

The map was designed in frame of the project Enhancement of Tourism Potential of Mountainous Regions in Georgia as a Means of their Development (donor Czech Development Agency, implementor Agora CE) 2017

GUDAMAKARI TRAIL

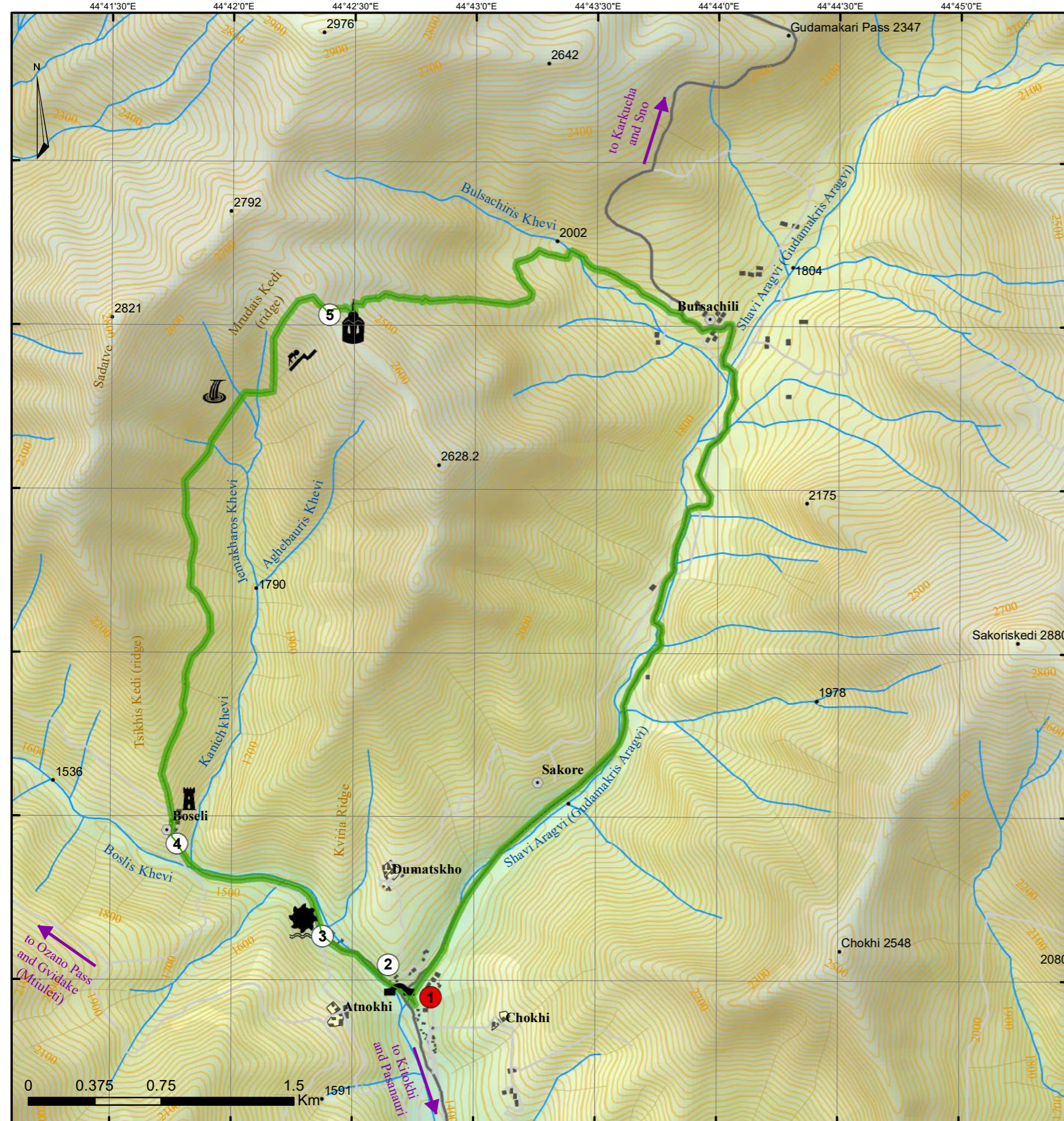
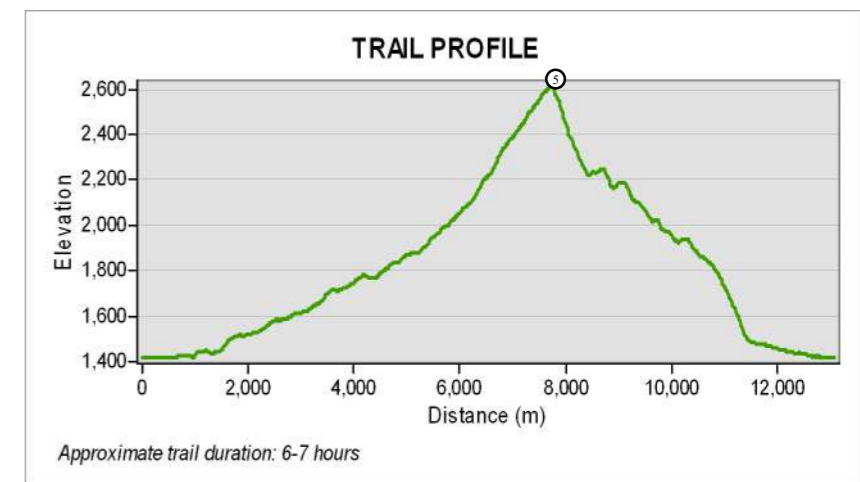
LEGEND

| | | | |
|--|----------------------------|--|---|
| | Mountain and Elevation | | Hiking Trail |
| | River | | Pirimze – Pudzis Angelozi (start-end point) |
| | Local Road | | Abandoned hydro power station |
| | Path | | Abandoned water mill |
| | Buildings and Settled Area | | Boseli Fortress |
| | Village | | Saghtomaghali |
| | Abandoned Village | | |
| | Topography | | |
| | Forest Area | | |
| | Grass Area | | |
| | Fortress | | |
| | Water mill | | |
| | Waterfall | | |
| | Bridge | | |
| | Shrine | | |
| | Steep ascent | | |

GUDAMAKARI TRAIL

Length: 13 000 m

Duration: 6-7 hours



If you are heading from Pasaauri to Sno Valley through the newly built dirt 4WD cars road or if you are going to hike through Bakurkhevi Valley and the mountain pass to the village of Barisakho in Khevsureti, consider the option to stay for a day in the upper part of Gudamakari Valley, and discover this so far neglected, yet unique region of East Georgian Mountains. It's rich in culture and cultic traditions, as well as in the beauties of nature.

Gudamakari Valley is situated along the 30 km long stream of Shavi Aragvi (Black Aragvi) River, flowing from the bottom of Chaukhi Mountain of Greater Caucasus range to reach the Tetri Aragvi (White Aragvi) near Pasaauri. Shavi Aragvi gained its name due to its grey-coloured gravel, that washed away from the slopes of the upper part of the valley near Bulsachiri.

Gudamakari constitutes a particular small mountainous region, distinctive from the nearby regions of Mtiuleti, Pshavi, Khevsureti and Khevi. From 2018 it should become a part of the newly established Aragvi Protected Landscape.

The inhabitants of Gudamakari are mentioned already by ancient Georgian chronicles as participants of the events, connected with Christianization of Eastern Georgia/Iberia in 4th century, yet the locals preserved their ancient religious traditions. In the Middle Ages, Gudamakari was in the sphere of influence of Aragvi Dukes (*Eristavi-s*). The local mountaineers were cow-herders as well as shepherds, which resembles the traditions of more distant Tusheti region.

Gudamakari is composed of 22 villages, though the number of inhabitants has decreased to about 700 people in the present day. The administrative center of the valley is Kitokhi.

GUDAMAKARI TRAIL

(Chokhi – Boseli – Saghvtomaghali – Bulsachiri – Chokhi)

Our route is a circle starting and ending near the Pirimze-Pudzis Angelози shrine in Chokhi Village. At first we should cross the river through a bridge and follow the path along a valley on our left side (Boseli Valley). We walked by the building, which used to serve as a local hydro power plant and then passed a ruined small water mill. The path led us on the right bank of the stream. Under the village of Boseli we crossed the river by wading and walk uphill to reach the ruins of Boseli fortress. The boulder round walls of the Medieval tower are preserved up to 2 m. From there the narrow path will led us through the wood, where we should cope with quite many fallen trees. Afterwards, we proceeded through alpine meadows, crossing several streams, one of them with a little waterfall. Finally we hiked up the steep ascent to the Saghvtomaghali ridge with a small sanctuary, from where we enjoyed panoramic views of the Greater Caucasus ranges. Thereafter the track led us down the hill to Bulsachiri Valley, where we crossed by the small river by wading and proceed to the village of Bulsachiri. If we were not under time pressure, we would have had a small rest in the half-abandoned village, where we could acquire superb milk products from local herds. The historically main road connecting South to North Caucasus led through the village to Gudamakari Pass and to Sno Valley. From Bulsachiri we followed the main dirt road down the Black Aragvi, passing several times the stream (through pedestrian bridges and through fords), eventually reaching the village of Chokhi.

Chokhi Village

Chokhi Village is the natural center of the upper part of Gudamakari Valley. From the village we enjoyed views of peaks of Shirimi Mountain (3201 m) above Boseli Valley as well as the Eastern Chaukhi (3644 m) above main Black Aragvi Valley.

In Chokhi, the famous Georgian writer and filmmaker. Goderdzi Chokheli (1954-2007) was born. The people we met in route were probably descendants of at least one of the heroes of his short stories, full of sorrow and sensitivity to the harsh nature and people striving for freedom.

Pirimze-Pudzis Angelози (vill. Chokhi)

The main shrine of Gudamakari Valley is situated in the lower part of Chokhi village, on the bottom of the slope, just on the further side of small meadow-plain above the bridge over Black Aragvi. The shrine includes a Christian church as well as several buildings typical of local syncretic religion.

Pirimze – Pudzis Angelози (literally, “The Sun-Mouthed Angel of House Foundations”) is one of the deities in the pantheon of syncretic religion, preserved in Eastern Georgian Mountains. In its Christian aspect, it's regarded as one of 363 hypostasis of St. George. Nevertheless, in his image clearly prevail the traits of a pre-Christian deified hero, so called *ghvtisshvili* („Son of God”), fighter with demons (*devi-s*). In its character, there are two images united – that of the Sun Ray (*Pirimze*) and the Soil-Earth (*Pudzis Angelози*).

On August 28th, the main festival of worship takes place where cattle sacrifices and feasting occurs, this is known as *Mariamoba* (i.e. the feast of Dormition of the Mother of God). The shrine has its counterpart, another Pudzis Angelози sacred place in Khevsuretian village of Ukanakho, from where the main Gudamakarian families of Bekauri and Tsiklauri are believed to originate.

Pirimze-Pudzis Angelози found out, that the demons (*devis*) were living on the site of the present-day shrine. He set out for the campaign to fight them. Iakhsari and Kopala [other “Son of Gods”) decided to assist Pudzis Angelози. When they arrived on the hill above the demons dwelling, he said to his fellows, “At first, I shall dare to go down the hill and if only I will be in a trouble you shall rush to help me.” Pudzis Angelози ran down the hill and exterminated all the demons alone. Once upon a time, a man from the village of Akho lost his cow. When he finally found her, he noticed that the cow gave birth to a calf. Although the calf should have been very light, the cow herder was not able to lift it and bring it back home. The calf stubbornly stayed at the place refusing even to follow the cow. The village elders realized that the deity apparently resided on the place where the calf stayed. It was decided to dedicate the calf to the deity and to establish there a shrine.

Pay attention to the ash trees grove around the complex of the shrine. The ash trees were venerated as one of the main manifestation of the world tree, connecting the heavens, the terrestrial world and, through it's roots, the underworld.

Pay attention to the proper behavior in the environs of the shrine, which is common for all East Georgian sacred places. Women are not allowed to enter the precincts of the shrine. The men are permitted to enter the yard of the shrine and to light there a candle, but even for them it's prohibited to touch the sacred structures or to enter the interior.

Saghvtomaghali Shrine (literally “Shrine of Divine Heights”)

The main mountain shrine of Gudamakari Valley is a small mound of stones on the top of the ridge (2586 m). A festival is held here on 100th day after Easter.