

RECOMMENDED TRAILS

Aravi Protected Landscape has not been discovered by plenty of tourists, although it offers many interesting hiking trails of various difficulty levels. These range from easy single day hikes to more demanding multi-day routes to the higher parts of the Greater Caucasus. This leaflet offers only a small selection.

Confluence of the Khevsurets Aragvi (bridge) – Roshka – Confluence of the Khevsurets Aragvi (bridge)

» **Distance:** 9 km
 » **Duration:** 4 hours
 » **What you will experience:** ascending safely from 1,500 metres above the sea level to almost 2,000 metres and back. The trail is safe, nonetheless it provides spectacular views to the deep valley below you as well as to the ridge of the Chakhi peaks.

» The trail is for those who like walking but have less time. There is a nice shorter trail beginning directly at the main road to Shatli. You will park your car at the confluence of the Knost and Khevsurets Aragvi. There you will cross the bridge and follow blue marks till Roshka. In Roshka, you can have a break and refresh. Then, you will return following the same route.

» **Distance:** you can reach the place by car and walk around as much as you please.

» The Gudamakari Valley is part of the Aragvi Protected Landscape and is accessible by car only from Paganart. It is a more open and less forested area, complementing the diversity of the whole region.

» Recommended route: drive through the Gudamakari valley to the village of Chokhi (18 kilometres, about 40 minutes drive) and park there. In the village, there is not only a church but also a shrine. You may also walk on the surrounding slopes. The traditional trail from Tbilisi to Kazbeg and on to Russia used to lead through this area.

TWO-DAY HIKING TRAILS

» **Just-Roshka trail**

» **Basic variant:** 16 km (20 km with extension from Roshka to the main road) near the main road (1,470 m asl); you may walk in both directions

» **Jura** (2,200 m asl) – Chakhi pass (3,338 m asl) – Roshka (1,980 m asl) – Roshka bridge

» **Alternatives:** an easy roundtrip from the village of Roshka to the Abudauri lakes and back

» This is a well-established and most visited trail in the APL, well known among foreign tourists. You can continue so Shatli or even to Omalo. Along the very beautiful trail you will enjoy gorgeous views of the Chakhi massif with glaciers, the Abudauri lakes, and the Roshka Natural Monument. It is the most sensitive part of the APL, so please avoid disturbance of the nature. As a reward, you are likely to spot soaring raptors including the Bearded Vulture (*Cypripus barbatus*) above you and other animals.

» **Alternatives:** from Mt. Tskaros to Miko

– Shupkho (1,220 m asl)
 – Mt. Akhuni (3,004 m asl) – Mt. Tskaros (2,767 m asl) – Tsbaurta (1,900 m asl)
 » **Route/Direction:** Davysvart Pass (2,677 m asl) – Mt. Khakhnatis (3,010 m asl)

» **Distance:** 15 km
 » **Davysvart pass – Shupkho**

» **Alternatives:** from Mt. Tskaros to Miko



ARAGVI PROTECTED LANDSCAPE



Parnassius apollo

» This path follows mainly the main ridge and is therefore easy for orientation. It offers breath-taking scenery and abundant flora of alpine meadows – really worth reaching this remote area.

» **Korsha – Bakurkhevi**

» **Distance:** 16 km
 » **Korsha** (1,320 m asl) – Chardli (1,600 m asl) – Bakhkura (1,650 m asl) – Ukanakho (1,850 m asl) – Bakurkhevi (1,850 m asl)
 » **Alternatives:** from Bakurkhevi you can follow the road to Kirokhi (1,300 m asl). If you are fit and experienced hikers, there is an option to continue to the pass towards Braschili (1,800 m asl) and further up through the Gudamakari Pass (2,347 m asl) – to the village of Sno.

» **Shepherd dogs**

Along some tourist trails in Aravi, usually above the forest line, there are several grazing areas which are guarded by dogs. When passing by, you can manage well if you take into consideration the following advice:

» A shepherd dog is a guardian of its owner's property – that is a shepherd's hut, a cow herd or a sheep flock. Thus, it is not recommended to enter any place where you may see any of these. The dog is not after people, it just fulfils its commitments. If you maintain some distance and do not try to invade its territory, the dog will just bark and watch. It will keep distance and will not attack or get overaggressive.

» BUT there can be some more complicated situations. For example, the path may run directly through a grazing area without giving other options than entering it. Cow herds are usually watched by one or two dogs only, while sheep flocks are accompanied by shepherds, too. When meeting dogs, you should be able to show you are prepared and "dangerous" too, but nothing more. Any aggression or attempt to fight the dog can lead visitors into serious problems. Dogs are better attackers than humans. Just take a solid stick and collect stones and throw them in the direction of the dog (not directly at it). Meanwhile, try to pass the herd quickly into neutral lands. Dogs usually do not see what you have in your hands, but when you bend over to pick up a stone that action is unmistakably perceived as if you were dangerous. The dog will run keeping distance and giving you time to walk away.

» If you cannot cope or you are too afraid, call for a shepherd. He is usually somewhere near the sheep flock and will help you!

» With cow dogs you mostly have to cope on your own, but here the dogs are generally less dangerous than sheep dogs.

BE AWARE OF!

» **Many activities are limited or forbidden by the Regulations of the Protected Areas, especially:**

» access for visitors to certain (sacred) places;
 » hunting, fishing, making fire, changes or any damage to historical buildings, etc.;
 » picking plants or catching animals.

» **Shrine and churches of Chokhi**

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Specific religious spirituality of visitors we kept alive in impressive sacred places surrounded by mysteriably magic old trees and forests

DID YOU KNOW?

» **Some unwritten rules of the Caucasian traditional code of behaviour are as follows:**

» do not bath naked in water near a road or in the middle of a village; where anybody might see you. It is completely unacceptable for locals.

» to receive an invitation from local people is polite and shows your respect, but be aware of excessive drinking, especially when you are invited by shepherds and cow herders. They are usually very glad to have guests as they rarely meet people there.

» if you are offered a drink by locals, be ready to share the same attitude of hospitality as they do. Try to be as self-giving as the locals and offer them the whole bottle. That will gain you real friends.

» some traditional behaviour restrictions for men and women are very common in Pshavi. Gudamakari and Khevsureti. Women are not allowed to participate in sacred rituals that take place in the shrine (called *khani*) or to step inside its territory, which is usually several square meters around the shrine. Shrines can be situated inside or outside the village. There are several shrines in each village. The boundary of a shrine is often denoted with stones but may not be visually marked at all. When you arrive in a village, ask where sacred places are and do not break the women taboo. Showing respect to local beliefs will spare you unpleasant experiences with locals. They believe that breaking this taboo (as well as any other kind of taboos) destroys natural balance and something happens – e.g. some drastic changes in weather are to be awaited, rainstorms, etc. If a taboo is broken in many places and many times, it can bring complete loss of balance and a disaster.

» **Behaviour and traditions**

Traditions are to be respected in mountainous Georgia even more strictly than in the lowland. Certain forms of behaviour which are acceptable elsewhere in Europe and Tbilisi (capital of Georgia) are not quite welcome in the Caucasus. Of course, respecting the hospitality rules no one will protest straight away. Nevertheless, it also depends on situations, the individuals and the nature of generally unwelcome acts. Thus, you may sometimes be facing problems.

» Do not go into a shepherd's place if you do not see anyone, even when there are no dogs around. Dogs can let you go in but they will not let you go out until the owner comes.



Black Aragvi river valley in Gudamakari

» **Dear visitor,**
 Welcome to Aragvi Protected Landscape! This leaflet along with the map will provide you with the basic information about the area.

Aragvi Protected Landscape is a unique place combining its cultural and natural values. The **sceneries** of sharp peaks, mountain ridges, glacial corries and deep river valleys contrast with flat bottoms of valleys. You can pass through the **harmonious landscape** (mosaic of small mountain settlements, fields, meadows, forests and pastures), get to know the **historical and cultural heritage** (history of sacred places, traditional pasture and agricultural culture, strong relation of local people to their land, etc.), and see the **high diversity** of plants and animals (endemic species, etc.). The beauties and the wilderness of the area are also depicted in the poems by Vazha Pshavela, a native of the village Chargali in Aravi, where you may visit a museum dedicated to this famous poet. To get a better feel of the local spirit, it is great to read his poetry before or during your trip to Aravi.

There are three local communities living in the area: Pshavians, Khevsurs, and Gudamakarians. Despite inhabiting separate valleys, they are unified by numerous cultural and social overlaps – common sanctuaries, common feasts and holidays, resembling material and spiritual culture (cuisine, folklore, etc.), and similar management practices (especially cattle kept for milk production).

The historical values of Aragvi Protected Landscape are mostly represented by architectural monuments, which may be found all around. In general, local architecture includes many types of human settlements, religious sites (various types of shrines and churches).

Native of Gudamakari, prose-writer and film-maker Goderdzi Chokheli (1954–2007) was awarded by a Grand-Prix at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen for his movie *Madhis dada* (Mother of the Place, 1976). It tells a story of an elderly woman, inhabitant of an abandoned mountain village, who turned herself into a living shrine-protective deity of the village, having no right to die, otherwise the village and its community vanishes. Watch other films made by Goderdzi Chokheli full of sorrow and compassion for nature (e.g. A Letter to Spruce Trees, Easter Lamb and Gospel of Luka) and visit his memorial museum in his native village of Chokhi.

» **Poetry-reading, folk verses competition, songs and dances.**

» **Birthday of Vazha Pshavela, the annual festival of Vazhaoba is held in Chargali, offering Landscapes, showing the modest and tough way of life of the poet. Around July 26, the jainists). Vazha-Pshavela Memorial House in Chargali is a must-see in Aravi Protected (the Khevsur Snake-Eater Mindia refuses to harm nature in a way resembling even Indian mountain laws. Human love is powerfully paralleled to the profound love of nature depicts the conflicts between strong free personalities and strict followers of traditional (Luksa Kazikashvili, 1861–1915), a formative poet and prose-writer of Georgian 19th century. In his poems (among others Aluda Kerkauri, Gucer and Hadz, Snake-Eater), Vazha Pshavela**

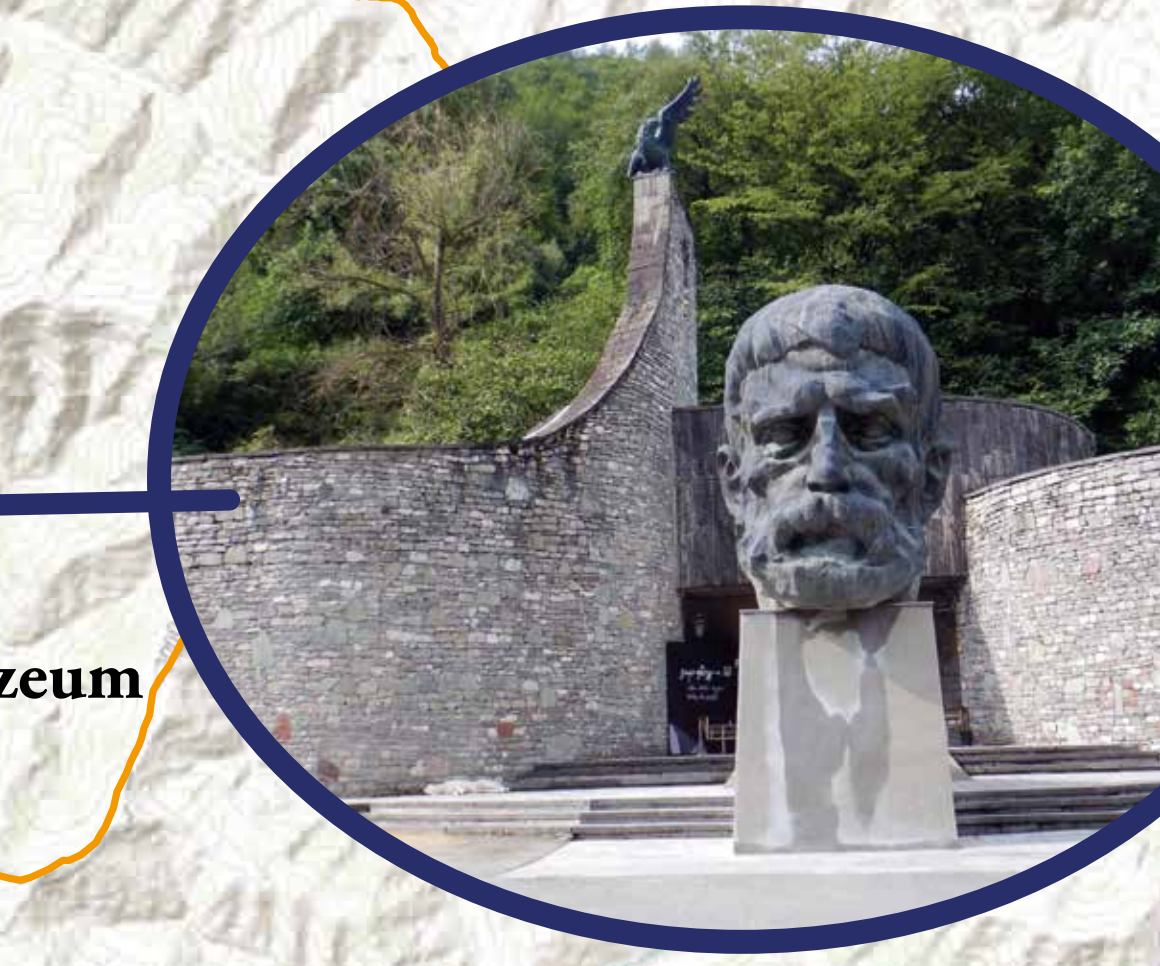
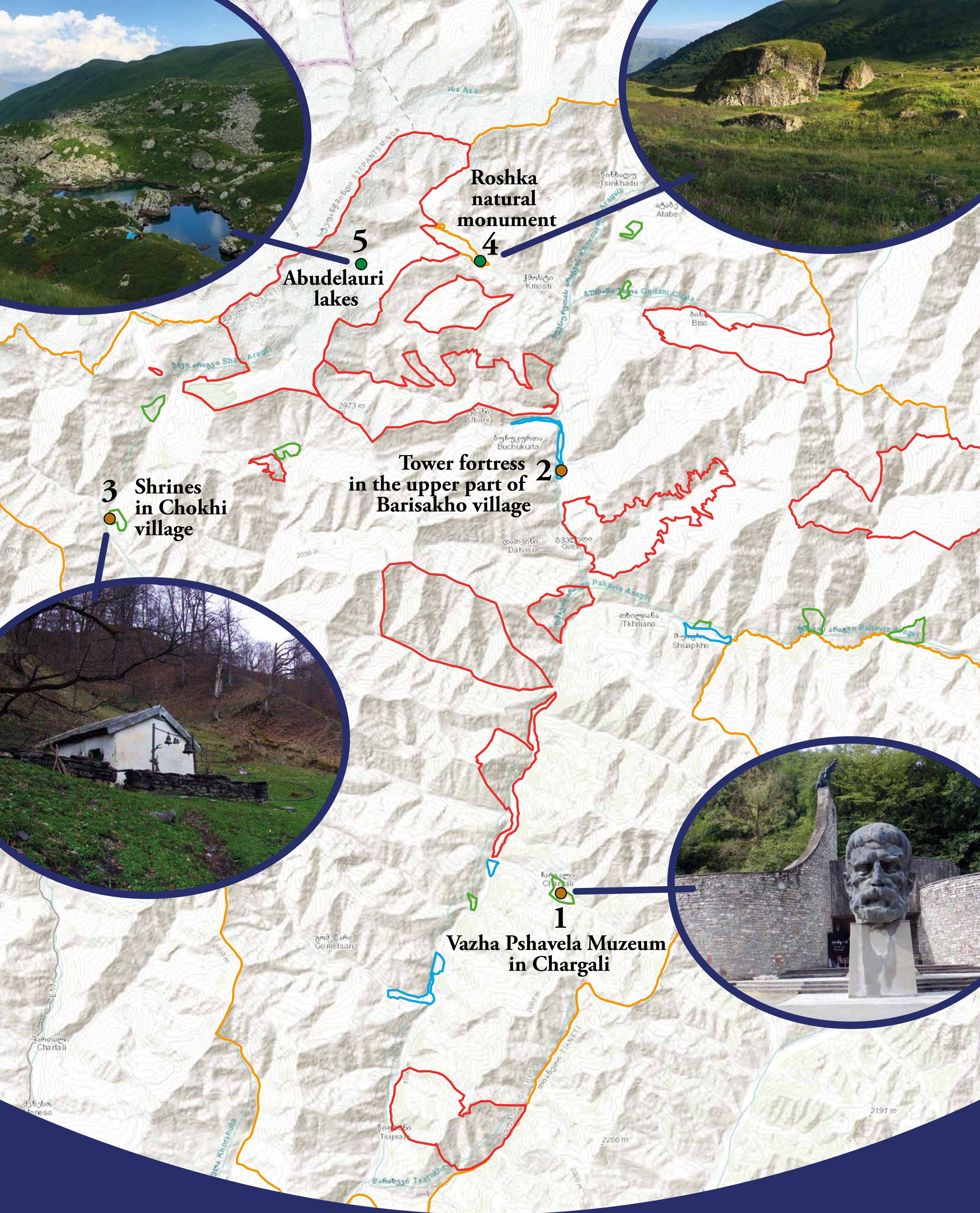
» **Upstairs, Khevsurs in the early 1920's. You may go to visit two nearby places connected to the uprising, First World War. Sulikhanur Chinchauri was a key figure in the anti-Bolshevik uprising of until the first decades of 20th century. Visit the tower-fortress of Sulikhanur Chinchauri in Khevsureti, the local villagers continued to build fortified dwellings with defensive towers**

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Aragvi Protected Landscape zoning:

- Protection zone
- Historical cultural zone
- Traditional use zone
- Sustainable development zone

Points of Interest:

- Cultural heritage
- Natural heritage

