



Project funded by
EUROPEAN UNION



PROMOTING HERITAGE - AND CULTURE - BASED EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN

Project No BSB-1145



HULISH

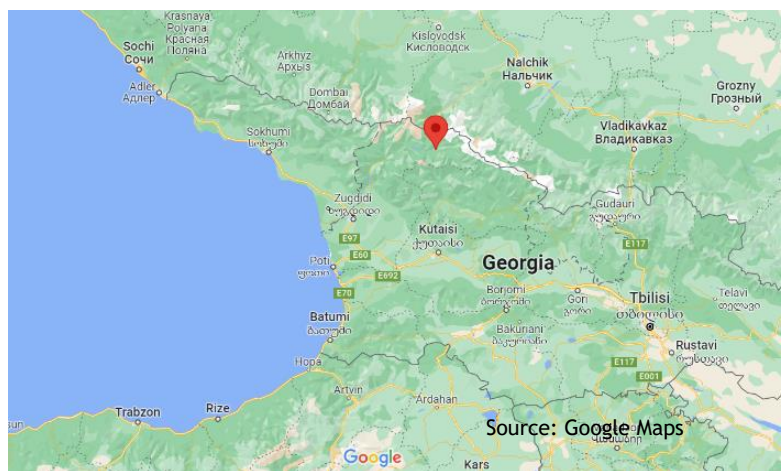
(Traditions and Events)

Common borders. Common solutions.

BASIC INFORMATION

WHERE:

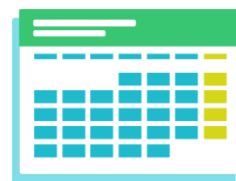
Hulish is celebrated in West Georgia, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti, Mestia Municipality, Becho Community. Becho Community is located at about 1660 meters above sea level, in river Dolra valley. From here, Ushba-Mazeri rocky massive looks to the north and snowy peaks of Svaneti range to the south.



Hulish is celebrated on a beautiful Shikhri valley in Becho Community located at the bottom of Mount Ushba (4 700 m). This place is known for its special nature and impressive views at the highest peaks.

SCHEDULE:

Hulish is held in June (a week before the start of the Fast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, on the 60th day after Easter). Therefore, Hulish should be held a week before the start of the Fast of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. Currently, this day is celebrated on Sunday. In old times, the celebration cycle used to be durational.



ORGANIZER AND CONTACT INFORMATION:



Ushba Valley - Becho Community, Phone: 599 96 59 95 Zviad Kvitsiani 599 42 47 78 Sion Argvliani, E-mail: zviad.kvitsiani@tsu.ge, <https://www.facebook.com/UshbaValley>

DESCRIPTION

Hulish is a folk festival and was established in ancient times. There are several legends about its origin. According to one legend, the ritual is related to the celebration of defeating and expulsion of the enemy attacking Svaneti; another legend associates the celebration with avoidance of natural disasters (for example, the ice ("Hol" in Svanetian) falling from the mountain filled Enguri river and destroyed Svaneti villages). According to a third legend, Hulish is dedicated to asking for calm and good weather. It is directed at the Prophet Elijah, who prayed for weather, promising a peaceful and high-yield year for Svaneti and avoiding unfavorable weather.

Lemi (Svan.) is the inflatable war banner of



Svaneti. According to the legend, it led the Svanetian army during the battle. Lemi represents a zoomorphic image (Wolf//Lion) sewn from yellow silk. Its owner was the head of the ravine called Meleme. The banner used to be exposed before the public during Hulish when horse racing was held. A rider led the horse racing holding this flag in his hand. As the

horse ran, the flag would unfold and the head of the lion (wolf) would appear. It should be mentioned that a wolf represented a totemic animal for Svans. All supernatural powers were assigned to it. Svans considered that wolves patronize and help people and killing them was taboo. Lemi was considered to be a holy flag. Therefore, it could be a zoomorphic symbol of

St. Georgia. Similar flags were common among Scythians, Sarmatians and Parthians and then it was imitated by Romans and the Sasanian Iran, from there - by Byzantines and medieval Europeans. The banner Lemi sewn in the 19th century is kept at the National Museum of Georgia and the Mestia Museum of History and Ethnography. The silver handle of the flag is assumed to belong to the 11th century.

The festival venue is located between Shikhri and Skelshi St. George Churches. It is noteworthy



that the ritual of Hulish is held in the vicinity of St. George Churches. According to the folk tradition, St. George was the first - the best

warrior, rider, hero who always led the Georgian army riding on the horse and made it win.



KEY MESSAGE

Hulish allows the visitors to participate in the ancient religious and sports rituals and its central message is a peaceful year.

The main idea of Hulish is a popularization of traditional Georgian rituals, their preservation and transmission to the future generation.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Traditionally, when celebrating Hulish, the locals say a prayer and sacrifice calves (Lighuanvaari), bake large cheese-filled breads - khachapuri (Leskar), flatbreads (Lemzir). So-called women's prayers occur in Svaneti on the Saturday of Hulish: women go to the church extensions (Ladbashi) and pray for peace and abundance in their families.

One of the culminating moments of Hulish is an exposition of the flag - "Lemi" after which horse racing, competition in the lifting of heavy stones, shooting are held. Residents of various villages of Svaneti participate in the activities. In addition, competitions in football, long jump, discus throw, shot put and volleyball, wrestling, arm-wrestling, chess, etc., occur, children's, girl and boy ensembles sing and dance.

After the horse racing, people dance a round dance, a feast, drinks are drunk from silver cups. A table is laid in the church's yard and toasts are said. Then the feast continues in the family, which has to celebrate this festival that year.

EXPERIENTIAL AND INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

The attendants can participate in various sports competitions.

INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS

Hulish is held in a traditional format and artistic innovations are less presented onsite.

MAIN FEATURES AND SERVICES THAT ATTRACT PUBLIC

Hulish is an ancient religious-sport festival. The organizers try to preserve both of these meanings. It is celebrated in the entire Svaneti in the form of religious rituals. Becho Community makes it particularly diverse with sports competitions. Hulish allows the contestants to demonstrate their bravery, quickness and stamina. The name of the winner riders becomes known in the entire Svaneti. The winner's reputation and his native community, village, and family strengthened. The praying population pray not only for Svaneti, but also for the entire Georgia, which is typical for all Svanetian religious festivals.

The sports competitions held during the festival are the aftermath of the traditional life during military actions. They create a chain of transmission of traditions and bring past images to life.

KEY PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

The festival is organized and facilitated by Becho Community. Nobody provides financial support except the community members. The leaders of Becho Community, representatives of all generations of the local community, are engaged in the celebration.

The partners directly participating in the festival include local folklore ensembles "Riho" and "Ushba". Sports teams arrive from various villages of Svaneti, as well as Kutaisi and Sachkhere.

PARTICIPANTS, LOCAL COMMUNITY AND CUSTOMER SEGMENT

The population of all communities of Svaneti gather at the festival of Hulish. As the festival is held in June, the tourists visiting Svaneti are also attracted. However, this happens on a random basis and in an unorganized manner.

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION CHANNELS

The main source of dissemination of information is social media. The organizers place announcements in crowded places. Guests are invited based on personal contacts.

Word-of-mouth recommendations from relatives and friends remain as the main source of dissemination of information. Also, video records of the event are posted on YouTube.

SPECIFIC ELEMENTS AND FEATURES

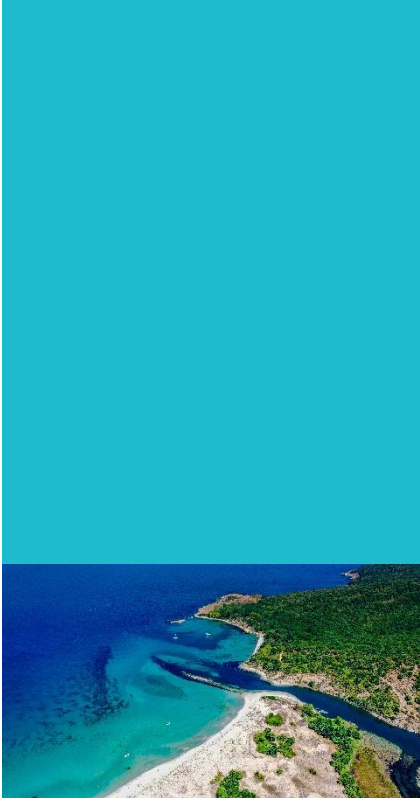
ACCESSIBILITY

The length of the motoroad from Tbilisi to Mestia is 463 km. Depending on the transport type, travel time ranges between 6-8 hours. Air flights are performed from Natakhtari airport to Mestia every day, except Sunday. The flight duration is 1 hour. Flight from Kutaisi to Mestia are performed every Monday and Friday. The flight duration is 3 hours.

There is a 25 km asphalted, easily passable road from Mestia to the venue.

LIAISON WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS OF THE BLACK SEA BASIN REGION

Historic festivals, as the mechanism of revival and preservation of local traditions, are popular in the countries selected within the Black Sea Basin project framework. Therefore, the inclusion of the event in the cultural route will contribute to its popularization.



The editor of the material: Georgian Arts and Culture Center

Address: Georgia, 0108 Tbilisi, 7 Niko Nikoladze str.

Phone: +995 5995 06448

E-mail: maka@gaccgeorgia.org

Website: www.gaccgeorgia.org

Joint Operational Programme Black Sea Basin 2014-2020

Georgian Arts and Culture Center

February 2022

Joint Operational Programme Black Sea Basin 2014-2020 is co-financed by the European Union through the European Neighbourhood Instrument and by the participating countries: Armenia, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Turkey and Ukraine.

This publication was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Georgian Arts and Culture Center and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.