



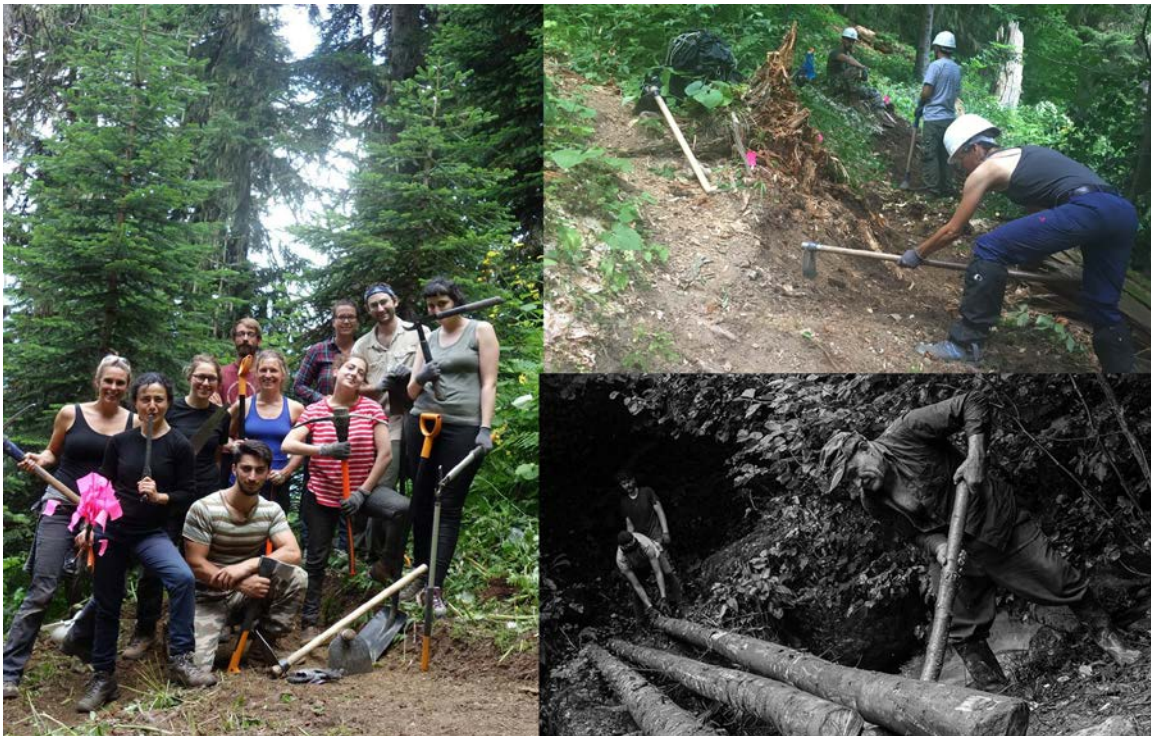
**Transcaucasian Trail Association  
Annual Report  
2017**

**In Georgia**, the Transcaucasian Trail Association (TCTA) organized a second summer of volunteer trail crews in Svaneti. The project built on the work of trail crews in the summer of 2016, improving a 75 km section of trail between Chuberi and Mestia in western Svaneti.

The improvement of the trails west of Mestia has created an opportunity for hikers to make a 3-4 day trek through remote mountain villages where there have been very few tourists, and the trail represents a significant opportunity to develop sustainable tourism in the area. This 75 km trek links to a 50 km trek from Mestia to Ushguli, which has become increasingly popular in recent years. In coming years, with planned improvements starting in 2018 on trails in Svaneti and Racha, a 200 km+ trek across the region, connecting the planned national parks of Upper Svaneti and Racha-Lechkhumi-Lower Svaneti will be possible.

In total, 58 volunteers participated in the 2017 Svaneti volunteer trail crews, 20 of the volunteers were Georgian and 38 were international volunteers, mostly from Europe and North America. Over the course of nine weeks in July and August, the trail crews built two kilometers of switchbacks above Tvebishi village in the Becho (Dolra) valley, which serve as an example of sustainable, user friendly trail design. They replaced a collapsing bridge between Tsaleri and Kichkhuldashi, and improved a bridge between Pari and Etseri. They rerouted several kilometers of trail and built switchbacks on landslide area between Tsaleri and Kichkhuldashi, and improved markings between Nakra and Becho. Overall, the trail is now marked and in good condition between Chuberi and Mestia (75 km). The total budget for Svaneti 2017 project: \$36,278

The trail guide for the Svaneti route is now available online [here](#).





**In Armenia**, the Transcaucasian Trail volunteer trail crews achieved better than expected results in developing a multi-day hiking route in Dilijan National Park and the surrounding area to meet internationally recognized standards of safety, sustainability and aesthetics.

The summer project was carried out by the “Transcaucasian Trail” Tourism Support NGO, with the support of the Harair & Anna Hovnanian Foundation, the Caucasus Nature Fund, and the Transcaucasian Trail Association.

In Dilijan, 95km of new routes have been developed (10km more than proposed), comprising 4-5 days of continuous hiking on the main route of the Transcaucasian Trail, plus an additional loop trail that doubles as an access route. These results can also be interpreted as 9 individual day-hikes of varying distances and levels of difficulty, which complement existing and proposed trails in the Park.

By using volunteers, the project created an opportunity for young people to gain expertise in trail building and maintenance. After the project ended, 38% of local volunteer participants were employed in trail development related positions in at least four different organizations. Finally, the Transcaucasian Trail has identified several follow-up projects and general recommendations for the attention of partners and stakeholders. The total budget for Armenia 2017 project: \$75,436

The trail guide for the Dilijan route is now available online [here](#).







### Promoting the TCT and the region

The Transcaucasian Trail project and the organizations working on it were recognized in a number of media outlets through out the year as well as the Adventure Travel Conference in London, which awarded the TCT it's [2017 Innovation of the Year Award](#). Tom Allen [presented the Transcaucasian Expedition](#) to a packed house at the Royal Geographical Society in London in February and Paul Stephens [presented the Transcaucasian Trail concept](#) at TEDx Tbilisi in October. International media coverage for the TCT this year included:



["Thru-hiking Goes International with These New Long-Distance Trails"](#) Outside Magazine, June 2017



["How Armenia Plans To Become The Next World Class Hiking Destination"](#) Smithsonian Magazine, October 2017



["What it's like to trek across two countries on a trail that doesn't yet exist?"](#) Lonely Planet News, November 2017



["Adventurer sparks Eurasian rebirth of hiking tourism"](#) Nikkei Asian Review, October 2017

### Harnessing the power of an international community

In 2017, more than 90 individuals contributed financially to the work of Transcaucasian Trail Association from 16 different countries. This included donors, members, and volunteers, the latter who additionally covered the costs of their food and transportation during trail building camps by paying a volunteer fee.

<b>TCTA 2017 REVENUE</b>		<b>\$56,959.14</b>
Total contributions		\$53,959.14
Volunteer fees		\$29,504.14
Membership		\$2,710.00
Fundraising tour fees		\$6,300.00
Other contributions		\$15,445.00
Sale of Automobile		\$3,000.00
Carry-over from 2016		\$218.00
<b>EXPENSES</b>		<b>\$56,836.14</b>
TCTA Operating Expenses		\$8,940.66



TCT Svaneti Project Expenses		\$36,277.94
TCT Fundraising Tour Expenses		\$2,097.54
Grants to TCT Armenia NGO		\$9,520.00

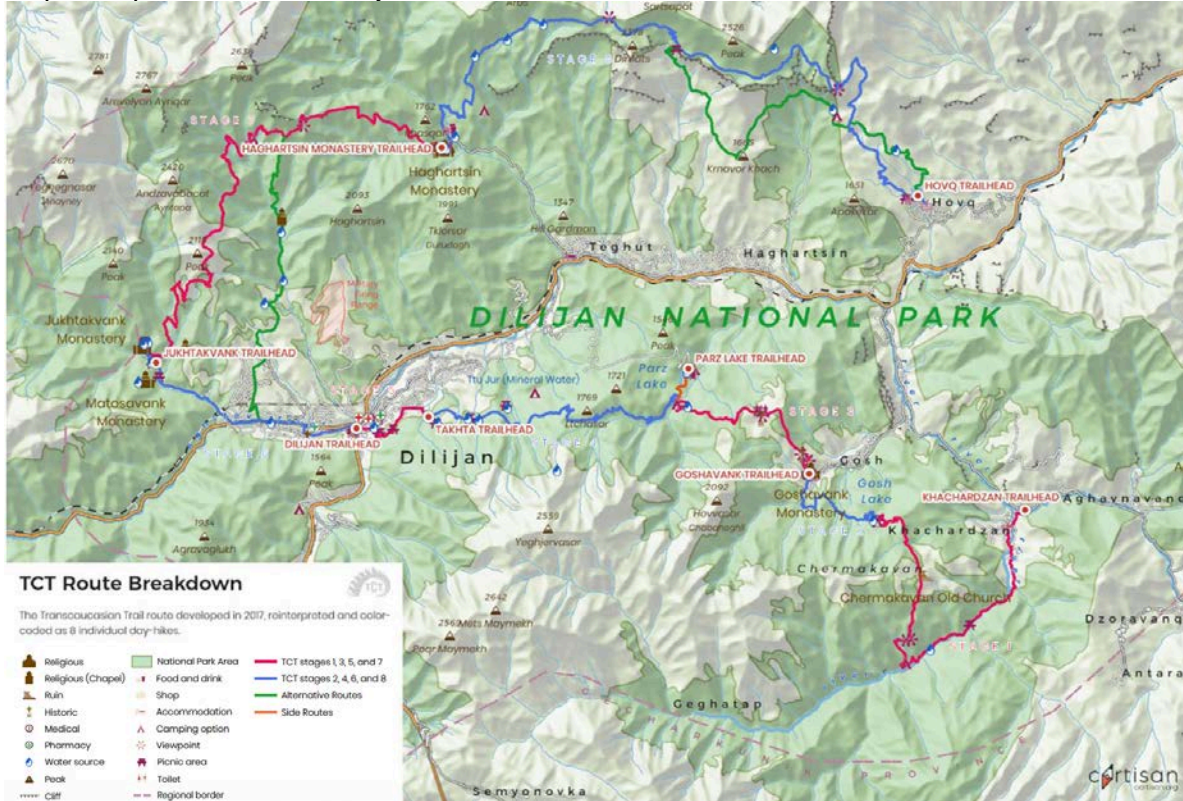
### **Building local partnerships**

The *Transcaucasian Trail* NGO of Georgia was officially registered in November. This local NGO joins the *Transcaucasian Trail Tourism Support* NGO of Armenia as one of the TCTA's local partners in the region. These organizations will be responsible for carrying forward the vision, movement, and development of the trail in their respective countries with the support of the TCTA and other stakeholders. The project in Armenia also spurred the formation of another local organization called Trails for Change, founded by professional trail builder and TCT crew leader Hans Keifer. Trails for Change will focus on training Armenians in sustainable trail design, construction, and maintenance.

Several members of the board of directors of the TCTA were able to visit the project sites in Armenia and Georgia. Matt Stephens visited Svaneti in June, Laura Linderman volunteered on the Svaneti project in August, and James Scipioni visited Dilijan in September. Paul Stephens, the Executive Director of the TCTA, served as the project manager for the Svaneti trail building camps. He also provided organizational support for the Dilijan project and made site visits in June and October.

*A special thanks from the TCTA goes towards all our wonderful volunteers, members, donors and other individuals who have contributed time and energy to the Transcaucasian Trail movement in ways large and small. And our sincere gratitude to the local communities and hospitable families along the trail supporting for supporting our work and vision.*

Map of improved route in Dilijan:



Map of improved route in Svaneti:

