

Welcome To Authentic Albania Quality Mark - Albania's Official Mark of Quality, Excellence, and Sustainable Tourism

Quality standards and accreditations give travelers the confidence of staying in accommodations run by owners who are serious about providing customers with good value and high quality experiences. Starting in April 2011, travelers can make smart choices when they book accommodations in Albania by choosing those that carry the Authentic Albania Quality Mark.

Hotel guests can trust facilities that hold the Authentic Albania Quality Mark because each has been individually visited, critically assessed, and determined to offer quality products and great Albanian hospitality. On-site assessments are carried out by trained assessors who apply international standards to all applicants for this prestigious award.

Measuring What Travelers Find Important

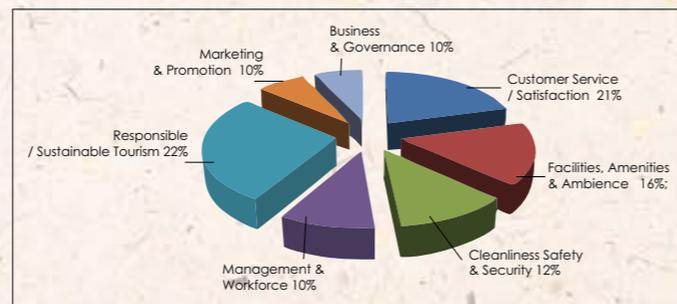
Recent trends in tourism and travel clearly show that an increasing numbers of travelers seek authenticity and enjoy experiencing a genuine connection with people in the country they visit. The Authentic Albania Quality Mark was developed to raise awareness among Albanian accommodation providers to deliver a product travelers value and appreciate.



Accommodations that Go the Extra Mile

The accommodations carrying the Authentic Albania Quality Mark offer distinct experiences that travelers will fondly remember. Many accommodations are located in diverse environments whether rural, coastal or urban, and some are off the usual tourist track. They offer food and wine typical of their settings and information on events and opportunities for guests to explore the local historic and contemporary culture. Because many are run by owners and employ staff who grew up in the area, these hotels and guesthouses are known to go out of their way to please their clients.

The Authentic Albania Quality Mark framework evaluates facilities using seven key dimensions that together address the travelers' requirements for professionalism, safety, cleanliness, and comfort, as well as demonstrating responsible tourism practices.



Continually Improving Product Quality For Guests

Hotels and guesthouses must apply and be assessed to determine if they qualify to join the Authentic Albania Quality Mark Award Program. Assessors grade facilities using a scorecard that promotes continuous improvement and identifies quality excellence on a continuum. The performance of a business today is appraised, including ways in which it can be even better tomorrow, along three award categories: *must have*, improving to: *more is better*, and for true excellence: *delighter*.

A comprehensive assessment report, including the scores achieved on the seven key dimensions, is submitted by the assessor to an independent Authentic Albania Quality Mark Award Committee. The Committee reviews the findings, researches customer feedback, and makes the final decision to assign an award or not. The accommodation can receive one of the following awards:



Based on the qualitative report and recommendation of the assessors, the Committee also decides if the accommodations offer guests outstanding quality excellence in the following areas:

-  Albanian Spirit
(*hospitality, customer service, family feeling*)
-  Albanian Cuisine
-  Responsible Tourism
(*community connections, guardians of the environment*)
-  Essential Albanian Architecture

Meeting Trends for Responsible and Sustainable Tourism

The Authentic Albania Quality Mark Program assessment criteria include the internationally agreed Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org) to inform this part of the rigorous assessment. The criteria measures and demonstrates responsible and more sustainable practices and ways to reduce environmental impact.

In addition, the overall Authentic Albania Quality Mark Program is based on respected international quality assurance and accreditation programs, such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (US) and the principles promoted by Japanese quality expert Dr. Noriaki Kano.

Symbols of the Authentic Albania Quality Mark

The visual identity of the Authentic Albania Quality Mark Program was developed based on motifs placed on ancient Illyrian vases and amphora, as well as ornamental designs used in Albanian traditional folk costumes.

Why is the Key a Symbol of the Authentic Albania Quality Mark?

The key symbolizes Albanian hospitality, a tradition that all Albanians are proud to call their own. To give someone the key to your home shows that you consider them a family member. This logo symbolically conveys the idea that anyone who visits Albania is welcomed and considered as a special and honored guest, a part of this nation. Similarly, municipalities across the world honor their important guests with a key to their cities.

General Information about Albania

In the heart of the Mediterranean region and located on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, Albania is fast becoming one of the world's most interesting getaways. Still relatively unknown, tourists will discover 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 Sea from Italy, Albania boasts blue and turquoise seas, beautiful beaches, snow covered mountains, and an abundance of rivers, lakes, and forests. As well as stunning nature, Albanians themselves are famous for their hospitality, and tourists are welcomed with heart-warming generosity.

Home of both Mother Theresa and the great 15th century hero Skanderbeg, Albania today offers not only beach, mountain and lakeside holidays, but also a vibrant city life with a relaxing outdoor cafe culture. Visit Albania and you will see that it is quickly evolving in a myriad of directions, connected both to its past and embracing its future.



The Authentic Albania Quality Mark Program is a tourism industry-wide initiative developed by the Albanian Tourism Association (ATA) and USAID's Rritje Albania project based on Quality Mark Programs found in other countries. All accommodations in Albania are eligible to apply to be part of the program by passing an assessment and qualifying to earn the right to display the Authentic Albania Quality Mark Award.

For more information on the Authentic Albania Quality Mark Program, please visit the following website:

www.authenticalbania.com

Alternatively, you can contact one of the following program partners:

Albanian Tourism Association (ATA)

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