

TCT Rangers

Guidelines for Mapping Routes in the Caucasus

There is a great need for mapping hiking routes in the Caucasus, both for developing official trails like the TCT and for hiking enthusiasts who want to get off the beaten path. So thanks for your help in contributing, and welcome to the TCT Ranger team!

The aim is to enable better maps and better information for hiking in the region. This information will help us identify the best routes for the Transcaucasian Trail.

We want you to hike – established routes, new routes – and to explore, finding great walks, great spots, and useful information. And we want you to share this information, not only with us, but with the public as well.

What information is useful? When you go on a hike, you may end up somewhere that no one has gone before – well maybe not somewhere no one has been, but at least somewhere that no one has mapped. What does it mean to map? Mapping means taking a GPS (or a Smartphone) with you on your hike and recording the trail that you walk. It also means saving points on your device for important locations, such as water sources, campsites, or places where the trail diverges and you should turn left instead of right. It is also helpful to take a few notes, so that later on you can write a description of the trail – where it begins, where it is easy or hard, where to fill up your water bottle, where to turn, and so on. Lastly, photos are always great!

Ways to share your hikes:

GPSies

GPSies.com is a website where anyone can upload a hike and add waypoints, descriptions, and photos. This is our preferred platform for sharing what you collect. Use their platform to upload your data, route description and photos. Include “(TCT Ranger)” in the title or description of your hike so we know that you’ve contributed. Note that there is a GPSies app for iPhone and Android which allows you find existing routes and record your own. To sign up for an account and learn how it works visit gpsies.com.

OpenStreetMap

A second place where you can add your information is OpenStreetMap, or OSM. OSM is an open source map of the world, and forms the basemap for a lot of our mapping and scouting activities. While it is not useful for adding photos or trail descriptions, it is a great second place to record hiking paths, road information, and points of interest like water sources or campgrounds. If you are able, we encourage you to map using this platform as well. For more information visit openstreetmap.org.

Email

If the above options are too difficult to learn, but you still have tracks and waypoints from your hikes that could be of use to us, don't let them go to waste! Please send them to us by email (info@transcaucasiantrail.org) along with any notes, descriptions, and photos that go along with the route. We will be setting up a TCT Rangers email group in the coming months for discussion on routes and places to explore. Let us know your interest and we'll add you to the group as soon as it is formed.

Wikiloc

This is a platform very similar to GPSies, which some contributors may use already. While we encourage the use of GPSies as a central repository for hiking routes in the Caucasus, if you are already a user of Wikiloc and prefer to use it, feel free to post your routes there instead.

So in short, when you are exploring a route, take the following steps:

1. Check to see if the route has already been mapped. Look on OpenStreetMap, GPSies, and Wikiloc. Even if it has been mapped, there is probably more information that you can add – like improved descriptions and waypoints.
2. Go hiking. Remember to record the trip with your GPS or smartphone app. Take notes in a notebook or on your phone – the more the better!
3. Add the route to GPSies along with your route description.
4. If you have time, add any useful data to OpenStreetMap as well.
5. Let us know about it! Email us or even better, tweet @transcaucasiant with a link to your route.

Questions? Or looking for a good area to explore? Send us an email at info@transcaucasiantrail.org.