

Discover Albania

In the heart of the Mediterranean, on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, Albania is fast becoming one of the world's most interesting getaways. Still relatively unspoiled by globalization, tourists will notice an inspiring mixture of civilizations and cultures - making this European country truly unique.

Nestled in between Greece, Macedonia, Kosovo, and Montenegro, and across the Adriatic from Italy, Albania boasts blue and turquoise seas, beautiful beaches, snow peaked mountains, rivers, lakes, and forests. As well as stunning nature, Albanians themselves are famous for their hospitality, and tourists are welcomed with heart-warming generosity.

Albanian history and culture is fascinating. Butrint, one of the world's archeological wonders - and a UNESCO World Heritage site - in the south of Albania provides a glimpse of Mediterranean civilization from the Bronze Age through the Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman periods - all atop a cliff overlooking Corfu. It's not to be missed!

Home of both Mother Theresa and the great 15th Century hero Skanderbeg, Albania today offers not only beach and mountain holidays, but also a vibrant city life, a relaxing outdoor cafe culture and you will see that it's quickly evolving in a myriad of directions.

Come - discover Albania for yourself!

General Facts

Area: 28.748 Km² (~11,000 sq miles)

Population: 3,544 808 million

System of government: Parliamentary democracy

Head of State: President, elected by parliament every five years

Capital city: Tirana

Currency: Lek

Official Language: Albanian

Weights and Measures: Metric

Electricity: 220 V

National Anthem: Himni Flamurit (" The Flag Hymn")

International telephone prefix: ++ 355

National Flag: 

Geography



Albania is a small country with a landmass of 28,748 sq km (about 11,000 sq miles), roughly the size of Belgium. It is situated in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula in the southeastern part of Europe. It shares borders with Montenegro and Kosovo to the North and Northeast, Macedonia to the East and Greece to the South. To the West, Albania has a coast that adjoins the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. The Adriatic separates it from Italy via the Strait of Otranto (72 km/45 mi).



Much of Albania's surface is mountainous – the average height above sea level is 708 m, (2,336 ft) and its highest peak, Mount Korabi on the Macedonian border, is 2,753 m (9,085 ft). Most of the population lives in the south-central lowlands and on the coastal plain.

The country has many rivers which originate in the high mountains and pass through steep gorges before reaching the plain and making their way to the sea. Most of the main rivers have been extensively managed, usually to generate hydro-electricity.



Albania has nearly 450 km (280 mi) of seacoast, with the Adriatic running from the Montenegrin border south to the Bay of Vlora, where the Ionian Sea begins. The Ionian Coast is very rugged with rocky coves along the narrow coastal strip and steep mountains rising almost straight up almost much of its length. The highest point along this stretch is at the Llogara Pass, over 1.000m (3,300ft) high. Geologic activity and erosion have created many caves at the base of these cliffs, some of which were inhabited in prehistoric times.



On the other hand, the Adriatic coast is a low-lying one, with large protected bays (such as those of Vlora and Durrës), which have been

used as harbors since ancient times. The rivers that flow into the Adriatic have created fertile alluvial plains on these lowlands and, at their mouths, exceptionally rich wetlands, which are home to many waterfowl and migratory birds.

In Albania there are also a number of lakes. The most significant are:



Lake Shkodra is the largest lake in the Balkans and straddles the border between Albania and Montenegro. Thousands of cormorants winter on this lake each year. It is relatively shallow and is fed by many different rivers as well as by springs, making it quite varied in its aquatic life, with various species of carp and trout in its waters.

- Lake Ohrid is shared between Albania and Macedonia in the southeastern part of Albania. Around the lakeshore there are some tourist areas such as Lini, Pojska, Pogradec, Tushemisht, and Drilon. It is exceptionally deep and fed mainly by springs around the edge of the lake and on its floor.



Above Lake Ohrid lies Prespa Lake, which is distinguished by its solitude and beautiful landscapes. In this lake there are very important breeding populations of Dalmatian and white pelicans. Lakes Ohrid and Prespa are between two and four million years old, and unique species of fish have evolved in them, among them the delicious koran and belushka.

Over a third of the territory of Albania – about a million hectares (2.5 million acres) – is forested and the country is very rich in flora. About 3,000 different species of plants grow in Albania, many of which are

used for medicinal purposes. The forests are home to a wide range of animals such as wolves, bears, wild boars, and chamois. Lynx, wildcats, pine martens and polecats are rarer, but survive in some parts of the country.

History



The territories of present –day Albania have been inhabited as early back as 100.000 years ago. It was at the turn of the third millennium BC that an Indo - European population settled there. As the result of the mixture, a population incorporating the unique cultural and linguistic characteristics of the whole Balkan Peninsula (pellazgs) was created.

Based on this ancient population, the Illyrian people developed through the second millennium and the first century B.C. After its fall in the year 30 B.C. Illyria came under the control of Roman Empire . With the division of the Roman Empire (395 A.D) ,Illyria became a part of the Byzantine Empire.

The country has suffered continuous invasions over the last 1000 years and by the end of the 14th century Albania was occupied by the Ottoman Empire.



The subsequent efforts and insurrections for independence eventually brought about the proclamation of the independence of Albania in 1912. After 1912 till the end of the First World War , the country was attacked by neighboring countries. After eleven years of monarchy the country was occupied by Mussolini forces in 1939, putting the end of monarchy. In 1943 the armies of Hitler occupies the country.

The resistance against foreign invasion was known as the Anti – Fascist National Liberation front. The Communist party took power in November 1944, when the foreign armies were expelled. Shortly thereafter, a totalitarian regime was established under the communist leader Enver Hoxha. For about 50 years, the regime applied the policy of self-isolation, leaving the country in great economic poverty when it finally emerged from isolation in 1991.



The principle of self-reliance applied by the Communist regime prohibited foreign loans, credits and investment. From 1991 until 1997 The Democratic Party lead the country. After the unrests of 1997 due to the failure of pyramidal schemes the Socialist Party with its coalition was in power until 2005. After the last elections on 3 July 2005 The Democratic Party with its coalition is turn back in power. Albanian policy intends to integrate the country into European Community and the Alliance of NATO forces.

Climate



Albania has a mild, Mediterranean climate. Many visitors will find that it never gets “cold” in the lowlands. The Ionian Coast, in particular, is very clement, with average winter temperatures of 8-10°C (46-50°F). In Tirana and in other inland cities on the plains, temperature sometimes drops below freezing, but this is usually only at night, and it is rare for ice or snow to last more than a day. The country enjoys a good deal of sunny weather, with an average of around 300 sunny days each year. Most of Albania’s annual rainfall occurs between late autumn and early spring; outside of the mountainous areas, it is unusual for it to rain in summer.

In the summer, visitors often find the inland towns to be quite hot, with July usually being the warmest month. In Tirana, for example, temperatures occasionally reach 40°C (104°F). Many hotels and restaurants have air conditioning. The best places to be in midsummer are on the coast, where sea breezes keep the average temperatures down to a more tolerable 25-30°C (73-86°F), or in the high mountains.

If you have the luxury of choice, the best times of year to come for sightseeing are spring and fall. In autumn the orchards blaze with the bright orange of the persimmons and the cooler colors of the citrus fruits, while in spring the apple and cherry blossoms cover the roadsides with their pastel-toned blossoms. The long spring evenings are a good time to enjoy the terrace and sidewalk cafes which are ubiquitous throughout the country, while in September and October it is still warm enough to swim on the southern coast.

HOW TO GET TO ALBANIA?

Entry by sea

Albania can be accessed by sea through its main ports:

Durres: the Italian ports of Ancona, Bari, Brindisi and Trieste

Vlora: the Italian port of Brindisi

Shengjin: the Italian port of Bari

Saranda: the Greek Island of Corfu

MAIN TICKET OFFICES

ADRIATICA, Durresi Str., Tirana;

Phone 04 231 858,

AGJENCIA TAULANTIA, Durres

Phone 052 222 33 / 273 33, Fax 052 229 11

AGOUDIMOS LINES L 3, "Skenderbeg" Str.nr 111, Durres

Phone 052 242 55 / 303 83; Fax 052 24255

C/ F GRECIA L 3, "Skenderbeg" Str. nr. 12, Durres

Phone 052 251 54; Fax 052 203 41

DUNI, Lagjia 4, "Skenderbeg " Str., Durres

Phone 052 253 38 / 249 00 / 202 00; Fax 052 240 12

KAD, Durres

Phone 052 251 54; Fax 052 203 41

QUALITY LINE, Lagjia 4, "Prokop Meksi" Str. 156, Durres

Phone & Fax 052 245 71

MAIN PORTS CONTACTS

Port of Durres Phone 052 220 28

Port of Vlora Phone 033 245 21 / 294 18

Port of Saranda Phone 0732 2734

Entry by roadways

From Montenegro

Through Hani I Hotit and Murriqan-Sukobina. The first road leads to the Northern City of Shkodra and Lake Shkodra, while the second links Shkodra with Ulcinj Montenegro.

Recently opened is Vermoshi, which links the region of Kelmendi in Albania with Plava and Gucia (Gusinje) in Montenegro.

From Macedonia

Through Qafe Thana pass leading to Pogradec, Librazhd and Elbasan.

From Tushemisht, at the Southeastern end of Lake Ohrid, leading to Pogradec.

From Bllata, leading to Peshkopi or Bulqiza and Burrel.

From Gorica the road leads to the northern shores of Lake Prespa.

From Kosovo

Through Morina pass, which links Kukes, Albania, with Pristina, Kosovo.

From Greece

Through Kapshtica leading to Korça.

From Kakavija Leading to Gjirokastra.

At Qafe Boti Konispol is connected to Filat, and at Tre Urat, connecting Permet with Konica.

There are regular bus services between the following cities:

Tirana - Tetova, Macedonia, through Qafe Thana

Tirana - Prishtina and other towns in Kosovo through Morina

Korça - Thessalonica, Greece, through Kapshtica

Tirana - Athens through Kakavija

Tirana - Sofia, Bulgaria, and Istanbul from Qafe Thana

Transport Travel Agencies operating in Albania:

“ROY – 2“

(Tirana – Pristina; Tirana – Peje) (Tirana – Athens)

Address: Bul. “Zogu I“, Tirana

Phone & Fax 04 262 509

“KLID BALLKAN INTERBUS“

(Tirana – Athens – Tirana) (Tirana – Skopje – Tirana)

Address: “Murat Toptani” Str. n 26, Tirana

Phone 04 235 491, Fax 04 222 228

“VJOSA TRAVEL“

Address: “Willson“ Square, Tirana

Fax 04 253 929, mob. 068 202 2388

“JOY TRAVEL“

(Tirana – Athens – Tirana)

Address: “Selman Stermasi” Stadium

Phone & Fax 04 273 030 / 272 932

“SKENDERBEU“

(Tirana – Thessalonica – Tirana)

Address: “Mine Peza” Str P. 139

Phone & Fax 04 234 629

Entry by air

All international air arrivals enter through Mother Theresa International Airport, located 25 km northwest of Tirana.

Linkage with the city is provided through a shuttle bus service, the Tirana Rinas Express, running between Skanderbeg Square and Mother Theresa Airport. Shuttle buses depart every hour at the top of the hour, with an approximate cost of 2 euros. Taxi service available at all times, taxi fares mounting to approximately 20 euros.



“Mother Theresa“ Airport

Phone: + 355 4 379 063 / 4

Lost & Found: +355 69 20 666 26

E-mail: info@tirana-airport.com

Website: www.tirana-airport.com.al

The main airlines operating in Albania that provide connections to the main European capitals are listed below. With these Airline Companies you may easily continue your travel worldwide.

ALBANIAN AIRLINES

www.albanianairlines.com.al

National Airline of Albania provides connections to Rome, Milan, Turin, Bologna, Istanbul, Frankfurt, Pristina, and Athens.

Address: “4 Shkurti” Str. Phone: 04 235 162; Fax 04 235 138

ADA AIR

www.adaair.com

Address: “Durrës” Str. n. 11, Phone: 04 256 111; Fax 04 256 117

ADRIA AIRWAYS

www.adria-airways.com

Address: "Mine Peza" Str., Phone: 04 228 483 / 234 914; Fax 04 235 489

ALITALIA

www.alitalia.com

Address: Bul "Deshmoret e Kombit" Hotel "Europapark", Phone: 04 230 023; Fax 04 257 061

ALPI EAGLES

www.alpieagles.com

AUSTRIAN AIRLINES

www.aua.com

Address: "Europapark Hotel", Phone: 04 235 028 / 235 029; Fax: 04 235 026

BELLE AIR

www.belleair.it

Phone: 04 240 194

BRITISH AIRWAYS

www.britishairways.com

Phone: 0564 600 00

CLUBAIR

www.clubair.it

Phone: 04 239 982

HEMUS AIR

www.hemusair.bg

Address: "Durrresi" Str., Phone 04 230 410 / 242 410, Fax 04 267 989

JAT AIRWAYS

www.jat.com

Address "Torre Drini", Phone 04 251 033 / 34; Fax 04 251 036

MALEV

www.malev.hu

Address: "Torre Drini" kati 2, Phone: 04 234 163 / 227 900; Fax 04 234 578

MYAIR

www.myair.com

OLYMPIC

www.olympicairlines.com

Address: "Veve Center" Bul. Zog 1, Phone: 04 228 960 / 61 Fax: 04 228 959

TURKISH AIRLINES

www.turkishairlines.com

Address: "Tirana International Hotel", Phone & Fax 04 240 964

