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THE IMPORTANCE OF GEORGIA'S RESORT AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES AND GEOGRAPHICAL CLASSIFICATION OF RESORTS

The article discusses the geographical features and classification of Georgia's resort and recreational resources. Recreation and recreational farming are related to the geographical environment, its natural characteristics and landscape diversity, and the geographical features of farming and social infrastructure.

The field of study of recreational geography includes those objects that consist of natural and social elements. Due to this, it has developed on the border of separate directions of both natural and social geography, medical geography and geography.

Geographical research of resorts, as well as recreational facilities, can be carried out using both geographical analysis and synthesis, as well as comparative, expeditionary, geoinformatics, sociological, and other methods.

For geographical research of resorts and resort economy, it is desirable to study such issues as:

- The impact of the natural environment or landscape on human health;
- Landscape structure and functions;
- Research on the recreational (resort) and aesthetic value of the landscape;
- Classification of resorts according to location, landscapes, purpose (treatment of diseases), mineral or thermal waters, climate (dryness index, sunlight, temperature amplitude, pressure, humidity, snow cover), natural resource potential (vegetation, reservoirs, fauna, natural monuments, relief, etc.), usage traditions (i.e. history), folk beliefs (attitude of the local population to medicine), uniqueness, historical-cultural (historical monuments, cultural objects, etc.) and transport (accessibility, Internet, etc.) infrastructure, and in general - natural and socio-economic factors;

A complex assessment of recreational potential involves the study of dozens of issues and objects, which is a rather difficult scientific and practical task. There are no generally accepted criteria for it, which makes it difficult to make a complex assessment of natural, historical-cultural, or socio-economic factors.

Georgia is distinguished throughout the world, and especially in the Caucasus, by its recreational resources. There are more than 100 resorts and resort areas in Georgia. About 2 thousand mineral springs have been identified and studied, most of which are distinguished by their high balneological purpose. Georgia has all types of resorts known worldwide. The main ones are sea, mountain, and climatic-balneological resorts.

The article discusses the geographical, historical-cultural, recreational and infrastructural features of 55 Georgian resorts. A total of 29 parameters were considered, 25 of which are not found in the scientific literature related to Georgian resortology.

Keywords: *recreation, Georgia, resort, geography, factor, assessment, classification.*

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Introduction

Recreation and recreational farming are closely linked to the geographical environment. Its potential is closely linked to the natural characteristics and landscape diversity of the territory, the geographical features of farming and social infrastructure. **Active research** into the geographic features of recreational farming and resources dates back several decades. Nevertheless, due to the diversity of the issue, it is still common in scientific or popular science literature to find mutually exclusive or opposing views on its definition. Moreover, the relevant direction is practically not represented among the commissions of the International Geographical Union, except for the Commission on Tourism, Leisure and Global Change (IGU commission of Geography of Tourism, leisure and Global Change). The same can be said about one of the main directions of recreational geography - the geographical study of resort management. There are almost no studies in this regard, which is also related to the specificity and diversity of the issue.

Specialists in the field of public geography believe that the main subject of recreational geography research is recreational territorial systems, which consist of several interconnected subsystems. These include: natural and cultural objects, relevant infrastructure, service personnel, and recreational users (Tsarfis, 1979). It is clear that in the case of presenting only such types of recreational resources as cultural, historical, educational, entertainment or sports facilities, recreational geography is considered as part of social geography. If we connect recreational-territorial systems with resorts, here the natural and social subsystems are characterized by almost equal functions. In this case, recreational geography is a more integrative (social-natural science) geographical direction than social-geographical. The affiliation of recreational geography to integrative geography becomes even more evident if we consider cultural and historical landscapes (Erikstad, Uttakleiv, Halvorsen, 2015, Deng, Li, *etc.*, 2020, Elizbarashvili, Meladze, *etc.*, 2022, Groot, Born, 2003, Ramos, Silva, 2015, Franch-Pardo, Brian, *etc.*, 2017) or protected areas as recreational subsystems.

Recreation is one of the most important areas of public activity and a determining factor in socio-economic efficiency. It is closely related to the geographical environment, since its features are territorially different. Such a situation is associated with its versatility - the spatial features of the natural environment and natural resources, population and economy, social and transport infrastructure. The field of study of recreational geography includes those objects that consist of natural and social elements. Due to this, it has developed on the border of both natural and social geography, medical geography and separate directions of geography.

In the geographical literature, recreational economy and system are considered a social phenomenon (Andreas Skriver Hansen, 2021, Mitchell, Smith, 1985, Luís Nobre Pereira, Thomas Panagopoulos, 2022), because in this regard, human activity is social in nature and is related to the restoration of his energy (practically -

health).

Research methods

Recreational geography uses research methods (comparative, field, historical, cartographic, statistical, modeling, sociological survey, *etc.*) that are known in geography. Currently, the assessment of the environmental impact of recreational systems, forecasting of territorial development, and recreational planning are considered interesting and promising areas (Elizbarashvili, 2024). Geographical research of resorts, as well as recreational facilities, can be carried out using both geographical analysis and synthesis, as well as comparative, expeditionary, geoinformatics, sociological, and other methods.

For geographical research of resorts and resort economy, it is desirable to study such issues as:

- The impact of the natural environment or landscape on human health;
- Study of landscape structure and functions (Elizbarashvili, Meladze, *etc.*, 2022, Ramos, Silva, 2015, Franch-Pardo, Brian, *etc.*, 2017, Tongway, Hindley, 2009, Mitz, Kremer, Larondelle, Justin, 2021);
- Research on the recreational (resort) and aesthetic value of the landscape;
- Classification of resorts according to location, landscapes, purpose (treatment of diseases), mineral or thermal waters, climate (dryness index, sunlight, temperature amplitude, pressure, humidity, snow cover), natural resource potential (vegetation, reservoirs, fauna, natural monuments, relief, *etc.*), usage traditions (*i.e.* history), folk beliefs (attitude of the local population to medicine), uniqueness, historical-cultural (historical monuments, cultural objects, *etc.*) and transport (accessibility, Internet, *etc.*) infrastructure, and in general - natural and socio-economic factors;
- Regionalization of the resort economy (to identify regions in which resorts are concentrated not only in terms of quantity, but also in terms of uniqueness and specialness) and zoning (through the allocation of landscape and recreational units);
- Spatial and landscape planning of resorts.

Results

1. Some current issues in assessing the recreational potential and attractiveness of the territory

The assessment of the recreational attractiveness and capacity of a territory is related to the study of several issues. Among them, the following are important: a comprehensive assessment of recreational potential (resources), the features of their use, the ecological state of the natural environment (natural landscape), and the material and socio-economic capabilities (potential) of the recreational facility.

A complex assessment of recreational potential involves the study of dozens of issues and objects, which is a rather difficult scientific and practical task. There are no generally accepted criteria for it, which makes it difficult to assess complex natural, historical-cultural, or socio-economic factors. This is especially true for a

recreational facility or place of local importance, which cannot be said for a country or a large region. The possibilities of using the recreational potential of a country are to some extent indicated by the dynamics of the number of vacationers and budget revenues, which are related to the biological and landscape, historical and cultural diversity of the country, the size of the country, food and folk craft traditions, ethnogeographic features, the duration of the recreational period, diversity, etc. Such characteristics are limited in the case of a local recreational area or resort, although some of them (especially natural diversity) can be considered in high detail.

The recreational attractiveness of the territory is also related to the standard of living of the local population, qualified personnel, the modern level and directions of agricultural development, the ratio of vacationers to the local population, the availability of infrastructure and transport communications. Considering such characteristics, the recreational potential of Georgia, especially resort agriculture, has not been practically studied.

Recreational attractiveness is related to the recreational capacity of the territory and requires its consideration. Consideration of recreational capacity is directly related to environmental protection problems, which often becomes a prerequisite for the degradation of the natural environment. There are no generally accepted criteria for recreational capacity, which is due to the diversity of the natural environment. Such capacity varies depending on forested and non-forested, mountainous and plain, water bodies and rivers, recreational activities and goals, etc.

Recreational geography is primarily a part of geographical sciences, which is why it has the closest and most complementary connections with several main directions of geography. Recreation is a part of agriculture for economic geography, an object of assessment and research of natural resources and elements (water, climate, vegetation, landscapes, relief) for physical geography, an area of research into the natural environment and human ecology for medical geography, and an area of study of the recreational potential of regions and recreational flows for geography. Recreational geography is also closely related to regional planning (including landscape planning) and urban planning, which is related to the recreational needs of the population and sustainable ecological development.

The main goal of its research is also related to the objects of recreational geography. It is the study of those spatio-temporal regularities that are related to the geographical features of the formation, dynamics, development, diversity, functioning, territorial organization and planning effectiveness of recreational objects and territorial systems. The importance of territorial (landscape) planning in recreational geography has not been studied either at the theoretical or practical level.

One of the components and visible parts of the territorial development of recreational systems are resorts. Their importance in recreational economy is immeasurable. Georgia is rich in such recreational resources, the complex study and planning of which is a pressing task of the Georgian Geographical School.

From the recreational assessment of environmental elements, special attention is paid (Voprosi, 2014) to

relief, vegetation, water bodies, and climatic phenomena.

From the **relief** assessment, the division of the territory (alternating between mountains and plains), relative heights, diversity of relief forms (glacial, karst, volcanic, peak, nival), etc. have a special recreational purpose. The large variation in relative heights creates effective landscapes, which is important for the aesthetics of the landscape. In this case, the optimal selection of viewpoints and exposure (in terms of the illumination of the territory) is essential for a recreational object, which is possible using GIS methods.

When assessing **vegetation**, special importance is attached to its species composition, medicinal properties, layering, age, etc. It is known that coniferous, mixed, polydominant and multi-layered forests, in the formation of which many species or evergreen elements participate, are distinguished by their effectiveness.

When assessing **water bodies**, it is advisable to pay special attention to their spatial (lakes, reservoirs, swamps) and linear (rivers) forms and recreational use possibilities. Large-scale objects that create effective landscapes have a significant advantage. In this case, both the area of the reservoir and the transparency, salinity or temperature of the water are important. The effectiveness of rivers can be related to their slope (fall), the shape of the gorge (closed and open), the number of waterfalls and rapids, the volume of suspended material, the species composition of the living world, etc.

Atmospheric events cannot be predicted in advance, although the frequency and periodicity of events characteristic of a particular place are known. Observing them can become one of the forms of recreation. It is also worth noting the transparency of the atmospheric air, which is determined by the amount of vapor and vegetation. At night, observing the transparent sky leaves a unique impression.

When evaluating **resorts**, general characteristics such as geographical accessibility (location and transport accessibility), sustainability (seasonal durability), capacity (facilities or usable space), comfort (based on climatic conditions), natural diversity, attractiveness (presence of effective medical and landscape resources), etc. can be used. Such characteristics differ in the case of assessing the natural environment of marine, mountain and climatic-balneological resorts (for example, the Abastumani resort).

2. Potential and development prospects of Georgia's resort and recreational economy

Georgia is known for its recreational resources worldwide, and especially in the Caucasus. It is home to more than 100 resorts (55) and health resorts (Human, 2021). About 2,000 mineral springs have been identified and studied in Georgia, most of which are distinguished by their high balneological value. It is also worth noting three important factors in the development of resort economy and health tourism in Georgia:

1. The main resorts are located in a comfortable relief and climatic zone, i.e. up to 1,500 meters above sea level;
2. The country's territory is characterized by a high density of resorts and recreational facilities;
3. The high health-improving potential of Georgian resorts, which is associated with the effective treat-

ment of cardiological, neurological, gastroenterological, skin, bone and joint diseases, and other diseases.

In Georgia, there are such functional types of settlements as a resort town, a resort town, or a resort village.

Georgia has all the types of resorts known in the world. The main ones are sea, mountain, and climatic-balneological resorts.

3. Classification of Georgian resorts

The paper discusses the geographical, historical-cultural, recreational and infrastructural features of 55 resorts in Georgia. The resorts were classified according to the following characteristics:

1. Geographical features

- ✓ Location
- ✓ Relief
- ✓ Geological structure
- ✓ Climate
- ✓ Waters
- ✓ Vegetation
- ✓ Landscapes

2. Recreational values

- ✓ Natural Monuments
- ✓ Protected Areas

3. According to historical and cultural values

- ✓ Historical and cultural monuments

4. By infrastructure

- ✓ Distance from a large settlement (airport)

A total of 29 parameters were considered, 25 of which are not found in the scientific literature related to Georgian balneology.

Classification of Georgian resorts by geographical features

1. Location

Location (according to the altitude of the place. It was assessed according to mountainous and plain lowlands, namely: resorts up to 1000 meters above sea level, from 1000 to 2000 meters and above 2000 meters. In Georgia, 32 resorts (58%) are located up to 1000 meters above sea level, 22 resorts (40%) from 1000 to 2000 meters, and above 2000 meters - 1 (Gudauri). 15 resorts are located within the plain relief, 23 - in the hilly zone, and 17 - in mountainous relief. Thus, 70% of Georgian resorts are located in an environment favorable for the development of road infrastructure. Almost 2/3 of Georgian resorts are located in relatively comfortable, plain-lowlands, low and medium mountains.

2. Geological structure

There are 20 resorts in the sedimentary rocks area, 28 in the metamorphic rocks area, and only 7 in the igneous rocks area. Thus, 87% of Georgia's resorts are located in favorable geological environments.

3. Climate

3.1. The average summer air temperature is up to +14 0 C in 12 resorts, +15 to +22 0 C in 27 resorts, and above 23 0 C in 16 resorts. Thus, more than half of Georgia's resorts are characterized by comfortable average summer temperatures.

3.2. Positive average winter temperatures are characteristic of 19 resorts, -1-5 0 - for 26 resorts, -6 0 and less - for 10 resorts. Thus, 82% of Georgian resorts are characterized by relatively comfortable average winter

temperatures.

3.9. Precipitation in the warm (recreational) period, i.e. up to 700 mm, characterizes 25 resorts, 700–1000 mm - 16, and more than 1000 mm - 14 resorts. Thus, almost half of Georgian resorts are characterized by comfortable precipitation rates in the summer.

4. Hydrography

40 resorts have proximity to hydrological objects, or a possible recreational connection, with rivers, 2 with lakes or reservoirs (Tbilisi, Ritsa), and 13 are sea resorts.

5. Landscapes

The largest number of resorts and resort areas in Georgia (102 units in total) are located within the subtropical humid Colchian forest landscape of plains and hills. Here their number reaches 33 (32%). Among them, climatic and balneological resorts prevail. In second place is the low mountain moderately warm humid and semi-humid forest landscape (12 resorts). According to the number of resorts, the following are distinguished:

Moderately warm, semi-humid, forest and shibliak landscapes of plains and hills, moderately warm humid Colchian forest of low mountains, moderately warm humid beech and oak-hornbeam forests of medium mountains, and cold subalpine forest and meadow landscapes of high mountains. Each landscape features 7 resorts and resort areas. 5 resorts and resort areas are found in the medium-mountain moderately warm humid Colchian forest landscape.

6. Population density

Low population density (up to 100 people per square kilometer) in the surrounding areas is characteristic of 45 resorts (depending on the municipality), medium (100-150 people) - for 7 resorts, and the population density in the vicinity of 3 resorts (Batumi, Tbilisi, Tskaltubo) exceeds 150 people. The number of population (density) can be considered an essential characteristic of the development of resorts.

7. Natural monuments and protected areas

7.1. In the vicinity of 53 Georgian resorts, or within 50 kilometers, there is a natural monument (waterfalls, caves, travertines, panoramic views, etc.), in 2 resorts (Anaklia, Ujarma) such monuments are within 50-100 km. Thus, in the vicinity of the absolute majority of Georgian resorts, there is a natural monument, which enhances their recreational purpose.

7.2. Protected areas are located within 50 kilometers of 46 resorts, 50-100 kilometers from 8 resorts, and more than 100 km from 1 resort (Muashi). Thus, the vast majority of Georgian resorts have protected areas nearby, which greatly enhances their recreational potential.

8. Historical and cultural values

54 resorts stand out based on their proximity to historical and cultural monuments (up to 50 km), while 1 (Ritsa) is up to 100 km away from them.

9. Natural healing factors

Among the 102 resorts and resort areas in Georgia, 45 have a climatic profile (44%), 27 have a balneological profile (26%), 17 have a balneo-climatic profile, 12 have a climatic-balneological profile, and 2 have a natural mud treatment.

According to the resorts alone, there are 27 climatic profiles (almost half). 12 have a balneological profile, and 16 resorts have a balneo-climatic profile.

Summary and discussion

The therapeutic, health-improving and prophylactic purpose of Georgian resorts is related to a number of factors. Among them, of course, the most important are the balneological and climatic-balneological characteristics of the resort. However, geographical features such as

location, altitude, open and wide landscape, geological structure, climate comfort, type of hydrological objects, species composition of vegetation, degree of landscape transformation, proximity to historical and cultural values, etc. are of no less importance.

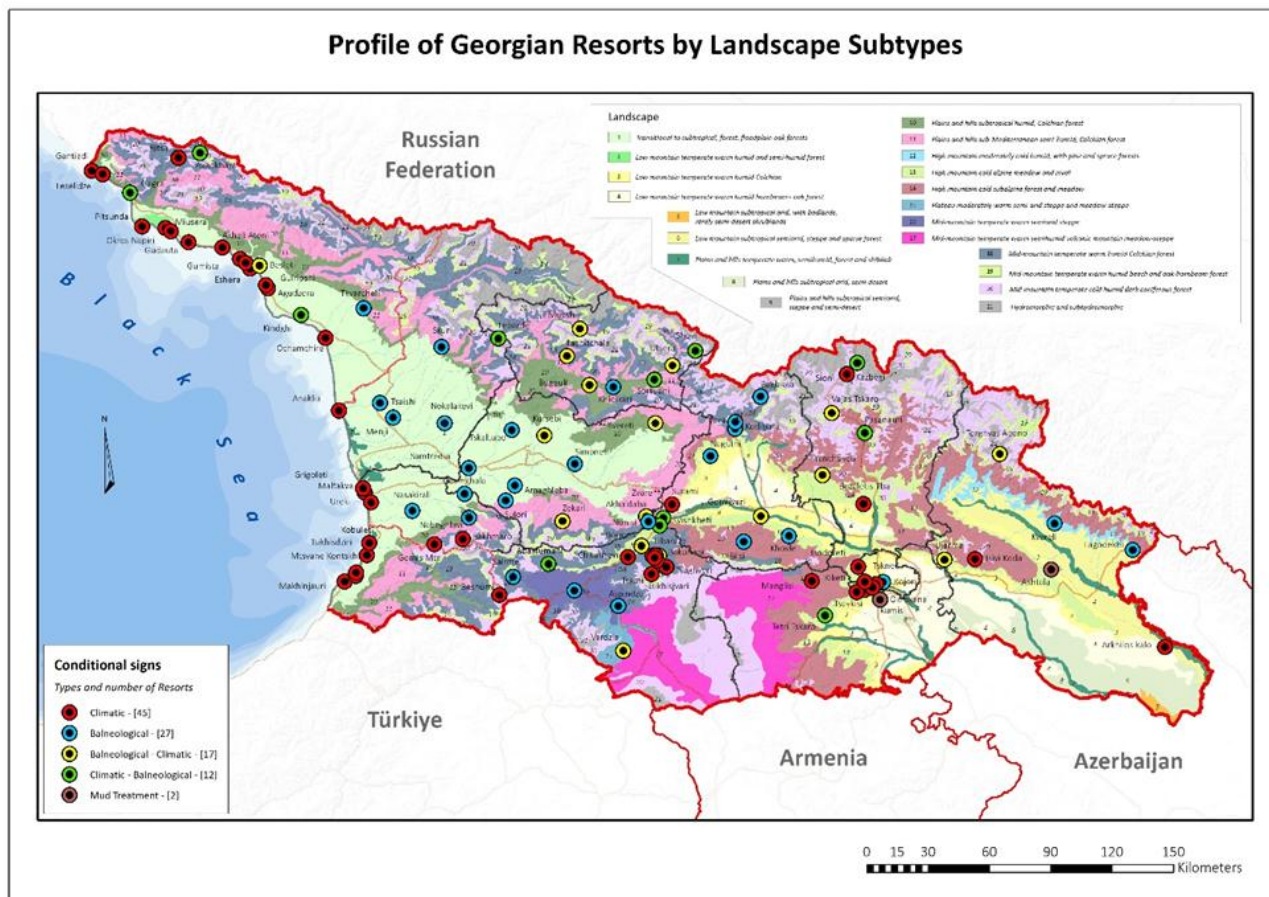


Fig.1. Georgian resorts and geography of resort areas by landscape

Georgian resorts, based on the comfort of the geographical features considered, can be grouped into three types - high, medium, and low comfort. 1. There are 25 resorts in Georgia with high comfort geographical (environmental) and recreational characteristics. The comfort index of their geographical location and environmental factors is 65%. 2. 30 (50%) resorts are distinguished by their geographical and recreational characteristics with average comfort. 3. Only one resort has a low indicator - Muash. The comfort index of its geographical environment reaches 30%.

The development and operation of resorts requires the development of environmental assessment and protection policies. As a rule, the activities of vacationers create a number of ecological problems. In order to prevent the situation, it is desirable to apply the principles of landscape architecture and landscape planning (<https://uk.indeed.com>, <https://worldlandscapearchitect.com>, Elizbarashvili, 2024, Landscape, 2009) for the sustainable development of a recreational facility. This will ensure the preservation and improvement of the recreational facility's land-

scape, and the enhancement of its recreational value. This approach is typical of recreational farming in developed countries (Voprosi Geografii, 2014).

It is clear that any recreational facility requires landscape planning, maintenance and management in order to ensure its sustainable socio-economic and ecological development.

Among the transformations of the geographical environment that may result from the operation of a recreational facility (resort).

Landscape planning (Landscape planning, 2009, Piloting, 2009) can play a significant role in solving this problem, through which both the functional zoning of the territory and its regulations will be implemented, as well as the determination of forms of use (preservation, improvement, development). Landscape planning will determine the forms and intensity of use of a recreational facility, its sustainability, the permissible scale of impact, and its compliance with the natural potential of the landscape. In the landscape planning of a recreational facility, the analysis and synthesis of its geographical characteristics is of crucial importance.

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ЗНАЧЕННЯ КУРОРТНО-РЕКРЕАЦІЙНИХ РЕСУРСІВ ГРУЗІЇ ТА ГЕОГРАФІЧНА КЛАСИФІКАЦІЯ КУРОРТІВ

У статті розглядаються географічні особливості та класифікація курортно-рекреаційних ресурсів Грузії. Рекреація та рекреаційне землеробство пов'язані з географічним середовищем, його природними характеристиками та ландшафтним різноманіттям, а також з географічними особливостями сільського господарства та соціальної інфраструктури.

Галузь вивчення рекреаційної географії включає ті об'єкти, що складаються з природних та соціальних елементів. Завдяки цьому вона розвивалася на межі окремих напрямів як природничої, так і соціальної географії, медичної географії.

Географічні дослідження курортів, а також рекреаційних об'єктів, можуть проводитися за допомогою як географічного аналізу та синтезу, так і порівняльних, експедиційних, геоінформаційних, соціологічних та інших методів.

Для географічних досліджень курортів та курортного господарства бажано вивчати такі питання, як:

- вплив природного середовища або ландшафту на здоров'я людини;
- структура та функції ландшафту;
- дослідження рекреаційної (курортної) та естетичної цінності ландшафту;
- класифікація курортів за розташуванням, ландшафтами, призначенням (лікування захворювань), мінеральними або термальними водами, кліматом (індекс сухості, сонячне освітлення, амплітуда температур, тиск, вологість, сніговий покрив), потенціалом природних ресурсів (рослинність, водойми, фауна, пам'ятки природи, рельєф тощо), традиціями використання (тобто історія), народними віруваннями (ставлення місцевого населення до медицини), унікальністю, історико-культурною (історичні пам'ятки, культурні об'єкти тощо) та транспортною (доступність, Інтернет тощо) інфраструктурою, та загалом – природними і соціально-економічними факторами.

Комплексна оцінка рекреаційного потенціалу передбачає вивчення десятків питань та об'єктів, що є досить складним науковим та практичним завданням. Для неї немає загальноприйнятих критеріїв, що ускладнює комплексну оцінку природних, історико-культурних чи соціально-економічних факторів.

Грузія вирізняється в усьому світі, і особливо на Кавказі, своїми рекреаційними ресурсами. У Грузії налічується понад 100 курортів та курортних зон. Виявлено та вивчено близько 2 тисяч мінеральних джерел, більшість з яких вирізняються високим бальнеологічним призначенням. Грузія має всі типи курортів, відомих світі. Основними з них є морські, гірські та клімато-бальнеологічні курорти.

У статті розглядаються географічні, історико-культурні, рекреаційні та інфраструктурні особливості 55 грузинських курортів. Загалом було розглянуто 29 параметрів, 25 з яких відсутні в науковій літературі, пов'язаній з грузинською курортологією.

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Ключові слова: рекреація, Грузія, курорт, географія, фактор, оцінка, класифікація.

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