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**ALBANIA**

GO YOUR OWN WAY

# Discover Albania

Explore the beauties of albanian  
nature and its cultural heritage sites





# Discover Albania



# ALBANIA

GO YOUR OWN WAY





# Contents

## 04

### Introduction

General Data  
Geography  
Climate  
Population and Language  
History  
Religion  
Political Structure  
Economy  
National Holidays

## 16

### Albanian Nature

Albanian Coast  
Rivers and Lakes  
Mountain Tourism  
Flora and Fauna

## 34

### National Heritage

Archaeological Parks  
UNESCO Sites  
Cultural Monuments  
Folklore and Iso-polyphony

Handicrafts  
Literature and Arts  
Cinematography  
Theatre  
Opening Hours of Museums and  
Archaeological Parks

## 62

### Practical Information

How to travel to Albania  
By Air (Rinas Airport)  
By Sea (ports)  
By Land (Land Border Crossing  
Points)  
RENT A CAR Companies  
Interurban Transport (departure  
points)  
Potable Water  
Working Hours of the Albanian  
Administration  
Banks and monetary system  
Stores  
What can you buy in Albania  
Social tips and advice/caution  
Mobile phone services  
Border Formalities  
Emergency Number

# ► Introduction



“Welcome to Albania!”

A board at “Mother Teresa” airport  
welcomes you to the “Land of the Eagles”.  
It is Called “Albania” by foreigners, where  
hospitality is a centuries-old tradition and  
reality turns into a fantasy



With its favorable climate, that offers opportunities for many tourism activities, the diversified landscape, where are combined sandy and shallow beaches of Adriatic Sea with small and deep beaches of Ionian Sea, large and small Lakes, fields and river valleys, high snowy mountains, with an ancient history, rich with archaeological parks, castles, medieval monuments, cities with typical architecture, Albania is a tourist destination to be visited!

## GENERAL DATA



**AREA:** 28,748KM<sup>2</sup>

**CAPITAL CITY:** TIRANA

**POPULATION:** 3,150,886 INHABITANTS

**LANGUAGE:** ALBANIAN

**CURRENCY:** LEKË

**POLITICAL SYSTEM:** PARLIAMENTARY  
DEMOCRACY

**FLAG:** BLACK DOUBLE-HEADED EAGLE  
ON RED BACKGROUND

**INTERNATIONAL AREA CODE:** 00355



Gjirokastra ◀

Located on the Balkan Peninsula in southeastern Europe, Albania is located near to the main European markets and can be visited easily by air, land and sea. Albania lies in the subtropical belt and is included also in the Mediterranean climate, with relatively short and mild winter and hot and dry summer. The climate of Albania varies a lot from one region to another with big contrasts in terms of temperature, rainfalls, solar

lighting, air humidity, etc. The annual rainfall is averagely 1,430mm per year, decreasing from west to the east. It is believed that the prehistoric flow of Albanians is from a very ancient Indo-European tribe, which the Greek historian Herodotus described as the "Pelasgians". They are considered as direct descendants of an ancient Illyrian tribe called "Albans", who settled in today's Albania. Others believe that Albanians and Illyrians are direct descendants of the Pelasgians, who lived thousands of years before Christ. Through this guide we aim to provide you practical information on our country, which will somehow come to your help during your travel and stay in Albania. This brochure contains information about the geographic position, population, history, climate, national parks, museums, coastline, forests, language, religion, most attractive tourist sites, information on border crossings points, etc. In addition, visitors can find information on how to come to Albania, suggestions and accommodation in various hotels and



Albanian Alps ◀

houses for rent that meet all tourists' needs. "The sun in Albania never sets and Albania will never fade as a tourist attraction."

### Geography

Republic of Albania has a total area of 28,748km<sup>2</sup>. It lies in Southeastern Europe, in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula, with a significant seafront by Adriatic and Ionian seas. It is located between the geographical coordinates: 39° 38' - 42° 16' north geographical latitude and 19° 16' - 21° 04' east geographical longitude. The extreme points of the geographic area of the Republic of Albania are: Vermosh in the north, Konispol in the south, Sazan Island in the west and Vernik village in Devoll district in the east. The airline

**THE MAJORITY OF THE ALBANIAN TERRITORY (2/3 OF THE SURFACE) IS OCCUPIED BY MOUNTAINS AND HILLS. SUCH PREVALENCE OF MOUNTAINS AND HILLS CREATES VERY FAVORABLE NATURAL CONDITIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SEVERAL MOUNTAIN TOURISM TYPES**

distance between North and South is 355 km and 150 km from east to west. Albania is bordered by Montenegro in the north, Kosovo in the Northeast, with Macedonia in the east and with Greece in the south and Southeast. In the west the country is surrounded by

## Climate

Albania has a typical Mediterranean climate, with hot and dry summer and relatively mild and humid winters. However, as a result of the rugged terrain, the country has many microclimates. The average annual temperature in the northern and north-eastern part of the country reaches 7.5°C, while in the Albanian coast 17.5°C. In the central regions of the country, the average temperatures in January vary from -3 to 2°C, while at the coast it reaches 10°C.

Albania is known for a large number of sunny days. Normally, 80-90 percent of the days annually are sunny. On average there are 2,200 hours of sunshine per year, while the largest number of sunny hours is in the area of Fier, with 2730 hours per year. Due to these characteristics, the beach season lasts from 4 to 5 months a year. Therefore Albania can be considered quite a "sunny" country. Such indicator makes it attractive to a broad category of visitors, who come especially from Northern European

the waters of the Adriatic and Ionian sea. The Strait of Otranto, 72 km wide only, separates Albania from Italy. Albania's coastline length, including lagoons area, is 450 km. Albania is divided into four physical-geographical units which are: Albanian Alps, Central Mountainous Region, Southern Mountainous Region and Western lowlands. The majority of the Albanian territory (2/3 of the surface) is occupied by mountains and hills. Such prevalence of mountains and hills creates very favorable natural conditions for the development of several mountain tourism types. There are over 10 peaks that exceed the height of 2,000 meters above the sea level. The highest mountain peak of the country is Korab, which rises in the north-eastern part of the country, in the region of Dibër along the border with Macedonia. The highest peak of this mountain reaches 2,750 meters above sea level. Spectacular and highly preferred by tourists are the



Berat ◀

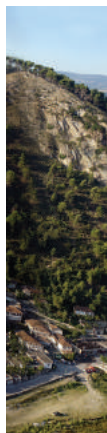
Albanian Alps in northern Albania, along the border with Montenegro and Kosovo. The rest of Albanian territory 1/3 is occupied by lowlands, which lie in the western part of the country and in Korça area. The country is rich with large and small lakes. The Lake of Shkodra, with an

countries.

As a result of the considerable terrain covered by the mountains, Albania possesses areas covered by a thick layer of snow, which lasts up to 100 days a year. Only in the area of Vermosh in the Albanian Alps, the layer of snow reaches 70cm of thickness and lasts from October to May. These features create very good opportunities for the development of the white tourism and winter sports. It is worth mentioning that the climate of Albania is an important natural factor for tourism development.



Albanian Riviera ◀



area of 370km<sup>2</sup>, is the largest lake of the entire Balkan Peninsula. The Ohrid Lake, with a maximum depth of nearly 300 meters, is the deepest lake in the Balkans and the Prespa Lake represents the highest tectonic lake of the Balkan Peninsula. These lakes are located at the border with the neighboring countries.

The coast is one of the main and most important assets for the tourism industry. The Albanian Adriatic Sea is noted for its sandy and shallow beaches, which are very suitable for family vacations. The Ionian coast, also called the “Albanian Riviera”, stretching from Vlora to Saranda, is well-known for its beautiful and attractive coastline, small and intimate beaches and above all, the high quality of marine waters. This coast is rocky and mainly harsh, with craggy mountains that fall sloping into the sea.

Such a geographical position of Albania is considered very favorable for its overall development, especially for the tourism. Therefore, Albania is often referred to as the “gateway to the Balkans”, or “a linking bridge in the Southeastern Europe”. The most important roads connecting the East and the West of the Southeastern Europe have traditionally crossed and currently cross through Albanian territory.

## Population and language

The Albanian population is approximately 3.2 million inhabitants, with a density of 113 inhabitants per square meter. The Albanian population is generally young and it is distinguished for its vitality. The most populated parts of the country are the area of the capital city, the port of Durrës and generally the western lowlands of the country.



*Butrinti; (bottom right) National Hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu* ◀

Albania is a country with a homogeneous population. The minorities represent about 3 percent of the population. The largest one is the Greek minority (located in the southern part of the country, in the provinces of Dropull, Pogon and Vurg). Other minorities are the Macedonians, located in the area of the Great Prespa Lake, Serbian, Roma etc. The largest population is concentrated in the cities of Tirana, Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodra, Vlorë, Korça etc. Other cities of tourist importance are Berat, Gjirokastra, Saranda, Kruja and Pogradec. The official language is Albanian. It constitutes a special and original branch of Indo-European family. Albanian language is a sequel of the Illyrian language and it's without doubt one of the oldest languages spoken in the European continent. Its vocabulary contains words from other

languages like Turkish, Greek, Latin and Slavic languages, but it has preserved its originality as an unique language. Albanian language is recognized for its two distinct dialects, which are: "Gheg" and "Tosk". Shkumbini river, which divides the country into two almost equal parts, is the natural border of these two dialects. Gheg dialect is spoken in the North, while Tosk is spoken in the South. The Albanian alphabet has 36 letters.

### History

Albania is considered as one of the regions with the most ancient population traces in the Balkans and Europe. There are precisely the evidences of numerous archaeological findings in different parts of the Albanian regions, such as those of Xara in Saranda, nearby Shkodra, at Dajti

Mountain, Prizren etc., that prove for traces of ancient population on Albanian territory. By studying these archaeological objects, it has been proved that the first Albanian settlements have started to be inhabited in the middle of the Paleolithic period (100,000 to 40,000 years BC). Likewise, during the Neolithic period (6000 - 2600 BC), it's indicated a much more dense population on Albanian territories. This is noted in the archaeological excavations, carried out in the area of Korça, where 12 settlements are found belonging to this period. Such settlements have also been discovered in Cakran, Kolonjë, in the valley of the Black Drin River in Mat, in Përmet etc.

The Indo-European population settled here at the beginning of the III millennium BC. As a result of this merger, a new population was created in the Balkan Peninsula (Pelasgians), which preserved the specific cultural and language characteristics.

This ancient population became the ancestors of the Illyrians between the II Millennium and I century B.C. After its fall in the year 30 B.C., and at the end of three Illyrian-Roman wars, Illyria fell under the control of the latter. After the division of the Roman Empire (395 B.C.), Illyria became part of the Byzantine Empire.

Although they were under Roman conquest the Illyrians retained their language and traditions for centuries.

"Via Egnatia", the most important trade route between Rome and Constantinople (Byzantium), passed through the port of Durrës.

The first three Byzantine emperors (Anastasius I, Justin and Justinian I) were of Illyrian origin. The attacks by Barbarian migrating tribes (Visigoths, Huns, Ostrogoths and Slavs) continued during the V and VI century. In 1344, Albania was under the rule of the Serbian Kingdom. After its fall in the war against Turkey in 1389, the Arbëresh principalities were created. The Principality of Balshaj was the most important one. The region was open to the Ottoman attacks, which gradually managed to take Arbëria under the rule. The culmination of the anti-Ottoman resistance reached during the years 1443-1468, when the Albanian national hero Gjergj Kastriot Skanderbeg

led the revolt of the Albanians against the Ottomans. During this period, Arbëria turned into a key factor in the entire Europe. After the formation of a coalition of Arbër Feudal in the Historical League of Lezha, held on March 2nd, 1444, the National Hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg, led for 25 years the resistance against





*Monument of Independence in Vlorë* ◀

the Ottoman threat. There were three Ottoman attacks on Kruja, all of which failed and only 10 years after the death of Skanderbeg, in 1478, they finally managed to capture Kruja. For more than 400 years, Albania was under the Ottoman regime. Albanian Resistance continued during the subsequent periods, being inspired especially by the Illuminist movement of the Albanian National Renaissance, which emerged in XIX century. Successive revolts and efforts reached their peak with the proclamation of the National Independence on November 28th, 1912. The Assembly of Vlorë established the first Albanian government led by Ismail Qemali. During the First World War, which broke out in 1914, Albania turned into a battlefield for different occupation troops, such as Austrian-Hungarian, Italian and French troops. The Congress of Lushnjë, held in 1920, aimed to maintain the territorial integrity of Albania after the First World War. This Congress proclaimed Tirana as the capital of Albania. In the same year, Albania adhered to the “League

of Nations”. After a period of political turmoil in 1924, the country went through a bourgeois-democratic revolution and immediately after it, the country was led by the government of Fan Noli. In 1928, the country was declared a monarchy under King Zog I. The latter pursued a policy of rapprochement with Italy and Great Britain, but without being able to avoid a military occupation of Albania by Italian fascists. On April 7th, 1939, the country was occupied by Mussolini’s troops, putting an end to the monarchy regime that lasted 11 years. In 1943, the country was occupied by Hitler’s Nazi forces. The resistance to foreign attacks is known as Anti-Fascist National Liberation Front. The end of World War II brought into force the Stalinist regime of Enver Hoxha.

For about 50 years, the totalitarian regime followed a policy of isolation, leaving the country in economic poverty and totally isolated from the international community. Its economic policy was based on the principle of “relying on its own forces”, by banning loans and credits

from abroad. This situation continued until 1991 when Albania, as a consequence of new winds that blew in Eastern Europe, eventually emerged from isolation. Since 1991, Albania holds pluralistic elections. The Socialist Party, along with its allies, is currently in power since 2013. Since 2009, Albania adhered to NATO as a member with full rights. The country is now undergoing a series of reforms, which aim the integration of Albania into the European Community.

### Religious faith

There are four official religious beliefs in Albania. These belong to the Muslim (Sunni), Orthodox, Catholic and Bektashi. The Muslim belief is widespread across the country. Catholics are concentrated in the northern part of the country, the Orthodox ones are in the south and center of the country, and the Bektashi sect is found in some specific regions such as Skrapar, Krujë, Elbasan, Mat, Mallakastër, Korçë etc. The right to freedom of religion is guaranteed by the Albanian Constitution. Albania is a secular state where religious authorities are separated from the state. Besides the official religions, it has also followers of other religions as those of Baha'is, Evangelists, Jehovah's Witnesses, etc. Likewise there are also atheists and non-religious people. Albania became a unique case in Europe in 1967, since all kinds of religions were banned by closing down churches, mosques, religious schools and tekkes. For about 23 years, Albania was the only atheist country in the world. In 1990,

after the democratic movement, the freedom of religion was restored and all the churches and mosques were rebuilt, as well as many other objects of religion. Albania offers several types of religious pilgrimages. The most important are those in honor of Shna Nues (St. Anthony) on 13 June at the Church of Lac, the pilgrimage of Abas Ali on 19 August in Tomori Mountain, the one in honor of St. Mary on 15 August in some of the churches across the country, the pilgrimage in honor of Sari Salltiku in Kruja, etc.



Church in Berat; (top) Mosque in Shkodra ◀

## NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

**JANUARY 1 & 2** - NEW YEAR

**MARCH 14** - SUMMER DAY

**MARCH 22** - NEVRUZ DAY

**MAY 1** - INTERNATIONAL WORKER'S DAY

**OCTOBER 19** - MOTHER TERESA  
BEATIFICATION DAY

**NOVEMBER 28** - INDEPENDENCE DAY

**NOVEMBER 29** - LIBERATION DAY

**DECEMBER 8** - NATIONAL YOUTH DAY

**DECEMBER 25** - CHRISTMAS

## RELIGIOUS FEASTS

(ACCORDING TO THE RESPECTIVE CALENDAR)

ARE ALSO NATIONAL HOLIDAYS:

1. CATHOLIC EASTER
2. ORTHODOX EASTER
3. THE DAY OF EID AL FITR (EID FITTER)
4. EID AL ADHA

## Political structure

The Republic of Albania is based on a pluralist democratic system. The highest figure in the country, the President, is elected every five years by the parliament. The parliament is elected every four years by people's vote and the executive power is exercised by the Council of Ministers, which is chaired by the Prime Minister. Local governments are led by officials elected directly and proportionately.

## Economy

The Albanian economy is based on the following most important sectors: construction, hydro energy, agriculture, garment industry, extractive industry, services and transport. In the private sector



operate more than 60,000 enterprises. Most of these enterprises are based in Tirana and in the largest cities of the country. Similarly, the agricultural economy is almost completely privatized in over 400,000 small private family enterprises located in the countryside. Regarding mineral reserves, Albania is rich



*Port of Durres, biggest in Albania* ◀

in chrome (reserves which are estimated to rank Albania third in the world after the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Africa), copper, bitumen, iron, nickel, oil etc. Of a major importance in Albania are hydro reserves. Albania ranks second in Europe after Norway, regarding the hydro reserves per capita. Over 95

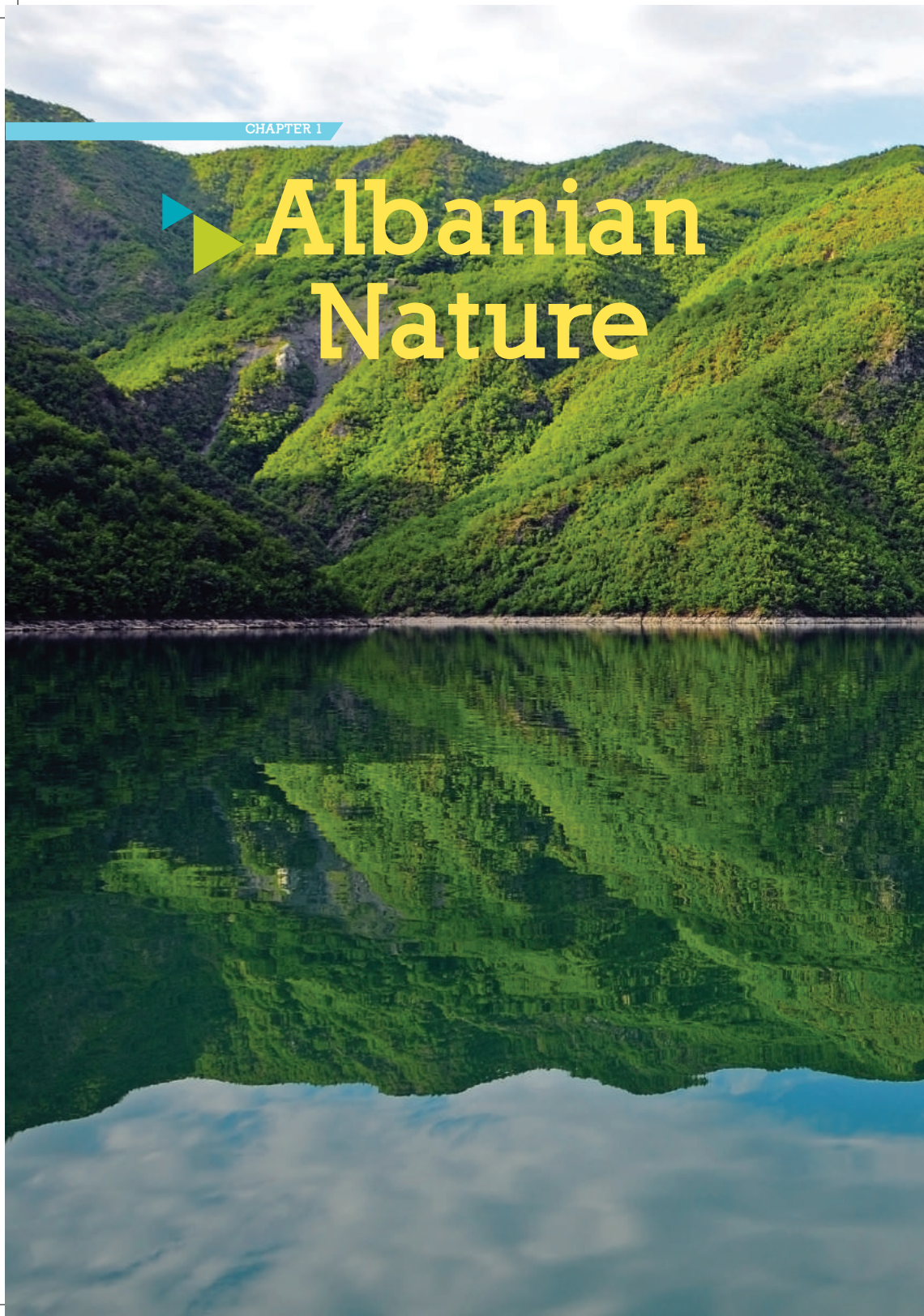
percent of electricity is generated by hydropower plants. The largest cascades are over Drin River. There are projects for further utilization of these resources for power generation.

Very rapid developments have been observed in recent years in the sectors of construction, transport, trade, tourism, etc.



CHAPTER 1

# ▶ Albanian Nature





## Albanian coast

Albanian coastline has a considerable length of 450 km, including even the lagoons area. The coast has a particular character because it is rich in varieties of sandy beaches, capes, hidden bays, lagoons, small gravel beaches, sea caves etc. Some parts of the coast are very clean ecologically, which represent in this context unexplored areas, still virgin in the Mediterranean basin



*Ionian Coast from Llogara; (bottom right) Phalacrocorax Carbo ◀*

The Albanian coast starts in the north at the Buna River estuary, which marks the Albania-Montenegro border. Precisely here, as a result of the river's alluvions, it is formed the small island of Franz Joseph which, depending on the flow, turns also into a peninsula. This is an important natural object, especially because of the presence of waterfowls and vegetations contained therein. Its vegetation is of the type of coppice, dominated by poplar trees, alder and other timbers. Woodcock prevails, regarding the birds. Franz Joseph is a very favourable place for those who love nature and prefer to stay away from the noise. The estuary of Buna River is part of RAMSAR International Convention. The country's northern beach is that of **Velipoja**, situated 22 km away from Shkodra. Velipoja is a sandy beach, 4 km

long, distinguished for the high quality of sand. There are 250 sunny days in this area and the days with a temperature above 20°C normally start by the middle of May. The beach is suitable for family vacations and is frequented in general by vacationers of north Albanian areas. Near Velipoja beach is situated the lagoon of Viluni with an area of 130 hectares. This is a very important natural ecosystem for the breeding of waterfowls; 183 species of birds are found in it. There it is situated also a legally hunting area of 700 hectares near Velipoja beach.

**Shëngjini Beach** is another sandy beach in the district of Lezha. It is situated only 8 km away from the city of Lezha. Shëngjini is well-known for the quality of its sand. This beach has 200 to 300 sunny days a year. In the north of Shëngjin, near to

the Renci hills, lies protected from the winds, the wonderful beach called “Rana e Hedhun”. Lezha Coast has an excellent natural ecosystem for the development of ecotourism, observation of the birds, etc. The area of Drini River estuary as a result of the wind direction, it is very suitable for “surfing”. At Drini estuary is located the System of

**Kune-Vain lagoons**, where many waterfowls nests. Two lagoons are located here, the one of Ceka with an area of 235 hectares and the one called Merxhani with an area of 77 hectares. The biggest surprise for tourists is the Kunë sandy island, with an area of 125 hectares, on the right of the delta of Drini River. The Kunë Island is covered with lush vegetation of hygrophytes. Green Mediterranean shrubs grow there, such as lianas, willows, ash, etc. In this area you can find 227 species of plants. Regarding the wild life, we can mention wild ducks, pheasants, woodpeckers, phalacrocorax carbo, heron, anas Penelope, etc. In this lagoon system are found 70 species of birds; 22 reptiles, from 33 throughout Albania; 6 species of amphibians, from 15 species in total in Albania; and 23 species of mammals.

In the south of Kunë, in Tale area, are located other less frequented beaches by the tourists.

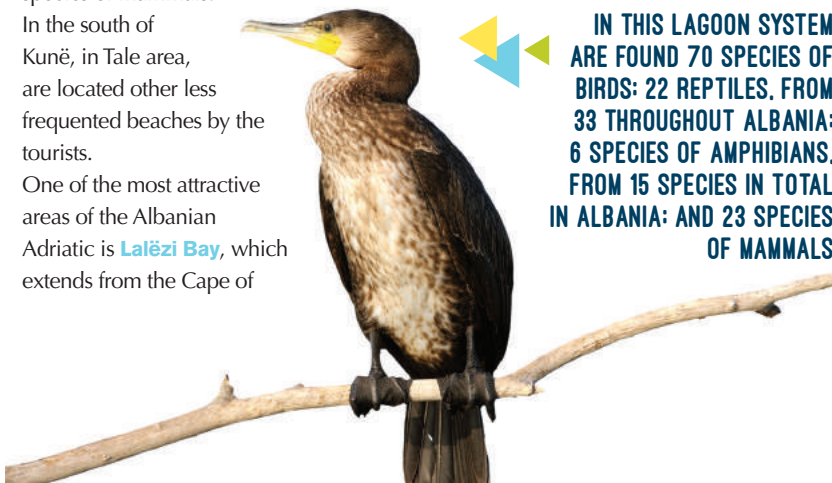
One of the most attractive areas of the Albanian Adriatic is **Lalëzi Bay**, which extends from the Cape of

Rodoni to Bishti i Pallës. The Cape of Rodoni, which limits the bay from the north, is of great natural beauty that enters the sea at the length of 7.5 km. Cape of Rodoni is one of the most interesting places of the Albanian coast for practicing underwater diving

The beaches of Lalëzi Bay are sandy, some of which are surrounded by a belt of natural vegetation of coniferous forests. It is worth to refer the beaches of Shën Pjetri and Rushkull, which are distinguished for the purity of sea waters.

**Durrësi beach**, which is only 39 km away from Tirana, the capital of Albania, is the largest and most populated beach of the country. It is 6 km long with a considerable wide sand belt. The sea depth increases gradually, thus making this beach suitable for children and family holidays. The position of Durrësi bay makes it very protected by the winds. In Durrësi beach are situated the biggest number of tourist facilities like hotels, motels, villas complex, bars, restaurants, discos, etc. Over the last few years, this beach has not only been frequented from the capital daily tourists, but also

**IN THIS LAGOON SYSTEM  
ARE FOUND 70 SPECIES OF  
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33 THROUGHOUT ALBANIA;  
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FROM 15 SPECIES IN TOTAL  
IN ALBANIA: AND 23 SPECIES  
OF MAMMALS**



from tourists coming from Kosovo and Macedonia. In the north of the city of Durrës, on the foot of its hills, is located the famous beach of Currila, where sea waters are deep blue and the beach is well protected from hot winds coming from the land. The beaches of Golemi and that of Mali i Robit are almost an extension of the beach of Durrës, as they have common features. Here you can find the presence of pine forests, which decorate the seaside. Same as in Durrësi beach, the number of tourist facilities is quite large here (hotels, complexes, restaurants). Regarding the beaches belonging to Kavaja District, it is worthy to mention Karpen and Spillenjë beaches, which are distinguished for the high quality of sand, pure sea waters and dense vegetation of pine trees (Spillenja beach). Recently, investments are made in this area in order to create the conditions for accommodation of tourists.

**The Cape of Lagji** closes Durrës bay on the south. It is a natural place suitable for divers. Nearby can be found small beaches of rare beauty, such as Bardhori and Gjenerali beach. Bardhori is a rocky beach, while Gjeneral is surrounded by lush vegetation. It looks like a natural amphitheatre. Both are isolated beaches, very quiet ones, with high quality marine waters.

Undoubtedly, one of the most beautiful natural places of the Albanian coast is **the beach of Divjaka** and **the Lagoon of Karavasta**. Divjaka sandy beach, the forest and the lagoon constitute a natural complex with a great tourist



importance. Divjaka forest stretches from mouth of Seman river up to the estuary of Shkumbini river. The Lagoon has an area of 4,330 hectares, being the largest lagoon in the entire Albanian coast. It is one of 12 National Parks of Albania and it has a special importance in terms of its biodiversity. The Lagoon of Karavasta is the western extreme point in Europe, where the Dalmatian Pelican (*pelicanus crispus*) can nest. Here can be found 5 percent of its world population. It is due to these qualities, that since 1994, the Lagoon is under the protection of international RAMSAR Convention. It's a



*The Lagoon of Karavasta* ◀

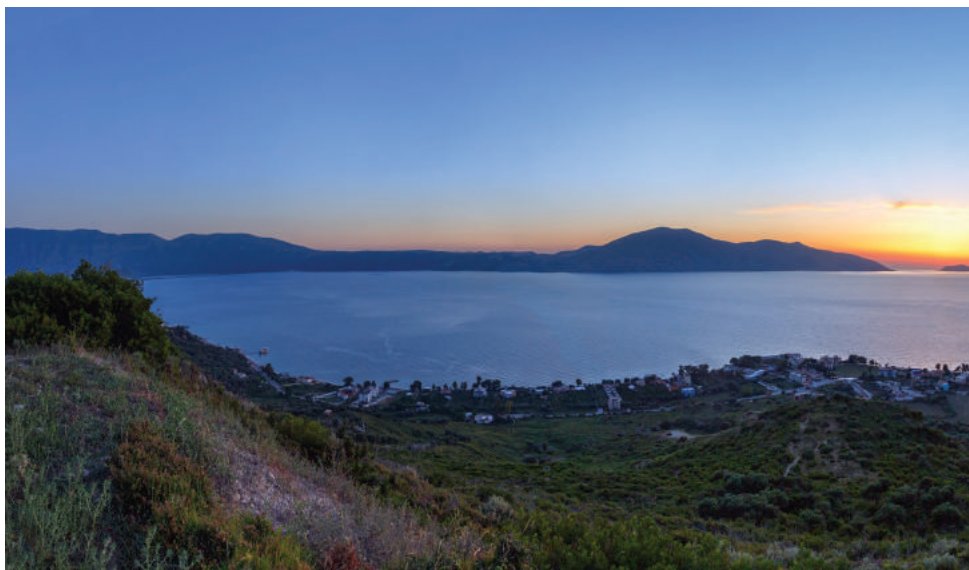
very interesting experience watching these pelicans, while coming by boat to the island in the lagoon where they usually sit. This ecosystem is home to 210 species of birds, 12 species of mammals and 16 species of reptiles. The waters of the lagoon, which reach a maximum depth of 1.5 meters, are rich in fish, where the main catches are mullet and eel, which are offered in many restaurants at Divjaka beach. The National Park vegetation of Divjaka is known for its unique beauty and freshness. The coniferous surfaces prevail here, such as soft and wild pine. The pines with large crown, shaped as an

umbrella, are very noticeable. The forest has different categories of plants ranging from herbs to high woods. It is noted for the firs, ashes, etc. Divjaka's Beach sand has a significant content of iodine and temperatures over 20°C starting from the second half of May to continue until beginning of October. This is an area where beach activities are combined with ecotourism.



*The Lagoon of Narta* ◀

The estuary of Vjosa River, located further in the south, constitutes a protected natural area in both sides of the river called the area of Pish Poro Fier and Vlora. This is a natural area with coastal pines, sandy secluded beaches and favourable nesting location for aquatic birds. In the south of Vjosa estuary is located **the Lagoon of Narta**, with an area of 4,180 hectares, being the second largest lagoon in Albania. The belt of the land, which separates the lagoon from the sea, is covered by a pine forest. Narta Lagoon is another natural ecosystem with possibilities for development of



ecotourism, poultries observation, fishing, etc. It represents the second largest lagoon in Albania regarding the presence of waterfowls. Narta lagoon is home to 195 species of poultries. Only during the winter season, 48,700 water birds build here their nests. They constitute 23 percent of the winter birds that come in Albania. Thousands of different ducks arrivals are noticed. There are also present the whitetail eagle, flamingos, pilgrims hawk, the black claws falcon, etc. The area of Narta is well-known for its handicraft production of high quality wine. In the future, natural tourism in the lagoon can be combined with the "wine tour" produced here. In the waters of lagoon are grown various types of fishes, such as eel and bass of Narta.

## Vlora

**Vlora** is the second biggest harbour of the country and one of the most important tourist places, which mainly offers the product "sun & sea". The area near the town, along the beaches of Vlora bay, is distinguished for the new and modern hotels and other facilities such as bars, restaurants, disco-clubs etc. This is one of the most intensive tourist areas of the country. The tourist area starts immediately in the south of the city, across the small, rocky beaches of Vlora bay. These are beaches with a very interesting configuration. In front of these beaches lies the Karaburun Peninsula, the largest peninsula of the coast and also Sazan island, that is also the largest island of Albania.



Orikum Beach and Karaburun Peninsula ◀

This configuration makes the beaches of Vlora bay quite protected from the winds. Jonufri beaches are located in this area of Vlora bay, which stretch to Dukat stream, close to the small town of Orikum. The beach is surrounded by a hilly area, covered with citrus, which contrasts nicely with the blue waters of the sea.

In south of Vlora's bay you can visit **Orikum**, where recently is established a harbour for yachts. The Orikum beach has a length of 2 km. In this area you can visit also Rrapi and Pana sea caves. All this area can be of interest for underwater explorations, because of archaeological remains and sunken ships. Such is the Italian ship "Po" sunk in 1941 during the Italian - Greek war.

It is also said that Julius Caesar sank the ships that his troops brought during the pursuit of Pompey. A suitable area for diving and observing the different algae is the one called "Cold Water", while Zhironi beach is well-known for the presence of green and black algae, etc. In the west, Vlora bay is closed by the **peninsula of Karaburun**, the largest peninsula in Albania about 16 km long and 4.5 km wide. Karaburun west coast is a spectacular one, with high and fragmented shores, small bays and beaches. In the north of peninsula is to be visited the cave of Haxhi Ali, which is the largest marine cave in the country. It has a depth of 30 m, a height of 18 meters and a width of 12 meters. These dimensions allow the entrance of the boats into the cave. The cave name is in the memory of an Ulqin sailor in the XVII century, who used to sail in these waters. Regarding the small beaches of Karaburun, it should be mentioned the bay of the Bear, Dafina and Grama beaches, which are distinguished for deep waters, very high quality of marine waters and secluded positioning, completely away from the noise. Nearby Grama beach you will find the cave of Slaves. According to the legends, in ancient times, the slaves used to work here and extract stones. On the walls of Grama beach are found ancient writings and it is thought that here was probably a temple of Pelasgian- Dioscuria. Western of Karaburun is one of the most attractive sites of the Albanian coast for those who love underwater diving.

Near the Peninsula of Karaburun is situated [the Island of Sazan](#), which is the largest island in Albania. It has an area of 5.7 km<sup>2</sup>, with a length of 4.8 km and a maximum width of 2 km. It is about 12 miles away from Vlora Harbour. In antiquity the island was named Saso. The island represents a block with harsh rocky shores, especially in the western part of the island. In the southeast of the island is located a pebble beach named Beach of Admiral, which is known for its very clean waters of the sea. Sazani represents a special interest for divers and along with the Karaburun Peninsula, they create a real underwater park. After the Llogara Pass, the Ionian beaches follow, also called “the Albanian Riviera”, which is one of the most beautiful regions of

Albania, where the sun meets  
with the depth sea,  
small rocky and  
intimate

beaches, wonderful configurations, mountain slopes and hills lined with typical Mediterranean vegetation (olives, citrus), and typical villages built between mountains and sea, that opens in front of them. This is the warmest region of the country, where average January temperature is 10°C and 25°C in July. The area has 300 days of sunshine.

From the [Pass of Llogara](#), 1,057 meters above sea level, a magnificent view of the coast opens in front of you, which seems to behold from the plane. Dhërakeos beach is the first one in Palace, which has a length of 1.5 km. It is one of the most exotic beaches across the Albanian coast, which is known for its quietness, very deep and blue waters and with a very high quality. The beach serves also as a landing point for air sports, especially for parachute flights from the Llogara Pass. Finally, there is a driving road available to reach the beach.





*Dhërmi; (bottom left) Road in Llogara* ◀

**Dhërmi Beach** that follows more in the south of Albania, is one of the most frequented and important tourist places of the entire Albanian coast. The crystal sea waters, secluded beaches, water sports and scuba diving make it much preferred, especially by young people. The beaches being part of Dhërmi are Drimades, Jaliksari, Shkambo and Gjipea. Gjipe beach has a very beautiful formation - as you walk past the beach, you will see a canyon with walls up to 70 meters high, created by a stream. Near the beach of Dhërmiu, you will find the Cave of Pirates, where tourists can access by boat. There are several hotels, restaurants, and summer discos in Dhërmiu beach. "Family Tourism" is developed in the entire area and the surrounding areas, offering to tourists houses for rent. Vuno is located 8 km to the south of Dhërmi. From Vuno you can

drive to the popular beach of Jali.

**Himara** is the main center of the "Upper Ionian coast". It is a tourist place, which is revived during the summer season by families and young people. The beaches of Himara are: Spillea, Potami, Llamani, Livadhja and Filikuri. All of them are distinguished for deep waters, rocky nature and the high quality of sea waters. Before reaching Borsh, you can find Qeparo beach and small tectonic bay of Porto Palermo, where to be visit the castle of Ali Pasha.

**Borshi** is the longest beach of Albanian Riviera, stretching to 6km. This beach is surrounded by massive Mediterranean plants (olives and citrus plantations). Family tourism is very popular in the area. On the road to Saranda, you can visit the beaches of Bunec, Kakome and Krorëz (up to 3 km long), distinguished for their rare beauty and the clear crystal waters.



*The Lagoon of Butrinti; (top right) Saranda; (bottom right) Venetian Fortress in Butrint* ◀

**The city of Saranda** is the largest inhabited center of the “Albanian Riviera” and one of the most important tourist sites of the country, preferred historically by newlyweds, who come to Saranda for their honeymoon. The city and the area around it, offer a network of hotels, starting from 5-star hotels to “budget travellers”, as well as houses for rent. The city has a very favourable geographical position, as it is located only 9km away from Corfu island. The ferries provide daily trips from Corfu to Saranda, making Saranda an attractive place frequented by European and international tourists coming from Corfu. An important place due to natural and archaeological beauty

is **Butrint**, which is part of UNESCO heritage, located 18km south of the city. In Saranda, you will find the small beaches of Central, Pllaka and Liman. Usually, the tourists who prefer sea, travel on the south of the city, to the most frequented beach of Ksamil, which is located between the peninsula with the same name and Butrinti lagoon. In front of Ksamil, lies the island of Corfu; close to Ksamil beach you will find 4 small islands, completely covered by green Mediterranean vegetation. Their total area amounts to 8,9 hectares. In Ksamil, you will find several hotels and restaurants. Another important ecosystem of tourist values, is **the Lagoon of Butrinti**, which



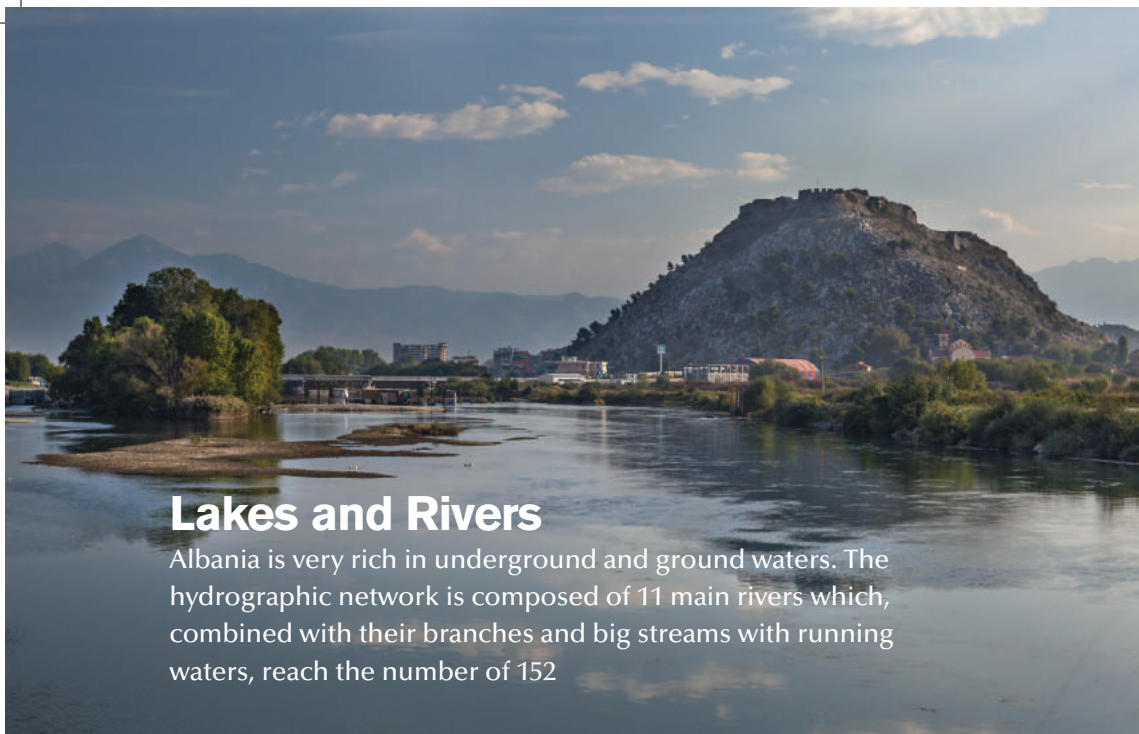
is also called a lake because of its tectonic origin. It has an area of 16km<sup>2</sup> and it has access to the sea through Vivari Channel, 3.6km long. Maximum depth of the lake is 20 meters. Due to favourable wind direction, it is a very suitable place for those who want to practice the sport of sailing. Regarding its fauna, some of the most important species are: the wild duck, the black neck duck, fulica atra, eagle of the field, Falco tinnunculus, the white tail eagle, the Mediterranean horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus euryale*) and the bat

(*Myotis capaccinni*). The lagoon also shelters many amphibians and reptiles, which grow in the red area, located in the north-eastern shore of the lake.

To be mentioned is the frog of Epirus, a species found only in Albania. The ecosystem is also suitable for the observation of birds, of which 90 species are aquatic birds only in the forest of the archaeological area, near the shores of the lake.

The southern extreme point of the Albanian coast up to the Cape of Stillo is composed by low, completely virgin beaches.





## Lakes and Rivers

Albania is very rich in underground and ground waters. The hydrographic network is composed of 11 main rivers which, combined with their branches and big streams with running waters, reach the number of 152

Shkodra ◀

Besides the great lakes, there is a large number of small lakes, five big artificial lakes and several water irrigation reservoirs and also 200 sources of underground water, with a capacity of 200 l/second each. As mentioned above, Albania has parts of the three most important lakes of the Balkan Peninsula, which are of big values and tourist importance.

In the north-western part of the country, at the border with Montenegro, lays **the Lake of Shkodër**, which is the largest lake of the Balkan Peninsula. It has an area of 368 km<sup>2</sup>, from which 149 km<sup>2</sup>, and 57 km of shore belong to the Republic of Albania.

An interesting legend explains the formation of the lake according to which, it used to be a small stream fed

by a source of water, which was always kept closed and was opened only when women went there to get water. One evening, while a woman was getting water at the fountain, she received the news that her husband had returned home from immigration. She was so happy that she left quickly and forgot the water source open. The water flowed during the entire night and in the morning Shkodër lake was created.

The shores of the lake are very attractive and divers. The northern part of it is low, while the southern part at Tarabosh mountain foot is rocky and high. Here are to be visited the two most important tourist sites, Shiroka and Zogaj. Sunbathing, water, fishing and rowing are the main activities on the Lake of Shkodër. Shirokë Beach has 250-260 sunny days

a year. In addition to these values, this lake represents a very important natural ecosystem. It shelters 270 species of birds, which constitute 87 percent of the entire ornithofauna (poultry) of Albania. In this lake, migrate in winter 24 thousand of water birds. This site offers very good opportunities for nature lovers and observation of poultry. The lake waters are rich in fish. There are 45 species of fish, of which the most important are carp, shijozja, eel etc.

**Lake Ohrid** is one of the most important natural tourist sites of Albania. It lies in the south-eastern part of Albania, up to 695 meters above the sea level, with an area of 358 km<sup>2</sup>. 1/3 of its surface belongs to Albania. A special characteristic of the lake is its depth of 289 meters, which makes it the deepest lake of the entire Balkan Peninsula. Lake Ohrid is 4 million years old. Its waters are known for high clarity, up to 22 meters of depth. It conserves in its waters a very old fauna and in this context, it may be considered a relict lake. Here lives the fish of Koran, a kind of trout that is found only in this lake in the entire world. Koran dish is also well known in this area. There are 17 species of fish, more than 30 mollusks as well as Ohrid sponge, which are found only in Lake Ohrid and in Lake Baikal. Albania has a lake shore of 30 kilometres, with several suitable areas for tourism, such as Lin, Pojskë, Pogradec and Tushemisht. Since ancient times, Ohrid Lake is known as a place for vacation. Thus, the parents of Emperor Justinian used to rest in Lin

Peninsula. Some of the activities to be exercised include swimming, motor boats, diving, water skiing, as well as sport fishing. In addition to the hotels built on the shore of the lake, family tourism is traditionally well known here, especially in Tushemisht area.

**Prespa Lake** is located in the south-eastern part of Albania. Located 850 meters above the sea level, it represents the highest tectonic lake of the Balkan Peninsula. It is composed of the Great



Lake Ohrid ◀

Prespa Lake, with an area of 285km<sup>2</sup>. It is a contact point between Albania, Macedonia and Greece. Small Prespa Lake lies in the territory of Albania and Greece, with an area of 44 km<sup>2</sup>, out of which 38.8 km<sup>2</sup> belong to Albania. The waters of Great Prespa Lake are known for their high clarity, up to 20 meters of depth. The rugged character of the lake shore makes Prespë a very attractive place. During the summer, as a

result of moderate temperatures, you can sunbathe and swim in the lake. Another important tourist potential is ecotourism. You can find 11 types of fish in Prespa Lake. Most important of which are carp, eel and the common bleak. Fauna is represented by pink pelican, the eagle, the Dalmatian Pelican, lutra, the bear etc. This area shelters 12 species of reptiles and 56 species of plants. As a result of poultry nesting, tourist can enjoy bird watching.

The most suitable place for this activity is a place called "Beli Hill". Prespa National Park constitutes the largest park of the country. Rural tourism is developed in this area, where tourists and visitors can be accommodated in the houses of villages of the area (Zaroshke, Pustec, Goricë e Vogël, Gollomboc, Goricë e Madhe etc.), which are rented to tourists.

Albania is a country rich in rivers. They create numerous valleys with spectacular view and offer opportunities for development of water sports. We should mention here the **Osumi canyons** in Çorovodë, Gradec canyon in Osum River, Këlcyra gorge in Vjosa river, the canyons of Bënça in the Kurvelesh area, the Valleys of Valbona and Shala in the Albanian Alps, the valleys of Tomorricë, Skorana gorge on Erzeni river, etc. You will also find waterfalls with magnificent view, such as that of Grunas in Theth, in Albanian Alps, that of Shoshan in the valley of Valbona, the waterfall of Kokotraf in Konispol area, the waterfall of Geronat in Kurvelesh etc.

## Mountain tourism

Besides the seacoast, inland, Albania offers countless opportunities for practicing other types of natural tourism. Being a rich territory in mountains and heights, Albania is a very suitable country for the development of mountain tourism. This is the type of white tourism (activities that take place during the cold season of the year) and green tourism (activities held during the warm season of the year). Due to the significant layers of snow and suitable steep slopes, there are great opportunities for practicing the skiing sport. The main area for practicing winter sports is the mountainous spot of Voskopoja in Korçë District, 20 km west of Korça. Voskopoja is located 1.160 meters above the sea level and the snow layer there lasts for up to three months. There is a "ski platform" in Voskopoja, where the races of National Ski Championship take place. Other places where the winter sports are practiced, are the Albanian Alps in the North of the country, in the spots of Razma, Boga, Theth, Shishtavec in Kukësi District, Grabova in Gramshi District, Dardha in Korça District, Dajti in Tirana District, etc.

The territory of Albania offers numerous opportunities for trekking activities and mountain climbing. These sports can be practiced in the whole territory of Albania, from north to south of the country. Quite attractive is the trekking program called "Çika Trekking", which takes place in the south-western area of the country and goes through the valley of Dukat, Çika mountain range, Kurveleshi area and ends



*Albanian Alps* ◀

in the Ionian coast. This trekking takes place along the itineraries Dukat-Tërbaç-Vranisht-Kuç-Kudhës-Qeparo. Other areas suitable for trekking and mountain climbing are the Albanian Alps in such spots as: Vermosh, Theth, Razma, Boga, Valbona, Tomori mountain extending to the districts of Berat and Skrapar; Vithkuqi, Voskopoja, Drenova in Korça District, Guri i Kamjes in Pogradec, Llogara in Vlorë District, Korab Mountain in Dibër, Gjinari in Elbasan District, Drino valley in Dropulli area, in Gjirokastrë District, Borsh-Zhulat route that goes through Kurvelesh, etc. Albania offers excellent opportunities for practising air sports, due to its suitable topographic and natural conditions. The best spot for practicing this sport is Llogara Pass, up to 1.052 meters above sea level, where the direction of the wind is quite favourable. The parachutes

jumpers from this site, land in the beach of Palasë, making this passage from the mountain to the sea an unforgettable experience. Llogara Pass is a place where several international events are held for such activities. Other sites for practicing such a sport are Morava, in the District of Korçë, Dajti in Tirana etc.

Mountain relief is very attractive for outdoor camping and staying in tents during the warm seasons. Some of the camping areas are: Biza in Tirana District, Razma in the Alps, Llogara in Vlorë District, in the forests of Hotova firs in Përmet District, in the coniferous forests of Gërmenj in Kolonja District, in Kurvelesh Region in the south of the country, Qafë-Shtama Park in Kruja District, that of Lura in Dibër District, etc.

You can enjoy fishing in the numerous rivers and streams in Albania. They are

perfect for fishing the cold water trout and other fish species of warm waters. The most suitable areas of natural beauty for the fishing activity are the Valbona valley, Thethi stream, Shala river in the Albanian Alps, the upper valley of Vjosa etc. In the attractive valleys of numerous rivers and streams you can practice different water sports like rafting and kayaking. Such sports are mainly practiced in the upper valleys of Osum along Qafëzez-Mican-Çorovodë route. During this route, you will see the wonderful Osumi canyons. Another route is the one that crosses the Bridge of Dash – the Lengarica canyon in Vjosa valley. Other regions where you can practice these sports are Devoll Valley in the south, the Valleys of Shala and Valbona in the Albanian Alps, etc.

As a result of the widespread limestone formations in the territory of Albania, there is a development of various karst forms, which has enabled the existence of many karst caves of great interest for the tourism, or otherwise known as Speleology. You can find 35 such caves only in the region of Shkodër. A cave of particular tourism interest is “**Pëllumbas cave**”, also called the “Black Cave”, to be found in the southeast of Tirana on the panoramic gorge Skorinë, created by Erzen River. It is located 25 km southeast of Tirana, 10-35 meters wide, 15-40 meters high and up to 300 meters long. The cave is in a very good condition. Besides the numerous stalactites and stalagmites, is worth mentioning that the skeletons of the cave bear (*Ursus spelaeus*), who lived around

400,000 years ago, were found in this cave. In the entire European continent are known only five such caves.

Another attractive cave to visit is **Pirrogoshi cave**, located in Skrapari District in the south of the country, which represents the largest cave in Albania. It is located on the right slope of Çorovoda stream, in Radesh village, at a height of 450 meters above the sea level. The entry to the cave is 5 meters wide, while its length reaches 1.500 meters. The most attractive part of it is the wide corridor. The cave ends up in a deep well, populated by a colony of bats.

Other interesting caves are those of Jubani, Zhyla, Murriqi and Pusi in Shkodër and Alps area, the cave of Lekë Petë in Kurvelesh, etc.

### Flora and fauna

Albania is considered a country rich in flora. You will find 3250 types of plants in Albania, which constitute 29% of the flora of the entire European continent, 11% of which are endemic plants. Half of the endemic plants are found in the north-eastern and northern part of the country. From the fund of vegetation, 489 of the plants are typical for the Balkan Peninsula. The Mediterranean shrubs cover 35 % of the forest. The coniferous trees are spread along the Adriatic coast, especially between the estuary of Shkumbin and Seman rivers, precisely in Karavasta lagoon and on both sides of Vjosa estuary, in Pish Poro in Fier and the one in Vlora area. In this area you will find areas of soft and wild pines. The surfaces



Pëllumbas cave ◀

with black pine are found in areas situated 600-1000 metres above the sea level, in the zones of Puke, Mirdite, Martanesh, Tomorricë, Kolonjë, etc. Worth to be mentioned are the beautiful fir areals, such as “Hotova Fir” in Përmet area and fir of Bozdoveci in Korçë District. Both areas are National Parks. Regarding the tree coverage, the main tree is the oak, which grows 400 metres above the sea level and up. Beeches are found especially in the northern and north-eastern part of the country. There are 12 National Parks in Albania, the largest of which is that of Prespë, with an area of 22,00 hectares. These areas are important for tourism facilities.

The Albanian Fauna is noted for its variety, which is due to Albania’s contrasting landscape and the rugged terrain. Some of the mammal species found in Albania

are: the brown bear, wolf, fox, lynx, the marten, the weasel, the wild swine, roe, wild goat, wild rabbit, the squirrel, the otter, the badger. Among the endangered species are: the jackal, the marten and the skunk.

The avifauna of Albania consists of 350 species, among which are the mountain eagle, the pelican, wild ducks and geese, the heron, the swan, the crane, falco tinnunculus, the owl, etc.

In the waters of Albanian seas are found 260 species of fish, which belong to the family of the Mediterranean fishes. The “Mediterranean seal” (in Karavasta lagoon), a very rare species, can be found here. The world of reptiles is composed of turtles, snakes, wall lizard, salamanders, etc. Albania has several hunting reservoirs, where you can practice the “sport of hunting”.



# ► Cultural Heritage





*The Archaeological Park of Antigonea; (bottom right) Monastery of St. Mary in Apollonia* ◀

## Archaeological parks

### Antigonea

The Archaeological Park of Antigonea is located in the region of Gjirokastra, in the area of Lunxhëria. To get there you should take the road from Gjirokastra going through Asim Zeneli-Krinë-Tranoshisht villages. Near Saraqinisht village are found the ruins of this archaeological site, which has the status of an Archaeological Park. Antigonea is located 14 km far from Gjirokastra.

Antigonea was founded by Pyrrhus, the King of Molossoid, in 295 B.C., and it became an important economic, social, cultural and political centre. By the end of century III and at the beginning of century II B.C., it took the form of a polis (city-state). Pyrrhus named the city in honour of

his first wife, Antigonea.

Isamber, a French historian, visited the castle on the hill of Jerma in 1880. He thought that was the ancient city of Alexandria. In 1930, the British archaeologist Nicholas Samond recognized Pyrrhus's typical construction technique in the surrounding walls of Jerma. He proposed the identification of Jerma with the city of Epirus Hekatonpedon. During the Second World War, the Greek archaeologist Evangelis, carried out some limited archaeological excavations in this place. He had found traces of burials and he related them to the ruins of the Roman army of Emil Paul. In 1964, the Albanian archaeologist

Dhimosten Budina started the archaeological excavations in Jerma hill, in front of the castle of Gjirokastra. After 5 years of excavations, he discovered the house of a coppersmith of the ancient city, where he found some round thin plates of bronze in the shape of small coins. All of them were stamped with the same Antigonian inscription, which in the ancient Greek meant "it belongs to the Antigonians". The archaeologist Budina thought that these stamps, which are known since antiquity as PSEFOI and served to vote, showed clearly that he had discovered the city of Antigonians, Antigonea. Professor Budina led up to 25 expeditions to discover Antigonea. Among the objects that can be visited by tourists are the remains of fortified walls, the ancient nymph of Acropolis, the leather workshop, the main gate of the city, Stoa or the promenade, the housing complex of columns, the mosaic, etc.

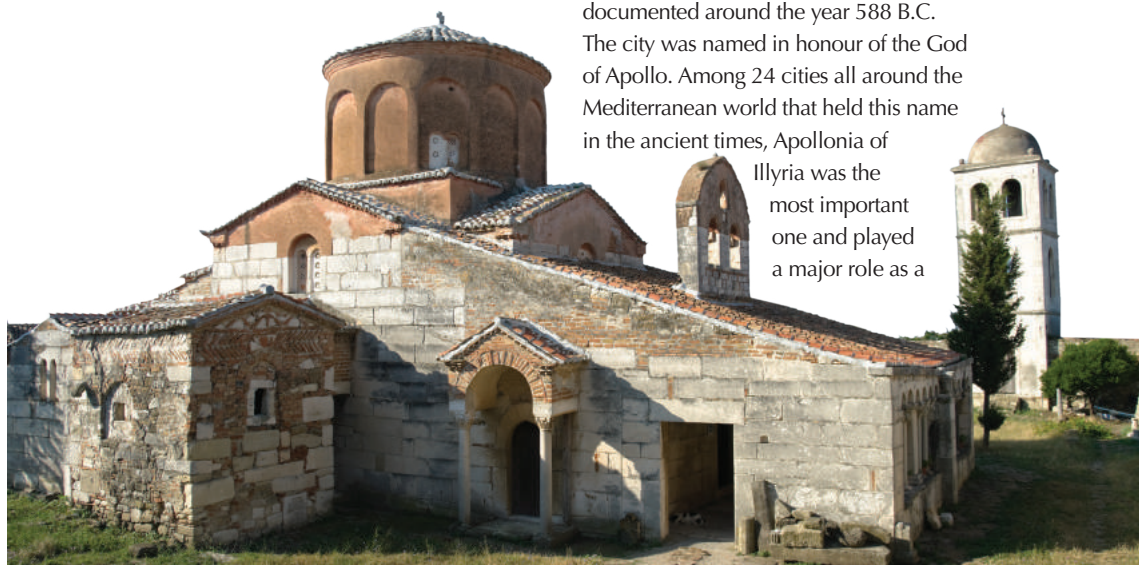
#### The archaeological park of Amantia

The Archaeological Park of Amantia is located in the region of Vlora. In order to

get there, you have to go through Vlora-Drashovica-Mavrove-Kote-Vajzë route. This archaeological site had a fortified acropolis around 220 metres long. The upper rocky plateau, sloping different in its sides, forced the builders to adapt the walls, the construction technique and their direction to this site. The wall found there is 28 meters long and 8 meters high. The builders of these ancient works shaped the rock were the polygonal blocks were placed. One of the entrance gates in acropolis had the form of an arch; its dimensions are 2.2 meters long and 0.12 meters wide. The main attraction for visitors is the stadium of Amantia.

#### The archaeological park of Apollonia

Apollonia is one of the most important archaeological sites of the country and at the same time, one of the most visited places by the tourists. It is located 12 kilometres far from the city of Fier. The city of Apollonia was founded at the beginning of century VII B.C by the colonies of Corinth and Corcyr. The first records of their presence have been documented around the year 588 B.C. The city was named in honour of the God of Apollo. Among 24 cities all around the Mediterranean world that held this name in the ancient times, Apollonia of Illyria was the most important one and played a major role as a



trade mediator between the Helens and Illyrians. Apollonia was at that time a big and important city near Aoos (Vjosa) River. Its population was estimated to be 60,000 inhabitants, a record for antiquity.

Apollonia preserved its grandeur even during the Roman period. The Apollonian School of Fine Arts was well-known in the ancient world. When Julius Caesar was murdered in Rome during a conspiracy in the Senate, his nephew Octavian Augustus studied philosophy in Apollonia. Visitors can visit a series of objects, among which we can mention the impressive wall of Agonothets, the theatre of Apollonia, the promenade, the monastery of Shën Meria, etc.

#### The archaeological park of Bylis

This park is located in the region of Mallakastra, near Hekal Village. It was founded in 350 B.C. Pliny considered it as a Roman colony, while according to Stephanus Byzantinus it was founded by Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles (this way Bylis takes an Homeric origin). Bylis itself constituted a "canyon" with an

area of 20km<sup>2</sup>. The coins of Bylis were different from those of Apollonia, one side of which showed the head of Zeus. The first one to identify Bylis was a British named Holland, in one of its publications in 1815. The first archaeological data on the park were published by Austrian Karls Patch. The first archaeological excavations were carried out in 1917-1918 by the Austrian archaeologist Prshniker, while the Albanian expeditions took place in 1978- 1991 by professor Papajani. The walls of Bylis are 2,250 meters long and they surround a very large surface of land. The wall has a triangular shape and it is adorned with 6 gates.

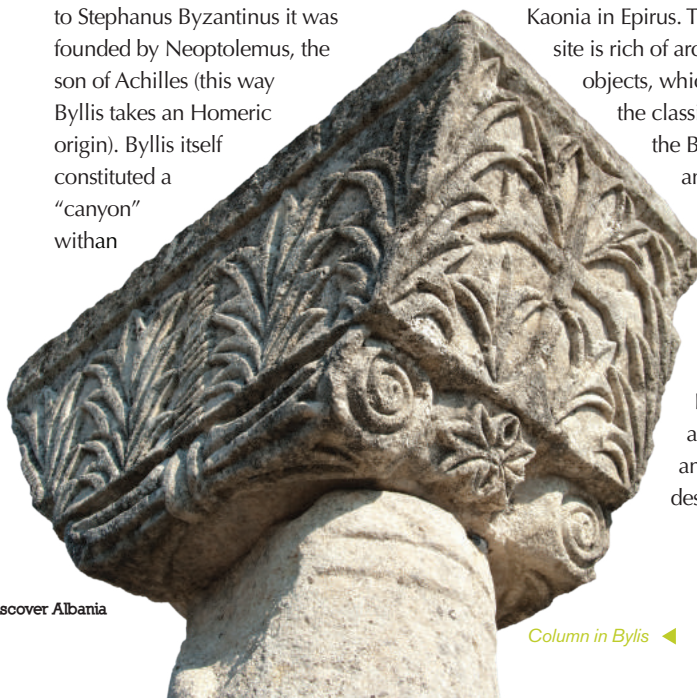
#### The archaeological park of Flniqi

The Archaeological Park of Flniqi is located at a distance 8 km far from the coastal city of Saranda, and nearly 20 km far from the border with Greece. Named Phoenixika, it has been the capital city of

Kaonia in Epirus. This archaeological site is rich of archaeological

objects, which date back from the classical period up to the Byzantine period, and are located in a still untouched landscape.

Evidences of many ancient sources (Polybius, Strabo, Titus Livius, Ptolemy and later Procopius and Hierokli) describe the great



Column in Bylis ◀

wealth of the city, especially during the Hellenistic period between century III and II B.C, when the city played an important role in the League of Epirus. In general, it had good relations with the Roman Republic (even though it did not offer assistance as some other cities to Philip V and later to Perseus of Macedonia during the conflict with Rome) and organized within its walls the signing of the treaty that gave an end to the First Macedonian War, known as the “Peace of Phoinike”. The prosperity of the city continued certainly during the imperial period, over which there is now a lot of archaeological evidence.

During the Byzantine period, the city continued its normal life for about ten centuries. Procopius documented the fact that Justinian was highly interested in important urban interventions. Turkish invasion, for which Ugolin found archaeological evidence that showed a violent conquest, brought an end to the old history of the city, which remained later a small village at the foot of the Acropolis hill; Finiqi that still exists.

#### **The archaeological park of Orikum**

It is located near the small city of Orikum, in the Southern part of the gulf of Vlora. It was mentioned for the first time by the Greek geographer and historian Skylaksi in century VI-V B.C. in his work “The Sailing” as the city of Oriku, a marine port in the Ionian and Adriatic Sea. According to the legend, after the destruction of Troy, the Pelasgian tribe of Eubeas returned to the lands of their fathers and founded the



**THE PORT OF ORIKU WAS A VERY IMPORTANT SITE, ESPECIALLY DURING THE PERIOD OF CIVIL WAR BETWEEN CAESAR AND POMPEY. IT IS THOUGHT THAT SUNKEN SHIPS DATING FROM THIS PERIOD ARE FOUND UNDER THE WATERS OF THIS GULF**

city of Oriku.

The main object to be visited in this Archaeological Park is the Theatre of Oriku (which, in fact, is identified simply with a fountain by many archaeologists). It was built in centuries III-II B.C. and has a capacity that ranges from 400 to 600 spectators.

The Port of Oriku was a very important site, especially during the period of civil war between Caesar and Pompey. It is thought that sunken ships dating from this period are found under the waters of this gulf.



*The Archaeological Park of Butrint; (bottom) Gjirokastra ◀*

## UNESCO sites

Albania has three main sites that are part of UNESCO world heritage, which are also among the most visited places by foreign tourists. One of them is **the ancient city of Butrint**, which lies south of Albania, 18 kilometres from the coastal city of Saranda having a pretty good position in front of the Greek island of Corfu. Part of UNESCO since 1992, the city has the status of an Archaeological Park representing at the same time a National Park, which is also part of the RAMSAR Convention. Butrint is without any doubt, the most important archaeological site of Albania and one of the most visited touristic spots in the country. Tourists can visit a variety of objects, among which we can mention the temple of Asclepius

(the God of Health, of the century II B.C.), the theatre with 1,500 seats that dates back from century III B.C., the font with the mosaics (a Paleochristian monument), nympheus, bathrooms, the gate of the lake, the gate of the lion, the Venetian castle of Ali Pasha, etc.

**The city of Gjirokastra** with its specific architecture, is part of UNESCO since 2005. It is built in the Eastern part



of the Wide Mountain. Because of its architecture, Gjirokastra is also known as "the Stone City" or "city of a thousands stairs". The most important attractions in Gjirokastra are the high stone houses, which look like small castles and they seem to be architectonic monumental complexes. The main attraction is the castle of the city, also known as the castle of Argyro. It was after this name that the city was named "Argjirokastrò" in 1336. In the premises of the castle is also found the Museum of Guns; in which are exposed guns dating from the Paleolithic period until World War II. The castle of Gjirokastra is the largest one in the entire country. Among other things, it serves as a place for organizing the National Folk Festival,

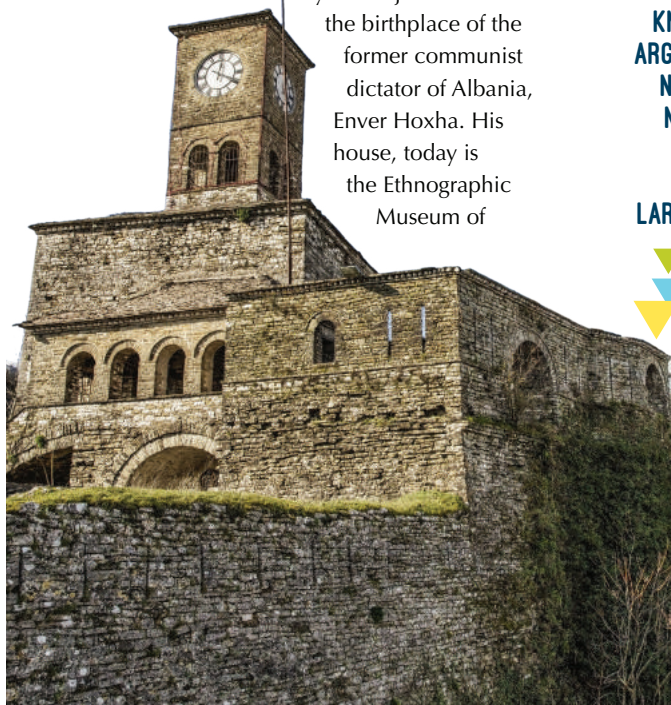
which takes place usually once every four years. Gjirokastra is the birthplace of the former communist dictator of Albania, Enver Hoxha. His house, today is the Ethnographic Museum of



Gjirokastra Old Bazaar ◀

Gjirokastra. The Albanian contemporary writer and sometimes candidate for the Nobel Prize in literature, Ismail Kadare, was also born in Gjirokastra. His house is also found in this city.

**THE MAIN ATTRACTION IS THE CASTLE OF THE CITY, ALSO KNOWN AS THE CASTLE OF ARGYRO. IT WAS AFTER THIS NAME THAT THE CITY WAS NAMED 'ARGJIROKASTRO' IN 1336. THE CASTLE OF GJIROKASTRA IS THE LARGEST ONE IN THE ENTIRE COUNTRY**





Mangalem, Berat; (bottom) Gorica ◀

**The city of Berat**, part of the elite of UNESCO world heritage since 2006, is located at a distance of 120 kilometres far from Tirana. It is one of the oldest cities of Albania, nearly 2415 years old. Berat is one of the most prominent examples of the traditional architecture in the country, as well as a treasure of our national history and culture. The major tourist attractions are the characteristic neighbourhoods of Mangalem, Gorica and Kala, where you can see the facades of the houses with numerous windows placed one above the other. For this reason, Berat is also known as “the City of thousand Windows”. In the city is found a complex of Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches, the museum of Onufri paintings (the famous Albanian iconography), as well as monuments from the Ottoman period. Despite of its age, the Castle of Berat continues to be inhabited even today. Besides the above mentioned



places, an important part of the oral world heritage of mankind (of UNESCO) is also the Albanian iso-polyphony. This old way of singing without musical instruments (with the exception of flute) in the area of Pilur (a mountainous village in the area of Himara), is widespread in the regions of Southern Albania, such as Tepelena, Gjirokastra, Vlora and culminating in Himara in the Ionian coast.



*Historical Center of Korçë; ◀*

## Monuments of culture

Albania is a country with an early civilization. This is shown by the prehistoric settlements, archaeological sites with Illyrian, Hellenic and Roman styles and influences, the numerous Byzantine and especially post-Byzantine churches and also the monuments that date back to Ottoman and Venetian period. With its millennial history and culture, Albania offers all the possibilities to visit the traces of early architecture, as well as new monuments belonging to later periods throughout Albania.

Some of the most important monuments are:

**- Bazaar of Korçë** - The Bazaar is a place of early historical, cultural and artistic values. It is characterized by one and

two storey buildings, narrow alleys and a construction style that attracts the attention of visitors. Centuries ago, the bazaar has been a place for the exchanges between merchants, which came not only from Albania, but also from Turkey, Greece, Trieste and Venice. It was noted for several inns located next to each other, where Elbasan and Manastir Inns distinguished a lot. They served as dormitories.

**- Historical Center of Korçë;** Korçë old neighbourhoods (quarters 1, 2, 11 & 12) are located in the east of the city. Old houses and the cobbled alleyways make these neighbourhoods an interesting area to be visited.

**- National Museum of Medieval Art** - The National Museum of Medieval Art

was opened in 1980. Its assets include historical, cultural and artistic objects of the medieval period, primarily related to the Byzantine and post-Byzantine Christian heritage. The museum has about 200 art objects.

**- National Museum of Education:** This museum is located in the building where the first Albanian school was opened on March 7th, 1887, named “Mësonjëtorja”. At the stands of the museum, among others, there is a photocopy of the first Albanian ABC Book, written by the patriot Naum Veqilharxhi, and the second ABC Book, written by the Albanian patriot Kostandin Kristoforidhi.

**- Archaeological Museum:** The museum was founded in 1985 and took a broader and complete form after its reorganization in 1990. The museum is located in two



*Bazaar of Korçë* ◀

characteristic houses of Korça of the early nineteenth century, which, due to their architectural values, are declared cultural monuments. The museum is focused on pre-historical data of the South-eastern zone, starting from the Neolithic period until the evolved stage of the Iron Age. It has about 1,200 exhibits, most of those belonging to the Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages.

**- Mosque of Iljaz bej Mihrahori** is located in the city of Korçë, near the Bazaar, and it is part of a socio-cultural construction complex. Its construction dates back to 1495 and it is named after its builder Iljaz bej Mihrahori. This mosque is the first monument of an Ottoman classical type in Albania and also the oldest one of the style hall of a dome in our country. After its construction, it was restored 3 more times between the century XVI and XIX. (1562, 1831 and 1887).

**- House museum of the painter Vangjush Mio:** The house of impressionist painter from Korça, Vangjush Mio, is declared a cultural monument and contains 40 oil paintings, landscapes and still life paintings. Vangjush Mio is the first Albanian painter who opened the first exhibition in Tirana in 1920, while in 1942 he opened his personal exhibition in Bari.

**- Tumulus of Kamenica:** Tumulus of Kamenica is one of the largest discovered so far. Nearly 400 graves and more than 3,500 objects have been identified there. The Tumulus of Kamenica is located in the extreme southeast of Korçë Basin. Just like



*Monastery of Shën Prodhromi in Voskopojë* ◀

the other tumuli in the region, it is located in the first belt of the terrace, created between the field and hilly area around it. The territory around Kamenica Tumulus also contains several other smaller tumuli, almost completely damaged nowadays. As one of the most representative prehistoric monuments and the largest of its kind in the Albanian territory, Tumulus of Kamenica is the cemetery of a rural community that has functioned as such for more than seven centuries (from the late Bronze Age, around Century XIII B.C., until the developed Iron Age around mid of century VI B.C.) It was excavated in the beginning of 2000s by the Rescue Archaeology Group of the International Centre for Albanian Archaeology, in collaboration with the Institute of Archaeology in Tirana.

- **Ristozi Church in Mborje village,**

just 3 km away from the city of Korça, belongs to the architectural cross shaped churches with a cupola. The inscription by the donor of this construction dates back to century XIV. The interior of the church is decorated with mural paintings, which distinguish for the perfect painting, harmonious composition and the masterful use of colours. It carries the typical features of late Palaeologan period. Besides the paintings of century XIV, the church porch preserves paintings of a later period, addressing scenes from the Apocalypse of John. It is believed that they are painted by the Albanian painter known as Kostandin "the teacher".

- **Shën Mitri Church in Boboshtica**

**village** is a church with one nave, with apses, which was covered with a gable roof in a later period. The interior of the church is decorated with mural paintings,

dating back to two different periods. The first layer dates back to the last quarter of century XIV, while the second one to centuries XVII – XVIII.

**- Shën Jovani Church in Boboshtica village** is a building with one nave, with an average size, consisting of a central nave and a porch closed on the west side. The floor of the church is paved with bricks, surrounded by lines of small stones. The interior of the church is decorated with mural paintings of high artistic quality, which represent the most complete cycle of the life of St. Gjon the Baptist, as well as other scenes inspired by the New Testament. They are classified in the group of post-Byzantine paintings.

**- Voskopoja Village (Historic Centre):** a developed cultural centre founded in 1330, where you can find the necessary conditions for mountain tourism.

**- Monastery of Shën Prodhromi in Voskopoja:** The church of the Monastery of Shën Prodhromi is an important monument, not only for its historical values as a building of century XVII, but also as a reflection of the cultural and economic prosperity of Voskopoja. It belongs to the Byzantine style, stands out particularly for the mural paintings, which are works of the monk Andon of Shpiska.

**- Shën Koll Church in Voskopoja** dates back to century XVIII. The interior of the church is decorated with murals painted by the prominent master David Selenica and his collaborators Kostandin and Kristo. According to the inscription, the painting was completed in 1726. About 24 years later, another famous atelier

of that time, the one of Kostandin and Athanas Zografi, were requested to paint the arcade.

**- Basilica of Shën Thanas in Voskopoja** is a construction of basilica type. The paintings of the church hold the authorship of the artistic personalities of that time, Kostandin and Athanas Zografi. It is considered one of their most professional artistic works, carried out in 1745.

**- Shën Mëhill Church in Voskopoja** is a monument of basilica type with relatively large dimensions. Its numerous interior saved mural paintings demonstrate the adoption of the most prominent features of the art of century XVII.

**- Church of Shën Mëri in Voskopoja** is a basilica construction, which stands out for its monumental values of external part. It was part of a social complex of buildings, built at the end of century XVII and at the beginning of the century XVIII. The interior part contains murals, icons and iconostasis



Church of Shën Mëri in Voskopoja ◀

engraved in wood, which show great artistic values and have a special historical significance. The inscription on the murals witnesses the artistic activity of the masters Theodhori, Anagnosti and Sterani from Agrafta, while some of the icons are painted by Kostandin Jeromonaku. The painting of the church was finished in 1712.

- **Shipska** is an important centre, which achieved its high economic and cultural development during the centuries XVII - XVIII. Now, instead of the old city, has remained only a small village, about three hours north of Voskopoja. The only proof left of its development is the **Church of Shën Gjergji**. The monument rises above a hill at the entrance of the village. The interior of the church is decorated with murals, which date back to the time of its construction. They are based on an expanded cycle of paintings, inspired by the Old Testament and New Testament.

- **Monastery complex of Shën Pjetri and Pavi** represents one of the most important monuments of the material culture of Vithkuq in century XVIII (today a village in the southeast of Korçë). This complex includes the cemetery of the Anargyes Saints Cosmas, Damian and Konaks. The monument is an important proof of the outstanding architectural, historical and artistic values. Popular artists of the time, such as Kostandin brothers and Athanas Zografi and Kostandin Shpataraku decorated the interior and are the authors of mural paintings, iconostasis and icons.

- **Shën Mëri Church** is one of the best preserved monuments in Vithkuq. The interior of the monument is decorated



*Shën Mëri Church in Maligrad, Prespa* ◀



*Shën Mëri Church in Cercka of Kolonja* ◀

with mural painting. The construction characteristics, similar to the church of Shën Mëhilli, which was built in 1682, are those of the second half of century XVII or the beginning of century XVIII.

- **Shën Mëhilli Church** is one of the oldest and magnificent monuments in Vithkuq, built in 1682 and painted in 1728.

- **Shën Mëri Church** (located in the island of Maligrad, in the Great Prespa Lake) is the most representative monument of the area. The frescos are maintained in good conditions. To reach this monument you have to go there by boat from the village of Pustec. You can contact the people that offer this service at the village bar.

- **Shën Mitri Church in Bezmisht** (the northern village of Prespa shore, near the border with Macedonia), is an important monument of century XIV.

- **Hermit Cave of Shën Mëri Giluboko (Bezmisht)** is located east of Bezmisht village, on the shore of the lake. The murals are kept in good conditions. The cave is an important expression of the start and organization of monastic life on the shores of Great Prespa lake.

- **Hermit Cave of Evangelism** is located at the place known as Crnatesh or Gollomboç, near Pustec village, on the west coast of Great Prespa lake. It dates back to the second half of century XIV.

- **Shën Mëri Church** is a chapel in the centre of Gollomboç village. The interior of the church preserves murals of two different stages, which are the expression of artistic activity in the area of Korçë during the late Byzantine period.

- **Cave of Tren:** The Cave of Tren represents the rock art of Albanian territory and carries a series of archaeological values. The cave is located in the western part of Small Prespë Lake and dates back to year 6000 B.C. A variety of objects have been found there such as paintings, but also ceramic works, which are an asset and real evidence of its early residence.

It dates back to year 6000 B.C. Its interior is prevailed by prehistoric wall paintings with hunting scenes.

- **Shën Mëri Church in Cercka of Kolonja** is located near the small town of Leskovik (south). The interior of the church is decorated with frescoes of high artistic quality.

- **Shën Mëri Church in Barmash** rises at the entrance of the village in the south of the city of Erseka. It is located outside inhabited areas. The village cemetery is found in its courtyard. According to the inscription, the church was painted in 1616.

- **Shën Marena Monastery** is built on a small plateau in the mountainous area of Mokra, in Pogradec, in the South-Eastern part of Albania. The Church of Shën Marena represents a basilica and its interior is covered with frescoes which, according to the inscription, along with the construction of the church, are foundations built with the expenses of residents of the city of Llënga on October 2nd, 1754.

- **Lower Selca** represents a significant archaeological site of the Illyrian period in the Dasareti province, which, in written documents, is known as the ancient city of Pelion, where the decisive battle between Alexander the Great and Illyrian leaders took place. Five monumental tombs lie here, which are almost unique in the entire Balkans.

- **Golik Bridge** has survived as a complete monument to this day. It was built in century XVIII. It is the bridge with two semi-circular vaults and there is a discharge window between them. The bridge was built with carved stones. -



Castle of Shkodër ◀

**Castle of Shkodër** is the main monument of the city and almost the main visited object. This medieval fortress retains today traces of fortification walls from the period of antiquity. The castle is divided into 3 yards. The basic form of the castle is typical of the second half of century XIV. Inside of this system, we can clearly distinguish a number of constructions such as some belonging to the Illyrian period, century IV B.C.; mainly medieval constructions starting since the Balshaj Dynasty, century XIV; Venetian period century XV; Turkish period centuries XVI-XVII; and finally those of Bushatli Patriarchy period in the century XVIII. The castle stands out for its well-built orderly walls, covered, worked and with many architectural fragments such as cannons or gun turrets, counterforts, gates, stairs, vault.

**- Drishti Castle** is located northeast of Shkodër, on a rocky hill with a powerful natural protection that, besides the large sloping sites, it is also protected from Kiri river surrounding it in the north and west; in the south, while at the foot of the hill flows into Kiri a mountain stream. The castle has small, half circular towers made by a building technique with thin walls without girdles. After the invasion of Drishti by the Turks in 1478, its importance as a city and as a fortress was weakened and there was a massive fleeing of the population.

**- Mesi Bridge** is a cultural monument of the first category. It lies on Kiri River. The whole area is built with stones and paved with cobblestones. It was declared a cultural monument of first category in 1948. The Mesi Bridge, built by Mehmet Pasha Bushati at the end of century XVIII,

is one of the largest and best preserved stone bridges in our country. It is an arched bridge, built with over 13 arches of different dimensions, with a length of 108m. This bridge is located 8 km far from the city of Shkodër, in Mesi village.

- **Mosque of Plumbi** is a first category monument, built in 1773 by Mehmet Bushati, an Albanian coming from Bushatllinj tribal family and vizier of Patriarchy of Shkodra at that time. The mosque is located within the city of Shkodra, near the fortress of Shkodra. The mosque represents a unique example of classical architecture monuments of the city and an enclosed courtyard, covered by a dome with fine arcades and decorated columns.

- **Stone of Përmet city** is a massive 12 m high rock with steep sides. In the upper part, the rock is flattened in a surface of 15mx15m, which preserves the ruins of a fortification that date back to century IV-VI. At the foot of the cliff, there is a tract of ancient period, similar to the fortifications of century III B.C. in the valley of Drino.

- **Shën Premte Church** is among the oldest monuments in the area of Përmet and it is one of the best preserved examples of post Byzantine architecture and painting in the south of Albania. It was built in the second half of century XVIII. The church is located on the southern part of the city. It is a basilica construction. The interior of the church is decorated with murals, which represent an interesting ensemble of post Byzantine painting, completed in September 1808.

- **Leusë Church** was dedicated to St. Mary and it is located in the village with the same name, which lies south of Përmet city. It is quite well known for its wooden iconostasis, carved with artistic craftsmanship. It consists of the central nave, built in 1812, the narthex and the porch.

- **Shën Mëri Church in Kosina** is an early monument of the type cross in square with a cupola, whose basic features are not clearly formed, especially in the lower building. The internal part of the church contains murals from two different phases. The first phase goes back to the construction of the church, while the second one dates back to post- Byzantine period.

**Frashëri Tekke** consists of two separate buildings, which are connected with a wall and a vault gateway at its centre. The building that is located on the right side is in shape of letter L, with an area of 325m<sup>2</sup>, which expands in three rooms, coffee chimney, cellar and bakery. The building on the left side is partly two-storey with an area of 218 m<sup>2</sup>. At the distance of 20 meters are two shrines, with domes, and separate entrances with an area of 102 m<sup>2</sup>.

- **Gjirokastra Bazaar** is a trade-craft complexes built (reconstructed) in centuries XVIII - XIX with unique historical, architectural and urban values for our country and abroad. It played and still plays an important socioeconomic role for the historical centre of Gjirokastra city.

Its position in the centre of the city, the



*Basilica of Shën Mëhilli, Durrës* ◀

compositional extension and architectonic - decorative aspect, give the complex a special significance regarding the types of Bazaars in our country. This is a first category monument and it is located in the town of Gjirokastra, which was declared a world cultural heritage by UNESCO in July 2005. Its design is radial, where from the Bazaar Pass, four main roads open, which serve as a connection with the residential areas. Located as a distinct urban center, it has an organic connection with the inhabited areas. Its urban scheme of significant radial trend for a better interconnection, dates back to century XVII. On the contrary, the Bazaar constructions belong to a later time, centuries XIX and XX.

- **Sofratika Well**, although not in working conditions, is preserved almost complete and shows clearly its function. Entirely

worked with limestone-tiles, this hydraulic building is in the form of a cylinder with a diameter of 5 meters, raised 1m from the ground, in center of which rises the mouth of the Well for receiving water. The area around the mouth of the stone cylinder is paved with cobbles, with cross fall at the sides. You can reach the square around the mouth of the pit, by climbing on a three-legged ladder. They lead to a narrow and short cobbled street.

- **Libohova Castle** is on a rocky platform in the eastern city of Libohova, Gjirokastra. The hill rising on the eastern side has a favourable position and dominates the castle. It is thought to have functioned as a protected building. However, the castle retains all the typical building characteristics of Ali Pasha.

This castle, together with its surrounding Saraj, was built by Ali Pasha for his sister,

Shaninshanë.

- **Shën Mëri Monastery** is located on Goranxi village in Dropulli region (Gjirokastra) and presents specific features regarding external decorative architectonic formulation. Four columns, with capitals carved with plant motifs, have created a square central core, covered with a dome on a high drum. The church was painted in 1600 and it consists of the central nave, narthex and exo-narthex.

- **Shën Mëri Church** is located in the village of Labovë e Kryqit. The Church of Labovë e Kryqit is one of the oldest in Albania and once contained a holy relic believed to be part of the true cross of Christ. The building is typical Byzantine with a high central dome, the Naos and naves built in order to create the image of the cross. The main entrance to the church is through a subsequent narthex. The Church, as seen today, is mainly a construction of 13th century and of the Epirus Despotism time. Although an initial foundation can go deep to the time of Emperor Justinian in 527-565 AD.

- **Castle of Grazhdan** is located near Bulqizë – Peshkopi road, 11 km southeast of Peshkopi, between two streams, Grazhdani (north-west) and Maqellara (south - west), which flow into the Black Drin River. The castle is built on a hilly-field terrain at about 525-600 m above sea level. It stands out for its very important geo-strategic position in the Black Drin basin, especially for trading - military roads, Via Egnatia and Lissus-Naissus connecting the provinces of New Epirus, Dardania and Macedonia II. The area of about 34

hectares makes it the biggest city of the Late Antiquity period in our country, after Dyrrahu. The castle dates back to century IV B.C.

- **The Castle in the city of Durrës**; the largest fortified city in the central coastal Albania was Durrës, founded by settlers coming from Corcyra and Corinth around 625 B.C; although archaeological objects discovered in its territory witness the establishment of this settlement in an earlier period. In written texts the city appears with two names: Epidamn and Dyrrachium, but in the Roman period only the name Dyrrachium started to be used. No traces of these wall remain from this period; however, the importance of the city as a trading centre is observed in the numerous castles built to defend it and the main road artery connecting it with Macedonia and other local regions. The surrounding of Durrës with triple walls was completed by Emperor Anastas. The first fortification formed the Acropolis, the second constituted the biggest quadrangle castle, while the third one, without towers, was in the north of the city. Today are preserved 500 meters of fragments of these walls.

- **Rotonda**: The Old Bazaar was discovered in the years 1987- 1990 and it was declared a cultural monument in 2003. It is believed that the monument was built from Century II B.C. up to century IV B.C. and has functioned as such until century VII. Later, this Bazaar was turned into cemeteries. The monument is composed in the form of a circular portico, among which there is a podium.



*Durrësi Amphitheatre* ◀

The monument has served as a public square where fairs were organized.

- **Durrësi Amphitheatre** is one of the most important monuments of ancient Durrës. It is a construction of the Antonine century (century II A.D.), built during the reign of Trajan. Today the amphitheatre is located within the city walls built by Anastasi in century VI. Studies suggest that the monument had a capacity of 15000 to 20000 spectators. Its major axis is 136 m and from the hill is stored up to 20 m height. During the Middle Ages the place was used by people for protection. In its underground galleries was built a paleo-christian church, which is decorated with mosaics showing St. Mary with the imperial clothing between two angels. The composition is also accompanied by portraits of donors, such as Alexander with his wife. It constitutes one of the earliest evidences of early Christianity in the city.

- **Church of Shën Ndoji** is located on the shore of the Adriatic Sea on the north side of Cape Rodon. It is mentioned in historical documents as the Church of St. Anastasia in the XVIII – XIV centuries. In century XV it was taken over by Franciscan missionaries who restored it and since that time, the church is known as the Church of St. Anthony.

- **Basilica of Shën Mëhilli** is located on the west side of the hill with the same name, in Arapaj area, about 6 km from the city of Durrës. It was discovered by the archaeological campaigns conducted in the '80s. The floor of the basilica is paved with polychrome mosaics, with anthropomorphic, zoomorphic figures and geometric herbal decor. It is one of the most beautiful paleo-Christian mosaics in our country, dating back to century V - VI A.D.

- **Bashtova Castle** is built on a field, nearly 400 m north of Shkumbini River and 3-4 km far from the coast of the Adriatic Sea, in villa Bashtova, Kavaja. Bashtova castle is mentioned at the beginning of the XVI century in a map drawn in 1521. According to the Turkish traveller Evliya Çelebi, the castle was founded by the Venetians. Later it was conquered by the Turks, when Sultan Mehmet departed for the conquest of Shkodra in 1478.

- **Church of Shën Premte** is located in the hilltop of Çetë village, about 2 km east of the city of Kavaja. The interior of the church is decorated with frescoes, painted by Joan Çetiri (Katro) from Grabova, whose activity spans from 1792 to 1813. The church of Çeta constitutes the northernmost monument where Joan Çetiri or other painters of Çetiri family worked.

- **Monastery of Shën Mëria, Ardenica**, represents one of the largest religious buildings in the area of Myzeqe. It rises in a dominant position on a high hill, on one side of which lies the wide area of Myzeqe field, while on the other side you can see the Adriatic Sea. Located between the villages of Kolonjë and Libofshë, it was a culminating station, in constant contact with the economic and social aspect of these two areas. On the western side of the hill, where the monastery lies, passed the southern branch of Via Egnatia nearby, which continued to be used also during the medieval period. According to the legends, it is the place where the marriage ceremony of Gjergj Kastriot Skanderbeg

took place in 1451, while the inscription dated May 1st, 1477 shows the existence of the monastery in that period. Ardenica Monastery represents an architectural ensemble with a triangular layout, with the church at its centre. The complex consists of the Chapel of the "Shën Triadha" in the Northeast, the Church "Dormition of the Virgin Mary" in its southwest and hospices around them, which planning is conditioned by the terrain.

- **Monastery of Shën maria in Apollonia** is a complex with architectural features that show the combination of eastern and western construction traditions, which provide these monuments with a particular individuality. The combination and rivalry between these two spheres of influence is reflected in the architectural formulation, decorative sculpture, and picturesque and technical painting of frescoes. Despite the fact that the architecture of the building is Byzantine in concept, some elements of the exonarthex, sculpture and painting features, show the work of craftsmen who follow Romanesque construction and paintings practices.

- In Myzeqe area, there are several interesting churches to visit, such as those of **"Shën Kolli" in Krutje**, **"Shën Kolli" in Toshkëz**, **"Shën Maria" in Bishqethem etc.**

- **Kanina Castle** represents a civic center of the Hellenistic period (century III - II B.C), which flourished as a medieval city up to century XVIII, without changing its fortification system. It is located in Kanina



*Bashtova Castle;* ◀

village, near the tourist coastal city of Vlora. Kanina is the balcony of the coastal area of Vlora bay, protected naturally from Shushica valley. This urban antic-medieval centre is of importance for researchers, for the interpretation of Illyrian-Arbër continuity, serving both the tourism and the cultural tourism.

- **Porto Palermo Castle** was built by Ali Pasha in 1804. It rises in a very nice position, in the small tectonic bay of Porto Palermo, in the Albanian Riviera, south of Himara. At that time, the ruler was distinguished for reconstruction and construction of a series of fortifications. He created a whole system of separate castles and towers, as he forecasted a potential conflict with Turkey. Castles were built in strategic key points, near the main roads and ports of the country. It is said that the Pasha gave the castle his wife's name, Vasiliqja.

- **Church of Shën Mëria Monastery** is located on the island of Zvernec, opposite the village with the same name. Its style is of free cross with a dome and narthex, while the exonarthex and the open porch were added later. The architecture of the church, with cast and developed forms, the treatment of facades with arcades, are elements that date back to the second half of century XIV. Romanesque architecture impacts are evident in its external part, which relates to the power and the domination of the noble family of Balshaj over these territories. Every August 15th, a pilgrimage takes place here in honour of Saint Mary.

- **Church of Source of Life (Marmiroi) in Orikum** is located behind Pashaliman, in a secluded place on the crest of a low hill in the western part of Vlora bay. It has been dedicated to the image of Saint Mary, as

Source of Life, but, in people's memories it exists as "Marmiroi", a name that appears in historical sources in 1307 and relates to the marble quarry nearby. Marmiroi Church dates back to the early stage of middle Byzantine period, the first half of century X.

- **Church of Shën Spiridhoni** was built in the lower neighbourhood of Vuno village, where it forms a building ensemble along with the other buildings of social character, such as schools and church administration. The interior of the church is decorated with murals which, according to the inscription on the southern gate, were painted in 1784 by Jani from the Eparchy of Drinopolje and Gjirokastra, with the contribution of the inhabitants of the village at the time of Bishop Joaniq. The same master is believed to have also painted the icon of Christ and the Archangel Michael in the iconostasis.

- **Ipapandia Church** is located at the lower part of Dhërmi village, near the sea. It preserves the typological features of the coastal one nave churches. The interior of the church is decorated with wall paintings, which reflect two different phases of construction. The paintings of the first phase are related to the Ionian School of painting and according to the inscription, they were completed in 1751, while the paintings of the second phase are completed in a Fjonjat studio in Kostur area, and date back to the second half of century XIX.

- **Shën Stefan Church** is located at the lower part of Dhërmi village, close to the sea. In its actual state, it represents a small

post-Byzantine chapel, the walls of which are integrated parts of an earlier basilica, consisting of the central nave divided into three naves, the altar and narthex on the west side. The interior of the church preserves traces of mural paintings of two different stages of implementation. The first stage belongs to century XVI, while the second one was completed in the second half of century XIX, by the studio of Fionjat.

- **Mosque of Muradije** is composed by the cubic halls and the minaret, while traces of the former porch are preserved on the north wall and its foundations. The walls are built with stones and bricks placed on a regular basis, two rows of carved stones, alternated by two rows of bricks. The building is covered with a dome. The entry to the mosque is on the north side. It was built in the second half of century XVI. The mosque is designed and built by the Albanian architect Sinan, who was one of the most important builders of mosques in the early Ottoman Period. The Mosque of Muradije is built with supporting walls. The walls are made of stone and bricks. The building is covered with a spherical dome made of stone. The mosque is located in the centre of Vlora city.

- **Church of Shën Koll Monastery in Mesopotam** is located on the southern part the monastery. This church is of a unique type. It is the largest among preserved Byzantine churches in Albania in XI-XIV centuries. The church has a shape of a cube with the central part which rises above and is crowned by four

domes. It is thought that the church was surrounded on three sides by galleries or open porches with arcades. They were demolished in 1793. According to researchers, in 1510 the church was hit by an earthquake, which caused considerable damage. The church is known for its unique architecture, its brick decoration, sculptural relieves on the exterior walls of the facades, for the capitols, for the artistic values, the high level of Byzantine-style building, including the Roman influence. It belongs to the XIII century, fact that is also shown in the emblem of D'Anjou.

**- Castle of Lëkurës** is another fortification built by the Turks. It is located on a high hill southeast of Saranda, near the ruins of the Lëkurës village. The castle's layout is almost square, measuring 42 x 44 m, with two round towers located in the northwest and southeast corner, and a rectangular tower on the western wall. In terms of planimetrics, Lëkurës Castle is similar to the other castles of Turkish occupation period, such as Preza and Pegini castle. Each of them, besides the towers round the corner, is also equipped with a rectangular tower in one of the walls. Based on the available data, the most likely time of the construction of this castle is second half of century XVI until the end of century XVII.

**- Church of Shën Mëri Monastery - Kakome;** The Monastery of Shën Mëri rises on a hilly plateau inside the Gulf of Kakome, away from residential areas. The nearest village is Nivica- Bubari. The position of the monastery and the

architectural - constructive level of the remaining constructions testify its importance and values. The monastic complex is composed of churches, towers and a two-storey building, which was used for service premises. The entire monastic complex is surrounded by high stone walls, where can be found also the well protected entrance gate.



*Mosque of Muradije in Vlora* ◀

**- Monastery of Shën Mëri in Krorëz** rises on a rocky shore with natural protection and a broad view of the coastal landscape. Churches and towers remain from the monastic complex. The church is in a cross shape, with a dome with internal dimensions 7,90 x 4, 40 m. There is a two-storey bower in the church. The tower or the fortified building is three-storey, with closed style and few and small lighting spaces. Besides these buildings, there are ruins of other buildings around the church. The monastery courtyard is paved with stone slates.

**- Shën Thanas Church in Sopik** is built on the highest park of the hill in the centre

of Sopik village. It consists of narthex, central nave and apse. On the north side, the porch of the church is provided with one division roof. Nowadays, the church looks like a construction of century XVII, and it is thought to be raised on the foundations of an earlier building. The interior of the church does not show any exposed frescoes, which should have been covered with plaster during the dictatorship period.

**- Lisus Castle and Memorial of Skanderbeg (Municipality of Lezha);**

the early stages of construction of the Castle of Lezha date back to century III B.C. The walls reach the maximum height to 8 m and a width of 2.5- 4 m. On the Hellenistic buildings there are later phases, such as the Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman buildings recently. The area of the castle is nearly 2 hectares and the perimeter of the surrounding city walls is up to 850 m.

**- Rubik Church (Rubik Municipality, Mirditë) or Shelbuemi Church**

is currently under the jurisdiction of the newly established diocese of Rrëshen. It has historically been part of Lezha diocese. It was built in century XII as a Byzantine church and repainted in 1272. According to written texts, it is closely linked to a community of monks of the Benedict Order. This is also evident in the clothing of Abbot Innocent, presented in miniature in Deisis composition, which belong to the Latin rites.

**- Church of Shën Kolli, Perondi** is located near the town of Kuçova. The only information about the village and the church is a note left by the Bishop of Berat Monastery, Anthimios Aleksudhis, at the end of century XIX. According to this note, in 1399, the abbot of Shën Kolli monastery in Pendearhontion gave the library to Theodore III Muzaka, in order to save it from the Turks.



Rubik Church ◀



Albania Folk Costumes ◀

### Folklore and Iso-polifonia

Albania, part of the Balkans, which is internationally recognized as a zone rich in folklore, has very old traditions, which continue even nowadays. The Folk music has its roots in antiquity. Albania is known for the songs of “Epos of Heroes” and iso-polifonia, which is part of the UNESCO oral world heritage. Albanian iso-polifonia is a group singing without musical instruments (except Piluri area, on Himara coast). It is spread over the districts of Gjirokastra, Tepelena, Vlora, culminating in Himara, on the Ionian Coast.

In addition to this genre, the Albanian folklore is also rich in its literature, music, choreography and drama. It comprises tales, legends, anecdotes, proverbs, etc. Albania is known for its rich and diverse costumes, where it is known the northern “xhubleta” (female dress), which origins date to ancient times; men’s kilt in the

south; as well as “Qylafi of lebër” in the south as well, which also originate from antiquity. A very important event of Albanian folklore is the National Folk Festival of Gjirokastra, which takes place in the magnificent castle of the city every 4 years. In this festival participate folk groups from all over Albania and other Albanian regions of Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Italian Arbëresh and Diaspora.

Besides of this important event, other activities are regularly held such as: The National Festival of harmonicas and Folk Orchestra of Korçë, the National Festival of Rhapsody and Folk Instruments in Lezha, the National Citizen Song Festival in Elbasan, the National Festival of Iso-Polyfonia in Vlora, International Festival “Multicultural Përmet” in Përmet, Folk Festival “Dardanelle Sofra” in Bajram Curri, Festival “Dibra Room” in Peshkopi, etc.

## Handicrafts

Albanian handicrafts have a long tradition. In ancient times, the Illyrians and Arbëresh had a high level of artistic works development, using a special technique. Most of the mentioned works are costumes with national artistic folklore motifs. Other works are filigree products, wood carvings, alabaster, bone work, ceramics, stone, wool and leather products. All these types of works have always attracted the attention of tourists, for their originality and high technical and artistic value. Nowadays, visitors and tourists can purchase items and souvenirs of the Albanian crafts during their stay. The main bazaar to buy these items is that of Kruja, which is located at the entrance to the castle. Other stores of this type are also found in Tirana, Shkodër, Berat, Gjirokastra, etc.

## Literature and Arts

The first Albanian book is “Meshari” of Gjon Buzuku (1555). Early literature is represented by religious books, expressing resistance to the Turkish invasion. The most prominent authors of this literature are: Pjeter Budi, Frang Bardhi, Pjeter Bogdani, etc. Albanian literature reached its peak in the National Renaissance period. This literature combines the enlightened, romantic, democratic spirit of the writers of that period. The most prominent authors of Renaissance literature are: Naim Frashëri, Andon Zako Çajupi, Sami Frashëri, Ndre Mjeda, De Rada, etc. During independence period, literature dealt with the same topic of Renaissance patriotism, deepening more in the democratic character.

The most prominent figures of this period are: Fan Noli as publicist, poet and leading translator of world literature masterpieces in Albanian, Migjeni, Lasgush Poradeci, Gjergj Fishta, Ernest Koliqi, Faik Konica etc. After World War II, socialist realism influenced literature topics. Although the themes were limited, a great number of valuable artworks were realised during this period. We can mention writers such as Mitrush Kuteli, Ismail Kadare, Dritëro Agolli, etc. The works of the novelist Ismail Kadare have been translated in 40 languages and in 2005 he was awarded with the prize “Man Booker International”. Kadare was also nominated for the Nobel Prize in literature.

## Cinematography

Albanian cinematography has been established after World War II, around 1947. The first Albanian movie “Tana” was produced in 1952. Some of Albanian movies are also known by the European public. They are awarded with prizes in various international activities. Successful movies have been produced in recent years and they have been awarded in various festivals and competitions in Europe and beyond. Some of these movies are also broadcasted on European TV channels. Short and animated films have been significantly developed. Nowadays, two professional cinematography schools have been opened in Albania.

## Theatre

The Albanian theatre has a long tradition. This evidence is also supported by the cultural and theatrical wealth dating back to IV and III centuries B.C. The origins



*Theatre of Opera and Ballet, Tirana ◀*

of the amateur theatre date back to "Renaissance". The theatre established its traditions in Shkodër, Korça, Gjirokastra and Elbasan. Albania is the birthplace of the international famous actor, Aleksandër Moisiu. The acting profile can be studied in Albania at the Academy of Fine Arts. Theatrical professional groups with their shows are always present in different cities of our country. Artistic and cultural institutions operating in Tirana are: National Theatre, Theatre of Opera and Ballet and the Puppet Theatre.

#### **OPENING HOURS OF MUSEUMS**

They are open from Tuesday to Sunday:

Time 9:00 a.m. – 02:00 p.m.

Time 05:00 p.m. – 08:00 p.m.

The museums are closed on Monday.

#### **Museums**

1. National Historical Museum, Tirana
2. National Museum "Skanderbeg" Kruje
3. Ethnographic Museum, Kruje
4. National Museum of Medieval Art

#### **Korçë**

5. National Museum of Education, Korçë
6. Onufri National Museum, Berat
7. National Museum of Ethnography, Berat
8. Museum of Independence Vlora
9. Archaeological Park Apollonia
10. Archaeological Park Byllis
11. Castle of Berat
12. Archaeological Museum of Durrës
13. The Durres Amphitheatre
14. Castle of Gjirokastra
15. Archaeological Park Antigone
16. Archaeological Park Amantia
17. Archaeological Park Orikumi
18. The Monastery of Mesopotami
19. Castle of Porto Palermo
20. Church of 40 Saints, Saranda
21. Castle of Himare
22. Castle of Kanina
23. Archaeological Park of Finiq
24. In the National Park of Butrint the opening hours are:

#### **Monday to Sunday**

9:00 a.m. – 08:00 p.m.

# ▶ PRACTICAL INFORMATION





## BY AIR

All flights take off in the Airport “Mother Teresa”, located 17 km northwest of Tirana. The city of Tirana offers a shuttle service at the airport.

The buses leave from “Dede Gjo Luli” Street, behind the National Museum, every one hour, starting from 07:00 until 19:00. The ticket costs about 2 Euros. You can also use the taxi service, which costs 20 Euros.

### “Mother Teresa” Airport

At the airport there are shops and “duty free shop”, which provide 24 hour service.

Tel: 00355 4/2381800/1600

Fax: 00355 4/2379065.

For the lost baggage during the flight, please contact:

Tel: 00355 4/2381681/82

Mob: 00355 69 20 66626

E-mail: [info@tirana-airport.com](mailto:info@tirana-airport.com)

Web: [www.tirana-airport.com.al](http://www.tirana-airport.com.al)

The airlines that operate in Albania (Rinas) are **ADRIA AIRWAYS, LUFTHANSA, ALITALIA, AEGEAN AIRLINES, AUSTRIAN AIRLINES, HEMUS AIR, BRITISH AIRWAYS, TURKISH AIRLINES, PEGASUS AIRLINES, AIR SERBIA.**

## BY SEA

You can enter Albania from Italy and Greece, as well as through the ports of Durrës, Vlora, Shëngjin and Saranda. Some foreign companies provide regular services in ports as follows:

### Port of Durrës

It is connected with the Italian ports of Bari, Ancona, Trieste and Brindisi in Italy

Tel: 00355/052222028

E-mail: [portiDurrës@mrp.gov.al](mailto:portiDurrës@mrp.gov.al)

web: [www.apDurrës.com.al](http://www.apDurrës.com.al)

**The Port Authority operates 24 hours.**

### Port of Vlore

It is connected with the Italian port of Brindisi

Tel: 00355/033224521

Fax: 00355/033229417

E-mail: [portivlore@mrp.gov.al](mailto:portivlore@mrp.gov.al)

web [www.portivlore.al](http://www.portivlore.al)

**The Port operates until 22:00**

### Port of Sarande

It provides daily connections to passengers on the Greek island of Corfu

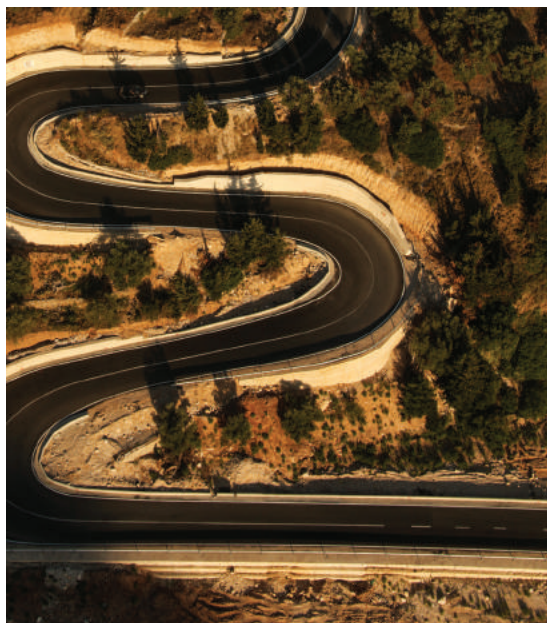
Tel: 00355/073222734

E-mail: [portsarande@mrp.gov.al](mailto:portsarande@mrp.gov.al)

web [www.portisarande.com.al](http://www.portisarande.com.al)

The Port operates until 22:00





## BY LAND

The Republic of Albania is connected with all its neighbouring countries through land border crossing points. These border crossing points are as follows:

### MONTENEGRO

- Through the border crossing point of Hani Hoti (Bozhaj Montenegrin side), which connects Shkodër with Tuzi and Podgorica.

**Customs operate until 22:00.**

E-mail: [hanihotit@mrp.gov.al](mailto:hanihotit@mrp.gov.al)

- Through the Muriqan border crossing point (Sukobin in Montenegrin side), which connects Shkodër with Ulcinj.

**Customs operate until 22:00.**

E-mail: [murriqan@mrp.gov.al](mailto:murriqan@mrp.gov.al)

Tel & Fax: 00355 26290070

- Through Vermoshi border crossing point, which connects the region of Kelmendi with Plav and Gucija area.

**Customs operate until 22:00.**

### KOSOVA

Through the border crossing point of Morina Pass (in Kosovo called the point of Vermica), which connects Kukes to Prizren.

E-mail: [morine@mrp.gov.al](mailto:morine@mrp.gov.al)

- Through the Morina border crossing point, which connects Bajram Curri with Gjakova.

- Through the border crossing point of Prushi Pass, which connects Has and Bytyci region with the province of Gjakova.

- Through Shishtavec border crossing point, which connects this region with Brodin and Grgash.

### MACEDONIA

Through the border crossing point of Qafe Thana (Kafasan, Macedonian side), which connects Pogradec and other parts of Albania and Struga.

**Customs operate until 22:00.**

E-mail: [qafethane@mrp.gov.al](mailto:qafethane@mrp.gov.al)

Tel & Fax: 00355 8326166

- Through Tushemisht border crossing point, which connects Pogradec with St. Naum and the southern part of Lake Ohrid. **Customs operate until 22:00.**

E-mail: [tushemisht@mrp.gov.al](mailto:tushemisht@mrp.gov.al)

- Through Bllatë border crossing point, which connects Peshkopi and Bulqiza with Great Dibra.

**Customs operate until 22:00.**

E-mail: [pkkblade@mrp.gov.al](mailto:pkkblade@mrp.gov.al)

- Through the Gorica border crossing point (Strenjë, Macedonian side), which connects the shores of Great Prespa Lake, on both sides of the border.

**Customs operate until 19:00.**

E-mail: [goric@mrp.gov.al](mailto:goric@mrp.gov.al)

## GREECE

- Through Kakavijë border crossing point, which connects Gjirokastra with Ioannina.

**Customs operate non stop during 24 hours.**

E-mail: [kakavije@mrp.gov.al](mailto:kakavije@mrp.gov.al)

- Through Kapshtica border crossing point (Krystalopigi, on the Greek side), which connects Korçë with Follorina and Thessaloniki. **Customs operate non stop, during 24 hours.**

E-mail: [pkkkapshtice@mrp.gov.al](mailto:pkkkapshtice@mrp.gov.al)

- Through the border crossing point of Three Bridges, which connects Përmet with Konica on the Greek side. **Customs operate until 22:00.**

E-mail: [pkktreurat@mrp.gov.al](mailto:pkktreurat@mrp.gov.al)

- Through Qafe Boti border crossing point, which connects Konispol with Filat on the Greek side.

**Customs operate until 22:00.**

E-mail: [qafebot@mrp.gov.al](mailto:qafebot@mrp.gov.al)

## CAR RENTAL RENT A CAR

In Albania there are several centers of car rents. The main companies are "Alba Rent", Avis, Hertz, Sixt and Europcar.

## Interurban transport

The main form of interurban transport in Albania is the service provided by private

bus and minibus.

## FROM TIRANA MAIN ROUTES:

### To South:

Tirana-Berat, Tirana - Vlora, Tirana - Gjirokastra and Tirana - Saranda. The buses leave from "Kavala" street, near the bus park.

### To North:

Tirana-Kukës, Tirana - Peshkopi in "Dritan Hoxha" street in Lapraka.

Buses depart to Shkodra in Rruga e Durrësit, near the Palace of Sports.

Minibuses to Bajram Curri depart from "Murat Toptani" Street.

### To Southeast:

Tirana- Librazhd at the Boulevard "Zhan D'Ark" near the headquarters of Democratic Party, Tirana - Pogradec, at the street of "Elbasan" (at the Faculty of Economics),

Tirana - Korçë, near "Qemal Stafa" National stadium.

Minibuses to Kruje leave at the end of "Mine Peza" Street.

From the harbour city of Durrës, buses and minibuses to different destinations inside Albania leave at the square near the railway station.

## POTABLE WATER

Potable water is controlled and chlorinated in all districts. In stores, supermarkets and markets is sold bottled drinking water.

## WORKING HOURS OF THE ADMINISTRATION

Government offices work from Monday to

Thursday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; on Fridays, from 8:00 a.m. to 02:00 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays are holidays.

## **BANKS AND MONETARY SYSTEM**

They work from Monday to Friday, from 8:30 to 15:00 (closed on Saturday and Sunday).

### **THE MONETARY SYSTEM**

Albanian currency is called Lek and is available in denominations of 5000, 1000, 200, 100 and in cents 100, 50, 20, 10 and 5 ALL. Foreign exchange rates are published daily. Electronic machines are installed and found in the most important cities of Albania. The major part of Banks, hotels and some restaurants accept credit cards, as well as checks. Cash payments are widely practiced. The most popular credit cards are: American Express, Dinner Club, Visa, Maestro (ProCredit Bank).

### **SHOPS**

Usually shops are open from 09:00 to 20:00 (some of which are closed on Sundays).

## **THINGS YOU CAN BUY**

During your stay in Albania, you can buy various items and souvenirs. Among them, we can mention carpets and tapestries (Kukes and Korçë products are recommended), embroidery items (Zadrimore motives), albastër bunkers in miniature, pipes, Skanderbeg Albanian cognac, various jewellery, filigree items, bags with traditional Albanian motives, etc.



**ALBANIANS ARE KNOWN AS HOSPITABLE PEOPLE AND WILLING TO HELP FOREIGNERS. IF YOU NEED GUIDANCE, FEEL FREE TO ASK THE HELP OF LOCAL PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE YOUTH.**

## **SOCIAL TIPS - THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW**

Albania is a safe destination, and you can also travel individually. Foreign languages are widely used in hotels, restaurants and other services. The young population is widely practicing the languages, especially Italian and English. During the introduction with someone, Albanians like to shake hands and feel happy if you ask about their family and health. If you have a chance to go as guests in Albanian houses, they usually offer you coffee and raki. Similarly, if you have a chance to go home as guests in the northern area of the country and especially in the villages, you must take off your shoes.

If you enter the mosque, you should respect the dress code which is preferable to be serious, during the month of Ramadan. The sale of alcoholic beverages in hotels, restaurants and shops continues normally and you are free to enjoy these drinks; only for those who are fasting, is alcohol prohibited.

We recommend you to exchange money at certain points where you read "EXCHANGE". Exchange rates in these



stores are displayed and you will be provided with an invoice for the service. Be careful if you travel late at night in isolated areas with low lighting. Do not leave your vehicle unlocked and with items that could attract the attention of evildoers. If you travel with urban bus line in Tirana or other cities, beware of stealing and in these cases keep as less valuable items. If you travel in remote mountainous areas we recommend you to travel with local companions who know the country. Be careful with the use of the Albanian currency. Albanians use new banknotes, but in practice they still calculate with the old banknotes.

That way, if you have a banknote worth 100 ALL, the Albanians will count it as 1,000 ALL (old lek). For example: if you buy in an ambulatory shop a "Tirana" or "Korça" beer, the seller can tell you that it costs 1,500 Lek (which in reality is 150 lek). However in all the restaurants, cafes and shops, the bills will appear with their real value.

## MOBILE PHONE SERVICES

Cellular companies providing mobile service in the territory of Albania are: Telekom Albania, Vodafone, Eagle Mobile and Plus.

These companies have agreements with most European countries. If you have roaming in your phone, it can be used in Albania. Note that the cost of using the mobile phone in Albania is higher than in other countries of Europe (in the case of roaming).

## BORDER FORMALITIES

### Passports

Foreign visitors from the following countries can enter Albania with a passport, without a visa, by paying an entry fee (10 Euros). The visitors from Poland and the Czech Republic are exempted from this tax. This category of foreign visitors who enter without a visa can stay in Albania for 30 days, with an entry visa. This period can be extended up to 90 days.

### The citizens of the following countries who can enter the Republic of Albania without visas by presenting passports are:

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Brazil, United Kingdom, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hong - Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Israel, Japan, Canada, Kazakhstan, Chile, Kosovo, Croatia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Montenegro, Malta, Macedonia, Monaco, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Cyprus, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), Czech Republic, Romania, San Marino, Vatican, Serbia, USA, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey, Ukraine, New Zealand, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait.

### From the above list the citizens of the following countries can enter Albania by presenting an ID card:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, United



Kingdom, Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hong - Kong, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Canada, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Croatia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, Malta, Macedonia, Monaco, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Cyprus, the Republic of Korea, Czech Republic, Romania, San Marino, Vatican, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, New Zealand, Switzerland, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait.

**In addition to these countries, due to visa liberalization in the countries of the Schengen area, the citizens of the following countries can enter Albania without a visa:**

Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Brunei, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Maurishius, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, El Salvador, Seychelles, St Kitts & Nevis, Uruguay, Venezuela, Macau and Moldova

### **THE CITIZENS OF THIRD COUNTRIES WHO:**

- a)** have a valid multi-entry Schengen visa, which was first used in one of Schengen countries, or have a valid residence permit in one of the Schengen countries;
- b)** have a multi-entry visa to the USA or the UK, which was first used in one of these countries, or have a valid residence permit in the USA or in the United Kingdom.

\* If they stay more than 90 days during a six-month period, they must be provided with a visa type "D".

**IV.** For the period of 25 May to 30 September 2014 visas are removed for the citizens of Russia, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Oman. Passport is the only valid document to travel abroad for these citizens. For more information, please check the following website:

**[www.mfa.gov.al](http://www.mfa.gov.al)**



MINISTRIA E ZHVILLIMIT  
EKONOMIKË, TURIZMIT,  
TREGTISË DHE SËPËRQARJES



National Tourism Agency  
Rr. Sermedin Said Toptani, Tiranë - Shqipëri  
+355 42 273 778  
info@akt.gov.al  
Visit Albania  
@Visit\_Albania  
albania.tourism

## LEGEND

- National Capital
- District Capital
- Town
- Village
- International Airport
- Seaport
- Marina
- Boarder Crossing
- Country Boarder



-  National Road
-  Secondary Road
-  Railroad
-  Camping Site
-  Archaeological Site
-  Christian Monastery
-  Old Mosque
-  Orthodox Church
-  Old Bridge
-  Catholic Church
-  Bektashi Tekke
-  Fortress
-  Traditional Tower
-  Museum
-  UNESCO Site
-  Vineyards
-  Beach
-  Water Sports
-  Skiing
-  Spelunking
-  Paragliding
-  Fishing
-  Diving
-  Hunting Ground
-  National Park
-  Thermal Waters
-  Tourist Information



GREECE



## CONTACT:



## NATIONAL TOURISM AGENCY

Rruga Sermedin Said Toptani no 1

Tirana – Albania

Tel/Fax: 00 355 4 2273778

E-mail: [info@akt.gov.al](mailto:info@akt.gov.al)

Web: [www.albania.al](http://www.albania.al)

Web: [www.akt.gov.al](http://www.akt.gov.al)

## OTHER LINKS:



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

[www.mfa.gov.al](http://www.mfa.gov.al)

[www.inyourpocket.com/albania](http://www.inyourpocket.com/albania)

[www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)



## EMERGENCY NUMBERS

POLICE: 129 / 355 4 2226801

AMBULANCE: 127 / 355 4 2222235

FIRE STATION: 128 / 355 4 2351891 / 4 2223333

TRAFFIC POLICE: 126 / 355 4 2234875

INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCY LINE: 112

NIGHT DRUG STORE: 355 4 2222241





National Tourism Agency

🏠 Rr. Sermedin Said Toptani, Tiranë - Shqipëri

☎ +355 42 273 778

✉ info@akt.gov.al

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🐦 @Visit\_Albania

🌐 albania.tourism