



Albania - The Land of the Eagles

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Escorted Experience

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Visit: Berat-Saranda-Korca-Tirana

Detailed Itinerary

Day 01: Airport – Berat (Total driving distance: 119 km)

Arrival at "Mother Teresa" International Airport, meeting with the guide, and transfer to Berat. We will travel to Berat, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to explore its historic neighbourhoods: Mangalem, Gorica, and Kalaja. We will visit the interior of the Cathedral of the Dormition of Saint Mary and the "Onufri" museum, which is located within the cathedral itself. BERAT: Also known as "the city of a thousand windows" due to the large windows that adorn the grand houses in the old town. Thanks to its historical architecture and unique beauty, the city was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site. The citadel of Berat sits atop the Mangalem hill and has been protected by fortifications since the 4th century BC. The city features several beautiful 18th-century mosques and many Byzantine and post-Byzantine Orthodox churches. Note: Depending on the flight schedule, part or all of the visits may be completed on the second day. Overnight in Berat.

Day 02: Berat – Apollonia – Llogara NP – Albanian Riviera – Saranda (Total driving distance: 213 km)

This morning, we will leave Berat to visit Apollonia, one of the most important archaeological sites in the country, where we will explore the ruins, the Church of the Virgin Mary, and the Apollonia Archaeological Museum. APOLLONIA: Founded in the early 7th century BC by Greek colonists from the cities of Corinth and Corcyra (Corfu). Apollonia became a commercial centre for both Greeks and Illyrians, thriving during both the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The monuments discovered within the archaeological park include: a city fortifying wall, the Prytaneion, the Bouleuterion, and two Stoa (large and small). We will continue our journey towards Saranda, making several stops along the way to enjoy the pristine, deserted beaches of the Albanian Ionian coast and take photos at various viewpoints. The next stop will be at the Llogara National Park, where we will enjoy an impressive view of the pine park. During the stop, we will also have a traditional lunch at a restaurant within the National Park. The local traditional menu will conclude with a tasting of famous sheep's yogurt, local honey from a thousand flowers, and native walnuts from Llogara. (Lunch included). LLOGARA NATIONAL PARK: Located between the Adriatic and Ionian seas, it starts at 470 meters above sea level and rises to the highest peak of 2,018 meters. Near the peak of the Llogara Gorge, visitors can admire the park's famous pine trees, whose unique shape is a result of the air currents in the area. From the Llogara Gorge, one can see the Ionian coast, just three kilometres away, the rocky part of Mount Vetetima (the Mountain of Rays), and much of the Riviera. During the journey, we will be accompanied by the Albanian Riviera. The ALBANIAN IONIAN RIVIERA is considered by some as "Europe's last secret." It is the stretch of coastline between Saranda and Vlora, offering some of the most spectacular beach views of the Ionian. The road winds between tall mountains on one side and virgin beaches with turquoise waters on the other. Besides the natural beauty of the area, what makes it particularly attractive to tourists are the excellent beach bars and the delicious seafood. Arrival in Saranda. SARANDA: Located in a beautiful bay between the mountains and the Ionian Sea, Saranda's name comes from a Paleo Christian monastery dedicated to Agioi Saranta (the Forty Saints). In ancient times, Saranda was known as Onchesmus. Situated across from the Greek island of Corfu, Saranda is one of the most attractive tourist cities, often chosen by newlyweds to spend their honeymoon. Overnight in Saranda.

Meal Plan

Breakfast and Lunch

Day 03: Saranda – Butrint – Ksamil – Saranda (Total driving distance: 37 km)

In the morning, after breakfast, we will visit Butrint, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1992 and a unique archaeological park that is also a natural park. BUTRINT: This UNESCO National Park is composed of a well-preserved archaeological site set within unspoiled nature, where laurel trees dominate the landscape. It connects to the Ionian Sea through a natural canal. The area around Lake Butrint is home to various animal species, including endangered ones. Excavations and studies have shown that during the 7th and 6th centuries BC, Butrint was a pre-urban centre. The city was proclaimed a colony and was used by the Roman aristocracy as a vacation destination. We will then visit the coastal village of Ksamil to spend the afternoon at the famous and sought-after beaches of Ksamil. Overnight in Saranda.

Meal Plan

Breakfast

Day 04: Saranda – Gjirokastra – Gergenji NP – Korca (Total driving distance: 245 km)

After breakfast, we will continue our journey traveling to the city of Gjirokastra, the "City of Stone," declared a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2005. We will explore its impressive citadel and the 18th-century "Skenduli House," where we will meet the owners and learn about daily life in this important southern city of Albania. GJIROKASTER: A UNESCO World Heritage site, the city is known as "the city of stone" and features hundreds of Ottoman-style tower houses with stone roofs, wooden balconies, and white stone walls. Dominated by a citadel that stands on the main hill of the city, Gjirokastra is a magical city with a rich history. From medieval feudal lords to the Italian invasion and the Ottoman pashas, the city has been shaped by various rulers and has inspired poets and artists alike. We will make a stop at Gergenji National Park to breathe in the fresh air of the beech trees and enjoy the views and nature. We will then stop for lunch at one of the agritourism establishments in the Gergenji National Park area, where we will taste the famous southern cuisine, prepared with locally sourced ingredients. This destination is increasingly popular in both summer and winter, offering spectacular views of nature. (Lunch included) Continuing our journey to Korca for accommodation. Overnight in Korca.

Meal Plan

Breakfast and Lunch

Day 05: Korca – Voskopoja – Korca (Total driving distance: 40 km)

After breakfast, we will continue our journey towards the village of Voskopoja, where we will visit the village and its churches, followed by lunch with traditional southern food. As soon as we arrive in Voskopoja, we will begin our tour of the 18th-century churches: the Church of the Dormition of the

Virgin, St. Nicholas, St. Anastasius, the Church of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, and others. In addition to the churches, the village was known for its Academy, Library, and the entrepreneurial spirit of its people. Unfortunately, the town was plundered and burned in the late 17th century, leading to the abandonment of the village by its inhabitants. Today, due to tourism, it has once again begun to thrive. After visiting the churches and enjoying a short walk, we will have the chance to experience one of the most special cuisines in the country: that of the Korca region. It is famous for its “lakror” and local ingredients cooked in a traditional “sac” (a method of cooking in a metal container). This ancient technique is still used for dishes such as pies, meats, and more. These are essential dishes of the country. (Lunch included). In the afternoon, we will return to Korca, where we will discover the city and visit its main attractions, such as the Orthodox Cathedral and the newly restored Old Bazaar. KORCA is known as the centre of culture and art. The National Museum of Medieval Art houses some of the finest examples of iconography in Europe and beyond. The first Albanian school, initially for boys only, opened in 1887 and today serves as the National Museum of Education. Another school, exclusively for girls, opened in 1891. Overnight in Korca.

Meal Plan

Breakfast and Lunch

Day 06: Korca – Pogradec – Tirana (Total driving distance: 169 km)

After breakfast, we will bid farewell to Korca and head towards the beautiful city of Pogradec, located by the famous Lake Ohrid, which is a UNESCO Natural Heritage site. **POGRADEC:** This city is one of the most important in southern Albania, situated on the shore of Lake Ohrid, the most famous lake in the Balkans (285 meters deep). Known for its tranquillity, great gastronomy, and the famous Ohrid trout, Pogradec was also the summer residence of the Albanian Stalinist dictator Enver Hoxha. The town is located on the shores of Lake Ohrid, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and is one of the earliest settlements in the area. On the hill above the town, archaeological excavations have uncovered a Paleo Christian Basilica with extraordinary mosaics dating from the 4th-5th centuries AD. The ruins of the early Christian church are still visible. We will then continue to Tirana for lunch. The lunch will be organized in the area of the Old Bazaar in the capital, a neighbourhood well-known for its numerous restaurants where we will sample select local dishes. (Lunch included). In the afternoon, we will explore the capital of the country and visit the main monuments: the city centre with the famous Atomic Bunker, and the Et’hem Bey Mosque, which was built by the dictator as a form of protection in case of an attack by a foreign country. **TIRANA:** The capital and largest city of Albania offers a wide variety of activities, museums, and monuments to explore. In the main square of the city, Skanderbeg Square, and along the main avenue “Mártires de la Nación”, you will find most of the museums and monuments of Tirana. The oldest discovery in Tirana is a Roman house that was transformed into a church and features decorative floor mosaics dating from the 3rd century AD. Modern Tirana was founded as an Ottoman city in 1614 by Sulejman Barghini, a local governor from Mullet. It became the country’s capital in 1920 and now has a population of nearly one million. The city houses public institutions, universities, and is the political, economic, and cultural centre of Albania. Accommodation in Tirana.

Meal Plan

Breakfast and Lunch

Day 07: Tirana – Kruja – Fishta - Tirana (Total driving distance: 181 km)

After breakfast, we will arrive in the city of Kruja, known for being the heart of the anti-Ottoman resistance during the 15th century. This is a mountainous city dominated by a 15th-century citadel. Kruja is famous for its traditional Ottoman bazaar and its Ethnographic Museum, which will be part of our visit. KRUJA: After surviving for thousands of years, Kruja was nearly lost in the early 20th century but has managed to thrive again in the last 50 years. It is a popular tourist destination with a spectacular view of the mountains. The main attractions of the city are its fortress with the citadel and the traditional bazaar. Once we finish the visit in Kruja, we will continue our journey to the village of Fishta, where we will have lunch at a well-known agritourism establishment famous for its raw materials sourced directly from the farm. (Lunch included) There, we will visit the cheese workshop, the animal farm, and learn about the different processes through which fruits, vegetables, and meats go before turning into a delicious meal. Fishta is also the birthplace of the Renaissance poet and translator Gjergj Fishta. "Mrizi i Zanave," known as the best agritourism destination now, offers organic specialties from the Kallmet and Zadrima regions. We will also visit the pottery workshop and the Bio-farm. In the morning, we will pay special attention to the Museum of Medieval Art, where we will be accompanied by a specialist from the institution who will give us a professional and detailed explanation of the iconographic art. Accommodation in Tirana.

Meal Plan

Breakfast and Lunch

Day 08: Tirana - Airport (Total driving distance: 21 km)

After breakfast and some free time, we will transfer to the airport in due time for the flight back home.
End of tour

Meal Plan

Breakfast

Inclusion

7 overnight stays in 4* hotels with breakfast
English-speaking local guide/driver from the start to the end of the tour
Modern vehicle with A/C.
Half board (5 special lunches at agritourism and selected restaurants) included in the price.
All entrance fees mentioned in the program:
Berat Citadel, UNESCO.
"Onufri" Iconography Museum, Berat.

Apolonia Archaeological Site.
Butrint Archaeological Park, UNESCO.
Gjirokaster Citadel, UNESCO.
Skendulaj House in Gjirokaster.
Korca Medieval Art Museum.
Korca Orthodox Cathedral.
Voskopja Monastery.
Et'hem Bey Mosque in Tirana.
Atomic Bunker, Tirana.
Kruja Ethnographic Museum.
Information Materials (Maps).
All tourist taxes + VAT.

Exclusion

Flights
Commissions
Tips for guides and drivers
Any service not mentioned in the program

Note

Hotels Used Or Similar

1. Hotel Mangalemi Berat 3+* or similar.
2. Hotel Brilant Saranda 4* or similar.
3. Hotel Hani i Pazarit Korca 4* or similar.
4. Hotel Tirana International, Tirana 4* or similar.

Group minimum 4 pax.

Saturday Departure.



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