An interview with Giorgi Chogovadze, head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration

What challenges does the GNTA face this summer season? How do visitor numbers compare with last year? How has the season been so far and which countries are the tourists expected to come from?

The main challenge is to increase the inflow of tourists, as this will create new jobs, bring more money into the country, help develop the regions, etc. Tourism is one of the most important parts of any country’s economy; out of every 11 jobs anywhere in the world, 1 is in the tourism sector. Tourism also accounts for 6% of the world’s exports.

The Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) continues to undertake international marketing programmes and more tourists are expected to come to Georgia in the coming months.

More People Visited Georgia in May and June

Research conducted by the Georgian National Tourism Administration shows that the number of international visitors who entered Georgia in May and June was significantly greater than in the same two months of last year. Despite economic shocks, the depreciation of the Georgian Lari and the Tbilisi Flood in Tbilisi, the tourist index keeps increasing thanks to the hard work and various promotional events organised by the Georgian National Tourism Administration.

Radisson Blu Iveria Nominated for “Tourism Oscar”

Radisson Blu Iveria has been nominated for the World Travel Awards™ “Best Business Hotel in Europe” award. This is the first time a Georgian hotel has been nominated for this award. In addition, its sister hotel Radisson Blu Batumi has been nominated for the “Best Hotel in Georgia” award.

The voting process will last from 4 March to 26 July. The other nominees for Best Business Hotel in Europe include such famous hotels as the Hôtel Fouquet’s Barrière in France and the Hotel Adlon Kempinski in Germany.

Super Cup and European Youth Olympic Festival - New Tourism Opportunities for Georgia

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When signs of possible electricity tariff hike first emerged several months ago amid depreciation of lari, Energy Minister Kachka Kaladze said in May that the government will consider "targeted subsidizing" if electricity bills go up.

In May the Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission rejected a request by the water supply company in Tbilisi to increase the tariff.

### ELECTRICITY TARIFF HIKE IN REGIONS

Over one million customers of Enrgo-Pro Georgia power distributor company will see electricity tariff increase by 3.65 tetri (about 1.75 U.S. cents) per kWh starting from August 1, prompting the government to consider subsidies for socially vulnerable households.

Enrgo-Pro Georgia, which is part of the private Greek group Energo-Pro, is the largest electricity distributor in the country with 63% of market share, supplying electricity to customers in the regions except of Kakheti.

The Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission approved the rates for some category of households which were reduced, which was one of the pre-election campaign promises of the Georgian Dream ruling coalition.

After the energy regulator agency’s July 23 decision, the first-step tariff for Enrgo-Pro customers, applying to households which consume less than 101 kWh per month, will go up from current 9 tetri (about 4 U.S. cents as of July 23) to 12.98 tetri. This first-step tariff also applies to those households, who have no individual meters and are connected to common electricity meters. As a result of this increase the first step tariff will now go back to its pre-2013 level at which stood at 12.98 tetri.

The second-step tariff, applying to consumers who consume between 101 and 301 kWh per month, will be 16.93 tetri per kWh instead of current 12.98 tetri. The increased tariff is slightly more than pre-2013 tariff of 16.52 tetri.

The third-step tariff, applying to customers who consume more than 301 kWh of electricity per month, will increase from current 17.5 to 21.45 tetri per kWh. Tariff decrease did not apply to this category of customers.

"This is a fair tariff, which will guarantee uninterrupted and reliable electricity supply to our customers," said July 23, the head of the Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission.

She added that the tariff increase was caused by a hike in distributor company’s expenses for purchasing imported electricity and electricity generated by gas-fired power station, attributed to depreciation of the GEL.

In a separate decision on July 23, the regulatory commission approved the tariff increase on electricity generated by gas-fired power plants, operated by three companies, one of which is Enrgo-Pro’s subsidiary. Enrgo-Pro Georgia also operates about 22% of medium-sized hydro power plants.

Speaking at a government session earlier on July 23, PM Irakli Garibashvili said: "If the tariff set by the regulator is either low or high — that’s exactly what it should be defined by a relevant methodology. Therefore this is the principal guarantee that there will be no problems with electricity supply.

Regulator’s July 23 session was also attended by representatives of several small non-governmental organizations, which slammed the decision to increase tariffs and called for “disbanding” of the regulator.

On July 23 the Energy and Water Supply Regulatory Commission is expected to rule on a separate request by the Enrgo-Pro Georgia, which seeks increase of electricity tariff to its customer categories, citing depreciation of lari.

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**PARLIAMENT SPEAKER ON GEORGIA’S NATO INTEGRATION**

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Customers’ idea about ideal lottery

- There must be a wide variety of prizes;
- It would be good to win several times;
- Receive the prize the moment you win;
- The rules must be easy;
- In case of cash prizes, decide myself what to buy.

Having taken into consideration your wishes “Aversi” grand lottery has begun!

The prizes are

- The main prize: 40,000
- 20,000
- 5 × 10,000
- 5 × 5,000
- There are also 19,023 instant prizes!

The lottery will be held on the 20th of November 2015 in the broadcast of “Rustavi-2”, after “Kurieri” 18:00.
EU’S TUSK HAILS TBILISI’S ‘RESPONSIBLE REACTION’ TO RUSSIA’S ‘PROVOCATIONS’

President of the European Council Donald Tusk said the approach of the Georgian government to Russia reflects the policy of the EU’s ‘clear provocation’ in vitiating relations with Russia. Tusk said that the measures taken by Georgia, including the declaration of the policy of ‘clear provocation’, are not to be tolerated in the context of the administrative boundary line with Russia.

Specific defense capabilities from the political point of view and from other point of view,” Usupashvili told journalists in Tbilisi on July 20. He also said that he views this visit “to some extent as a follow up” of his address to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly session in Budapest in May 2015.

In that address Usupashvili said that Georgia is now ready for NATO membership as some of its members at that time were at the same time invited and NATO should either give Georgia a Membership Action Plan (MAP) during the next NATO summit in Warsaw in 2016 or declare that MAP is no longer a precursor to full membership.

George’s foreign trade turnover declined 12.6% year-on-year in the first half of 2015 to USD 4.76 billion and the trade gap decreased by 0.4% year-on-year to USD 2.6 billion, according to the state statistics office.

Oil products were on top of the list of imports in the first half of 2015 with USD 305.2 million (28.6% y/y decrease); followed by medicines – USD 297.8 million (almost two-fold increase compared to the same period of last year); vehicles – USD 244.1 million (15.7% y/y decrease); machinery and equipment – USD 232.5 million (26.4% y/y increase); hydrocarbons – USD 221 million (20.9% y/y increase); copper ores and concentrates – USD 109.5 million (13.1% y/y decrease); electricity – USD 88.5 million (31.8% y/y decrease); coffee – USD 68.1 million (19.6% decline); cigarettes – USD 48.6 million (9.7% y/y increase); wheat – USD 47.5 million (1% y/y increase); non-ferrous metal – USD 20.5 million; and mineral water – USD 18.4 million (6.4% y/y increase).

Opposition lawmakers from UNM party criticized Guramishvili’s candidacy. Referring to his background as Ivanishvili’s bodyguard, they were claiming that Guramishvili would be accountable before the ex-Pm, not before the Parliament. “All those claims that the security agencies are being depoliticized are far fetched and opportunistic,” Guramishvili, who is loyal to Ivanishvili, proves it,” UNM MP Chucha Gakharia said.

During the committee hearing, which lasted for about an hour, Guramishvili was named among the Interior Ministry’s list of candidates for the prevention of infiltration of ‘foreign countries’ special services’ into the Georgian state institutions, as well as ‘prevention of radicalization of our citizens’ by extremist and terrorist groups, in particular by the Islamic State group.

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Radisson Blu Iveria
Nominated for “Tourism Oscar”

Radisson Blu Iveria has been nominated for the World Travel Awards™ “Best Business Hotel in Europe” award. This is the first time a Georgian hotel has been nominated for this award. In addition, its sister hotel, Radisson Blu Resort, Batumi has been nominated for the “Best Hotel in Georgia” award.

The voting process will last from 4 March to 26 July. The other nominees for Best Business Hotel in Europe include such famous hotels as the Hotel Fouquet’s Barrière near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France and the Hotel Adlon Kempinski in Germany.

“The best team in the hotel business is the Radisson Blu Iveria in Tbilisi. I am very proud to represent the first Georgian hotel to be nominated for such a prestigious international award. I consider the nomination to reflect growing trends in the Georgian tourism industry, as domestic hotels do indeed offer their customers international-level service and experience,” said John Losas, General Manager of Radisson Blu Iveria.

The World Travel Awards™ were founded in 1993 and reward outstanding companies in all spheres of tourism. The international jury presents a range of awards in different categories to hotels, airlines, tour operators, cruise companies and others.

With regard to the nomination for the “Tourism Oscar”, this is very important for Georgia as well as for our hotel because this is the first time any Georgian hotel has been nominated for a Europe-wide award. This success will have a positive impact on Georgian tourism, as the fact that we have a recognized world-class hotel here is very important for the image of our country.

“I should also mention that this recognition is continuously supported by the Georgian National Tourism Administration. We have provided them with press releases about the nomination for the “Oscar” and various marketing materials. The GNTA is conducting an active PR campaign about this nomination and we are very grateful for such support.”

PARLIAMENT ADOPTS AMENDMENTS TO 2015 STATE BUDGET

Parliament confirmed on Friday with 78 votes to 18 amendments to the 2015 state budget cutting economic growth forecast from 5% to 2% and reducing initially targeted GEL 7.6 billion in tax revenues by GEL 200 million.

Funding cut in an amount of total of about GEL 160 million will affect Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development, Ministry of Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Health Care, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Ministry of Justice.

- Ministry of Infrastructure and Regional Development funding declines by GEL 10.5 million to GEL 99.5 million, mostly at the expense of funds, which were originally aimed at purchasing buildings for Georgian embassies abroad.
- Ministry of Justice funding is reduced by GEL 6 million to GEL 91 million.
- Ministry of Internal Affairs funding is cut by GEL 6 million to GEL 91 million.
- Ministry of Health Care funding is down by GEL 3 million to GEL 94.5 million.
- Ministry of Sport and Tourism funding is reduced by GEL 1.5 million to GEL 91.5 million.
- Ministry of Justice funding cuts in the category of Environment Protection Service (SSPS), increasing the latter’s funding to GEL 54 million; funding of the Parliament is reduced by GEL 6 million to GEL 46 million; Ministry of Culture funding is reduced by GEL 1 million to GEL 94 million; Ministry of Finance funding goes down by GEL 9 million to GEL 91 million; Ministry of Education funding is reduced by GEL 13.1 million to GEL 340.8 million; Ministry of Agriculture funding is reduced by GEL 25.3 million to GEL 267.4 million.
- Energy Ministry funding is reduced by GEL 10.7 million to GEL 114.3 million.

DEFENSE MINISTER: ‘RUSSIA TESTS OUR PATIENCE’


Placing of demarcation signposts along the breakaway South Ossetia administrative boundary line is part of Russia’s provocations through which it “is testing our patience,” Georgia’s Defense Minister Tino Khidzhiaeli said on July 19.

"The goal is not to make the country víctima of provocations, which Russia is permanently undertaking against us,” she said.

"By doing this they are leading our patience on the daily basis, trying to provoke and engage us. Our current authorities will not let happen,” she told journalists at the Vaziani military base outside Tbilisi, where Agal Sport 2015 drills are held with participation of Georgian, U.S., Bulgarian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Romanian troops.

Signposts marking “South Ossetian border” were placed on July 10 close to the villages of Telaviakhele and Orchosiani in the short distance from Georgia’s main east-west highway and in the area where a mile-long portion of the BP-operated Baku-Supsa oil pipeline runs.

Series of protest rallies by activists and journalists, who were arriving in the area from Tbilisi, followed, with one of the signposts being torn down. Some locals were complaining that those protests were exacerbating situation, affecting further negatively on the local population living in an immediate vicinity of the administrative border. Police restricted access to the area on July 17 for non-resident locals. A protest rally, organized by some media outlets and civil society organizations, was held in Tbilisi on July 18, criticizing government’s policies towards Russia and accusing the authorities of not doing enough to prevent Russia’s “creeping occupation.”

After the August, 2008 war and following recognition of South Ossetia’s “independence” by Moscow, Russian troops in the breakaway region started building demarcation line mostly along southwestern, south and southeastern portions of the administrative border. The line mostly follows the Soviet-era administrative borders of former Autonomous District of South Ossetia.

The process, referred as “borderization”, involved placing of border markers, erecting of fences and putting barbed wires, cutting farmlands and in some cases dividing villages.

In September 2010, when one of the early instances of borderization affected farmlands close to the villages of Kvemo Nikozi, Zemo Nikozi, Dziri, Atsko and Kordi, the Georgian authorities initially started local protest, but toned down rhetoric shortly afterwards.

Borderization process was stepped up in the course of 2013 to 2014 with the dividing fences reaching the length of roughly 45 kilometers by the end of that year.

Currently there are about 200 “border” signposts along the administrative boundary line, according to EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM), whose unarmed monitors observe situation on the ground since the 2008 war, but they have no access to breakaway South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

Head of the EUMM, Lithuanian Diplomatic Kestutis Juanauskas, said in an interview with the Georgian public broadcaster on July 10 that the year “we have not seen much borderization activities.”

He said that the recent installation of demarcation signposts were made in close vicinity of strategic infrastructure, including Georgia’s main east-west highway, and “in these issues there are lots of emotions”.

“In terms of perceptions these signs for the local population mark the areas where they can or cannot go, for them the boundaries have moved and that’s why it’s so emotional,” he said.

A meeting of Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism (IPRM) has been scheduled for July 20 to address recent developments. IPRM represents meetings with EU and EUMM facilitation between Georgian and South Ossetian representatives, as well as representatives of the Russian troops on the ground.
Giorgi Chogovadze: The main challenge is to increase the inflow of tourists, as this will create new jobs, bring more money into the country.

An interview with Giorgi Chogovadze, head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration

What challenges does the GNTA face this summer season? How do visitor numbers compare with last year? How has tourism been affected by the situation in the existing markets?

Giorgi Chogovadze: The main challenge is to increase the inflow of tourists, as this will create new jobs, bring more money into the country, help develop the regions, etc. Tourism is one of the most important parts of any country’s economy; out of every 11 jobs anywhere in the world, 1 is in the tourism sector. Tourism also accounts for 6% of the world’s exports.

We have a clear vision of the importance of tourism and do our best to increase the number of visitors to Georgia. This year we have undertaken various international activities and I am pleased to say that, as a result, visitor numbers have risen. There were 496,758 visitors to Georgia in June, a 9.3% increase on June last year. The number of tourists who spent at least 24 hours in Georgia in June rose, by 3.4%, compared with last June. This followed a 14.7% increase in visitor numbers in May compared with May 2014.

Most of the June visitors were from neighbouring countries. The number of visitors from Russia rose by 47% and the number from Armenia by 33%. We are also seeing more visitors from such countries as Israel (26%), Kazakhstan (40%), Belarus (56%) and others. Furthermore, more are coming from Georgia.

This growth trend, driven by the activities undertaken by the Georgian National Tourism Administration and the Ministry of Economy, encourages us to project that this year will be significantly more successful than the previous one.

What does the GNTA intend to do to increase Georgia’s tourism?

We work on this constantly, and we will soon be getting ready for the winter season and undertaking new marketing campaigns.

We do a number of things to attract more visitors: we are developing the small tourism infrastructure, increasing awareness of Georgia, marketing to the domestic and international markets, developing new tourism products, etc. The Georgian aviation market has good potential, and this also contributes to the development of the tourism sector in Georgia.

We are also working on developing domestic tourism. The “Discover Georgia” company has been established, special video commercials have been prepared and press tours are frequently organised in order to popularise Georgia’s splendid attractions. These activities will encourage a lot of our own citizens to explore the beauty of their own country.

How successful have your marketing campaigns been?

Our successful campaigns have brought significant results. Let me remind you that at the beginning of 2015 there was no tourism growth because of external shocks like the Russian- Ukrainian war and the currency depreciations in the countries most of our tourists come from (Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia). As soon as the decrease in the inflow of tourists was fixed, we analysed the causes of it and outlined possible ways to ensure it stays fixed. We changed our plan of action in accordance with the new reality, and set new strategic objectives due to the need to diversify our market.

We focused on activities which would bring tourists from new markets and improve the situation in the existing ones. These included:

- Beginning new campaigns in our target markets (9 countries)
- Accessing international mass media sources (CNN, EURONEWS)
- Inviting more than 200 journalists to visit Georgia
- Holding a media forum, which attracted 48 leading journalists from 6 countries
- Negotiating to establish new direct flights to Georgia and increase the frequency of the existing ones

As a result of these activities, we saw a gradual improvement of the situation in April. Visitor numbers only increased by 0.4% in that month, but in May there was the 14.7% increase I have mentioned.

How did the Tbilisi floods and the images of it broadcast influence the inflow of tourists?

Of course the tragedy on the night of 13 June, and in particular the images of it broadcast on the global media, had a certain impact on the inflow of tourists. Some groups did cancel their reservations, but despite this, we had 9.3% more international visitors in June compared with the previous June.

On the day after the disaster we began working to ensure that the planned tourists still came to Georgia. We held individual negotiations with tourism companies and our international partners and organised several press tours, which gave journalists the opportunity to see that the government had mitigated the results of the disaster in quite a short period of time, and that travelling to Georgia, and particularly Tbilisi, is safe.

How positively will such important global events as the UEFA Super Cup and the European Youth Olympic Festival influence the development of tourism in Georgia?

Both these events, which are being held this summer, are of great importance in popularising and increasing awareness of our country. The Georgian National Tourism Administration supports both events and, with the framework of our competitive advantage, we will host these events in Georgia.

We are also holding training courses for volunteers at these events. It should be mentioned that 120 volunteers of the European Youth Olympic Festival have already received our special “Service Skills” training. What do you expect from the GEM FEST electronic music festival which will be held in Anaklia? How important are such festivals for attracting tourists?

The GNTA actively supports GEM FEST and all similar festivals held in Georgia. These include the “Global Gathering” which will be held on 11 September in Rustavi. This is the first such licensed festival to be held in Georgia. Festivals are, of course, one of the best methods of attracting tourists, and we therefore welcome the holding of such high level festivals in Georgia.

Radisson Blu Iveria has been nominated for a “Tourism Oscar”. How important is this for attracting tourists to the country?

I am very pleased with this nomination, greatly support it and wish every success to Radisson Blu Iveria. The more such high class hotels we have in Georgia the more positively this will influence the country’s image and, consequently, the inflow of tourists.

Giorgi Chogovadze, head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration

Mountain Bike Trails Being Built in Gudauri and Bakuriani

The Georgian National Tourism Administration has told InterPressNews that the construction of mountain bike trails in Gudauri and Bakuriani has begun. They are being built by a Slovenian company, Alliance, with the support from the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development and the Mountain Resort Development Company, 1,000-metre section of the Gudauri trail is already open, the total length will be 4,750 metres.

The Gudauri trail will run from the upper Gondola station to the lower Gondola station. Construction of the Bakuriani trail will begin in a few weeks. Head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration Georg Chogovadze talked about the project.

"This is the first time mountain bike trails have been built in Georgia. The aim is to create a new facility for tourists which will contribute significantly to the extension of the resort season. The trails will soon be complete and we expect to bring more people to these mountain resort areas, who will also use the existing infrastructure (cableways, café-restaurants, etc.). The bike trails will not cross the ski trails, and consequently they will be safe and comply with international standards.

"Extreme tourism is becoming more popular in Georgia with both domestic and international tourists. The Georgian National Tourism Administration will organise a number of mountain bike tournaments. The development of bike tourism will significantly contribute to attracting more tourists in Georgia, Chogovadze said."
Welcome to Gino Paradise Tbilisi Resort in the City
GINO PARADISE
The Unique WELLNESS & SPA center
The best opportunity for your health and rest

GINO PARADISE TBILISI - the resort in the city-a new life style. This is a small island that thanks to its diversity, relaxation centers and numerous attractions is considered to be the leading entertainment-recreational center not only in Georgia, but in the whole Eastern Europe as well.

GINO PARADISE offers all types of entertaining, relaxation and health procedures any time of the year. Here you may relax and at the same time take care after your image and health. WELLNESS&SPA center of GINO PARADISE represents the best opportunity for rest, relaxation and taking care after health and beauty.

The resort in the city occupying 2000 sq. meters provides various types of services for taking care after physical health and peace of mind of each customer visiting GINO PARADISE. Here you will be served at the biggest WELLNESS & SPA centre in the Eastern Europe. Various types of fragrance saunas, relaxation pools, showers with rain and thunderstorm effects, ice and leave-falling chambers, Cleopatra’s milk and wine baths, outdoor and indoor swimming pools in compliance with the Olympic standards, heating pools, beer Jacuzzi – are particularly popular with the visitors.

12 different saunas at GINO PARADISE Wellness&Space centre satisfy the requirements and needs of any customer. Visitors may choose Romanian, Finnish or Turkish saunas with plant fragrancesin accordance with their desire and needs. For example, it is well known that Finnish sauna is the best way for curing vascular diseases. Iodized salt steam sauna is the best method for gout prevention. If you’d like to remove cellulite, correct weight and heal your organism, you should visit GINO PARADISE Wellness&Space centre. However, it should be necessarily mentioned the main attraction of the WELLNESS centre - EXCELENT corner where there are introduced the only Cleopatra’s gold baths in Europe. Here you may enjoy shampoo, wine, milk and chocolate baths. Here is also a big beer hydro massager (Jacuzzi), where the visitor may enjoy baths enriched with beer extract and also taste some beer from nearly installed beer barrel.

Besides, WELLNESS centre offers the variety of massages and different spa procedures. There are introduced various hydro massages (Jacuzzi) and whirlpools. You may enjoy as Turkish-Arabian soap, as well as dry, wet, chocolate, wine, apple and honey massages that significantly improve health and are the best method for keeping beauty. Everything depends on your choice.

There functions a heparium that after a cold shower and sauna is the best method of relaxation. The customer may take care after his/her health and with silent and pleasant music rest on the warmed armchair laid with marble mosaic.

The wide assortment of services introduced at WELLNESS&SPA centre cares about not only physical health, as well as peace of mind of the visitor. No less important is the fact that the prices at GINO PARADISE TBILISI are affordable for all visitors. You must only choose the package that is acceptable for you.

Besides, in summer there also functions the well-equipped seaside where numerous entertaining attractions are introduced.

There are constantly held interesting events at GINO PARADISE. GINO PARADISE TBILISI is a splendid place for holding a meeting and celebrating birthday parties. Every day Georgian and European animators offer diversified entertaining programs. GINO PARADISE - the resort in the city will host you any time of the year during 4 seasons.

Shorena Tskuradzevili
More People Visited Georgia in May and June

The Georgian National Tourism Administration (GNTA) continues to undertake international marketing programmes and more tourists are expected to come to Georgia in the coming months.

Research conducted by the Georgian National Tourism Administration shows that the number of international visitors who entered Georgia in May and June was significantly greater than in the same two months of last year. Despite economic shocks, the depreciation of the Georgian Lari and the Tbilisi Flood in Tbilisi, the tourism industry index keeps increasing thanks to the hard work and various promotional events organised by the Georgian National Tourism Administration.

In June 2015, 496,758 international tourists entered Georgia, an increase of 9.3% on last June. The number of foreign travellers who spent a minimum of 24 hours in Georgia was 197,537, an increase of 5.4% on last June.

As Head of the Georgian National Tourism Administration Georgi Chogovadze points out, the flood and the images of the flooded city broadcast worldwide may still have had a negative influence on the inflow of tourists. The GNTA’s large scale international marketing campaign has brought positive results.

“The Georgia promotion campaign for the summer season was aimed at nine target markets and involved placing videos on CNN and EuroNews. We kept working during the flood crisis and followed a special plan,organising press tours after the flood which provided journalists with the opportunity to see with their own eyes that the government had managed to mitigate the consequences of the disaster in a very short period of time. We were in constant contact with tourist companies and international partners,” Chogovadze said.

Nevertheless, most of the visitors in June (86%) were from neighbouring countries.

“There were significant increases in the numbers of tourists from Russia (+47%), Armenia (+33%) and Azerbaijan (+15%). There were also increases in the numbers from non-neighbouring countries such as Kazakhstan (+40%), Belarus (+56%), Israel (+26%) and the United Arab Emirates. The international market-plex international marketing and in subsequent months more foreign travellers are expected to visit Georgia. This projection is supported by the increased number of international visitors during the past 6 months,” said Giorgi Chogovadze.

“Our guests are mainly from the business sector. May and June 2015 were very productive and heavily loaded months. We are satisfied with the current numbers. It’s difficult to determine whether the flood in June or the Russian crisis hit the depreciation of the Lari have impacted us significantly”.

Other hotels we contacted presented a similar picture. The Sheraton Batumi’s representative told us that the weather is the main factor influencing hotel occupancy in that seaside city.

“This year we have had bad weather, so the summer season has began comparatively later. Over the whole year most Sheraton guests are foreigners, but in the summer the guests are predominantly Georgian”.

The Marco Polo hotel in Gudauri also did a good business. Its Sales Director Inaki Mamporia told us:

“In comparison with the previous years, May and June 2015 were quite productive. We are also satisfied with the July numbers. In summer the hotel is 75% occupied. 80% of our guests are from Eastern Europe. They come on tours of Georgia that last several days and stay in Gudauri for one or two days. Our hotel is the most attractive in this region for such visitors.

“We are working with the Georgian National Tourism Administration has proved very effective and brought very positive results for us. We frequently organise info tours with the GNTA which positively impact the number of bookings we receive. We have worked with them for many years and this has had very positive outcomes for us,” Mamporia said.

This August Georgia is expecting to see a great many visitors, as Tbilisi is hosting two big sporting events: the UEFA Super Cup and the European Youth Olympic Festival.

The Super Cup match, on 11 August, will be the most portentous to take place in Georgia. It will be held at the Boris Paichadze Stadium, more generally known as the Dinamo Arena, which has a capacity of 51,000. Consequently, Tbilisi is expecting to host this number of football fans and guests from Europe.

All the big hotels in Tbilisi are already booked solid for the days leading up to the match. 1,235 rooms have been reserved at the Intercontinental - 127 rooms, Courtyard Marriott - 118 rooms, Radisson - 249 rooms, Hotel Rooms - 141 rooms, Holiday Inn - 270 rooms, Hotel Preference Hauling Tbilisi - 230 rooms, Mercure Tbilisi - 100 rooms. However, there will still be an issue. In addition to Tbilisi public transport there are 14 registered agencies in Tbilisi who provide a taxi service but they only have 321 cars between them. There are however 150 different catering venues within the tourist area, and the infrastructure of the city of the Olympic village has taken an active part in the organisation of the match and we have never had any problems working with them. Every institution in Georgia you can imagine is also taking part in the organisation of this large scale event because it is so important for the country.”

Georgia acquired the right to host the 2015 European Youth Olympic Festival on 27 November 2010, beating out the Czech Republic in Belgrade by 5 votes. This victory was another unprecedented victory for our country.

Up to 3,800 sportspersons from 50 countries will gather in Tbilisi. The Olympic village has been built and the sports infrastructure improved in accordance with European standards.

The Georgian Times has contacted the Radisson Blue Iveria hotel to discover how this tourist inflow has impacted on the hotel trade. Its E-commerce Manager Eka Lolashvili told us:

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