleti Municipality Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University		
COORDINATOR	APA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ A least two training courses are organized annually for KPA administration staff.		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	12.000 Gel/year		

Action	Organize study tours for rangers/PA’s staff	2.1.2
Justification Based on experiences study visits and field works to developed PAs are more efficient than theoretical courses. Study tours to advanced PAs of Georgia such as Lagodekhi and Borjomi-Kharagauli as well as to other international protected areas would create new ideas and strong linkages. The exchange of experiences and practical work on the field can contribute efficiently to the adoption of best practices.		
Description In order to implement the Kintrishi Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan, Kintrishi administration personal, especially core staff (rangers, management), need trainings in hospitality and tourism. The main idea is to get familiar with operational system of PA administration including tourism product development and networking, as well as interpretation skills, marketing and sales. This study tour can give insights to participating rangers about best tourism practices that can be applied to their daily work. It is recommended that during the implementation of the Action Plan at least two study tours are organized at national level and one at international level. For instance, visits to Okatse Canyon, Borjomi – Kharagauli (at national level) and relevant areas in Azerbaijan or Turkey (at international level) that have specialized birdwatching tours.		
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select the most convenient PA in Georgia for study visit• Select the most convenient PA abroad (Azerbaijan, Latvia, Germany, Austria, Turkey or Spain) for tour.• Implement the tour and report		
EXPECTED RESULTS	Practical skills of rangers in tourism related activities and hospitality are enhanced.	
AGENTS INVOLVED	KPA and APA	
COORDINATOR	APA	
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ At least two study tours at national level are organized for KPA administration staff during the period✓ At least on study tours at international level is organized for KPA administration staff during the period	
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2019	<div>PRIORITY<div>HIGH <input type="checkbox"/></div><div>MEDIUM X</div><div>LOW <input type="checkbox"/></div></div>
BUDGET	18.000 Gel	

OBJECTIVE 2.2. Increase local communities' knowledge about PA's environmental values and tourism related issues.

Action	Design and implement a training program for local communities.	2.2.1
<p>Justification</p> <p>Local communities around Kintrishi Protected Areas play an important role in the tourism development in the Park. Local tourism enterprises in the “support zone” should be supported to achieve their objectives in terms improving their well-being through the opportunity of creating new business and employment.</p> <p>The training program should include a wide range of aspects, from environmental education (importance of biodiversity conservation, waste management...), hospitality aspects (customer service, and basic business management).</p> <p>By understanding the processes and benefits of sustainable use of natural resources, communities have become more involved in local resource management activities. Furthermore, tourism and management aspects are essential to support entrepreneurship. The formulation of business plans should be a key issue in the provision of this support.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>Local communities living around Kintrishi Protected Area, are willing to engage in tourism-related activities, however these initiatives should be assessed in order to support them in the creation of services that are linked to real market demand, and to ensure that the business are profitable. To develop viable local business, it is important to understand the type of tourist visiting Ajara PA's and their needs.</p> <p>Several trainings should be implemented to enhance the capacities of local communities in issues related to tourism, environment and business. Prior to the development and implementation of the trainings, priorities should be defined in conjunction with those interested. The identification of training needs can be assessed by PA's staff. Training content should be adequate to the needs of the local communities.</p> <p>Following aspects should be covered in the training programme:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tourism and hospitality - Safe sanitation and food hygiene practices - Environmental values of Ajara PAs - Ecotourism concepts - Marketing and promotion - Quality criteria in products and services - Business planning (for small scale enterprises) - Basic accounting <p>In addition, these micro-enterprises should be trained in basic accounting, to register income and expenses and help them to understand how to perform monthly accounts.</p> <p>Finally, for all those engaged, especially in accommodation business should be able to gather and submit visitor statistics from their guests to increase the knowledge of competent authorities on the profile of visitor and keep track of changes. Visitors' surveys should be placed at guesthouses to monitor also the level of satisfaction from visitors (<i>see action 1.3.3.</i>)</p>		
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organize a meeting with local communities to identify training needs. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential trainers/experts (NGO's) in the Region. • Establish an annual training calendar. • Implement training modules. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Local community members build their skills and capacities topics related to tourism, environment, business planning, etc.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	NGOs Kobuleti Municipality Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University Kobuleti Vocational Education Training Centre KPA		
COORDINATOR	APA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ A least two training courses are organized annually for local communities' members.		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	12.000 Gel/year		

Action	Organize study tours for community members	2.2.2
Justification Based on experiences study visits and field works to developed PAs are more efficient then theoretical courses. Study tours to advanced PAs of Georgia such as Lagodekhi and Borjomi-Kharagauli as well as to other international protected areas would support the capacity building of community members engaged in tourism. Community members are the main stakeholders of Kintrishi Protected Areas. One of the main objectives of PAs is to support the initiatives of local population and their involvement in small businesses.		
Description Guesthouse owners, producers and other tourism service suppliers lack of quality service skills. They are motivated to develop small businesses and work in tourism, and need some support to improve their service level. Study visits will help communities in following aspects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To increase their capacity, trust and initiatives to develop small projects, - To increase awareness about the benefits of protected areas - To work with other stakeholders, - To establish quality services and networking. - To support traditional product processors in labelling and marketing. At least two study tours should be conducted throughout the period with those community members engaged in tourism. These study tours can be organized in conjunction with the communities located around Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks.		
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish networks between local community members of two or three PA's of Georgia. • Organize study tours abroad. 		

EXPECTED RESULTS	Practical skills of community members engaged in tourism related business are enhanced.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	NGO KPA Local communities		
COORDINATOR	APA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ At least two study tours at national level are organized for local community members engaged in tourism business during the period ✓ At least on study tours at international level is organized for local community members engaged in tourism business during the period		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	18.000 Gel		

Action	Design a training programme about organic agriculture and product packaging for local farmers /producers	2.2.3
Justification Organic farming is closely linked to ecotourism or other forms of sustainable tourism. Organic agriculture is defined as an approach to agriculture and food production that is environmentally sustainable and can generate several positive impacts to rural society. Travellers visiting protected areas are interesting in consume organic food and other environmentally friendly products. It is an opportunity for farmer to generate additional income by producing environmentally-friendly products that can be marketed/used in local catering places, guest housed or even to be sold to visitors. Most of local producers, farm using traditional systems, encouraging the maintenance of this system and ensuring the products are organic is also a way of preserving biodiversity.		
Description Tourism can represent an additional source of income for some members of the local communities living in the support zone of Kintrishi Protected Areas. However, tourism should not be regarded as the only way to improve their quality life. Maintaining and ensuring the sustainability of their traditional way of life is also important. Most farmers can also benefit from producing organic products that can be marketed for a more conscious traveller that is concerned about the origin of the food they eat and they quality of its production. Farming is also a good approach to traditions and culture. <i>(This action is related to action 3.2.1)</i>		
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify farmers willing to participate in mentioned trainings • Identify training needs and develop a training curricula • Implement the training courses 		
EXPECTED RESULTS	Local produced products are promoted.	
AGENTS INVOLVED	Local communities	

	NGOs Kobuleti municipality		
COORDINATOR	Kobuleti municipality		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2018, at least two training courses have been carried out for local farmers.		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2019	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	5.500 Gel		

STRATEGIC LINE 3: LOCAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT

One of the main aims of tourism in protected areas is to enhance the quality of life of the resident communities. More specifically, UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as “*tourism which leads to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social and aesthetic needs can be filled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life supporting systems*” (UNWTO, 1999). Therefore, preference should be given to the interests of local residents and it should be ensured that they receive benefits from the increasing visitation level to the Park.

Protected areas can provide development opportunities for the communities. The employment in the tourist and service-related industries should be ensured by supporting traditional economic activities and promoting the purchase of local products by visitors, and supporting the promotion of new forms of employment (guides, etc.).

The local communities around Kintrishi Protected Areas have limited economic options and the development of tourism services present an opportunity to create additional economic income. The SPPA has funds available to support local initiatives to be funded through the Financial Participatory Approach.

In this framework, other activities that should be included are related to initiatives to check and improve the quality of provided services, as the quality of the tourism experience is key to attract visitors. Kintrishi Protected Areas administration staff shall carry out a programme, in conjunction with DTR, to improve the quality of tourism which it offers.

OBJECTIVE 3.1. Tourism service providers associated to Kintrishi Protected Areas comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2020.

Action	Assess quality service level of local providers of accommodation and catering facilities	3.1.1
<p>Justification</p> <p>Quality of accommodation, catering, guide and transportation services is a vital for any destination as consumers are more experienced today and have high expectations regarding their travel.</p> <p>The quality of services offered in and around Ajara PA's needs improvement. Minimum professional skills and some standards are required to meet market demands.</p> <p>There is indeed a guesthouse classification quality standard in Georgia elaborated by ELKANA (Biological Farming Association) in 2008. These standards are established according to EuroGites – European Federation of Farm and Rural Tourism (www.eurogites.org) criteria. Elkana NGO became a member of EuroGites for this reason. Standards are theoretically already known in Georgia. It seems that GNTA considered accepting Elkana classification system as national standards, but the project was put on hold because more pressing attention was given to hotel quality service standards (stars) instead of rural guesthouse standards. ELKANA's standards are <i>de facto</i> used by recently established Rural Tourism Network www.ruraltourism.ge members (non-formal network under ELKANA's umbrella). It is non-</p>		

obligatory, used mostly as a marketing tool. Anyone who wants to get quality service standard label, goes through a standardization process (inspection based on check list). The symbol for quality label is a “sun”. There are four categories for rural guesthouses and cottages:

1. Category "standard" (basic level);
2. Category "1 sun";
3. Category "2 suns"
4. Category "3 suns".

The above information was shared with APA to check service quality of guesthouses around Borjomi-Kharagauli, Lagodekhi Protected Areas, etc. Visitor specialists from PAs attended ELKANA's training, prepared check-lists (based on standards) and inspected guesthouses. At the result, guesthouses, met standard categories were recommended and placed on APA's web page.

Description

One of the first steps to improve quality service level is the elaboration of internal standards, check lists which can be based on Elkana's/EuroGites guidelines and contain ecotourism principals (environment responsibilities). For guide service, national standards (professional standards elaborated by Ministry of Education) can be used and introduced to local service providers.

SPPA project also started working on elaboration of quality standards and eco labelling in PA's of Georgia. The creation of the certification system and awards is subject to discuss. At this stage, it is recommended to train visitor specialists who will be the main “inspectors” and provide training courses in quality management including service quality. Visitor's specialist should be trained as a “local instructor”; small reports for each guesthouse can be prepared and delivered to APA. Based on which, selected guesthouses can be placed on APA webpage and recommended to visitors.

Continuous support and monitoring should be conducted in order to ensure that quality effectively improves. This activity can be done also with the support of DTR.

The service providers should have a proper visitor's satisfaction questionnaire in order to measure satisfaction and dissatisfaction, weak points for further improvement and better recognition of the area.

In addition, the DTR is also working in establishing a certification in tourism services the programme has started to be implemented “RECOMMENDED by the Department of Tourism and Resorts”

Activities included

- Definition the quality standards for tourism service providers.
- Training for visitor specialists' in the quality standards.
- Training for tourism service providers in the quality standards.
- Assessment to tourism service providers and elaborate recommendations of improvement.
- Provision of Certifications tourism service providers.
- Reporting.

EXPECTED RESULTS

Tourism service providers understand the importance of providing quality services and have the tools to improve their services.

AGENTS INVOLVED

DTR
GNTA
KPA
SPPA/ELKANA
TTOO

COORDINATOR	APA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2018, at least trainings focusing on the standards and quality should be developed. ✓ By 2019, at least 70% of the guesthouses should be certified.		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2019	PRIORITY	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	3.800 Gel		

OBJECTIVE 3.2. At least, three new local businesses are developed and running by year 2020.

Action	Assess and support new potential business in the communities of the support zone	3.2.1
<p>Justification</p> <p>The development of the support zone is vital for the sustainable tourism development of Kintrishi Protected Areas. The creation of new businesses should be a mechanism for creating economic and employment opportunities for locals living in the area.</p> <p>Moreover, the support of local business would increase locals' appreciation for conservation of the Park. Facilitate the private investment in concessions for example for developing kayaking activities, or even other options of accommodation (See actions 4.2/4.3.3)</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>The SPPA project is already implementing a funding programme through the Kintrishi Protected Areas Friends Association based on Financial Participatory Approach (FPA) guidelines. This approach seeks to: <i>"use direct financial resources for mobilizing local population to take charge of their own development. Through competitions and contests the individuals and groups of individuals can apply for funding of their investment projects in accordance to pre-defined funding areas."</i> These contests are publicly announced in the eligible areas to present their project.</p> <p>This programme has already supported some initiatives in different sectors ((see section 4.1.3), as for example in improving local houses to offer accommodation (guesthouses), and other businesses; however, this funding should be complemented with training and regular monitoring to evaluate performance. The objective of the monitoring is to avoid the failure of those enterprises and achieve an important rate of success.</p> <p>Some of the villages of the support zone of Kintrishi Protected Areas offer some tourism related services, specifically accommodation and catering. Most of these establishments function only during summer season and their customers are locals and foreigners visiting the area.</p> <p>Based on this, the additional business that could be supported are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Guesthouses/accommodation services. The accommodation offer in the area is still very limited. Some additional guesthouses could be developed; it is especially interesting that new guesthouses offer some kind of agrotourism offer (showing rural traditions, organic production, etc.) 		

<p>2) Catering places. Catering places available are also limited. It would be interesting to train some locals to produce and pack food to be offered to those visitors staying in the Visitor Shelter (for instance bread, khachapuri, jam, honey, fruits, nuts, etc.), so visitors would not need to bring all the food with them, and will have the opportunity to taste local food. This service should be announced in the Visitor Shelter, administration building, etc. The new catering places can be located in Didvake, Khino and Tskelmari.</p> <p>Even if biking is developed, some repair service would be available. Other options include handicrafts and folk art.</p> <p>Finally, it is recommended to support the creation of an association of tourism businesses in the area. Together the tourism business can share information, collaborate on projects, etc. and increase their performance level.</p>			
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify local initiatives • Preparation of business plans • Create some small grants to support local business. • Monitor the performance of the new business • Assess the creation of a Tourism Business Association. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Local community members are interested in developing tourism related business and support (administrative, legal and economic) is provided		
AGENTS INVOLVED	KPA KFA DTR APA NGOs		
COORDINATOR	Kintrishi Protected Areas Friends Association (KFA)		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By 2018, at least two new businesses are created ✓ By 2018, economic mechanisms to support local entrepreneurs are available. 		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	35.000 Gel		

OBJECTIVE 3.3. Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Protected Area administration by 2020.

Action	Conduct scientific research to identify main cultural assets in Kintrishi Protected Areas and its support zone	3.3.1
<p>Justification</p> <p>The Kintrishi Gorge is an area with important ethnographical and cultural values. The area hosts several cultural assets with historical importance and with diverse conservation status. These assets should be researched and preserved.</p>		

<p>Visitors are interested in learning about places through their cultural manifestations, the knowledge and promotion of cultural assets can be used as a tool for the creation of additional tourism products that can help to diversify the tourism offer in the area.</p> <p>The research activities can include not only monuments but also, traditional practices, festivals, etc.</p>			
<p>Description</p> <p>Several fortresses, and religious buildings are present in the area of Kintrishi Gorge. According to several sources it was one of the areas included in the Silk Route. A recent project “Black Sea Silk Corridor” has included this area as one of the areas of the Silk Road.⁶ The project’s objective is <i>“re-tracing the route of the western Silk Road through four countries: Armenia, Georgia, Turkey and Greece”</i></p> <p>Further investigations should be conducted to identify major features from that historical period. Equally, a historical religious route, related to the introduction of Christianity in the country could be traced. Kintrishi has a link to Apostle Andrew. This apostle arrived in Georgia, in Ajara Region, and was the first preacher of Christianity in Georgia and the founder of the Georgia Orthodox Church. Also it is interesting to combine it with other Muslim buildings, as there are also ruins of some mosque (i.e. Kvirike); showcasing the architectural diversity of the area.</p>			
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify main assets to be studied (database) • Conduct scientific research • Share results • Elaborate a Plan to conserve and promote historical assets • Seek for international funds to restore some of the assets. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Greater understanding of the importance of the cultural values of the area Preservation and promotion of cultural heritage.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	DTR NGOs KPA Kobuleti Municipality State Universities		
COORDINATOR	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By 2018, there is a database of tangible and intangible cultural resources of the area. ✓ By 2019, an agreement is signed with Shota Rustaveli or other national university to conduct some historical research in the area and assess the conservation status of the cultural resources. ✓ By 2020, there is a Plan to restore some of the cultural assets present in the area. 		
EXECUTION TIME	2018-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	45.000 Gel		

⁶ For more information: <http://ge.blackseasilkroad.com/en/wiki/Kintrishi/674/790>

STRATEGIC LINE 4: INFRASTRUCTURES AND SERVICES DEVELOPMENT

Product design and infrastructure development are key elements of a destination in order to create experiences to be offered to visitors. The design of feasible and cost effective activities in the Ajara PA's is essential to attract visitors and increase their level of enjoyment. Infrastructures and facilities should be built to support the development of tourism products.

Any tourism destination needs a good product portfolio strategy to be able to develop tourism and specialise the existing supply of the destination. The portfolio should be based on the existing attractions and resources, but it should also take into account the essential infrastructures, facilities and services needed to make the development come true.

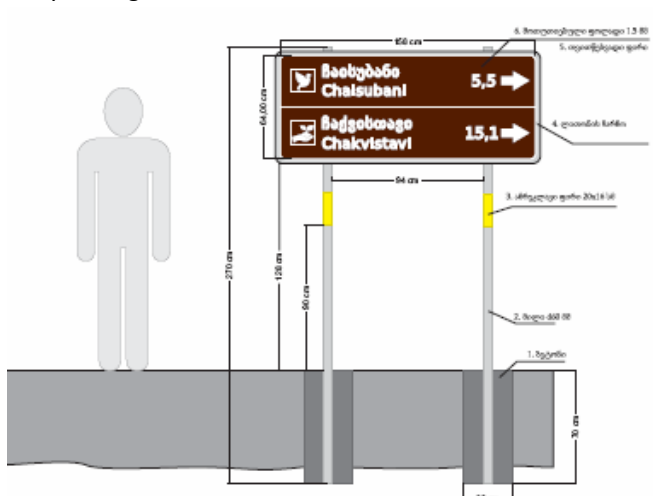
Kintrishi Protected Areas count on several infrastructures that can be improved in order to provide a more attractive and suitable tourism offer to different markets such as families, excursionist, adventures, etc. In addition, increasing the recreational and educational activities can encourage the visitation level.

The design and development of new tourism infrastructure has to be carefully considered having into account the surrounding environment and other aspects. Besides, attention has to be paid to maintain the infrastructures in order to ensure visitor's satisfaction and safety.

OBJECTIVE 4.1. By 2017, accessibility to Kintrishi Protected Areas has improved.

Action	Sign an agreement with Road Department to improve the access road to Kintrishi Protected Areas.	4.1.1
Justification Repair and maintain roads to Ajara PA's is especially important to improve level of safety and satisfaction of visitors and local communities. This is also a requirement from TTOO in order to bring their customers to the PA's.		
Description The poor condition of the roads leading to mostly Mtirala NP and Kintrishi PA makes travel to these destinations tiring and uncomfortable. The construction of the hydropower station on the way to Kintrishi PA is also contributing to damage the road, make it impassable (<i>see section 4.2.2</i>). This situation is preventing hotels and tour operators to send their customers to the area, so it should be addressed as soon as possible.		
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with the Department of Road and Rehabilitation of the Government of Ajara. • Elaborate project for road rehabilitation. • Repair and rehabilitate the road. 		
EXPECTED RESULTS	Time to reach Kintrishi Protected Areas is reduced and the journey is safe.	
AGENTS INVOLVED	DTR Department of Environment Kobuleti municipality	

	Department of Road and Rehabilitation of the Government of Ajara		
COORDINATOR	Kobuleti municipality		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ A project for road rehabilitation has been approved by end of 2017.		
EXECUTION TIME	2016-2017	PRIORITY	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	350 Gel (participation in meetings)		

Action	Design and install road directional signs	4.1.2
<p>Justification</p> <p>The signage system provides essential information about how to get to the destination, distance to the destination. This signage system should be aligned with the DTR signage system and also according to APA standards.</p> <p>Description</p> <p>There are no road signs indicating the direction or distance to Kintrishi Protected Areas in Kobuleti or on the road that lead to the Park. This is one of the priority actions that the Park should address in order to increase Kintrishi Protected Areas visibility and also make easier to visitors to reach the Park.</p> <p>The indication on how to get to Kintrishi Protected Areas should be located already in Kobuleti, and several locations along the road. At least a sign should be marking each diversion, to easily direct visitors to the administration building.</p> <p>In addition, other directional signs signalling the distance and direction of the trails, or relevant assets should also be placed.</p> <p>The signs should follow the standards of the DTR (see figure below). The signs should be monitored regularly and repair if any damage is identified.</p>		
		

Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify main locations to install the signs Design the signs according to DTR/ APA standards Install the signs Monitoring and repair 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Visitors can easily access to Kintrishi Protected Areas		
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA Road and Rehabilitation Department Kobuleti Municipality DTR		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2017, there are road signs indicating direction to KPA in Kobuleti and main road.		
EXECUTION TIME	2016-2017	PRIORITY	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	3.200 Gel (+ 800 Gel for potential damages)		

Action	Identify a suitable area for car parking	4.1.3
Justification <p>Public transportation from Kobuleti to Kintrishi Protected Areas is very limited. Most of tourists that visit Kintrishi protected areas drive their private car. Although currently, the number of cars is not causing big problems, the Park administration should work on defining a suitable area for car parking in order to avoid congestions in the near future.</p>		
Description <p>The area located around the visitor centre has a limited space for car parking. In order to regulate and facilitate access to the park, a suitable area should be identified to allocate a parking area.</p> <p>It would be recommended that the car parking area is located before the entrance of the Protected Areas, to avoid impacts and congestion around the bridge and the Visitor Centre. Since the area do not belong to the Protected Areas agreements should be established with neighbours or municipality to locate this car park.</p> <p>In addition, meetings with municipalities and public transportation providers should be established in order to improve the service offered to travel to Kintrishi Protected areas, especially during high season.</p> <p>In the long term, this should be the preferred option to access to Kintrishi Protected Area, and the use of public transportation should be promoted among visitors, especially during high season.</p>		
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and locate a suitable area for car parking Meetings with the taxis and other transportation providers. Organize minibus transportation from Kobuleti to Kintrishi Protected Areas during high season. 		

EXPECTED RESULTS	Visitors driving to Kintrishi Protected Areas can easily park their car.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	DTR APA Transportation providers		
COORDINATOR	Kobuleti municipality		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2019, a suitable area for car parking is identified		
EXECUTION TIME	2018-2019	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
BUDGET	8.200 Gel		

OBJECTIVE 4.2. Existing infrastructures are improved, and attract and increasing number of visitors by 2018.

Action	Design and build new infrastructures around the Visitor Shelter	4.2.1
<p>Justification</p> <p>Visitor Shelter is strategically located at the entrance of the Kintrishi Protected Areas. The Shelter works as the information centre for most of the visitors. Here visitors are registered, a picnic and a camping area is located, and it is the departing point for the exiting trails.</p> <p>The visitor shelter area offers a great space to develop some recreational and educational facilities, to complete and diversify the services offered.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>The proposed infrastructures and facilities for the Visitor Shelter area, as it has been described in <i>section 6.1</i> include:</p> <p>1. Nature Classroom:</p> <p>This facility aims at providing an indoor/ outdoor learning and educational space, in which students of the municipality/region/country and the region can participate in practical activities to discover the protected area and its values.</p> <p>This area has been conceived as a simple construction, to avoid high maintenance costs, equipped with two areas:</p> <p>(1) an open space with two main aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - provide space for the celebration/organization of nature related activities. This space should count on basic furniture: table, benches and shelves - count on an area for permanent/temporary exhibitions on the characteristics of the Kintrishi Protected Areas, the communities living around, the history of the area, etc. <p>(2) a small area (room) for providing basic information to visitors.</p> <p>The main target group of this infrastructure are schools and pupils.</p> <p>Among the activities that can be developed in the nature classroom to increase children appreciation for nature:</p>		

- Creation of an organic vegetable garden
- Workshop for elaboration of organic cosmetics, soaps, wax candles
- Workshop for the production of bird nest boxes, etc.

In addition, this classroom would provide also services for visitors

2. Children adventure playground.

This is a space aimed for children with several places to climb, jump, and swing. Designed to allow any child to play and explore the forest. The target group of this facility are families with children.



3. Recreational area

The visitor shelter counts on several tables and benches for picnicking. The area can be enhanced with some more tables and also a fire places. The picnic area located close to the river bank should be regularly maintained (especially the roofing).

Activities included

- Agree on priority investments to be done in the Visitor Shelter Area.
- Design and construct a Nature Classroom
- Design and construct other proposed facilities

EXPECTED RESULTS

The Visitor Shelter area is a place for welcoming visitors and learn about Protected Area.

AGENTS INVOLVED

APA
International Donors
DTR
Ministry of Culture
NGOs

COORDINATOR

KPA

ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By 2017, an environmental educational programme is designed. ✓ By 2018, the visitor shelter area offers a comprehensive range of services for different publics 		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2018	PRIORITY	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	170.000 Gel		

Action	Design and implement new facilities to improve the existing trails	4.2.2
<p>Justification</p> <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas counts already with two trails, as it has been described in <i>section 4.2.2</i>, These existing trails provide a good basis to further develop tourism in Kintrishi Protected Areas these trails should be enhanced to increase their visitation level, and especially the trail number 2 (Yew and Tbiliki Lake).</p> <p>Limited visitors of the Protected Area hike up to the Tbiliki Lake. The reasons are related to the difficulty of the trail and the length. In order to increase the level of demand of this particular trail some works and additional infrastructures are needed.</p> <p>This trail runs through a beautiful area of untouched nature and reaches some peaks with beautiful views over the valley. This trail although already developed needs to untap its potential.</p> <p>Description</p> <p>The Trail no. 1: <i>Tamari Bridge and Box Tree Stand</i> does not require a great number of interventions. Most of the improvements needed in this trail are related to: signage and interpretation. Close to St. Giorgi Church it is possible to glimpse a fortress on the top of mountain, this point should be marked, and some information about the fortress can be explained. This trail could be combined with other facilities to be proposed for the area.</p> <p>The Trail no. 2: <i>Yew and Lake Tbiliki trail</i> has a total length of 37 km and it is intended as a two-day trail. The initial 25 km of the trail are in good condition, and lead to village Khino. The remaining 12 km are difficult as it is an ascending path with a significant slope. It takes around 5 hours to hike all the way up. Since there is not accommodation up in the mountain, visitors are obliged to hike (up and down) this section in one day, making it difficult.</p> <p>Additionally, according to some visitors the area is not well marked and some areas present some difficulties. The trail should be assessed to identify points in which works are needed (safety handrails, ladders, etc.), and directional signs or a clear marking should be done. Even there are some bridges along the trail that need to be repaired.</p> <p>The picnic area situated in km 4,2 should be regularly maintained, and that area should be also cleaned. Close to the Lake Tbiliki there is an abandoned house that can be used as a hut/refuge for groups. The house need important reforms to host visitors.</p> <p>There is a new adventure tourism company in Batumi offering this route (Wild Horn), the Protected Area administration.</p>		

The trails and the facilities proposed can be checked in **Annex 3- Maps 7 and 8**



Figure 31: Abandoned house close to Lake Tbiliki area. Source: Wild Horn

In addition, it is recommended to investigate and develop a trail **from Khino to Mt Peranga**. APA has plans to extend the protection system towards this area that has also important environmental and recreational values. The approximate distance between these points is 8 km.

Activities included

- Assessment of the trail from Khino to Lake Tbiliki to identify the works and signage needed.
- Conduct the identified works
- Develop a mountain refuge/hut in the area close to the lake (existing building)
- Acquisition of bikes to developing biking towards Khino
- Assess the development of an additional trail from Khino to Mt. Peranga.

EXPECTED RESULTS	Improved quality of existing infrastructures		
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA DTR Local villages Tour operators		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By end of 2016, this trail has been completely assessed ✓ By end of 2017, the needed works have been conducted		
EXECUTION TIME	2016-2017	PRIORITY	HIGH X MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/>

			LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	65.000 Gel		

OBJECTIVE 4.3 New and sustainable tourism infrastructures and services that allow visitors to explore and enjoy Kintrishi Protected Areas are developed by 2018.

Action	Design and develop a new educational trail	4.3.1
<p>Justification</p> <p>Recreational trails help people to enjoy the outdoors and facilitate, promote and manage a range of outdoor activities including hiking, trekking, cycling, horse-riding. Trails are developed with the aim of providing a pleasant, safe and enjoyable experience to trail users and visitors to an area.</p> <p>Trails are essential to ensure that outdoor recreation activities are undertaken in harmony with the surrounding environment.</p> <p>An elevated boardwalk has been proposed for Kintrishi Protected Areas as a new trail to have a different experience and enjoy the forest and nature from a new perspective.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>The development of an “<i>Educational route on the tree top</i>” can be a good attractor for the area. The proposed route includes the construction, in a suitable area, of an elevated boardwalk that allow visitors to enjoy the forested area.</p> <p>The elevated boardwalk should not be long (around 600 metres) and should be circular to allow one directional visitor flow.</p> <p>Experts should be hired to investigate the suitability of this structure and the most appropriate area for it. Experts should have in consideration several factors such as best materials, access to the area, --- in order to not damage the surrounding environment. The design should be done in accordance and integrated with the surroundings</p> <p>Roots of trees have to be considered during the design phase in order to not damage the trees.</p> <p>As educational tree, it is important to develop a theme around which different interpretive panels should be developed and located along the trail. Among the topics suggested: endemic /relict species, role of the vegetation, fauna living in the area, etc.</p> <p>A fee should be charged (6 to 8 Gel) to access to this trail, and visitors would also have the possibility of renting some binoculars to watch birds in the area.</p> <p>It is recommended that the boardwalk is located using former paths or areas with some level of past use. The potential development of this boardwalk can lead to an increase in visitation numbers that has to be carefully considered. A significant increase on visitation numbers can also increase the potential for further negative (and also positive) impacts. Management plan should take this into consideration at very early stage in order to minimize these potential negative impacts, for instance establishing a limited</p>		

number of visitors to the facility, restricting also access to the area with private car, etc. Fees can be also charged in order to limit the visit and create some income for conservation of the area

Among the activities to be developed around the boardwalk are:

- Educational visits
- Birdwatching
- Photography

There are several examples in other Protected Areas worldwide that can be used as best practices:

- Ancient Forest (British Columbia -Canada): (see figure 1)
<http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/local-news/ancient-forest-gets-new-life-1.1028439>
- Valley of Giants (Australia): A 600 metres walk through a grove of more than 400-year old trees. (see figure 2) http://valleyofthegiants.com.au/menus/Attraction/Tree_Top_Walk.php
- Iwokrama Reserve (Guyana). (see figure 3)
<http://iwokramacanopywalkway.com/walkway/>



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Activities included

- Conduct a Feasibility study including a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis.
- Study the carrying capacity of this trail
- Elaborate an Executive Plan.
- Implement the Boardwalk

EXPECTED RESULTS	A new and attractive educational route that allow the development of birdwatching activities and attracts a higher number of visitors is developed.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection International Donors Regional Advisory Council KFA APA DTR		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By 2018, a feasibility study is elaborated to assess the viability of the infrastructure ✓ By end of 2019, the Executive Plan is elaborated. 		
EXECUTION TIME	2018-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	3,500.000 Gel ⁷		

Action	Design and implement thematic tours in Kintrishi Protected Areas	4.3.2
<p>Justification</p> <p>In order to promote the natural and cultural values of the protected areas among visitors, recreational and educational activities should be developed.</p> <p>Some of the activities that can be develop are oriented for soft-ecotourists, or those visitors that have interest in nature but prefer less physically demanding activities.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>In addition to the existing trails, thematic tours can be developed around specific topics/interpretation themes.</p> <p>These tours would highlight environmental aspects such as the conservation of the Colchic Forest, wildlife, the impacts of climate change and other impact on nature, historical use of the land, the changes in the vegetation according to altitude.</p> <p>These trails should be guided. The use of guiding is also strategical to generate income for the community, and also to reduce pressure on the natural resources. Furthermore, the use of interpretive guides can help visitors to fully appreciate the natural and cultural heritage of the area, and be moved to empathise with the need to ensure that such heritage is preserved.</p> <p>An initial proposal of the themes around which the routes can be developed are:</p> <p>» Ethnographical Tours:</p> <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas also counts on an important legacy in traditions that are maintained by the local communities living in the area. These resources should be promoted by designing specific routes. The</p>		

⁷ This is rough estimation based on existing data on similar infrastructures-

tours can be focused on traditions of the communities and the traditional use of land by locals, legends and local stories associated to the area, etc.

» **Environmental tours**

- a) *Medicinal Plants – Traditional uses of plants*
- b) *Endemic species of Kintrishi Protected Areas* (an example about how to prepare the activity is provided in **Annex 2**)
- c) *Colchic Forest*
- d) *Inhabitants of the forest-*
- e) *Geological tours*

The routes should be defined around main attractions and services identified in the area and interpretive content should be defined. The visitor specialist, together with technical assistance (Universities, Interpretation experts, DTR, locals, etc.) should be responsible of defining the script of the tours, the stops, etc.

The scripts of the tours should be available for guides implementing the tours. Rangers could also provide this guided hikes, however they should receive specific training in tour guiding, interpretation, etc. and be encouraged (through financial mechanisms) to implement the tours.

Activities included

- Identify potential tours to be developed
- Select the main assets to be promoted and define the script for the tour (objectives, main stops, themes, etc.)
- Together with DTR/experts assess the potential of the route
- Promote the tours

EXPECTED RESULTS	Cultural and environmental guided tours are available for visitors.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	DTR Local communities Tourism providers APA		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ At least two thematic tours are developed by 2018		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2018	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	12.500 Gel		

Action	Develop a tourism product around bird-watching		4.3.3
Justification <p>Ajara is an important spot for bird-watching. It is considered on the world’s largest migration corridor for birds and since 2011, a bird-watching festival is celebrated in places such as Sakhalvasho village, Mtirala National Park, Chorokhi delta or Shuamta.</p> <p>Although those places are main hot sports Kintrishi Protected Areas counts of areas of importance that can be promoted for birdwatching activities.</p>			
Description <p>Kintrishi Protected Aras is an Important Bird Area (IBA) according to Bird Life. Caspian Snowcock (<i>Tetraogallus caspius</i>) and Caucasian Grouse (<i>Lyrurus mlokosiewiczzi</i>) are the species around which this IBA was defined.</p> <p>Both species are very attractive for birdwatchers, and also difficult to see, and a tourism product around birdwatching could be developed and promoted.</p> <p>These species can be found in high altitude and trips should be organized with an expert. Ideally, a 2/3-day tour should be organized as, these species are easily to spot very early in the morning.</p> <p>Special attention when developing this product should be placed around the season in which this activity can be developed, as breeding season has to be respected.</p> <p>In Annex 3 – Map 9 is provided a map where main areas to see these species are located.</p>			
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify appropriate areas for bird-watching• Identify need of infrastructure to ensure visitors safety• Develop and promoted bird-watching tours.			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Bird watching is a consolidated tourism activity in Kintrishi Protected Areas		
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA DTR Local communities NGOs SaBuKo		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2018, an assessment has been carried out to determine the best bird watching spots for the Caspian snowcock and Caucasian Grouse.		
EXECUTION TIME	2018- 2019	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
BUDGET	6.500 Gel		

Action	Develop complimentary water-based activities	4.3.3
<p>Justification</p> <p>There is a growing interest in water-based recreation such as sailing, kayaking, etc. Kintrishi Protected Areas has the potential to develop additional adventure and sports activities. There are several rivers in the area, some of which are suitable for water recreational activities.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>Kintrishi river offers the opportunity to develop some water-based activities such as KAYAKING, although most suitable areas are outside the boundaries of the protected area. A careful assessment by specialist to identified suitable areas and trails would enable potential visitors to more easily participate in this activities.</p> <p>Water trails should be developed in appropriate water locations, ensuring that all safety issues are considered. According to experts' opinions, different trails according to different difficulty levels could be developed, see map 10 for further detail on the areas suitable for kayaking.</p> <p>The facilities that should be developed associated to the trail are mostly the access and egress facilities and if necessary some signs indicated the trail head form main road.</p> <p>The exact trail should be identified for a professional as there are several considerations to be taken into account when developing a trail such as the effects of wind, a rise in water levels, the water flow, etc.,</p> <p>It is recommended, that this activity is promoted by a third party, that is professionals engaged in active outdoor tourism activities. As this activity can also be directly linked to other businesses such as: introductory lessons to kayaking.</p> <p>Another relevant aspect to be taken into account is the ongoing development of the hydropower plant, this new infrastructure may hinder the potential development of kayaking activities in the area.</p> <p>The potential areas to develop kayaking activides in Kintrishi can be checked in Annex 2- Map 10.</p> <p>A Russian company is already promoting some kayaking/canyoning activities in the Kintrishi river (www.getur.ru). Cooperation agreements should be developed with this type of companies</p> <p>Other water-based activity that can be developed is FLY-FISHING. Kintrishi river and other tributaries and streams can be suitable for practicing fly -fishing. The fly-fishing should be regulated in specific locations, to not affect the rivers biodiversity.</p> <p>An annual contest between the three protected areas could be organized</p>		
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify appropriate water courses and locations • Plan and develop a water based trail for kayaking • Develop minimum infrastructures to ensure safe and pleasant passage to trail users 		
EXPECTED RESULTS	Rivers and water resources are appreciated resources and provide and scenario to develop sustainable recreational activities.	
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA	

	DTR Private investors Local communities Georgian Fly Fishing association		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2017, an assessment has been carried out to determine the suitability of developing some water-based activities in the area		
EXECUTION TIME	2017- 2018	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
BUDGET	5.500 Gel		

Action	Plan and develop new accommodation options inside the Protected Area	4.3.3
<p>Justification</p> <p>Accommodation options in Kintrishi Protected Areas area limited and should be extended to attract a higher number of visitors. In addition to improving quality standards of existing guest house, other options should be provided.</p> <p>A global trend called “Glamping” (glamorous/luxurious camping) that is gaining popularity in many natural areas worldwide, but this type of accommodation is not only related to comfort or quality service is also connected with nature preservation, unspoiled nature and eco-friendliness. This accommodation type would fit for those travellers that love being close to nature to enjoy peace, relaxation and active activities without sacrificing comfort</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>These huts would be intended for those families/couples that want to escape for urban areas and enjoy a few days in a pristine environment, practising outdoor activities and enjoying local food.</p> <p>This is not a priority investment (see evaluation matrix); however, it is to be considered that this innovative type of accommodation can generate some important economic revenues, as this huts should be rented for high prices. Careful evaluation should be elaborated by 2018-2019 about the need of implementing this activity.</p> <p>The huts can be located in the Visitor Shelter area, but at enough distance so the visitors can enjoy some privacy.</p> <p>Further research has to be conducted in order to identify the best location and type of huts to be constructed in the area. There are several options and examples of wooden huts and other styles of eco-certified glamping accommodation that would fit in Kintrishi Protected Areas.</p> <p>Some examples of huts located in other natural areas are provided below.</p> <p>Figure 1 (exterior) and Figure 2 (interior): http://www.thelittleabodes.co.uk/ Figure 3: http://www.glamping-lushna.com/</p>		



Figure1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Meals and other services should be arranged and provided by locals and managed by the Visitor Shelter responsible.

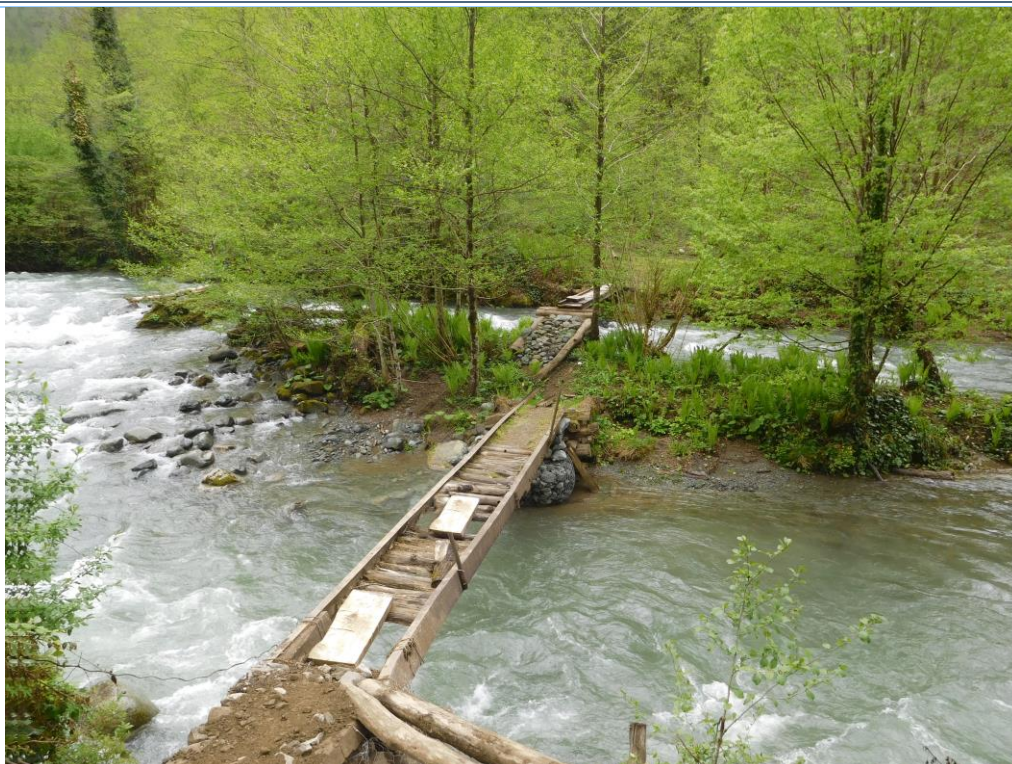
Activities included

- Assess the economic viability of developing some “glamping accommodation”
- Assess the best location to locate the huts
- Elaborate the Executive Plan to develop the huts
- Construct the huts

EXPECTED RESULTS	A variety of accommodation options are available for different market segments.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA DTR Regional Advisory Council KFA		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By end of 2019, the executive plan to construct the huts has been elaborated.		
EXECUTION TIME	2019-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X
BUDGET	400.000 Gel		

OBJECTIVE 4.4. A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Ajara Protected Areas is fully operational by 2019.

Action	Develop a trail that joins Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala National Park.	4.4.1
<p>Justification</p> <p>Ajara Region host three important areas that represent the Colchic Forest, with important natural and cultural resources. It is important to for PA managers to collaborate in setting a joint route to create more opportunities for visitors to choose from and increase the overall competitiveness of the region. An integrated approach (as already proposed in the Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan) across the three protected areas, would be very beneficial for each of the protected areas and also for the Region as a destination.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>Kintrishi Protected Area borders with Mtirala National Park creating the possibility of developing a route from Kintrishi to Mtirala National Park. This route, although not adequate (mainly for safety reasons) for hiking is already being used by some visitors. According to rangers in 2015 at least 28 people did this route.</p> <p>This route should follow the ancient trade route from Chakvistavi to Khino (Silk Road). According to sources there was a connecting path between both protected areas that was used as a trade route; also the Russian used this route. The historical background of this potential trail should be investigated and promoted.</p> <p>The combined Ajara Protected Areas route can be a good attraction for visitors, and work as a competitive advantage for the three protected areas at national level. It can provide a unique experience to tourists as they would be able to visit three different protected areas, with different characters and landscapes, in only one region.</p> <p>Other benefits of developing this route are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitates the inclusion in the tourism development of additional communities such as Zundaga, Aghara, etc. (especially for Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks) - Provides visibility to the three protected areas. <p>The route to be developed can be checked in Annex 3 – Map 11. The route would start from the Visitor Shelter and follow the exiting trail “Yew and Lake Tbikeli” up to km 4,2. Then visitors should turn right and cross the river towards Mtirala National Park.</p> <p>Since the trail uses the same path as existing “Yew and Lake Tbikeli” no major works are needed. The section from the other river bank toward Mtirala boundaries should be assessed and works should be carried out in case they are needed. It is also essential to inform about the distance to reach the Park.</p>		



The picture shows the bridge that should be crossed towards Mtirala National Park. This bridge should be repaired in order to provide a safe access to the other river bank. It has been estimated by administration staff that at least 8 bridges are needed to connect both protected areas.

In addition, specific signs and interpretive material for this section should be installed.

The route (including Machakhela National Park section) should be conceptualized as whole, focusing on the importance of the Colchic Forest; and PA managers should agree on the topics to be developed along the route, the facilities to be installed along the route, etc.

Activities included

- Assess the needs of the trail.
- Elaborate a trail development plan (each Park should be responsible for developing the needed infrastructures and works in their territory, however, the conceptualization and design should be agreed among them).
- Prepare a route conceptualization for the whole route

EXPECTED RESULTS

A hiking route that joins Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala National Park is available.

AGENTS INVOLVED

Municipality
Local communities
DTR
APA
Mtirala National Park
Kintrishi Protected Areas

COORDINATOR

APA

ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2017, visitors can hike safely from Kintrishi Protected Areas to Mtirala National Park		
EXECUTION TIME	2016-2018	PRIORITY	HIGH <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	12.500 Gel.		

OBJECTIVE 4.5. By 2020, a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.

Action	Design and implement an environmental education and interpretation program for local and visitors	4.5.1
<p>Justification</p> <p>Environmental education and interpretation are two subjects that should be linked tourism in protected areas. They are the necessary tools in order to create a wider knowledge of the natural areas and its relations, functions, etc. There is a close relationship between interpretation and tourism. Interpretation is related to providing information to visitors on the places they are currently in and encouraging them to appreciate and care for them.</p> <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas contains a lot of environmental information that it is necessary to transmit in order to raise the visitors' awareness and that of the local community. Some informative panels are available in the area but the trails are not thematic.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>One of the main objectives of the Protected Area is to raise ecological and environmental awareness about the natural and cultural values of the Park. Therefore, it is important to design a comprehensive programme aimed at different groups to educate them about the importance of environmental conservation and the values of Kintrishi Protected Areas.</p> <p>These programme should include different activities such as:</p> <p>1) Development of Interpretive Materials</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Design and print leaflets and posters that promote the values of the Protected Area and the importance of its conservation. Among the topics of leaflets to be developed are: main species of flora and fauna, the importance of Colchic ecosystem, etc.</i> <i>Design and print leaflets on the activities/routes that can be done in the Protected Areas. The production on these materials should be done once new infrastructures have been developed.</i> <i>Design specific Interpretive Materials (interpretive boards) for the routes to be developed (see actions 4.2.2/4.4.1)</i> 		

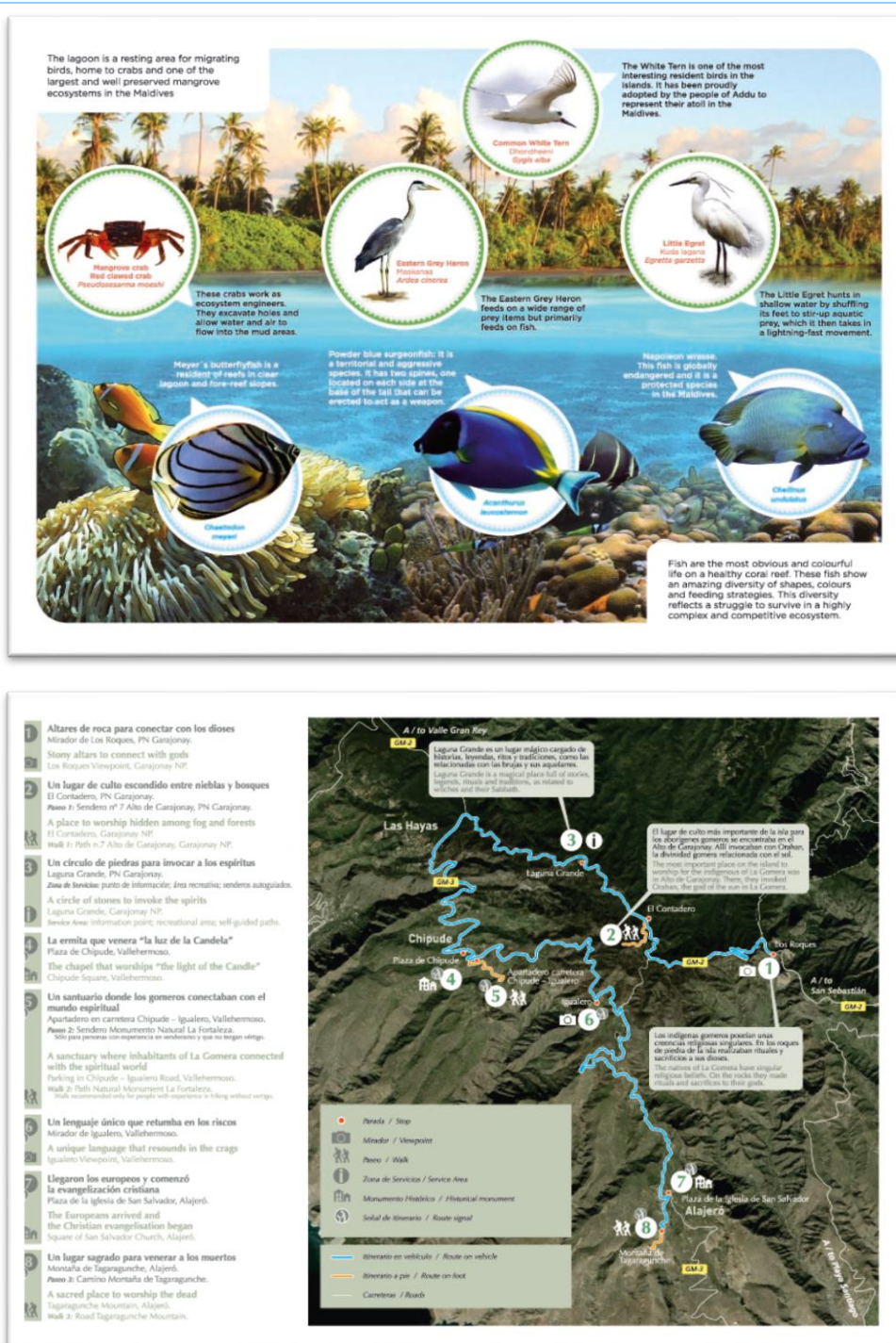


Figure 32: Examples of leaflets for Protected Areas. Source: HIDRIA

2) **Presentations.** The presentations should be designed in an interpretive way to better achieve defined objectives of knowledge and behaviour.

a. Presentations for schools

b. Presentation for specific groups (hotels/accommodation providers, farmers, etc.)

3) **Celebration of Special Days**

The protected area administration already organizes activities related to worldwide celebrated environmental-related days, such as the World Environment day,

<p>These celebrations should be used to raise awareness about environmental concerns and several activities in accordance to the other Adjara Protected Areas and APA should be organized.</p> <p>4) Organization of Cleaning/Recycling Campaigns. Several waste problems have been identified, especially in the local communities, related to throwing waste to the river, landfills, etc. Awareness campaigns on waste issues should be regularly implemented, especially focus on children and youth.</p> <p>5) Organization of regular workshops for children and families Among the workshops that can be organized:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational gincanas (with questions and games about the Protected Area values, etc.), - Preparation of bird nest boxes, - Elaboration of medicinal remedies, etc. <p>Some developed example can be checked in Annex 2 In addition, the presence of visitors will increase the pressure over the natural resources, awareness on the importance of keeping the environment clean should be raised, a code of conduct on the “leave no trace” could be produced, etc.</p>			
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define contents and materials to be used • Develop a schedule of activities • Implement scheduled activities and elaborate a report on results. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	An interpretation and Environmental Programme, aimed to different publics is successfully implemented.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA DTR Shota Rustaveli University Environmental NGOs (SaBuKo, etc.)		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By 2017, an environmental educational programme is designed. ✓ By 2018, several brochures are available to promote the natural resources of the Park 		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2018	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	5.500 Gel		

Action	Design a volunteer program in coordination with universities and regional education centres.	4.5.2
<p>Justification Volunteers play an essential role in raising awareness about the values of protected areas and contribute to their protection. They also motivate others to be involved in the conservation of protected areas. If properly managed volunteers can help protected areas with their invaluable work while the volunteers gain an unforgettable practical experience and valuable knowledge about protected areas management.</p>		

A well-designed volunteer programme can help to achieve the objectives and purpose of protected areas while increasing their visibility.			
<p>Description</p> <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas has a large potential for the development of a volunteering program. The development of these type of programs would allow the inclusion of interested groups or individuals in activities that can ensure better promotion of the park, increase the educational role of the Park, improve the relationship between public institutions, etc.</p> <p>The objectives of this programme will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To contribute to the educational role of the Protected Areas. - To better promote the Park at national and international level - To contribute to raise awareness of the importance of nature conservation and biodiversity - To contribute to enhance visitor's experience <p>The presence of international volunteers can help the national park to welcome visitors of other nationalities, especially during high season.</p> <p>The responsibilities of the volunteer can be diverse from helping rangers to monitor the biodiversity or to restore trails, carry out conservation activities such as reforestation activities, removal of invasive species; or even providing guiding services for groups.</p>			
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a program for volunteers (national and international) • Call for interest • Implement and report about the programme. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	A regular group of volunteers spend some time in KPA to collaborate in developing some environmental related activities.		
AGENTS INVOLVED	Local communities Kobuleti Municipality APA Universities		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ By 2019, a national volunteer program has been designed ✓ By 2020, international volunteers are interested in volunteer in KPA 		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	6.000 Gel/year		

STRATEGIC LINE 5: MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Marketing and promotion should be one of the priorities Kintrishi Protected Areas, annual marketing plans should be developed to promote define priority actions to promote the Park and its values. These plans should be defined in collaboration with APA, DTR, and the private sector. These operational plans should include online marketing activities.

This annual plan can also include actions related to renovate the existing logo and the visual image of the Protected Areas in order to modernising it.

New technologies are changing the way people travel and organize the trips. According the PA's visitors survey internet is one of the main sources of information. Updated information about KPA should be available in its own webpage and also in APA's and DTR website. The online campaign should be extended further that the Facebook profile, and other technologies such as applications shall be considered.

Finally, the creation of events and educational and recreational activities in the PA's can work as a tool for attracting visitor's, especially in low season. These events should help to promote traditions, and the environmental values of Ajara PA's.

OBJECTIVE 5.1. Kintrishi Protected Areas will be known at national and international level by 2020.

Action	Elaborate and implement an annual Operational Marketing Plan	5.1.1
Justification Marketing and promotion are essential to increase awareness about PA's and therefore increase the number of visitors.		
Description The annual marketing operational Plan will include the main activities to be developed throughout the year to promote the National Park. Among the activities that can be included in the operational plan are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organization of a Public Relations event. These event should be conducted prior the season and the objective will be to promote any new development activity of major achievement (inauguration of the new administration building, etc.) - Promotional/Educational Film. A short educational film (around 10 minutes) about the values of the Protected Areas shall be recorded. This film would present to visitors Kintrishi Protected Areas, its importance and values. The film can be showed in the exhibition area of the new administration building, and it will give visitors an overview of the richness of the Park. - Design and print brochures/posters/maps The main target groups for the brochures should be: tour operators/travel agencies (local, regional, national level) and tourists The brochures should have an appealing image and should be printed in different languages (Georgian, English, and Russian) - Organize specialized tours for national and international tour operators/press (fam trips) together with DTR. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate with APA/DTR in fairs, promotional events at national and international level (by providing brochures, images, etc. - Organization and participation in local events. The area of Kintrishi celebrates several important events that can be used to increase the visibility of the Protected Area and its role. It is also recommended that Kintrishi Protected Areas renovates its corporate image (logo, etc.) <p>The Plan should also include the activities defined in the Ajara Protected Areas Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan.</p>			
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire a marketing/Graphic designer expert to renovate the Protected Areas the logo/brand • Define the main actions to be included in the Marketing Operational Plan (including budget, and calendar of actions) • Validate the Marketing Strategy 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increase the level of awareness of nationals and foreigners on the National Park Increase the demand on tourism activities developed		
AGENTS INVOLVED	Kintrishi Advisory Council		
COORDINATOR	APA/KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2017, a Marketing Operational Plan is elaborated and validated by stakeholders.		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2020	PRIORITY	HIGH X MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	17.000 Gel		

Action	Participate in the creation of the Ajara Protected areas membership card.	5.1.2
Justification The creation of a “Friends of Ajara Protected Areas Card” has been proposed in the Ajara Sustainable Tourism Strategy as an efficient tool for promotion and awareness raising, especially for the domestic market. The creation of this Card is considered a positive way to encourage not only to visit the PA’s but also to keep cardholders informed about PA’s development projects, news, celebration of events, etc. This card can also be used to raise revenues.		
Description The “Friends of Ajara Protected Areas Card” is aimed to promote Ajarian protected areas and the services associated to them. The target groups for this card and the individuals that will benefit from having the card. The benefits will include discounts in associated providers and also to be informed about offers, events, etc. through a newsletter.		

<p>In the other hand, in order to be able to extend the number of discounts to be offered it is needed the active collaboration of tourism providers. These are the second target group of this card. With their involvement the providers will benefit by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Getting recognition as Protected Area supporters, improving their image towards sustainability and quality services. b) Increasing their exposure without high investments <p>KPA should be directly involved in promoting the benefits of joining the card among the tourism service providers in the area (also in Kobuleti)</p>			
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings with stakeholders and potential partners. • Promotion of the card (brochure, presentation event, contest, etc.). • Monitoring and reporting. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	<p>Increase PA's visibility in the domestic tourism market Involvement of private sector in the promotion of Kintrishi Protected Areas</p>		
AGENTS INVOLVED	<p>Tourism service providers in the area and Kobuleti.</p>		
COORDINATOR	<p>KPA/APA</p>		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<p>✓ By 2018, several meetings with tourism providers have been held to promote the Ajara Protected Areas Membership Card.</p>		
EXECUTION TIME	<p>2017-2018</p>	PRIORITY	<p>HIGH X MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW <input type="checkbox"/></p>
BUDGET	<p>1.500 Gel</p>		

Action	Organize a calendar of events to increase visibility of the Protected Areas	5.1.3
<p>Justification</p> <p>Events are good occasions to attract visitors to PA's, especially in low season. Events can be related to cultural, environmental or recreational issues to attract a different range of visitors. These events should provide an opportunity for discovery the Areas.</p>		
<p>Description</p> <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas should develop a calendar of events to be held throughout the year. The celebration of these events would help to increase the visibility of the National Park and increase visitation level in low season.</p> <p>The National Park administration should design the calendar of events at least a year in advance to have enough time to organize it. The celebration should count on the collaboration of administrations, communities (should be coordinated in the Regional Advisory Council.)</p> <p>Some of the topics that could serve the basis for the celebration of events could be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spring/autumn festival _Rhododendron Blossom 2. Earth Day (and other international celebrations) 		

<p>3. Open day. In specific days such as the anniversary of the creation of Kintrishi Strict Reserve, the Georgia Independence Day, anniversary of the creation of the APA, or the creation of the protected areas system etc. special activities should be planned such activities for children, special free guided tours, etc. These celebrations would be an opportunity to attract new visitors to the Park</p> <p>4. Actively participate in local celebrations such as the Kintrishi Gorge Fest, etc.</p> <p>5. Hiking day to Khino (organize a popular guided hike up to khino). This hike should be guided. A popular picnic can be organized in Khino. The objective would be to invite families to participate with the objective of disseminating the values of the protected area.</p> <p>6. Organization of activities related to bird-watching during the celebration of the Batumi Birdwatching Festival</p> <p>The events should be used to promote environmental education among visitors. Some of these events should be planned together with Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks. These events should be promoted in the website and social network profiles.</p>			
<p>Activities included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elaboration on an annual program of events to be developed in and around Kintrishi Protected Areas (should be done a year in advance for budgeting purposes). • Establish cooperation agreements with potential partners (NGOS, local communities, etc.) and with Mtirala and Machakhela National Parks. • Define an operational Plan for organizing and implementing the event. • Definition and implementation of promotional activities. • Monitoring and reporting. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increase visibility of Kintrishi Protected Areas		
AGENTS INVOLVED	Local Communities Kobuleti Municipality NGO's Associations Tourism private sector		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2020, at least 3 events have been celebrated.		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2020 (Annual)	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	3.000 Gel/year		

Action	Design and produce new promotional material that includes new products, routes	5.1.4
<p>Justification</p> <p>In order to promote and market the trails and activities, as well as the Protected Area and its values, new and attractive promotional material has to be produced. Information brochures, short tourist guide, maps, leaflets should be designed, printed and distributed among local tour operators and other tourism providers.</p>		

Description <p>The promotional material will help visitors to understand the value of the protected areas, and also inform them about the activities that can be done within its boundaries. These materials should provide detailed information and description of the Protected Area aimed for local and international visitors.</p> <p>The promotional material should emphasise on the fragile nature of the areas visited and contain advice to future visitors. Important materials that should be produced are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Map of the Park, marking the trails and other important areas. - Brochures, with general information about the area, activities that can be done, main species to be spotted, regulations of the area, etc. - Souvenirs, producing some type of souvenirs (calendars, pencils, etc.) to be distribute among stakeholders can contribute to increase awareness about the protected areas. 			
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define the type and contents of promotional materials to be produced • Design and print attractive materials • Distribute some of the materials among collaborators, stakeholders, etc. 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	<p>Increase the level of awareness of the Kintrishi Protected Areas.</p> <p>Increase the demand of existing activities.</p>		
AGENTS INVOLVED	<p>APA DTR TTOO Tourism providers Transportation services (bus/taxi/airport/train)</p>		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	<p>✓ By 2018, new and attractive brochures have been published.</p> <p>✓ By 2017, maps of the area are available for visitors.</p>		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2018	PRIORITY	<p>HIGH <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>MEDIUM X</p> <p>LOW <input type="checkbox"/></p>
BUDGET	9.000 Gel		

Action	Organize fam-trips with local and national tour operators to promote new activities developed	5.1.5
Justification <p>The mountainous Ajara has a great potential for tourism development and especially interesting is Kintrishi Protected Areas. Over the last years the marketing efforts to promote the Park and its activities have been very limited. In order to increase its visibility at national and international level familiarization trips (famtrip) are needed. These trips can be organized with press specialized in travel articles and tour operators. These actions will help the Protected Area to be included in the tourism offer of some of these operators and also to be present in some important publications or tv shows.</p>		
Description <p>Based on statistics by Ajara Tourism and Resorts Department, most arrivals in Ajara are organized from Turkey, Azerbaijan, Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Poland, etc.</p>		

<p>TOs and journalists from most frequently visited countries (especially for Turkish TOs) should be invited to introduce product, service providers.</p> <p>Batumi is main destination after (Tbilisi) for MICE tourism in Georgia. Post conference tours and special offers can be prepared for corporate clients in order to increase interest toward KPA and invite TV Media. DTR organizes regular famtrip for journalist, and it should provide support to KPA in order to organize some of these events also in KPA.</p>			
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with TOs/GITOA to hear tourism demands • Prepare Special offer for Fam trips 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increase interest toward the KPA		
AGENTS INVOLVED	GITOA Georgian Tourism Association APA Kobuleti Municipality KPA		
COORDINATOR	DTR		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2019, at least two fam trips have been organized.		
EXECUTION TIME	2018-2019	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	15.000 Gel		

Action	Organize fam-trips with hotels	5.1.6
Justification <p>The main stakeholders of KPA are hotels in Kobuleti. They are interested to establish additional services for clients, especially when there is non-swimming weather. Hotels provide transportation and guide service but they are now aware of KPA recreational resources.</p>		
Description <p>Selling virtual product without knowledge and experience is quite difficult in tourism. It is recommended to invite hotel representatives (receptionists, guest relations and managers) and introduce KPA with its facilities and infrastructure.</p> <p>The Protected Area has started to share some newly produced brochures among some providers, however it is important to bring close these providers to experience first-hand the beauty of the area.</p> <p>DTR can also contribute to design a program for these providers and actively cooperate to organize this action.</p>		

Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare FAM trip program • Promo material for distribution at hotels • Establish cooperation agreement with stakeholders 			
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increased number of visitors		
AGENTS INVOLVED	Hotels and other accommodation providers KPA Kobuleti Municipality Local communities		
COORDINATOR	DTR		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2018 at least two fam trips have been organized for hotels in the Region.		
EXECUTION TIME	2017- 2018	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	4.000 Gel		

OBJECTIVE 5.2. Information related to Kintrishi Protected Areas is easy accessible through new technologies.

Action	Create a visitor friendly tourism website for Kintrishi Protected Areas optimized for search engines	5.2.1
Justification <p>Websites are essential to promote any tourism destination or protected area. Travel consumers have become increasingly demanding of tourism websites and social media platforms in terms of content that is highly relevant to their needs. Almost 40% of visitors to Ajara PA's have organized their visit with information available in the internet. Therefore, adding more resources to the internet will facilitate potential visitors to find all relevant information to better organize the trip.</p> <p>Currently, most of the information related to Ajara PA's is hosted in APA website. This website is not user-friendly, especially for promotional purposes. The website publishes relevant information about the areas but this information is not related to the "support zone", areas: no information on how to get there, means of transportation available, etc.</p>		
Description <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas should have a website from which not only the environmental values of the PA can be promoted but also to offer detailed information about the activities in the Park, especial events, provide information about accommodation provided (including local guest houses), etc.</p> <p>Some key elements of the website:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Timely written and updated content (available in the language of target audiences) 2) Include quality and positive images of the destination (visual designed) 3) User-friendly 4) Appealing to target markets 		

5) Readable on multiple devices (desktop and mobile)

This website should be integrated to social network profiles to encourage an active participation with users. PA's staff should be trained to update regularly new content to the website.

Google analytics should be used to measure website traffic. It would be useful to create an email list or newsletter to informed list members about Ajara PA's news. Another tool for positioning is the use of keywords; this is an important element in online marketing success. It would be important to develop a list of around 120 words that will be used throughout the site (including words of interest to the different target markets).

In addition, the DTR website: www.gobatumi.ge is a good example of destination website. The site has already important information available about the region and Ajara PA's. This information should be updated regularly and enriched with potential new trails and products developed in the PA's.

Currently, the website has available brochures and maps to download, and this opportunity should be used for the promotion of brochures with information of Ajara PA's.

Strengthen the collaboration between DTR and Ajara PA's around this marketing strategy can enhance the image of the destination, and, in the other hand can help to reduce costs for content creation and advertising.

Activities included:

- Definition of requirements of websites.
- Develop the websites (website developer)
- Update regularly the websites.
- Monitoring and reporting about website use.

EXPECTED RESULTS	Increase online visibility of Kintrishi Protected Areas		
AGENTS INVOLVED	APA GNTA DTR		
COORDINATOR	KPA		
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2019, KPA website is published		
EXECUTION TIME	2017-2018	PRIORITY	HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM..X LOW <input type="checkbox"/>
BUDGET	3.500 Gel		

Action	Create downloadable multimedia trails and include detailed information on Ajara Protected Areas in the Gobatumi app	5.2.2
Justification <p>Hiking and trekking are one of the most popular activities in Ajara PA’s, it is a great opportunity for enjoying the beauty of the PA’s.</p> <p>Detailed information on trails are very useful for those adventures willing to engage in those activities. The provision of interactive maps is an added value for those taking self-guided hikes.</p>		
Description <p>Maps are a valuable tool for hikers, however giving the possibility of downloading the map and use it in the smartphone helps to reduce the use of paper and printing costs; and it is an added value for hikers. The maps should be ready for download in the websites of the PA’s, and visitors should be informed about this possibility.</p> <p>An additional option is to develop a mobile app or to use the Gobatumi app to download relevant information about Ajara PA’s, so visitors can use this app for visiting the area (main sightseeing, useful information, what to do in Ajara PA’s, etc.</p> <p>National Geographic has developed an app for the America’s most visited national parks that include photo gallery, visitor information, and maps to enhance visitors’ experience. The app also includes information on accommodation options, etc.</p> <p>The app should be free to download, and available for Android, IOs and Windows Phone</p>		
Activities involved <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Track needed trail information.• Develop an official mobile application for different mobile operating systems that will allow visitors to explore existing trails• Promotional activities.• Monitor and reporting.		
EXPECTED RESULTS	Information of trails can be downloaded from Kintrishi Website/App Gobatumi app offers detailed information on Kintrishi’s trails.	
AGENTS INVOLVED	KPA APA DTR	
COORDINATOR	DTR	
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2019, all trails available in the Park can be downloaded through the website or app	
EXECUTION TIME	2019	<div>PRIORITY<div>HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM <input type="checkbox"/> LOW X</div></div>
BUDGET	3.000 Gel	

Action	Define and implement a social media strategy using different channels.	5.2.3
Justification <p>The use of social networks as promotion channels is known as social marketing. Social media plays a key role in every aspect of the travel and tourism industry. During their holiday, a great percentage of travellers’ upload comments and photos on social media outlets using smart phones.</p> <p>Social media are a new source of information for travellers. Tourists made their decisions on comments from other fellow travellers. Creating a social media strategy can help to better position Kintrishi Protected Areas in the domestic and international market. The opinions of other travellers are highly valued and the active participation of visitors in the Kintrishi Protected Areas social media profiles should be encouraged.</p>		
Description <p>Kintrishi Protected Areas counts already with Facebook profile. Additional profiles should be created in other social media channels such as Flickr, Instagram or YouTube. Visitors should be encouraged to upload pictures and videos to these profiles creating a community of followers. The presence in the social media can contribute to better position the areas in the Google search.</p> <p>The social media profiles should also be used to keep followers informed about events and other important issues related to the Protected Area, therefore they have to manage them regularly.</p> <p>In addition, Kintrishi Protected Areas should review potential comments by visitors, especially those that have participated in any of the activities that will be available in the PA. This revision is especially important to identify potential bad reviews and address them, improving the areas that generate complaints from visitors.</p>		
Activities included <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Definition of the two-year social media strategy.• Implement the strategy• Monitoring and reporting.• Update the social media strategy		
EXPECTED RESULTS	Increase visibility of Kintrishi Protected Areas in online social media.	
AGENTS INVOLVED	Kintrishi Regional Advisory Council	
COORDINATOR	KPA	
ASSESSMENT INDICATORS	✓ By 2017, a two- year Social Media Strategy is elaborated	
EXECUTION TIME	2017/2020	PRIORITY <div>HIGH <input type="checkbox"/> MEDIUM X LOW <input type="checkbox"/></div>
BUDGET	1.200 Gel/year	

9. SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

STRATEGIC LINE 1: MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE										
Objective 1.1. The Regional Advisory Council (RAC) is a mechanism to coordinate tourism development in Ajara Protected Areas by 2017.										
Code	Action	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.1.1	Assist and actively participate in the development of multistakeholder platform at regional level – Regional Advisory Council	Department Tourism and Resorts of Ajara AR (DTR)	Ajara Environmental Department Municipalities of Ajara Ajara PA's administrations/APA Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, etc.) Local Communities NGOs	300 Gel/year	HIGH					
1.1.2	Establish collaboration alliances with potential partners	KPA	DTR Kobuleti Municipality Shota Rustaveli University Tourism Private Sector (TTOO/TA, hotels, restaurants, transport, etc.) Tourism associations Local Communities NGOs Local Communities NGOs	450 Gel/year	MEDIUM					
Objective 1.2. A monitoring and evaluation system to identify visitor effects on natural and local communities is defined and implemented by end of 2019.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
1.2.1	Develop a study on the carrying capacity visitor management in Kintrishi Protected Areas	KPA	APA DTR	19.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
1.2.2	Elaborate and implement a Visitor Impact Monitoring System	KPA	APA KPA Staff	6.500 Gel	MEDIUM					
1.2.3	Elaborate and conduct a visitor satisfaction survey	APA	DTR KPA Tourism service providers (hotels, guesthouses, etc.)	1.100 Gel	MEDIUM					

STRATEGIC LINE 2: CAPACITY BUILDING										
Objective 2.1. Build capacities and skills of PA's staff in sustainable tourism, environmental issues and business planning										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
2.1.1	Design and implement a training programme for PA's staff.	APA	KPA Kobuleti Vocational Education Training Centre NGOs Kobuleti Municipality Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University	12.000 Gel	HIGH					
2.1.2	Organize study tours for rangers/PA's staff	APA	KPA APA	18.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objective 2.2. Increase local communities' knowledge about PA's environmental values and tourism related issues.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
2.2.1	Design and implement a training program for local communities.	APA	NGOs Kobuleti Municipality Local communities DTR Shota Rustaveli University Kobuleti Vocational Education Training Centre KPA	12.000 Gel	HIGH					
2.2.2	Organize study tours for community members	APA	NGO KPA Local communities DTR	18.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
2.2.3	Design a training programme about organic agriculture and product packaging for local farmers /producers	Kobuleti municipality	Local communities NGOs	5.500 Gel	MEDIUM					

STRATEGIC LINE 3: LOCAL COMMUNITIES DEVELOPMENT										
Objective 3.1. Tourism service providers associated to Kintrishi Protected Areas comply with APA/DTR recognized standards by 2020.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
3.1.1	Assess quality service level of local providers of accommodation and catering facilities	APA	DTR GNTA KPA SPPA/ELKANA TTOO	3.800 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objective 3.2. At least, three new local business are developed and running by year 2020.										
3.2.1	Assess and support new potential business in the communities of the support zone	Kintrishi Protected Areas Friends Association (KFA)	KPA KFA DTR APA NGOs	35.000 Gel	HIGH					
Objective 3.3. Cultural and traditional assets are investigated, enhanced and promoted by the Park administration by 2019.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
3.3.1	Conduct scientific research to identify main cultural assets in KPA and its support zone	Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports	DTR NGOs KPA Kobuleti Municipality State Universities	45.000 Gel	LOW					
STRATEGIC LINE 4: INFRASTRUCTURES AND SERVICES DEVELOPMENT										
Objective 4.1. By 2017 accessibility to Kintrishi Protected Areas has improved.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.1.1	Sign an agreement with Road Department to improve the access road to Kintrishi Protected Areas.	Kobuleti municipality	DTR Department of Environment Kobuleti municipality Department of Road and Rehabilitation of the Government of Ajara	350 Gel (meetings)	HIGH					
4.1.2	Design and install road directional signs	KPA	APA Road and Rehabilitation Department Kobuleti Municipality DTR	4.000 Gel	HIGH					
4.1.3	Identify a suitable area for car parking	Kobuleti municipality	DTR APA Transportation providers	8.200 Gel	LOW					

Objetivo 4.2. Existing infrastructures are improved, and attract and increasing number of visitors by 2018.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.2.1	Design and build new infrastructures around the Visitor Shelter	KPA	APA/DTR International Donors Ministry of Culture NGOs	170.000 Gel	HIGH					
4.2.2	Design and implement new facilities to improve the existing trails	KPA	DTR Local villages Tour operators	65.000 Gel	HIGH					
Objective 4.3. New and sustainable tourism infrastructures and services that allow visitors to explore and enjoy Kintrishi Protected Areas are developed by 2019.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.3.1	Design and develop a new educational trail	KPA	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources Protection International Donors Regional Advisory Council KFA /APA/ DTR	3.500.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
4.3.2	Design and implement thematic tours in Kintrishi Protected Areas	KPA	DTR Local communities Tourism providers	12.500 Gel	MEDIUM					
4.3.3	Develop a tourism product around bird-watching	KPA	APA DTR Local communities NGOs	6.500 Gel	LOW					
4.3.4	Develop complementary water-based activities	KPA	APA DTR Private investors Local communities	5.500 Gel	LOW					
4.3.5	Plan and develop new accommodation options inside the Protected Area	KPA	APA DTR Regional Advisory Council KFA	400.000 Gel	LOW					
Objective 4.4. A new trail that allows visitors to visit the 3 Ajara Protected Areas is fully operational by 2019.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.4.1	Develop a trail that joins Kintrishi Protected Areas and Mtirala National Park.	APA	Municipality Local communities DTR APA Mtirala National Park Kintrishi Protected Areas	12.500 Gel	HIGH					


Objective 4.5. By 2020 a comprehensive environmental educational programme aimed at locals and visitors is functioning.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
4.5.1	Design and implement an environmental education and interpretation program for local and visitors	KPA	APA / DTR Shota Rustaveli University Environmental NGOs (SaBuKo, etc.)	5.500 Gel	MEDIUM					
4.5.2	Design and implement a volunteer program in coordination with universities and regional education centers.	KPA	Local communities Kobuleti Municipality APA Universities	6.000 Gel/year	LOW					
STRATEGIC LINE 5: MARKETING AND PROMOTION										
Objective 5.1. Kintrishi Protected Areas will be known at national and international level by 2020										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
5.1.1	Elaborate an annual Operational Marketing Plan	APA/KPA	Kintrishi Advisory Council	17.000 Gel	HIGH					
5.1.2	Participate in the creation of the Ajara Protected areas membership card.	APA/KPA	Tourism service providers	1.500 Gel	HIGH					
5.1.3	Organize a calendar of events to increase visibility of the Protected Areas	KPA	Local Communities Kobuleti Municipality NGO's /Associations Tourism private sector	3.000 Gel/year	MEDIUM					
5.1.4	Design and produce new promotional material that includes new products, routes	KPA	APA /DTR/TTOO Tourism providers Transportation services (bus/taxi/airport/train)	9.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
5.1.5	Organize fam-trips with local and national tour operators to promote new activities developed	DTR	GITOA /Georgian Tourism Association APA /Kobuleti Municipality KPA	15.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
5.1.6	Organize fam-trips with hotels	DTR	Hotels and other accommodation providers KPA/Kobuleti Municipality Local communities	4.000 Gel	MEDIUM					
Objective 5.2. Information related to Kintrishi Protected Areas is easy accessible through new technologies.										
Code	Actions	Coordinator	Agents involved	Estimated Budget	Priority	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
5.2.1	Create a visitor friendly tourism website for Kintrishi Protected Areas optimized for search engines	KPA	APA/ GNTA DTR	3.500 Gel	MEDIUM					
5.2.2	Create downloadable multimedia trails and include detailed information on Ajara Protected Areas in the Gobatumi app	DTR	Ajara PA's administration APA DTR	3.000 Gel	LOW					
5.2.3	Define and implement a social media strategy using different channels	KPA	Kintrishi Regional Advisory Council	1.200 Gel	MEDIUM					




10. ANNEXES

ANNEX 1: VISITORS QUESTIONNAIRE

ANNEX 2: EXAMPLES OF HOW TO PREPARE A THEMATIC TOUR AND AN EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY FOR FAMILIES

EXAMPLE THEMATIC TOUR	TREES OF THE PROTECTED AREA		
Implementation	Mtirala National Park		X
	Kintrishi Protected Areas		X
	Machakhela National Park		X
Theme/Topic to be developed	The trees and other interesting vegetation in the Protected Area		
Public Objective	General Public/families		
Duration of the activity	1' 20"	Maximum number of participants	15
TYPE OF ACTIVITY	Educational		
	Interpretive		X
	Promotion of the values of the NP/PA		X
OBJECTIVES			
Learn about the different forms of the trees and the leaves. Learn some curiosities about how trees adapt to the environment. Learn about the cultural relation about trees and people (traditional uses of the trees, etc.) Estimate the use of senses (smell, sight and touch) in the process of learning about the values of the protected area.			
DESCRIPTION			
Conduct a thematic tour of about 4/5 km, with several stops in which a brief explanation is made. It is important to encourage visitor to use their senses: observe, touch, smell and hear nature and vegetation.			
Preparation of the activity			
The guide/visitor specialist should identify the most suitable places to conduct this activity and the relevant stops (around 4/5). The stops should be located where a particular/endemic species is located, or other relevant areas that can relate the area with the topics to be explained.			
Development			
*Guide Presentation - Prepare a affective introduction *Presentation of the activity (the guide should explain visitors the objective of the trail, how long it will take, and main stops during the tour) *The tour should be around 5/6 km long, along which visitors will learn about main species of the Park, their characteristics, etc. * The guide should be enthusiastic, use simple language, without neglecting the technical level, create expectations between the established stops, and attend all questions visitors might have.			
Human resources/materials			
A guide/expert and materials to support the activity. It is recommended that the guide/expert has knowledge on Environmental interpretation. The materials to support the activity could be images showing how the trees look like in the different seasons, products that have been elaborated in the past with the wood, aromatic leaves, etc.			
Adaptaci3ns			
Content of the tour should be adjusted to general public and children.			
Avaliaci3n			
The activity should be evaluated. A evaluation questionnaire should be distributed among participants after the workshop. The evaluation questionnaire should be analysed by the Visitor Specialist.			

Protected Areas work as natural pharmacies			EXAMPLE 01
Implementation	Mtirala National Park	X	
	Kintrishi Protected Areas	X	
	Machakhela National Park	X	
Theme/Topic to be developed	Medicinal Plants of the National Park		
Public Objective	Children above 15 years old		
Duration of the activity	1' 15"	Max. Number of participants	20
TYPE OF ACTIVITY	Educational		X
	Interpretive		
	Promotion of the values of the NP		X
OBJECTIVES			
* Discover some of the medicinal plants of the National Park, traditional uses and their medicinal properties. * Increase awareness about the richness of Protected Areas.			
DESCRIPTION			
Preparation of natural cosmetics: a stick against mosquito bites, a balsam against headache, a lip balm using medicinal plants (for instance: rosmmary, lavender, etc). Note: the plants should be adjusted to what it is available locally			
Development			
*Presentation of the expert and the activity. *Brief explanation (a ppt. presentation can be used) about the importance of the National Park and its values. * Description and explanation of the plants that are going to be used for the elaboration of the cosmetics and their medicinal properties. * The guide leads the activity elaborating each of the proposed cosmetics, the way of preparation is quite easy and involves: heat the ecological wax, mix the the oil and essences of the medicinal plant. * After the elaboration, the containers are identified with the stickers. * Conclusions and evaluation			
Human resources/materials			
The activity shall be conducted by a guide/natural resources expert (also a local expert could be invited) The needed materials for the preparation of the cosmetics are: electrical stove, saucepan, ecological wax, oils macerated with medicinal plants, oil esences, glass/plastic containers, sticks. <i>Note: This activity can be substituted by the elaboration of bee wax figures or other products related to beekeeping/honey, elaboration of ecological soaps, etc.</i>			
Recommendations			
*The plants to be used should be collected from gardens/cultivated plants (DO NOT COLLECT WILD plants) * Avoid rooting out the plant. *Collect the plant when it is mature in order to ensure that the active ingredients are already developed.			
Evaluation			
The activity should be evaluated. A evaluation questionnaire should be distributed among partipants after the workshop. The evaluation questionnaire should be analysed by the Visitor Specialist.			
PICTURES			
			

ELABORATION OF A NEST BOX			EXAMPLE 02
Implementation	Mtirala National Park	X	
	Kintrishi Protected Areas	X	
	Machakhela National Park		
Theme/Topic to be developed	Birds in the Protected Area		
Public Objective	Families with children + 7 years old		
Duration of the activity	1' 30"	Max. Number of participants	15
TYPE OF ACTIVITY	Educational		X
	Interpretive		
	Promotion of the values of the NP		X
OBJECTIVES			
* Discover some of the birds living in the Protected Area * Increase awareness about the richness/ecological values of Ajara Protected Areas.			
DESCRIPTION			
Children will learn how to build a nest box. Bird nest box provide a safe area for chicks against their predators and harsh weather. Children can take the nest box home and then paint it and decorate it. <i>Note: Similar activities can be: preparation of traditional baskets (with a local expert), elaboration of pots for flowers, etc.</i>			
Development			
*Presentation of the expert and the activity. *Brief explanation (a ppt. presentation can be used) about the importance of the National Park and its values (especially birds). * Description and explanation on the importance of the bird nest box * The guide leads the activity elaborating the nest box. * Conclusions and evaluation			
Human resources/materials			
The activity shall be conducted by a ranger or other appointed staff. The needed materials for the preparation of the nest box are: wood pieces, ecological glue.			
Safety issues			
The activity is safe for children: they will assemble/join the pieces that have been previously cut to prevent them to handling sharp objects.			
Evaluation			
The activity should be evaluated. A evaluation questionnaire should be distributed among participants after the workshop. The evaluation questionnaire should be analysed by the Visitor Specialist.			
PICTURES			
<div></div> <div></div> <div></div>			

ANNEX 3: MAPS

ANNEX 4: MINUTES OF MEETING – STRATEGY VALIDATION WORKSHOP

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