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Southern Coastal Trail

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INTRODUCTION

The Southern Coastal Trail takes you along 74 kilometres of Albania's beautiful southern riviera. Although mainly known for its beaches, the coast has rich cultural heritage and culinary traditions that can be experienced along this multi-day trek from village to village. As you pass along sandy and pebble beaches, rocky goat trails, through olive groves and along the narrow cobbled alleys of charming villages, views of the seemingly endless blue sea contrast with the backdrop of dramatic mountain ridges.

Crossing Llogara Pass, the entrance to the Albanian Riviera, the Southern Coastal Trail stretches from Dhërmi almost all the way to Saranda, and is made of mostly moderate village-to-village hikes that make it comfortably walkable for experienced hikers in 6 days. Extensions and combinations with trails in the hinterland are also possible to create a more physically challenging trekking experience. However, some sections of the trail are also suitable for leisure hikers and families looking to combine relaxation and swimming at the beaches with easy walks – the Southern Coastal Trail has something for everyone.

The best time of the year to explore the area on foot is in spring and autumn, when the weather is usually stable and warm, but not too hot, the beaches are quiet, and accommodation is more easily available and reasonably priced. Passing numerous beaches, the trail is ideally combined with a plunge into the turquoise waters to cool off, or even a day or two of rest to enjoy swimming and sunbathing.

The Southern Coastal Trail also leads you through a region of rich cultural heritage from built objects like centuries-old churches and monasteries to more intangible delights, the most famous example of which are the region's polyphonic songs: the voices of several singers become intricately woven to create beautiful sounds telling ancient stories. Just like these unique songs, the beauty of the mountains and the sea, the olive groves and long beaches, the canyons and friendly shepherds, and all the other different elements combine to create the unique experience of the Southern Coastal Trail.

DHËRMI–DHËRMI BEACH–GJIPE BEACH–JAL BEACH–LIVADH BEACH

From beach to beach to beach

13.4 km / 550m+ 670m+ / 5:00 h

Dhërmi is one of the largest villages along the riviera. Perched on the mountain slope under a steep cliff face, the recently restored bright white facades shine under tiled roofs. For the best view over the village, the walk up the steep alleys and stairs to the church of St. Mary towering over the highest houses is well worth it.

From Dhërmi the hike starts at the main road near the bend that crosses the ravine, at a small round stone square, surrounded by an eye-catching red banister. Descending a few stairs, we follow the *Mills Trail* (Albanian: Shtegu i Mullinjve), the historical connection of the village to the sea. Several old mills and a waterfall lie along this easy, wide path that contains several informative signboards on notable people, local customs and songs, as well as benches to rest under the shade of large plane trees. After passing two springs, a small bridge crosses the stream along which the path runs, and as the stream widens, the terrain flattens. The descent continues softly through the terraced countryside, passing the 15th-century Ipapandias church, before the trail ends at a red metal gate.

From here, we take a left onto a dirt road and make our way down to the beachfront, following the paved promenade to the southern end of Dhërmi beach. After crossing the dry streambed after Alevra Resort, a signpost indicates the start of the trail towards Gjipe, leading along a series of small bunkers on its first stretch. The small, marked trail lined by holly oaks and sage gently ascends, granting views back over the sandy beach of Dhërmi. The trail now zigzags upwards and soon tall cypress trees indicate the approach to St. Theodhori Monastery. As the trail widens and the terrain flattens, you reach a lookout where the contrast of the crystal-clear turquoise waters below and the dramatic mountains of the Ceraunian range up to Llogara invite you to pause and savour the view.

A dirt road then leads to the gate of the monastery grounds, which can be bypassed by hikers on the left. Following the trail markings, the monastery is reached after about 200m. From here a paved road continues down to a parking lot, and after a right turn the trail follows an old and rocky military road towards the beach of Gjipe. Two small bars, one at each end of the beach, offer refreshments here during the high season, and the usually quiet beach makes for a great rest spot. Furthermore, the lush Gjipe canyon that extends inland from the beach, with its steep rock faces popular with climbers, is worth exploring.

The trailhead for the next stage of the hike lies at the opposite end of the beach, indicated by a wooden signpost for Jale (also found on maps and signposts as Jal, Jali, Jalë, or Jala). After approximately 100m, the trail forks: off to the left, it leads up the mountain to the village of Vuno, while straight ahead you continue on to Jal. A relatively level trail along the slope of the mountain leads you to more overgrown terrain by scratchy holly oak shrubs, unless recently cleared by locals. With a gentle descent, it crosses a dry creek, and while some trees provide shade, the trail also becomes more overgrown. Soon Jal beach comes into view. Apart from a few steeper stretches, the trail stays mostly level, and a series of gullies in which the 1.5m bushes become a nuisance alternate with more open terrain and a handful of sections with scree. As the smell of wild thyme fills the air, shortly after traversing a final field of large rocks, the trail hits a car park and a hundred metres further you reach the main asphalt road to Jal beach. Follow the road for 1 km, bypassing the large luxury resort at the northern end of the beach.

From there continue along the wide cobbled promenade lined by beach bars on one side and small restaurants on the other. The promenade ends at concrete barriers, where the trail to Livadh takes us on to a wide dirt road. On flat terrain, past some private houses, green meadows and a football field, the walk is now easy. After passing the small, rocky Akuariumi beach, the rocky road ascends and descends gently through the countryside, leaving bunkers, olive groves and some fenced properties behind. For the last stretch of the day's hike, a small rocky trail with some steep steps turns off from the road and leads downhill and around a hillslope, before Livadh beach comes into sight. The last metres of trail descend along the cliff face, before reaching the pebble beach.

LIVADH–OLD HIMARË–PILUR

Through mighty city walls and cursed canyons

9.2 km / 850m+ 150m+ / 4:30 h

Looking inland from Livadh beach, the striking grey stone houses of Old Himarë (Himara) sit majestically atop a hill. From the trailhead near the end of the beach, we follow the dirt road and just a few metres later turn left onto a small trail. The remnants of a nicely cobbled path show that this was once a highly frequented route. Passing through a field, the small trail soon turns into a wide dirt path and then an even wider dirt road, past a handful of buildings. Aiming towards the old town of Himarë, we follow the water channel and then gently ascend through olive groves.

Soon after passing a water source sheltered by a stone arch to the left, the path steepens. Ancient olive trees with thick trunks on fern-covered terraces now surround the wide old stone road. The crossing of the asphalt road briefly interrupts the fairy tale-like scenery, but shortly after

passing a handful of modern concrete structures, the trail leads along a ruined church and seemingly century-old stone walls appear again. The final metres before entering the walls of Old Himarë are up cobbled stairs, from where a view over the town centre of modern-day Himarë and the surrounding beaches appears. Don't miss the opportunity to get lost in the steep alleys and explore the deserted upper quarter with its ruined houses, churches, a viewpoint and some ancient wall foundations dating back to the 8th century BC, all interspersed with beautiful oleander bushes. From here, exit the old town and make your way down the stairs leading to the asphalted main road, which you'll follow uphill for about 450m to reach the trailhead to Pilur.

Passing the few last houses, the smooth dirt road leads downhill, past some fenced properties and deeper into the ravine towards the mountains of the hinterland. Continuing straight ahead upon hitting the riverbed, and ignoring the turnoff to the right, we catch a last glimpse of Old Himarë, as it soon disappears around the bend. Stay to the left when reaching the junction overlooked by one of the omnipresent mushroom-shaped concrete bunkers and soon the path is surrounded by greenery, remote and seemingly devoid of other people.

The dirt road passes a house on the left, followed by two more at another junction, where the trail leads up a short uphill walk to the left and soon brings you to a subsequent downhill stretch to the right. Staying on the road and ignoring the trail forking off to the left leading up, turn right at the next junction. The road eventually hits a closed metal gate, which can be bypassed by a trail to the left, entering terraced olive groves. Stay level and pass below the ruined church, before meeting a dirt road leading uphill. Following the road a short descent brings you to a dry riverbed and soon after to a small patch of pines on the left. Immediately after the pines, leave the road to turn right and cross a meadow to reach the edge of the canyon ahead, where a group of parallel, narrow and rocky goat trails climb upwards, with a stretch of forest to their right. (Continuing downhill on the dirt road takes you back to the centre of Himarë.)

As the vegetation becomes shorter and sparser, the trail widens into a gravel path, then continuing as a number of smaller trails. As you ascend on the left side of the canyon, the terrain has now an almost alpine feel to it, with ferns and large pine trees. With increasing elevation, views of the canyon start to open up, and the zigzagging trail more and more resembles a stone equestrian path.

From here the terrain becomes more demanding and is characterised by stretches of sharp, loose rocks. A short downhill along a washed out trail brings you to the crossing of a dry canyon bed, dammed by a stone-walled weir. Imagining the gushing stream and strong winds in the winter months or during a storm, it is no wonder that local legends say that the devil is supposed to lurk in this canyon, and it's better not to linger.

The last ascent to Pilur lies ahead of us and requires traversing patches of scree and the crossing of another, smaller streambed. Following the very rocky uphill, we're greeted by the smell of wild mint and oregano, and the view back over the canyon, the mountain ridges and the hills leading to the sea. When we hit a gravel road just below an electrical pole, it's only a few more metres until the village and its first houses.

PILUR–KUDHËS

Solitude of the hinterland

10.9 km / 300m↑ 720m↑ / 4:30 h

From the village square in the centre of Pilur today's trek takes us through a bit of backcountry near the coast, a remote region with not much traffic, foot or otherwise. After filling up your water bottles at the water source at the square, follow the sign towards Kudhës. The wide gravel road leaves the church grounds behind on its left and one of Albania's omnipresent partisan monuments on its right. After about 100 metres the view opens up, and passing the few last houses, more mountains and green hills become visible.

Following the marked main road downhill, and ignoring occasional turn-offs, the route passes through orchards and vineyards. Soon the smoother road turns off to the left, while we stay on the rockier road straight ahead. After a slight uphill, the terrain flattens again and while walking through a sea of the yellow flowers of Jerusalem sage as well as ferns, we can also catch a glimpse of the coast in the distance below. Passing the electric pole on the right, the road descends softly past some terraced gardens before we leave it, going straight ahead onto the small trail instead of following the road in a sharp left.

After a turn, the wide trail descends around the slope of a hill, with more views towards the sea. A stretch of overgrowth follows, dominated by hip-high flowers and ferns, and later blackberry bushes and thistles. Interested botanists can also spot *Serapias cordigera* orchids along the way in late spring. Sometimes rocky, sometimes gentle, the path continues downhill until you hit an asphalt road. Take the dirt road through the valley which you spotted from above by turning left and walking along the asphalt road for 100 metres, and then turning left again onto the dirt road at the tombstone and cypress trees. Beware of the shepherd dogs (see Health and Safety) upon passing the shepherd huts next to an enclosure.

Keeping straight through the plain, and aiming towards the two large trees at its end, the trail passes a reservoir before continuing more visibly again across the small pass. Even though the terrain becomes very rocky, the numerous trail markings show the way down into the gully, into

which the trail now descends. Through a series of ruined terraces, partly indiscernible and overgrown, the small, steep rocky trail leads into a forest on the right side of the gully.

After occasionally passing through a dry streambed, and crossing a few rock fields, the terrain opens up and the village of Kudhës lies in sight, straight across the valley. From here, the trail follows the rocky mountain slope covered in grass and some shrubs, and descends until eventually hitting a dirt road. For a stretch the terrain flattens, with the trail not well defined, but numerous markings make it easy to follow. A last steep decline along a network of animal trails brings us to what looks like the remains of a wide, once cobbled road.

The road continues and soon merges with another dirt road that leads you to an asphalt road shortly after. This was once the main road connection for traffic along the coast, bypassing the area around Porto Palermo Bay, which was a military zone and strictly closed off to the public during communism. Today the old road is almost entirely disused. Following its bends for a good kilometre, it crosses a bridge, and shortly after a concrete road to the left leads up to Kudhës, the village stretching along three ridges of the mountain. The windy road can partly be avoided by cutting through some olive groves at the beginning of the ascent. The hike eventually finishes all the way up at the recently renovated village square, towered over by a giant plane tree.

KUDHËS–OLD QEPARO–BORSH

Back to the coast through a hilltop stone village

15.4 km / 400m+ 650m+ / 5:15h

From the village square of Kudhës, the hike back towards the coast first leads us up through the upper, historic neighbourhood of the village, where many facades and steep cobbled alleys have recently been beautifully restored. Turning right at the small old church and continuing along the houses, a small trail leads out of the village. Along some terraces with vegetable gardens to the right and a few last houses to the left, it turns into an equestrian path a bit further down, which gently descends along the mountain slope. In the first bend, a wide rocky streambed full of oleander and large plane trees is crossed, before the trail stays roughly level with only a few gentle ups and downs.

As we follow the path, the views back to Kudhës reveal even more clearly how the houses of the village spread along the edge of the mountain. In the next bend we pass a water source just below the trail with a small basin for animals. Soon we're wandering through terraced olive groves and then along a ruined building surrounded by almond trees. Across another large patch of scree with bright white stones and many oleander bushes, the trail leads past a grassy field with large boulders and ruined stone walls. From here the ascent starts up a wide gravel path.

As the terrain flattens out again, we are surrounded by wild sage and hollyoak bushes lining the wide, road-like path, and the bells of grazing sheep and goats from the shepherds' respite higher up the hill might be audible in the distance. Around a bend a large pond reminiscent of an oasis awaits, surrounded by oleander and visited by amphibians, such as the yellow-bellied toad, that duck between plants as we approach. After continuing further, the trail crosses a small dry streambed and soon hits a plateau with two prominent olive trees. Shortly after, we cross the pass below the small St. Thanasi chapel and the photogenic village of Qeparo comes into view.

Just behind the pass there is a stone and concrete shelter over a water source, opposite a large poplar tree. Continuing straight ahead, the trail leads down to a cluster of cypress trees, with a church to the right. From here it is possible to skip the descent to Old Qeparo by turning left onto the wider eroded dirt road towards Borsh. If you choose to head towards Old Qeparo and explore the village, enjoy the superb views from one of the viewpoints, or have a refreshing drink at the village bar, continue down the small rubbly path.

After passing a large white metal cross, the trail continues downhill to the left, and past a small white fenced building before arriving at the bar of the village. From here you can walk a loop through the small alleys, ending up at the village square with the large plane tree. Then follow the asphalted road out of the village towards the sea. At the next opportunity, turn off the road to the left, taking a slightly ascending dirt road into the olive groves. After a while, the terrain opens up and the gravel road hugs the side of the mountain. Below, the modern village and beach of Qeparo come into sight, while the view back offers a picturesque vista of the historic village (Old Qeparo).

About 200 metres after passing a fenced property on your left and an electrical pole on your right, an easy-to-miss trail turns off from the dirt road to descend down the mountain. After a slightly difficult first few metres (as the trail was damaged while constructing the dirt road), the trail is easy to follow, leading through rocky terrain with some small shrubs. Not long after, it hits another gravel road, which eventually arrives at the asphalted SH8 national road that runs along the coast.

Continue downhill to the left 100 metres, turn right onto a driveway, and then follow the path to a river and cross it, skipping over the large stones. On the other side, turning right onto a dirt road brings you to the beach of Borsh, while the main trail up to the village crosses the asphalt road and leads through a small alley. From here, turn right when hitting the road, then follow it past the hydropower station to *Hotel Florika*, from where a short trail zigzags steeply through the olive groves. It arrives at the village's small clinic, the *ambulanca*, housed in a yellow building. From here it's a short walk up to the main road and to the popular Ujvara Café, where tables behind the building are arranged between small streams of water.

BORSH–PIQERAS–BUNEC BEACH–LUKOVĚ

Terraced hills and the prisoner's path

14.7 km / 400m↑ 360m↓ / 4:30 h

From the village centre at the Ujvara Café, follow the main road southwards for about 100 metres and then take the dirt road named *Rruga Haliq* down to the right. Pass the last neighbourhood of Borsh seen above the dirt road, instead keeping straight ahead. The dirt road stays wide and level, and the view of the sea, the beach and the large plain covered in olive trees below, as well as the quiet surroundings make this a pleasant stroll. After passing two final secluded houses, the road turns into a smaller trail, then widening again shortly after. In a sharp right-hand bend, a small trail forks off and continues straight through increasingly dense housing, ending in a neighbourhood of holiday apartments and colourful houses. From here we make our way down to the beach along the concrete road.

Upon hitting the beachfront, turn left and walk along the beach southwards until reaching Hotel Elisabeta. Here we turn away from the beach and take the dirt road to the left that gently leads up the hill. As we continue on, terraced hill slopes surround us. Created during the communist period, these terraces were painstakingly built by the military and prisoners as well as through the “volunteer actions” of the townsfolk; only a few are still used to grow olives, lemons and oranges, while the majority are crumbling and increasingly overgrown.

The wide path runs above a neighbourhood of small huts and makeshift houses, inhabited by Albanians who arrived here in the early 2000s from the more northern regions of the country. Afterwards, the trail becomes narrower and stays mostly level, with scenic views all the way back to the 6-kilometre wide Bay of Borsh, and the previous day's descent. Below, turquoise waves break at a small beach at the bottom of the bright green, fern-covered slopes.

As the trail snakes its way along the ridges and gullies of the hillside, sometimes sandy, sometimes rocky, we approach the village of Piqeras. Olive groves now line the way, and the peacefulness of the surroundings gives little indication that this trail was once used by hard labour prisoners who were not allowed to use the main road or enter the village. The houses of Piqeras and the St. Mary of Kremesova Monastery above it come into view. Shortly after crossing the small stream, a small trail forks off to the left and leads up to Piqeras, while the main trail continues as a wide, level and rocky dirt road shaded by olive trees towards the beach of Bunec.

Continuing towards Bunec, the view opens and the next village, Lukovë (Lukova), and more terraces come into sight; look out on the right for the turnoff from the dirt road, onto a smaller trail descending the hill. Although covered in loose rocks for some downhill stretches, the trail soon

leads through softer and flatter terrain, before turning narrow and rocky, lined with boxwood bushes and strawberry trees (*Arbutus unedo*). Remnants of cobbled path bear testament to the importance these trails once had as the main connection from the village to the sea. Shortly before arriving at Bunec beach, the trail hits a rutted, partly stony dirt road again. At the bottom of the valley, you'll be greeted by the strong smell of chamomile.

Crossing the bridge, if open, beach bars can offer some refreshments. Continue along the coast southwards, take the asphalt road that runs along the beach and soon passes a hydropower station signposted as HEC Sasaj. The asphalt turns into a gravel road, which eventually ends near the last beach bar, Beach Taverna Nikolaus. From here, walk along the pebble beach for another 300 metres and turn left to take the ascending old cobbled and dirt road along the hillside overlooking terraced olive groves which are overgrown with ferns, as you gain elevation. Stay on the cobbled road while enjoying a scenic stretch of coast and more abandoned terraces, with Lukovë now seemingly within reach. Passing a small bunker, the dirt road bends to the left uphill. At the next opportunity, take the next, easy-to-miss, sharp turn to the right.

Before arriving at the village the road turns into a narrow trail and soon passes a waterfall on its left. Instead of turning left and up at the turn a few metres from here, continue straight, ending up at the old, half-ruined 15th-century church of St. Paraskevi of Rome, *Shen Premte* in Albanian. Heading uphill from here and turning right at the next crossroad, you enter the old part of the village. Ascending through the cobbled alley past historic stone houses, you reach the road, and climbing the last few stairs, the modern church and square in the centre of Lukovë.

LUKOVË–SHPELLA BEACH–SHËN VASIL–NIVICË

Ghost village and communist prison camp

14.7 km / 400m↑ 360m↑ / 4:30 h

Starting again from the village square of Lukovë (Lukova) and take the road which leaves the church behind us to our left heading out of the village, following the trail markings. The road passes some modern houses with little vegetable gardens, and ends at an asphalt road. Keep to the right and follow the asphalt road for Shpella beach. Take the road downhill for about one kilometre; then as the main road bends to the left, continue straight onto a sandy and wide dirt road behind a small kiosk. From here the beach comes into view. The dirt road leads towards the coast, and soon you'll follow the trail to the left at the fork, that descends all the way to the beach.

The trail starts off running along a series of ruined water channels, surrounded by thorny shrubs. A mix of dirt and loose rocks, the path continues through a stretch of olive trees, while providing

scenic views of the crystal-clear sea and the surrounding green hills. Eventually we reach Shpella beach, near where the main road also hits the beach. The beachfront is lined with beach bars, none of which are open in the off or low season though. Walking along the dirt road, a valley full of olive trees come into sight, and the shady grass patches underneath are great for a rest. Before arriving at the end of the road, take a left turn and cross a small stream, following the road upstream, deeper into the valley. Horses and cows graze under trees, and soon a fenced shepherd settlement comes into view.

Shortly before reaching the shepherd's huts, the trailhead up the slope is located on the right, hidden between ferns – beware of shepherd dogs as you approach (see Health and Safety). After a first uphill stretch on a narrow trail that bends back in the direction of the beach, turn left and up onto a wide path with loose rocks, which takes you above a large patch of very thorny and spiky bushes on the slope of the mountain. Since there are many small goats' trails, make sure that you stay on the main path, and if you hit a dead-end, backtrack to the nearest trail marking.

Following the trail's zigzags as you gain elevation, you pass a large prominent tree along the path. From here, the trail dissipates as the ascent continues 180 metres straight onto a steep, two-metre wide strip with somewhat less vegetation; keep following the trail markings. Just as the vegetation becomes thicker again ahead, a distinctly visible trail traversing the mountainside appears. Before turning left to follow the trail leading inland, a look back reveals views not only of the valley and beach below, but as far back as the Llogara Pass and the coastline travelled in the previous days.

The narrow trail continues to traverse the mountainside for about one kilometre on rocky terrain, slightly overgrown in parts. Not long after coming around a bend, the trail becomes more heavily overgrown again, and in late spring a field of blue larkspur (*Delphinium staphisagria*) flowers frames both sides of the way. A few metres further, the ruined houses of Hundecova come into sight, a village that suffered heavy destruction during the Balkan Wars and was finally abandoned in the 1950s. The trail runs below the houses on either side of the ravine, and afterwards passes the village church. Stay on the upper trail at the fork, leaving the church to your left, and soon the small path widens to resemble a dirt road.

The terrain now becomes softer and the walk easier, as the dirt road, lined by bracken ferns, softly ascends past terraced olive groves. Another kilometre on and the village of Shen Vasil emerges in the distance. Once a medieval centre of the region, the village, then known as *Përparim* (meaning progress), became notorious for its communist-era labour camp for political prisoners. Take the turn uphill at both of the next two forks and the road passes a water source; soon the uppermost quarters of the village are reached, with the first walled and fenced properties coming into sight. Turn right along the fence and pass a house. Keep to the right at the

next fence, going straight up the rocky hillside. A bit further, take the goat trail uphill to meet the wide dirt path that runs along the top of a bare rocky patch in the mountain slope. The path reaches an olive grove after a few metres, and then becomes narrower. Through the terraces, partly heavily overgrown by head-high ferns, the last stretch of the trek holds some scenic views over the plain below. Soon the first properties with animal enclosures appear along the trail before leading us to the village of Nivicë (Nivica). Over paved paths and through small alleys, the northernmost neighbourhood is reached, and from here it's only another 300 metres to finish the trek at the village square centred on a giant plane tree.

ANNEX: PRACTICAL INFORMATION

How to Get to Here

The starting point of the Southern Coastal Trail is the village of Dhërmi, which is reached from Tirana city centre / Tirana Airport in about 3.5 hours (220km), from Vlora in about 1.5 hours (60km), or from Corfu Airport via the ferry to Saranda, with a travel time from Saranda of about 1.5 hours (70km). Public transport is available to the coast from major cities like Tirana, Durres, Vlora and Saranda, and locally between the villages along the coast.

Trail Stages

The trail is divided into six stages, all of which are easy to complete within a day and always ending at a village or town with accommodation. These stages can be shortened or extended in many cases to suit individual desires and fitness levels.

1. Dhërmi–Dhërmi Beach–Gjipe Beach–Jal Beach–Livadh Beach
2. Livadh Beach–Old Himarë–Pilur
3. Pilur–Kudhës
4. Kudhës–Old Qeparo–Borsh
5. Borsh–Borsh Beach–Piqeras–Bunec Beach–Lukovë
6. Lukovë–Shpella Beach–Shën Vasil–Nivicë

The trail is marked with a red-white-red markings, while signposts at each stage help with orientation during the trek.

When to Visit

The best time to visit is in spring from March to mid-June, or in autumn between September and November. July and August are usually not suited for active holidays due to the extreme heat, and beach tourism during these months can lead to a short supply of single-night accommodation and high prices.

Accommodation and Other Services

It is recommended to plan your trip ahead and pre-arrange accommodation at your destination for the following day, especially in the smaller villages of Pilur, Kudhës and Nivicë, where accommodation options are limited (see contacts below). Bars, restaurants and minimarkets might not be open outside of the mid-June to mid-September beach season, so these services might be limited or not available outside of the villages, and shouldn't be relied on.

Pilur

Vila Çipa: +355 69 240 4322, on Booking.com
Vila Bala: +355 69 332 2776

Kudhës

Drita Çani +355 68 504 1730
(Janaq Tata? Viktor Çani?)

Nivicë

Landscape Guesthouse: +30 69 7559 7925, on Booking.com
Taverna Muzhaqi: +355 69 826 4070

Dhërmi, Livadh, Himarë, Borsh and Lukovë have several options for accommodation that can easily be booked online.

Health and Safety

The Southern Coastal Trail passes through an area that is still used for animal husbandry by the local population, and it is not uncommon to meet shepherds along the way. If you encounter shepherd dogs on their own, pass with as much distance as possible. Carrying a stick or pepper spray, or the gesture of picking up and throwing stones, can help to keep aggressive dogs at bay until the shepherd arrives.

The terrain is generally not technically difficult, but often features loose rocks and gravel, and a few steeper slopes, so sure-footedness is required. Carry at least 1.5 litres of water, more in warmer temperatures, as water sources between villages are rare. The sun can be strong even in spring and autumn, so a hat, sunscreen, long sleeves and sunglasses are recommended.

Lastly, some parts of the trail can be overgrown with shrubs and other thorny bushes. Consider wearing long trousers to protect your skin.