



Project funded by
EUROPEAN UNION



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

Project No BSB-1145



LELOBURTI

(Traditions and Events)

Common borders. Common solutions.

BASIC INFORMATION

WHERE:

Leloburti is held in village Shukhuti located in Lanchkhuti Municipality, Guria region, West Georgia.

The area has been inhabited since antiquity. There was a fortified city there in the 6-7th centuries A.D. The name "Shukhuti" is first recorded in

the 1708 documents. According to tradition, it originated from the Turks, who called this place *ukhuti* ("impossible to conquer").



SCHEDULE:

Leloburti is held annually, on the day of Easter.



ORGANIZER AND CONTACT INFORMATION:



Name: Service for Education, Culture, Sport and Youth Affairs,
Lanchkhuti Municipality City Hall

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DESCRIPTION

Leloburti is the Georgian national sport - antecedent of rugby. According to the tradition, Leloburti has been played for almost three centuries and this game is an imitation of fighting the enemy.

The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia assigned the status of a monument of intangible cultural heritage to Leloburti. Lelo is the ancient Georgian word, literally meaning "field ball [playing]".



Researchers assume that this old game comes from ball playing. Lelo used to be played during folk-religious festivals in other



regions of Georgia too, but nowadays, it has been preserved in the form of a festival in Guria.

By the rules of Shukhuti Lelo, the ball can weigh 16-18 kg. It is made of cattle hide and then filled with Grigoleti sand and sawdust. Before stitching up, Aladasturi wine is poured into the ball and saved in Shukhuti church the night before the game. The area of playing Leloburti covers 400 meters to both sides of the centre of Shukhuti and is blocked by narrow

ravines. Shukhuti Leloburti does not have any special prize for winners.



Leloburti has simple rules, but it required a solid physical activity. Shukhuti residents are divided into two groups and perform a scrum. The winning team has to bring the ball to the cemetery in respect of the deceased person's soul.

KEY MESSAGE

Rugby is the most successful team sport in Georgia. That's why it's antecedent - Leloburti- is particularly popular. Shukhuti residents say that Leloburti is the village symbol and Shukhuti and Lelo are inseparable. Leloburti serves as a reminder of historic battle and "respect" of souls of the deceased. The audience is attracted by the excitement and traditional nature of the game.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Many locals participate in the preparation of Leloburti. These include representatives of culture and sport. In addition to the contest, children's music bands, local entrepreneurs, including souvenir producers, are presented. Together with Lelo playing, wrestling, chess and backgammon competitions are held on Easter. In addition, the band "Mkhedrebi" from Lanchkhuti perform Gurian songs.

Locals meet each other for one day at the traditional Easter liturgy. The liturgy continues all night long and is the most important day for the Orthodox people. Residents of Shukhuti and Lanchkhuti agree on the final details related to the upcoming game during the meeting. The next day, the residents gather to play Leloburti. At the same time, sports or musical events, exhibitions and fairs of locally produced items are held. In the evening, the priest of the local church tosses up the "Lelo" in the air, which is the sign of starting the game. The primary motivation of the players is that the winning team has to take the ball to the cemetery and place it on the grave of any recently deceased person permanently. The defeated team also goes to the cemetery together with the winners. The ball has never been lost from the grave. Lanchkhuti residents express respect for the past in such way.

EXPERIENTIAL AND INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Leloburti coincides with the Easter preparations and rituals, and therefore, the participants attend the liturgy and the church ceremonies.

In addition to Lelo, tourists can participate in other sports competitions too.

INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS

Leloburti is held in a traditional format and artistic innovations are less presented on the spot.

MAIN FEATURES AND SERVICES THAT ATTRACT PUBLIC

Leloburti is assigned the status of the monument of intangible cultural heritage, so holding this event is very important for preserving the tradition and passing it on to future generations. The event is also important in terms of place marketing - Leloburti is considered to be an antecedent of rugby. At the same time, the three-century tradition of celebrating Leloburti has been preserved in the memory of the population, making them arrive to their native village and participate in the competition on an annual basis.

KEY PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

The main sponsor of the event is Lanchkhuti Municipality City Hall. The partners directly participating in the event are the local ensemble "Mkhedrebi", the local church, various cultural and sport teams.

PARTICIPANTS, LOCAL COMMUNITY AND CUSTOMER SEGMENT

Kvemo and Zemo Shukhuti residents compete with each other in Leloburti. The local population and Lanchkhutians arriving from various cities of Georgia for Easter to participate in the event. Their relatives gather to watch the game. Leloburti is a local event. There are fewer visitors from Tbilisi and Batumi.

COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION CHANNELS

The primary source of spreading information about Leloburti is a word of mouth recommendations (from relatives and friends). Information is also disseminated via Internet and T.V. shows.

SPECIFIC ELEMENTS AND FEATURES

ACCESSIBILITY

The guests arrive to Shukhuti mainly by their own vehicles. However, it is also possible to get there by public transport: bus, mini-bus and train.

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

As the mechanism of revival and preservation of local traditions, traditional sports games are popular in the countries selected within the framework of the Black Sea Basin project. Therefore, the event's inclusion in the cultural route will contribute to its popularization.



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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.