

Cultural Tour of Albania

A JOURNEY THROUGH HISTORY, NATURE AND CULTURE

(May 27 – June 3, 2025)



INTRODUCTION:

Settled in the heart of the Balkans, Albania is a hidden gem filled with history, culture, and natural beauty. This captivating country offers a rich tapestry of ancient ruins, Ottoman-era towns, and vibrant cities that tell the story of its complex and fascinating past. Wander through the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Berat and Gjirokastrë, where cobblestone streets wind between well-preserved Ottoman architecture, or marvel at the ancient city of Butrint, a living testament to civilizations long gone. Albania's unique position as a crossroads of East and West is reflected in its diverse traditions, from its music and dance to its mouthwatering Mediterranean cuisine.

The capital, Tirana, pulses with vibrant energy, its communist-era buildings now transformed into kaleidoscopic canvases of street art and modern expression. Yet perhaps Albania's greatest treasure lies in its people, whose ancient code of hospitality, known as "besa," turns strangers into honored guests with a warmth that transcends language and borders. This land, where ancient traditions dance with modern aspirations, where medieval churches share mountain peaks with communist-era bunkers, offers a journey through time and culture that few destinations can match.

This 7-night, 8-day itinerary explores some of Albania's most iconic cities, historic sites, and scenic landscapes. The program includes a mix of cultural experiences, historical landmarks, and unique activities like wine tasting. Here's a detailed day-by-day plan.

Detailed Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival in Tirana

- Arrival in Tirana.
- Explore Skanderbeg Square, Et'hem Bey Mosque, and Bunk'Art Museum.
- Visit Enver Hoxha's Former Residence, located in the heart of Blloku area.
- Evening leisure walk along and dinner at the Blloku area. it used to be the area where only the communist elites lived.

Accommodation: Marriott 5* or similar

Day 2: Tirana – Pogradec – Korçe

- Morning departure for Pogradec (2.5 hours).
- Visit Tushemisht, the tiny beautiful village by the shores of Lake Ohrid and Drilon National Park.
- Continue to Korçë (1.5 hours). Explore the Old Bazaar, the Resurrection Cathedral, and the Museum of Medieval Art.

Accommodation: Park Plaza 4* or similar

Day 3: Korçe – Sotira Farm- Permet - Gjirokaster

- Drive through scenic routes to Leskovik.
- Visit Sotira Farm for a countryside experience, including local farm activities and organic meals.
- Continue on the way to Gjirokaster, passing by Permet.

Accommodation: Hotel Fantasy, Gjirokaster or similar

Day 4: Gjirokaster – Butrint – Saranda

- Visit Gjirokaster, a UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Visit Gjirokaster Castle and the Cold War Tunnel.
- Explore the Zekate House for Ottoman-era architecture.
- After lunch departure to Butrint Archaeological Park (1.5 hours).
- Explore the ancient ruins and Venetian Tower.
- Have dinner in Saranda with seaviews from the Ionian Sea.

Accommodation: Hotel Butrinti, Saranda or similar

Day 5: Saranda – Vlora - Apollonia – Berat

- Morning transfer towards Vlora.
- Stroll around Vlora city center passing by the Lungomare pedestrian area and the historical the Flag Square

- After lunch drive to Apollonia Archaeological Park.
- After the tour in Apollonia, transfer towards Berat for the overnight.
- Enjoy dinner with wine tasting in one of the traditional wineries in the area.

Accommodation: Hotel Onufri, Berat.

Day 6: Berat— Durres

- In the morning explore Berat Castle, the National Iconographic Museum Onufri, and Mangalem Quarter.
- Enjoy lunch in one of the traditional restaurants in Berat.
- Continue on the way towards Durres.
- Visit the National Archaeological Museum and Durres

Amphitheatre. Accommodation: Palace Hotel & SPA

Day 7: Durres – Kruje – Shkoder

- Morning drive towards Kruja (1.5 hours).
- Visit Sari Salltik sacred pilgrimage site located in Kruje. Meet the Dervish of the site, who will explain the history and the role of Bektashi Order in Albanian history.
- Visit the Ethnographic Museum of Kruja, the Old Bazaar, and the Kruja Castle.
- Enjoy lunch in one of the Traditional restaurants in Kruja Castle.
- After the lunch, depart towards Shkodra.
- Visit Rozafa Castle, perched on a hill overlooking the beautiful city of Shkodër. With origins dating back to Illyrian times, this ancient fortress offers breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape, including the Shkodër Lake and the distant Albanian Alps.
- Stroll around the Kole Idromeno Pedestrian street. Visit Marubi National Musuem of Photography.
- Dinner in one of the traditional restaurants in the city center.

Accommodation: Golden Palace Hotel

Day 8: Shkoder – Tirana airport

- After the breakfast in Shkoder, transfer towards Tirana International Airport .
- Depending on the flight schedule optional lunch at Mrizi i Zanave Agroturizem.
- The group which will continue with the Hiking tour, might start from Shkoder towards Lepushe.

Key Recommendations for Each City

Tirana

1. Skanderbeg Square: Central square of Tirana, featuring the National Historical Museum and Skanderbeg statue.
2. Et'hem Bey Mosque: A cultural landmark known for its frescoes.
3. Bunk'Art: A Cold War bunker turned into a museum showcasing Albania's communist history.
4. New Bazaar (Pazari i Ri): Vibrant area with cafes, shops, and traditional goods.

Pogradec

1. Lake Ohrid: A UNESCO site with crystal-clear waters and natural beauty.
2. Drilon Park: A serene park with fountains, swans, and a picturesque setting.

Korçe

1. Old Bazaar: A historic market area with cobblestone streets and artisan shops.
2. Resurrection Cathedral: One of the largest Orthodox cathedrals in the Balkans.
3. Museum of Medieval Art: Home to over 7,000 pieces of Byzantine and post-Byzantine art.

Leskovik – Sotira Farm

1. Vjosa River Valley: Scenic views along the route.
2. Sotira Farm: A countryside retreat offering organic farming experiences and nature activities.

Gjirokaster

1. Gjirokaster Castle: A fortress with panoramic views and a military museum.
2. Ethnographic Museum: Located in Enver Hoxha's childhood home, showcasing Ottoman-era life.
3. Cold War Tunnel: A secret underground bunker from the communist era.
4. Zekate House: A well-preserved Ottoman mansion with stunning architecture.

Butrint – Sarande

1. Butrint Archaeological Park: A UNESCO site featuring ancient Greek, Roman, and Venetian ruins.
2. Ksamil Islands: Pristine beaches with turquoise waters (optional stop).
3. Lekursi Castle: Overlooks the Ionian Sea and Sarandë, perfect for sunset views.

Berat

1. Berat Castle: A hilltop fortress with churches and panoramic views.
2. Onufri Museum: Inside the castle, showcasing Orthodox icons.
3. Mangalem Quarter: Known as the "City of a Thousand Windows" for its unique Ottoman-style houses.
4. Çobo Winery: Renowned for wine tasting experiences and vineyard tours.

Kruje

1. Kruje Castle: A symbol of Albanian resistance led by Skanderbeg.
2. Old Bazaar: A charming market selling traditional crafts and souvenirs.

Trip Cost: 12 pax. 1748 Eur/ person; 16 pax. 1657 Eur/ person, on dual occupancy basis.

Single supplement: 320 Euro.

1818 Trip Coordinator: Ellen Goldstein, ellengoldstein000@gmail.com

To register, please fill up the [Booking Form](#) and send it to 1818society@wbgalumni.org

Tour Operator:

Anila HAXHIA

Landways International sh.p.k.

Address: "Rr. Themistokli Gërmenji" Nr.10, Tirana, Albania

Tel +355 4 2 255 655

Mobile: +355 67 40 55 807

Email: anilazego@landways.eu

Website : www.landways.eu