



Trekking Macedonia & Albania - May 2024

Trip duration: 14 days | Itinerary ref. #: TC-DH3K97WR | Travelers: 20 Adults



Trip information Albania and Macedonia



TRIP INFORMATION

CHECK IN FOR FLIGHTS: Due to added security checks, we highly recommend that you check-in for all flights at least two hours prior to your scheduled departure time. If the airline permits, we also suggest that you check your luggage all the way through from your hometown to the destination city. Valuable or essential items such as camera equipment, binoculars, and prescriptions medications should always be hand carried on any flight to avoid loss or damage.

MISSING YOUR FLIGHT: If your flight was canceled or you missed it, you need to have the airline put you on the next flight to your destination - either on one of their flights or on another carrier. Explain that you are joining a pre-paid tour and you must arrive in time. Once you know what time you will arrive in Albania, please notify Ema, Phone: +389 71 327075

PASSPORT & VISA REQUIREMENTS: Please check the expiration date on your passport. It must be valid for six months after the date of your departure from Macedonia. In addition, we recommend that your passport has two completely blank visa pages for every country you will be visiting on this trip. It is also recommended that you carry with you photocopies of your passports' photo page and any acquired visa pages if applicable in case your passport is lost, or as an additional identification.

EU, US, Canadian and Swiss citizens do not need a visa for Albania and Macedonia. If you are a citizen of any other country please check with the local consulate for entry requirements

EMERGENCY CONTACT MOBILE PHONE NUMBER: +389 (0)71 327075

FACTS ABOUT ALBANIA AND MACEDONIA :

TIME ZONE: GMT + 01:00 Daylight saving time: +1 hour, begins last Sunday in March and ends last Sunday in October.

TELEPHONE: Telephone code for Albania is + 355, for Macedonia is +389. For international use from abroad: dial the international out code of your country + 355 or 389 + city area code + local number.

INTERNET ACCESS: Internet access is available at all hotels. In smaller cities connections may be spotty.

ELECTRICITY: Power supply: 220 V, 50Hz. Power outlets in Albania and Macedonia are the Continental two-pin type, so USA and UK visitors should bring a converter and plug adaptor kit for appliance use.

MONEY:

ALBANIA: Local currency in Albania is LEKE / 1 EURO = 115 LEK

MACEDONIA: Local currency in Macedonia is DENAR (MKD) / 1 EUR = 61,30 MKD.

There are ATMs in all towns and some villages. You can also withdraw cash across the counter in many banks against a valid credit card and passport. Other major credit cards are accepted in most places,

however small cafes might accept only cash. It is advisable to ensure you carry some cash with you in the event that credit cards are not accepted in the area you are travelling. Most banks work from 08:30 until 15:00 Monday to Friday. Some operate on Saturday mornings.

SUNDAY STORE CLOSURES: It is important to note that all stores in Macedonia are closed on Sundays including grocery stores. If you arrive on a Sunday and are self-catering, plan to eat out that day. Bakeries and gas station (selling snacks, milk etc) are open on Sundays.

DRIVING IN ALBANIA AND MACEDONIA: It is mandatory in all countries to drive with the daytime headlights switched on at all times. There is zero tolerance on alcohol, seatbelts must be worn and driving whilst talking on a mobile / cell phone is not permitted. All of the above can be subject to a spot fine or court summons. You must carry your car registration papers, green card, passport and drivers licence with you at all times when travelling by car. Passengers must carry their passports. It is quite usual to see spot checks for documents and speed checks along the roads, don't be alarmed if you are stopped, it happens here more regularly than it does in some parts of Western Europe.

SECURITY: Crime is relatively low in Albania and Macedonia compared to many parts of the world. However, in the summer months there has been an increase in small time opportunist thieving from beaches and in resorts, so please take care of your valuables as you would when travelling anywhere.

HEALTH: Generally tap water is safe to drink, but we recommend you ask in each town if unsure. Pharmacies are located in all major towns – in Albanian language look for the sign "BARNATORE", in Macedonian language it is "APTEKA" with a green cross. Most recognisable 'over the counter' medicines such as aspirin, ibuprofen / brufen / paracetamol are readily available. Baby formula is also readily available and both formula and nappies (diapers) are sold in pharmacies as well as supermarkets. Pharmacies also usually stock baby swim nappies, which smaller supermarkets might not.

If you are ill or need to see a doctor you will need to head for the local health centre in the town where you are staying. Please call us if you need any assistance in this respect. Many doctors and dentists speak English. If you take prescription medication please ensure you have an up to date prescription from your doctor with you and for all stronger medication we recommend you carry a doctor's letter confirming you have been prescribed the medication.

PEOPLE AND CUSTOMS: The people in the Balkans are very welcoming and interested in visitors. On the coast, and in the bigger cities they are well used to visitors and many hotel / restaurant / bar / shop staff speak good English. In the smaller towns English is less commonly spoken but the major tourist areas have tourist information centres where staff speak English.

NOTES ON TIPPING: Tipping is becoming more widely practiced in the Balkans, we suggest leaving 10% if you are pleased with the level of service you have received.




ACTIVITIES (if booked with us): Hiking and mountain biking takes place on varied terrain and sometimes paths are old, in bad condition and overgrown. Water activities take place in coastal areas and on lakes and rivers with moving or flat water. Balkans are mountainous countries with remote areas. Some items for outdoor recreation are not available yet to buy here so bring what you need. Come with a sense of adventure, a willingness to participate and ready to enjoy a real outdoor experience!

SUSTAINABILITY: There are several initiatives for reducing single use plastic. Recycling in the Balkans is still in the early stages and trash is generally not separated except for some plastics and card. Glass recycling is not possible and this is not separated. If you are staying in a rental villa or apartment there will be communal trash cans in the local areas where you can see from the label on the trash cans if it is possible to accept separated plastics or card. Some areas do not have this possibility. So far there is no deposit & return scheme on glass bottles but it is planned. If you have booked any activity with us please bring your own re-usable drinking bottles.

Our itineraries and visits are planned to try to avoid overcrowded tourist hotspots and to visit local and rural areas where tourism makes a positive contribution to the local economy and we work actively in the support and development of rural tourism offers which protect local heritage and the environment.

WATER: Tap water is potable in all parts of Macedonia, while in Albania in Korce, Voskopoja, Permet and in Llogara national park.








May 02, 2024 - **Thursday**

-  Welcome to Macedonia
-  Dinner in the bohemian district of Skopje
-  4* hotel in Skopje







May 03, 2024 - **Friday**

-  Explore Skopje
-  Mother Teresa Memorial House
-  Mustafa Pasha Mosque
-  The Holy Savior church
-  4* hotel in Skopje





May 04, 2024 - **Saturday**

-  Transfer from Skopje to the cable car stop at Sredno Vodno
-  Visit Millennium Cross by cable car
-  Transfer from Cable Car Sredno Vodno to Canyon Matka (21km / 45min)
-  Hiking in Canyon Matka
-  Boating in Canyon Matka
-  Transfer from Canyon Matka to Skopje (26km / 35min)
-  4* hotel in Skopje


May 05, 2024 - **Sunday**

-  Transfer from Skopje to Tetovo (44km / 50min)
-  The Painted Mosque in Tetovo
-  Transfer from Tetovo to Prilep (137km / 2h20min)
-  Hiking to Treskavec Monastery
-  Transfer from Prilep to Bitola (44km / 40min)
-  4* hotel in Bitola

May 06, 2024 - **Monday**

-  Transfer from Bitola to Pelister national park (15km / 25min)
-  Hiking to Crveni Steni in Pelister National Park
-  Transfer from Pelister national park to Bitola (15km / 25min)
- 

 Heraclea Lyncestis archeological site


 Explore Bitola

 4* hotel in Bitola

May 07, 2024 - **Tuesday**

 Transfer from Bitola to Ohrid (69km / 1h 15min)


 Explore Ohrid

 Explore the East Coast of Ohrid Lake

 4* hotel in Ohrid

May 08, 2024 - **Wednesday**


 Transfer from Ohrid to Galichica National Park (36km / 1h)

 Hiking to Peak Magaro in Galichica national park


 Transfer from Galichica National Park to Ohrid (36km / 1 hour)

 4* hotel in Ohrid

May 09, 2024 - **Thursday**

 Transfer from Ohrid to Berat (156km / 3 hrs)

 Explore Berat, the city of thousand windows


 Traditional hotel 4* in Berat


May 10, 2024 - **Friday**

 Transfer from Berat to Gjirokaster (181km / 2h 40min)

 Explore Gjirokaster


 Transfer from Gjirokaster to Blue Eye (37km / 1 hour)

 Easy hike at the Blue Eye


 Transfer from Blue Eye to Saranda (22km / 35min)

 hotel 4* in Saranda

May 11, 2024 - **Saturday**


 Transfer from Saranda to Butrint (16km / 25min)

 Explore Butrint


 Transfer from Butrint to Saranda (16km / 25min)


 hotel 4* in Saranda

May 12, 2024 - **Sunday**

 Transfer from Saranda to Apollonia with visit of Ali Pasha (Porto Palermo) Castle (195km / 3h 20min)


 Visit the Porto Palermo Castle


 explore Apollonia Archaeological site


 Transfer from Apolonia to Tirana (119km / 1hr 45min)

 Centrally located hotel in Tirana


May 13, 2024 - **Monday**

 Explore Tirana on a guided tour


 National History Museum

 Centrally located hotel in Tirana

May 14, 2024 - **Tuesday**


 Visit the Bunk'Art

 Hiking in Dajti National Park

 Afternoon is free to take a walk in the new Bazaar area in Tirana.

 Centrally located hotel in Tirana

May 15, 2024 - **Wednesday**

 Transfer from Tirana to Tirana International Airport (20km / 25min)

Itinerary

May 02, 2024 - **Thursday**



Welcome to Macedonia

Meet your guide at Skopje International Airport. Bus transfer to the hotel in Skopje, where you will meet also the Macedonia Travel representative. Check in.



Dinner in the bohemian district of Skopje



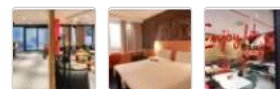
If you wish to eat like a local, there is no better place to do it than dining in one of the restaurants in the Bohemian district of Skopje. Skopje's Bohemian neighborhood is a 10-minute walk from the main square, but a world away. Here you won't find recently built kitschy statues and baroque-style buildings. Instead, you will experience a completely different vibe, a rather laid back atmosphere. The area consists of tree-lined streets and countless restaurants, bars, and cafes.



Stay at



4* hotel in Skopje



May 03, 2024 - **Friday**



Explore Skopje



Explore Skopje on a guided tour: all tourist trails start from the central square 'Macedonia': the grand fountain of Alexander the Great, the Mother Teresa memorial house (the Nobel Peace Prize laureate was born here in 1910) , the big collection of life-size marble and bronze monuments (there are almost 300 in Skopje!)... Walk over the old Stone Bridge and enter the maze of cobblestoned alleys of the old town, lined with centuries old mosques and ottoman baths turned into art galleries, jewelry and antique shops, lively restaurants and tea houses.

Included entrance fees: Holly Savior church and Mustafa Pasha mosque. Entrance in the Memorial House of Mother Teresa is free of charge.

Afternoon is free to explore the capital on your own.



The Mother Teresa Memorial House is dedicated to the Catholic Saint and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Mother Teresa who was born in Skopje on 26 August 1910. She lived in Skopje until 1928. The memorial house was built on the pedestrian 'Macedonia Street', on the very location of the once Sacred Heart of Jesus Roman Catholic Church, where Mother Teresa (than Gondza Bojadziu) was baptized.


The most important items in this museum are the white sari with blue stripes, the official habit of the Missionaries of Charity, copy of the Baptism certificate from the Catholic Church Sacred Heart of Jesus, authorized copies of documents with her handwriting and her awards.

Among the documents on display is the prayer book written by Mother Teresa, a copy of the Nobel Peace Prize received in 1979 and a copy of the letter sent to the Mayor of Skopje, Metodi Antov, on the occasion of her receiving the prize.



Mustafa Pasha Mosque



 20 Adults

The Mustafa Pasha Mosque stands on a plateau above the old bazaar, just below the Skopje fortress Kale. It was built in 1492 by Çoban Mustafa Pasha, who later became vizier on the court of Sultan Selim I (1512-1520).

The mosque is largely intact from its original state, and no additions have been made through the years. The body of Umi, the daughter of Mustafa Pasha, is entombed in the turbe next to the mosque.



The Holy Savior church



 20 Adults

Built in the beginning of the 17th or 18th century, upon foundations on an older church, the Holy Savior church is home to a part of the fresco painting on the southern side (found from this older church which originates from the 16th century) and the famous iconostasis on the eastern side carved in walnut, which combines a profusion of plant and animal motifs with the figures of saints in local costumes. This realistic high-relief carving is the work of skilful craftsmen of the Debar area, who included their own figures in one corner of the iconostasis. The iconostasis is 6 meters high and 10 meters long. On this space, the carving group managed to show numerous scenes from the Bible, important geometrical ornaments and figures from the flora and the fauna. The iconostasis at this church is one of the finest samples of traditional woodcarving which can be found on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia along with the iconostasis of St. Jovan Bigorski Monastery.

The white marble sarcophagus containing the remains of Goce Delčev, the Macedonian revolutionary hero and leader in the movement for Macedonian independence and liberation from the Ottomans, is to be found in the courtyard.



Stay at



4* hotel in Skopje



May 04, 2024 - **Saturday**



Transfer from Skopje to the cable car stop at Sredno Vodno



You have arrived in Skopje, marveled at the mixture of ordered Socialistic brutal architecture and chaotic Old Town Ottoman heritage, you've been awestruck by this unique micro cosmos of our multicultural city. But do you want to see the "Big picture" from above?

The Millennium Cross (a 66 meters high steel cross) was built in year 2000 at the top of Vodno Mountain. If you don't wish to hike the mountain, you can visit it by cable car - it takes only 15 - 20min drive to the cable car stop.

The views from the Millennium Cross are spectacular: You will notice that Skopje valley is surrounded by several mountain chains, and the top of Mount Vodno (1060 m asl.) offers an unforgettable 360 degree panorama of the northern half of Macedonia. To the North is Mount Skopska Crna Gora hiding Kosovo plains in behind. East opens a view over hills to Osogovo Mountains bordering Bulgaria. South is the location of the Macedonian Massif central – Jakupica Mountain with Solunska Glava pick (2525m) looming above all, and finally to the west is the magnificent ridge-line of Shar Mountain – beginning with pyramidal pick Ljuboten and continuing south for 80 km. In the far horizon, among many picks of 2300+ meters height you will notice Titov Vrv (2474m) the highest pick of Shar Mountain.

Cable care ride schedule:

April and October: first ride up at 10am / last ride down at 5pm

May to September: first ride up at 10am / last ride down at 7pm

November to March: first ride up at 10am / last ride down at 4pm



Transfer from Cable Car Sredno Vodno to Canyon Matka (21km / 45min)



This trail is with easy / moderate ascent to the monastery St Nikola Shishevski, from where you will experience the best view over Canyon Matka, Lake Matka and the medieval churches and monasteries scattered on the rocks around the lake. The descent is steeper and it takes you to the Lake Matka, where you will cross the lake by boat to the opposite side.

Hike: 4,5 km, ↑364m ↓364m, 1,5 - 2h



Boating in Canyon Matka



Take a relaxing boating tour to enjoy Canyon Matka further. The boating tour is around 1,5 hour and it will take you to Vrelo Cave (one of the deepest underwater caves in the world).



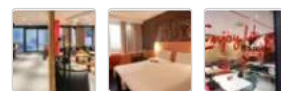
Transfer from Canyon Matka to Skopje (26km / 35min)



Stay at



4* hotel in Skopje



May 05, 2024 - **Sunday**



Transfer from Skopje to Tetovo (44km / 50min)



The Painted Mosque in Tetovo is one of the masterpieces from the Ottoman period. A fascinating building with facade that resembles an art canvas, stretched in the middle of the city rush of Tetovo. Forms and colors that reveal the artistic play of the Turkish-Ottoman style. It was built in the 15th century and called Aladzha (colorful cotton, linen) mosque. What makes the Mosque the anthological work are the paintings and the decorations with geometric and floristic motifs. Every place on the walls of both its interior and exterior presents a highly valued artistic style



Transfer from Tetovo to Prilep (137km / 2h20min)



One of the most amazing places of Macedonia is situated above the city of Prilep: the monastery "Treskavec" - laid as an eagle's nest among vertical rocks and granite slabs. Located at 1300 m asl. and protruding over the landscape of plains of Pelagonija this holy locale has been shrouded with mysticism since ancient times.

Our hike to reach the Monastery begins at the King Marko medieval towers above the city of Prilep and travels by a well-established single track in an outer-earthly landscape. It will take you less than three hours to reach the Monastery in 6km and 700mD+. Enjoy this mystical place with fantastic panoramas of the surrounding plains of Pelagonija, Mount Babuna, Mount Baba (National park Pelister), Mount Kaimakchalan and the cities of Prilep, Krushevo and in the distance Bitola. Drive down from Treskavec and continue to Bitola.

Hike: 13,3 km, ↑831m ↓831m, 5h



Transfer from Prilep to Bitola (44km / 40min)



Stay at



4* hotel in Bitola





Transfer from Bitola to Pelister national park (15km / 25min)



Pelister National Park is located on Baba Mountain, which rises above the city of Bitola. This mountain has historical importance as a silent witness of WWI frontlines and the horrible fates of the soldiers that fought here. One such remnant is the locale known as **Crveni Steni (Red rocks)** – its name was given by the locals because of the fearsome battles a century ago that left many soldiers mortally wounded in this area. Thus the local rocks, rivers and fields have "Red" in their topo name.

The hike starts on a well-established single-track nested in pine forest slopes. At one point you will cross a stone river – moraine that has also a mountain spring water source where you can refill your bottles. After almost 6km of hiking, Crveni Steni - your destination reveals itself from the forest. It is located at an altitude of 1.830m, and is considered the most alpine-like section of Mount Baba. Take your time here to enjoy the awesome views at the other prominent peaks and ridges of Mount Baba, as well as Pelagonija valley and the city of Bitola.

Hike: 11,2 km, ↑792m ↓792m, 4-5h



Transfer from Pelister national park to Bitola (15km / 25min)



Heraclea Lyncestis archeological site



The archeological site Heraclea Lyncestis, was a city founded in the mid-4th century BC by Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. Heraclea was an important strategic town until it was conquered by the Romans in the 2nd century BC. Renowned for the 5th century mosaics in its basilica, the floor mosaic in the narthex is the most complete representation of the world as it was understood at that time. It is located on 2,5km from the center of Bitola.

Open Tuesday to Sunday

April – October: 09.00 – 18.00 h

October – March: 09.00 – 16.00 ч



Explore Bitola



Located on 20km from the border with Greece, Bitola is the second largest city in Macedonia with a long urban tradition of 1600 years. Explore the unique blend of the past and the present of Bitola, its traditions and urban living, which is especially present on the main pedestrian street "Sirok Sokak" (wide alley), lined with traditional works and buildings, but also with modern and exclusive shops and cafes. From a historical point of view, Bitola is known as the City of Consuls because of the consular representatives of many countries which were in this city at the time when the Ottoman Empire was an important administrative, political, diplomatic, educational, scientific and cultural center. Not far from Sirok Sokak (2,5km) you can visit the ancient city of Heraclea Lyncestis, founded in the mid - 4th century by Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander Great. It is renowned for the mosaics in the basilica, which represent the world as it was understood at that time.



Stay at



4* hotel in Bitola



May 07, 2024 - **Tuesday**



Transfer from Bitola to Ohrid (69km / 1h 15min)



Explore Ohrid



Ohrid's major attractions are all located within a remarkably concentrated and walkable area around the narrow cobblestoned streets of the Old Town: see the most photographed church of the Balkans, St Jovan Kaneo and the famous cathedral St Sophia; walk around the ancient theater, built more than 2200 years ago, and still being used today for outside performances; enjoy fantastic views from the massive medieval city walls of Tsar Samoil; visit the manufacturers of handmade paper – if you like history of books and writings, this workshop is a must-see, with one of the two remaining (and operating!) Gutenberg press machines in the world; shopp for world-famous Ohrid pearls...



Explore the East Coast of Ohrid Lake



The narrow road from Ohrid to the Albanian border is 30km long, and it takes by the eastern lakeshore. Besides the few tourist settlements and fishing villages along this road, you will also find here many historical places to visit: the cave church at St Stefan (built in 9th century from a crack in the rocks above the lake), the Bay of Bones museum on water (reconstruction of a lake-settlement dating back to the period between 1200-600 B.C.), the St Naum monastery (resting place of St Naum, 10th century), built on a cliff above a sandy beach. At St Naum you can also take a boat in the beautiful lagoon at the springs of River Crni Drim where it flows into Ohrid Lake.



Stay at



4* hotel in Ohrid



May 08, 2024 - **Wednesday**



Transfer from Ohrid to Galichica National Park (36km / 1h)



Hiking to Peak Magaro in Galichica national park



Peak Magaro is the highest peak on Galichica Mountain, located in the highly protected zone of Galichica national park. The hike ascends through a pleasant forest, grassy meadows and limestone rocks in the higher sections. Once you get above the tree line there is a steeper ascent which passes gently onto the ridge of Galichica and to the peak.

This trail gives some of the greatest views of Ohrid Lake and the surrounding mountains, and at some points of both Ohrid and Prespa Lakes, the two largest lakes in Macedonia. Once you reach Peak Magaro you walk back about 100m and continue on the trail downhill on the right to Galichica pass.

Hike: 7,4 km, ↑684m ↓684m, 5h



Transfer from Galichica National Park to Ohrid (36km / 1 hour)



Stay at



4* hotel in Ohrid



May 09, 2024 - **Thursday**



Transfer from Ohrid to Berat (156km / 3 hrs)



Explore Berat, the city of thousand windows



Situated on a hill dominating River Osum and its gorge, Berat is a must-see in Albania for every history and culture lover. Its most striking feature is the collection of white Ottoman houses climbing up the hill to its castle, earning it the title of 'Town of a thousand windows'. Berat is UNESCO World Heritage site since 2008.

Climb to the 13th century Berat Castle. Within its walls, you'll find a vast citadel complex of stone streets, houses and Byzantine churches mixed in with ruins from various epochs. (please note that it takes a long, steep climb up a slick stone road to reach the castle from the lower town).

Visit the Onufri Iconography Museum - it was established to safeguard a collection of icons, artworks and artefacts salvaged from the ruins of Berat's religious buildings.

Wonder in the old town of Berat, divided by the river valley on two quarters: Mangalem and Gorica. While today there is no big difference between them, in the centuries past, Mangalem was traditionally the Ottoman or Muslim Quarter, and the Christians lived over the river in Gorica.



Stay at



Traditional hotel 4* in Berat



May 10, 2024 - **Friday**



Transfer from Berat to Gjirokaster (181km / 2h 40min)



Explore Gjirokaster



The Ottoman Era town of Gjirokaster is on the list of UNESCO World Heritage sites, but it is also known as the "Stone - city" with its slate-roofed houses, vertiginous streets paved with limestone and a castle assembled from rock hewn from the surrounding mountains. The town is known locally for being the birthplace of revered Albanian writer, Ismail Kadare, but also as the site of Albania's most notorious political prison and the birthplace of Enver Hoxha, Albanian one-time despotic leader.

Visit Gjirokaster Castle (Kalaja e Gjirokastrës), which stands out above the city as a balcony, providing fantastic views over the town and beautiful landscapes. The castle houses the Gjirokaster Museum, as well as the National Museum of Weapons. Wander through the charming Gjirokaster bazaar. If you want to do some shopping, look out for products made from local materials: kitchen utensils carved from olive wood, herbal teas, olive oil, local honey and raki, artisan products, Albanian embroidery and craft souvenirs from wood and stone. Take a tour of Gjirokaster's Cold War Tunnel: the 800-metre Cold War Tunnel runs under the castle and comprises 59 rooms, fashioned to shelter Communist Party elites in case of a nuclear attack or foreign invasion.



Transfer from Gjirokaster to Blue Eye (37km / 1 hour)



Easy hike at the Blue Eye



The natural geological phenomenon, the Blue Eye is a very deep spring water pool set in a karst rock formation. Because of the depth and of the surrounding vegetation, the water has beautiful hues of turquoise and azure.

The name 'Blue Eye' comes from the pool's close resemblance to a human eye, with its central 'pupil' a dark shade of blue, and the surrounding iris a lighter shade of blue-green. It is fed by an underground water spring and it is unbelievably deep – 50 metres is the furthest any diver has gone down.

The pool is hidden in the middle of the forest so you have to walk to find it – but it's worth the long slog.



Transfer from Blue Eye to Saranda (22km / 35min)



Stay at



hotel 4* in Saranda



May 11, 2024 - **Saturday**



Transfer from Saranda to Butrint (16km / 25min)



Explore Butrint



The UNESCO World Heritage site Butrint, a site with a monumental theatre and ancient city walls, is perhaps the most well-known archaeological site in Albania. Inhabited since prehistoric times, Butrint has been the site of a Greek colony, a Roman city and a bishopric.

Visit to the Old Amphitheatre, the Temple of Aesculapius, the Baptistery with colorful mosaics and the ancient city walls. An old fortress housing a small museum watches over the entire site, which is one of the last unspoiled natural and ancient historical areas in Mediterranean.



Transfer from Butrint to Saranda (16km / 25min)



Stay at



hotel 4* in Saranda



May 12, 2024 - **Sunday**



Transfer from Saranda to Apolonia with visit of Ali Pasha (Porto Palermo) Castle (195km / 3h 20min)



The best preserved garrison erected by Ali Pasha in the region is the Porto Palermo castle, ranked by Huffington Post the first among 15 undiscovered European Destinations for 2014.

The fort served as former Soviet submarine base during the communist regime in Albania, and nowadays its semi abandoned tunnel and barrack attract attention of visitors, as well as the stronghold walls and gates built by the powerful Ali Pasha of Ioannina. Many interesting stories are connected with the man who built the

castle - Ali Pasha Tepelena, who allegedly built this castle in honor of his favorite mistress Vassilessa, whom he kidnapped from a nearby Greek village of Plessio, at the age of 15...



explore Apollonia Archaeological site



The evocative ruins of the ancient Illyrian city of Apollonia sit on a windswept hilltop some 12km west of the city of Fier. While a large part of the ruins remains buried under the ground, what has been excavated within the 4km of city walls is pure poetry. The highlights include the theatre and the elegant pillars of the restored facade of the city's 2nd-century-AD administrative centre.



Transfer from Apollonia to Tirana (119km / 1hr 45min)



Stay at



Centrally located hotel in Tirana



May 13, 2024 - **Monday**



Explore Tirana on a guided tour



Located in the beautiful setting between the ranges of Dajti Mountain (reachable with cable car) and the Adriatic coastal plains, the colorful capital of Albania, Tirana is a place where rich traditional and contemporary cultures merge. Some of the larger bunkers (there were over 173.000 of them built in Albania during the regime of the dictator Enver Hoxha) are located in Tirana and today many have been repurposed into museums, restaurants, hotels, etc.

Visit Skenderbe square, the largest square in Albania, and the statue of Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbe, the Albanian national hero.

Not far from Skanderbeg Square you will find Tirana's landmark - the Pyramid. The pyramid-shaped concrete structure was built back in 1988 to honor the former dictator Enver Hoxha - it was designed by his daughter.

Walk into the Ish-Blloku neighborhood, (known as Bllok) - one of the favourite places among the locals, loaded with fancy boutiques, restaurants, cafes and nightclubs.

See the light show at the fountain in front of the Taiwan entertainment centre in the evening.

Entrance fee included: Tirana National Museum



The National History Museum in Tirana was opened on 28 October 1981 and is 27,000 square metres in size, while 18,000 square metres are available for expositions.

Above the entrance of the museum is a large mural mosaic titled *The Albanians* that depicts purported ancient to modern figures from Albania's history. The museum includes the following pavilions: the Pavilion of Antiquity, Middle Ages, Renaissance, Independence, Iconography, National Liberation Antifascist War, Communist Terror, and Mother Teresa.



Stay at



Centrally located hotel in Tirana



May 14, 2024 - **Tuesday**



During his rule, the communist dictator Enver Hoxha built tens of thousands bunkers all over Albania to protect the population from nuclear attacks. In 1970s he gave orders to construct a massive bunker in the outskirts of Tirana which was ment to protect him and the political elite in case of war. Today, this five - storey underground bunker has been turned into the Bunk'Art historical-artistic center which reflects the communist period, where you will have the opportunity to see the interior living quarters and meeting rooms, staged as they would have been at the time, along with photographic displays.



Hiking in Dajti National Park



Take a scenic cable car ride up to the mountain's summit overseeing Tirana, where you will go on a hiking trail for an adventure through lush scenery. This easy hike provides amazing views over the bubbling city of Tirana and of the Dajti National park, including lakes and some beautiful peaks nearby.

Hike: 5,26 km, ↑519m 519m, 3-4h

Afternoon is free to take a walk in the new Bazaar area in Tirana.



Stay at



Centrally located hotel in Tirana



May 15, 2024 - **Wednesday**



Transfer from Tirana to Tirana International Airport (20km / 25min)