

Albanian Cultural Heritage



Albania 
yours to discover

Greetings,

Welcome to our beautiful country, land of the eagles. Albania is an attractive tourist destination, not only due to its varied landscapes, but also thanks to its rich cultural and historical treasures.

Albania is located in a very important section of the Balkan Peninsula, facing “ancient Rome” and en route to Byzantium and the “capital of the world” at that time, Istanbul. As such, many conquerors have passed through the region, leaving traces of their cultures.

The treasures and remains of the region’s great civilizations are still visible today, including the Hellenes, Romans, Byzantines, Ottomans, Venetians and modern Italians. And at our archaeological parks, you will have the opportunity to touch the ruins of some of these mighty civilizations.

An assortment of Byzantine and post-Byzantine churches, mosques, monasteries with valuable frescoes and icons, old bridges and other monuments will all enrich your visit to Albania. And crowning the heights of many of the country’s rugged mountains are castles dating back to the time of the Illyrians and into the Middle Ages.

The castle cities of Berat and Gjirokastra, with their traditional architecture, have also been highly praised throughout the centuries by the countless visitors who traveled through Albania.

Fans of archaeology will surely marvel at the mystic atmosphere of Butrint castle and will enjoy the beautiful panorama of the ancient Roman city of Apollonia.

UNESCO has also honored us by adding three of our sites to the culturally prestigious World Heritage List.

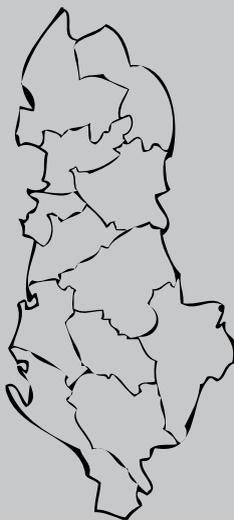
Albania’s living connection to its rich cultural heritage is also complimented by its commitment to keep in pace with a highly vibrant and contemporary life, echoing its spirituality and presence in the European cultural environment.

We are happy you have chosen to visit, and we hope you will have a pleasant stay. In this brochure you will find a summary of our choice recommendations for sites to visit during your stay.

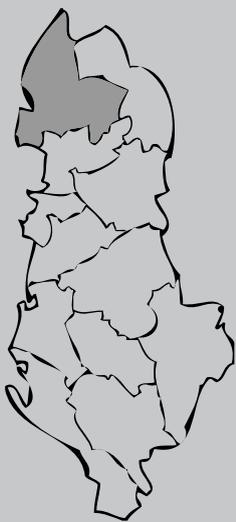
Welcome to Albania!

ALBANIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

A selection of the most important cultural monuments
in the twelve prefectures of Albania.







SHKODRA

Rozafa Castle
The Tumuli Burials of Shtoj
Sarda
The “Lead” Mosque
Mesi Bridge
Historic Museum
Marubi Atelier of Photography

SHKODRA

Shkodra is one of the most significant and ancient cities in northwestern Albania. It was founded in the 4th century BCE as the center of the Illyrian tribe of the Labeates, and became the capital of the Illyrian kingdom under the rule of King Gent. Coins from this period of prominence have been discovered in Shkodra. In 168 BCE it was occupied by the Romans, eventually becoming part of Claudius's empire. In 395 CE Shkodra became the center of the Byzantine Prevalis province. Following centuries of substantial political power, Shkodra came under Serbian rule in 1040 CE.



"Kol Idromeno" street

Due to its Mediterranean location and its geographical proximity to some of the main centers of the world's civilizations, a number of important archaeological discoveries have been made in Albania. The sites in the North as well as in the South are great tourism destinations for those who are interested in ancient history.

The Tumuli Burials of Shtoj

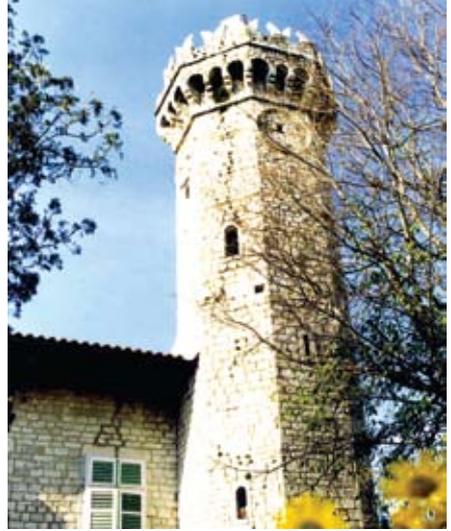


Old picture from Shkodra "Dugajet e Reja"

The **Tumuli Burials of Shtoj**: The Plain of Shtoj is situated about 5 km to the north-east of the city of Shkodra, in the vicinity of the villages of Boks and Dragoç, on the western side of the Kir River. The excavated tumuli, or burial mounds, appear to have been used for centuries, from the early Bronze Age until the late Iron Age. Most of the unearthed features of these tumuli are artifacts of the Iron Age, specifically from the 7th - 5th centuries BCE.

The most important monument to visit in Shkodra is the **Rozafa Castle**, which rises from a rocky hill to the west of Shkodra. The waters of three rivers, the Buna, Drini and Kiri, surround it. Rozafa is one of the major castles in Albania and the most important tourist attraction in Shkodra. The castle dates back to the Illyrians, when the Latin historian Titus Livius named it "the stronghold of the Labeates," an Illyrian tribe on the shores of Lake Shkodra. The Illyrian queen, Teuta, used it as a base in the war against Rome

The Clock Tower, "Kulla e Inglizit"



Rozafa Castel



SHKODRA

Mesi Bridge: Northeast of Shkodra, where the river Drin divides the fields from the hillside of Drishti and the Cukali's highland, there is a stone bridge with many arches that is named after the village near it. The monument is one of the biggest of its kind in Albania, constructed around the 18th century CE by Mehmet Pasha Bushatliu, who governed his province wisely by ensuring that this important port region was able to develop extensive trade with the West. The bridge made it possible to transport carriages and agricultural products from the farmers living in the highland areas to the Adriatic coast.

The form and the direction of the route was defined from the cliff's massif and the water flow variations. The bridge was made with a causeway and reaches a length of about 120 meters. Thirteen cantilevers sustain it, and it makes a turn 5 m away from the central cantilever at a 15 degree angle. The arch is combined with two discharger windows, which differently from the arch does not have a circle form. The replacement of the old bridge, which was often submerged from the river's high waters, added other cantilevers at both sides. The bridge's width is 3.4 meters and the track has the form of a staircase.



In the city of Shkodra you may visit also the **Historic Museum** and the **Marubi Atelier of Photography**.



"Catholic Women", an old picture by Marubi

The ruins of the medieval town of Sarda can be found on Shurdhahu Island in the artificial lake of Vau i Dejës, 35 km away from Shkodra. **Sarda** is a very picturesque location, surrounded by 24.7 hectares of fresh, blue waters.

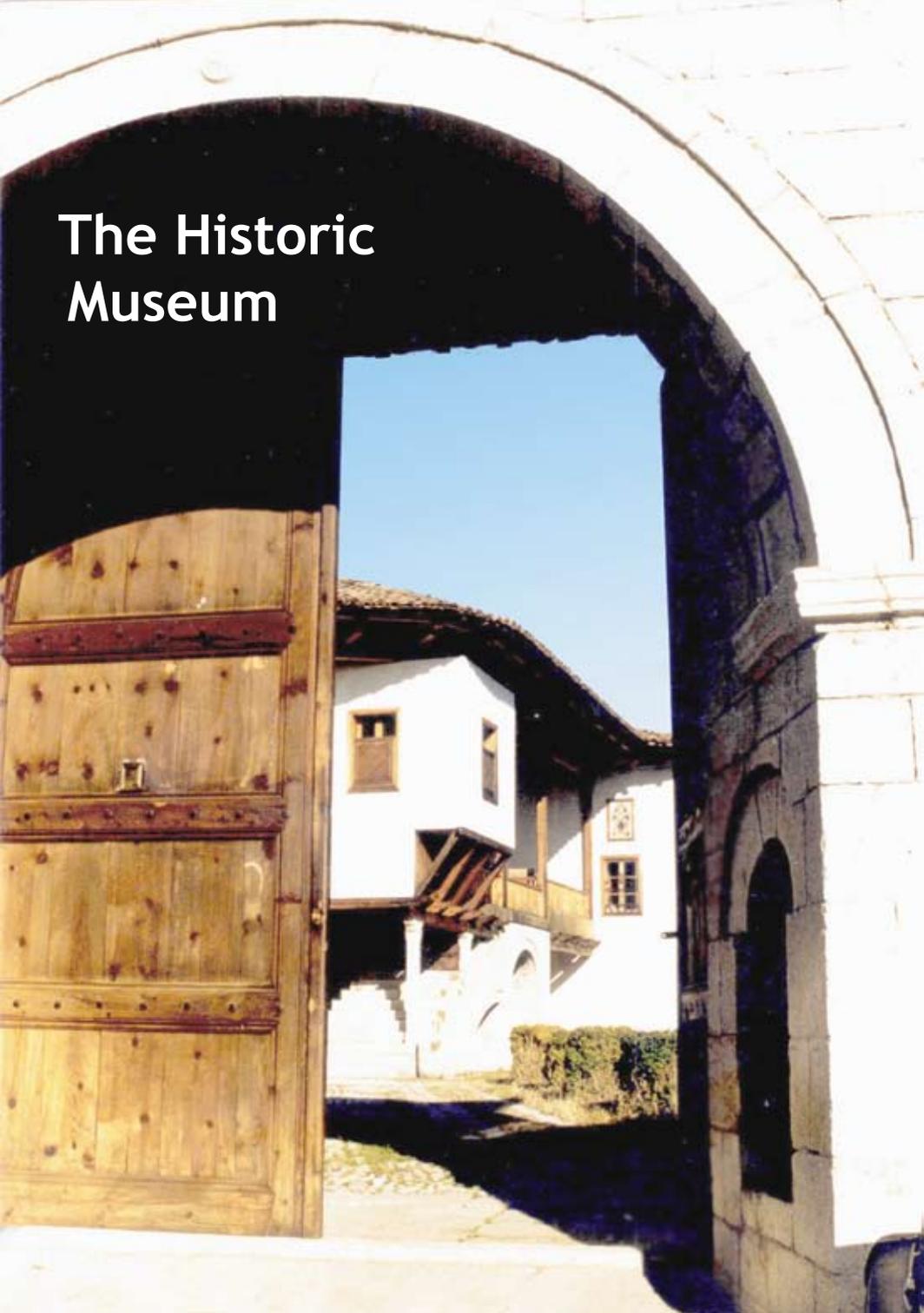
The ruins of a castle dating back to the 6th- 8th centuries BCE are also on the island. But the island's main attraction is the residence of the Dukagjini family, one of the most important Albanian feudal families in the 11th century. Among the remains are the defensive walls, church ruins and the gate to the Dukagjini palace.

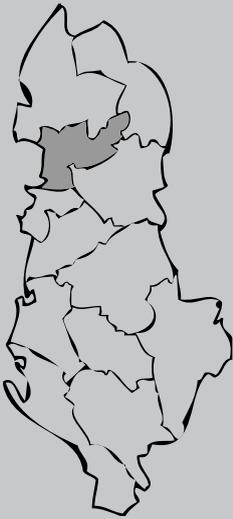
Located behind the Rozafa Castle, the **"Lead" Mosque** was built in 1773 CE by Mehmet Pasha Bushati and is one of the most prominent cultural and religious monuments in the city of Shkodra. Of particular significance is its architectural similarity to the Blue Mosque in Istanbul. This stands it apart from other mosques in Albania, which were designed and built based on typical Arabic architectural styles.

Sarda, on the Island of Shurdhahu



The Historic Museum





LEZHA

Lezha Castle
The Memorial of Skanderbeg
The Church of Rubik
The Church of St. Anthony of Padua in Laç

LEZHA



The Woman's Ensemble, Zadrime

The Memorial of Skanderbeg was inaugurated in 1981 CE in honor of Albania's national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti. It was built at his burial place, over the ruins of the Church of San Nikolas in the town of Lezha. After the Ottomans invaded Lezha, they destroyed the church and the tomb of Skanderbeg. The church was later reconstructed in the beginning of the 20th century. Inside the memorial, a copy of Skanderbeg's sword and helmet are on display, along with emblems of Albanian feudal families during the period.



Lezha Castle, originating from Illyrian times, is located at the top of a 186 meter high hill to the east of the town of Lezha. In 1440 CE it was reconstructed by the Venetians, and then again in 1522 CE after the Ottoman conquest. The castle bears traces of Illyrian, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman architecture.



Interesting places to visit include the ruins of the Ottoman buildings inside the castle, the tower at the southeastern wall with its Roman arch, the mosque and the Illyrian tower on the southern wall. In addition to being a cultural monument, the castle offers a beautiful view of the fields of Lezha and the Adriatic Sea.



The helmet of Skanderbeg



The **Church of St. Anthony of Padua** in Laç (Kisha e Shën Anoit) is located close to the town of Laç, 3 km away. The church was built in 1557 CE in honor of Saint Anthony of Padua, a Catholic saint who was born in Lisbon and died in Padua. This church is famous for hosting the largest Catholic pilgrimage held in Albania. The peak of the ceremony is organized on June 13.

Saint Anthony of Padua



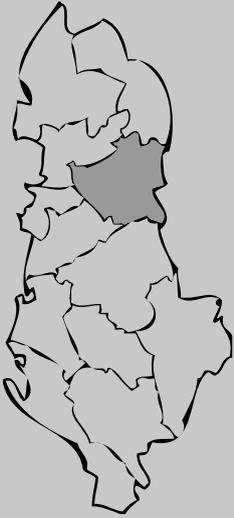
The Church of Saint Anthony of Padua

The **Church of Rubik** is located on the top of a rocky hill overlooking the small town of Rubik. The church represents one of the most important religious monuments of the 12th - 13th centuries CE. Its construction was completed in 1272 CE and has served as a Benedictine abbey and as a Franciscan monastery. Of particular value and importance are the Byzantine style wall frescoes that adorn the church's interior.





The Memorial of Scanderbeg



DIBRA

Grezdani Castle
Ethnographic Museum of Dibra
Historic Museum of Mat

DIBRA

Grezhdani Castle is located 11 km southeast of the town of Peshkopia, not far from the village of Maqellarë. The castle dates back to the 4th century CE, during the late Roman period. During the Middle Ages, it was supposedly the Stefigradi Castle, which was under the control of Albanian national hero Skanderbeg. It was strategically located, linking the region of Dibra with Kosova and Macedonia. It was declared a historical monument in 1963 CE and covers an area of 34 hectares.



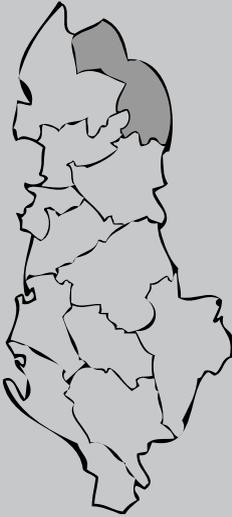
Grezhdani Castle

The **Historic Museum of Mat** opened in 1983 CE in the town of Burrel. The museum provides a description of the historical records of the area. A particularly interesting display is a layout of powder production, something that the region of Mat was well known for.

The **Ethnographic Museum of Dibra**. It is located in "Elez Isufi" boulevard in the town of Peshkopia. The objects of this museum are housed in a traditional building with typical architecture. There are round 2.000 objects displayed to the visitors. The items include a complex of national folk dresses, rugs and carpets, different arms since the Illyrian period, coins etc.

A Typical Albanian House (Kulla), close to Klos





KUKËS

The Towers of Bujan
The Tomb of Dervish Luzha

KUKËS

The **Towers of Mic Sokoli and Sali Mani** are two traditional towers located in the village of Bujan, a few kilometers south of Bajram Curri. The village of Bujan has been mentioned as a dwelling place since the 14th century CE. Mic Sokoli, born in Bujan, was a notable fighter of the Albanian League of Prizren. He died in battle fighting against the Ottoman forces in 1881 CE. The tower of Sali Mani is the place where the Conference of Bujan was held during the Second World War.



The tower of Mic Sokoli, Bujan

The **Tomb of Dervish Luzha** in the village of Luzha, located southeast of Bajram Curri, is a religious monument of the Bektashi order of Sufi Islam.

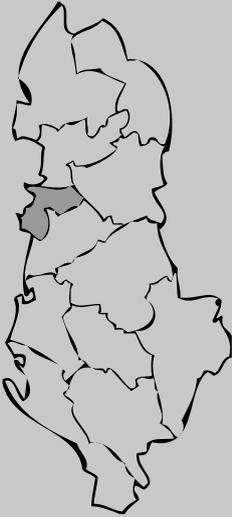


The museum of Tropoja

In Kukës there are many typical Albania towers (kulla), especially in northern Kukës in the district of Has. They include the **tower of Kurpali**, the **tower of Avdul Qerimi** in the village of Helshan, the tower of Gjonajve in the village of Kostur, the **tower of Dem Zenuni** in the village of Vranisht and another tower in the village of Gajrep.



An Illyrian settlement has recently been unearthed in Rosujë, close to Bujan in the district of Tropoja. The excavations have uncovered a fortified settlement indicating that Rosuja has been inhabited since the second millennium BCE until the 5th century CE. A lot of gold and silver coins, tools and weapons were found at the site.



DURRËS

Ancient Durrachium
Albanopolis
Early Christian Basilica of Shën Mëhill
The Bazaar of Kruja
The Skanderbeg Museum of Kruja
The Ethnographic Museum of Kruja

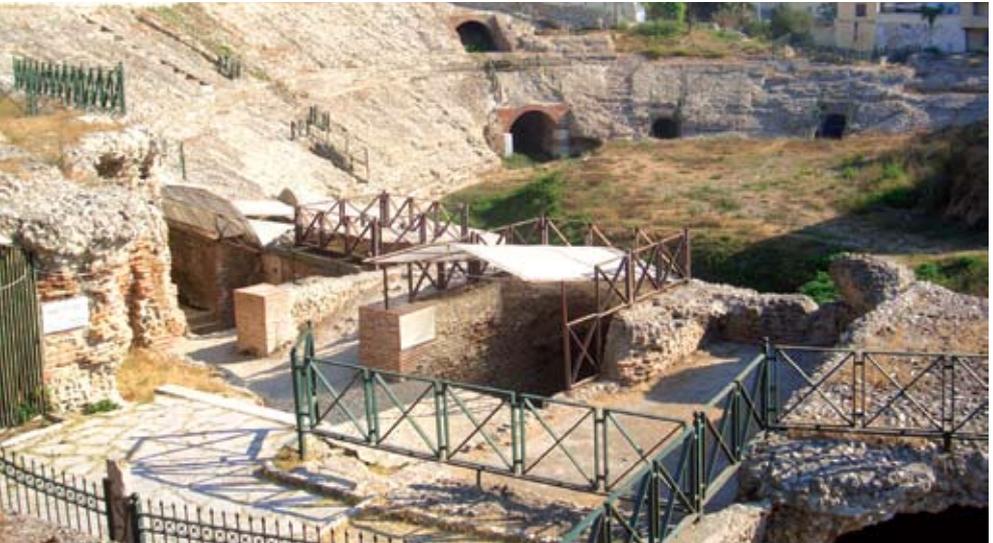
DURRËS

The earliest historical reference to the city of **Durrës** is from 627 BCE. The modern city is built on the top of the ruins of the ancient Epidamnos, or Dyrrachion, which became known as Dyrrachium in the Roman period. According to Thucydides, Corcyreans and Corinthians named the city Epidamnos after colonizing it. The founder was Phalius, from Corinth and a descendant of Heracles. The earliest coins of Epidamnos, dating back from the first half of the 5th century BCE, were marked with symbols of Corinthian origin. Another account, by the historian Apian, indicates that a non-Greek king named Epidamnos lived in the area before the Greeks arrived. He built the first city and named it after himself. Dyrhachos was his grandson and the city was later named after him.

Epidamnos was involved in the Peloponnesian War, and following the war the name was changed to Dyrrachium. The war led to many political and architectural changes in the city. Trade with the Illyrians flourished during the ensuing years. Many Illyrian tombs were discovered in the city cemeteries, indicating that this period was characterized by significant cultural exchange and that people were traveling freely between the regions.

Dyrrachium was the battlefield between the legions of Caesar and Pompey during the Civil War of 49 - 48 BCE. The city sustained damages as a result. In the year 30 BCE, Dyrrachium became a Roman colony and was named Colonia Iulia Augusta Dyrrachinorum.

The amphitheater of Durrës



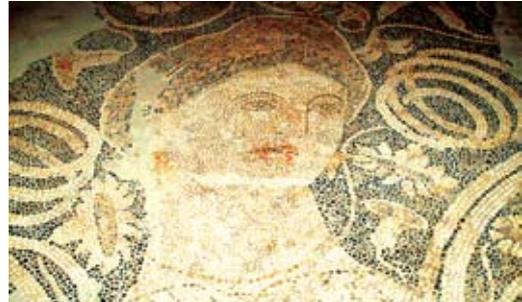


The wall mosaics inside the amphitheater

During the 2nd century CE, the city's status as a major trade center was further enhanced by the construction of the "Via Egnatia", a roadway linking the Adriatic with Thessalonica and then on to Constantinople. The largest of all public buildings constructed in Dyrrachium during the 1st and 2nd centuries CE is the amphitheater, with an estimated capacity of 15,000 - 20,000 people, situated near the center of the modern city. Other important archaeological finds are the public baths dating back from the 2nd century CE, the remains of a 15 km long aqueduct built during the reign of Hadrian, the Byzantine era walls and the round forum-macellum built in the 5th - 6th centuries CE.



Most of the excavations began in the 1960s, and most of them are ongoing, allowing observers a rare opportunity to view an archaeological excavation in progress. One of the most interesting finds in the city is the "Bukuroshja e Durrësit" (Pretty Women of Durrës) mosaic, housed in the National Historic Museum in Tirana. The mosaic dates back to the 4th century BCE, surviving as a wonderful artifact from this period. In the 9th century CE, the city entered into a turbulent period.



"The Beauties of Durrës" Mosaic

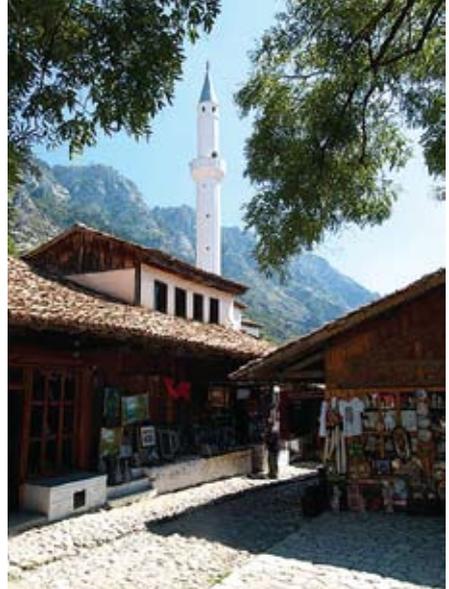
Normans attacked the city in 1071 CE, and then in 1081 CE subsequent attacks by the Venetians, and later the Ottomans, threatened the city's very existence. In the city of Durrës you may also visit the **Archaeological and Ethnographic Museums**.

Old Picture from Durrës



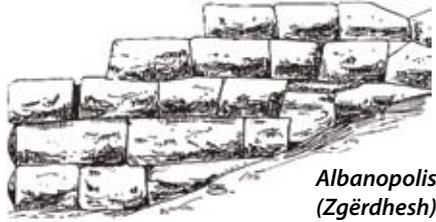
DURRËS

Early Christian Basilica of Shën Mëhill (Saint Michael) in Arapaj: The ruins of the St. Michael Basilica (Bazilika e Shën Mëhillit) were discovered during an archaeological expedition in 1974 CE, which took place 6 km away from the modern city of Durrës. The church is notable for its architectural style, which features three naves, an atrium on the west side and an impressive mosaic covering a surface area of 54 m². The mosaic is almost intact and survives in a surprisingly good condition. Not far from the area, some sculptural objects dating back to the 5th - 6th centuries CE were also discovered. Many unearthed coins found around the area indicate that the settlement was in use from the 5th - 14th centuries CE. In 1081 CE, the Byzantine soldiers fleeing from the Norman invasion sought refuge in the church, and it was thus later burned to the ground by the invaders.



The **Bazaar of Kruja** has been protected since 1961 CE, preserving the rich characteristics of traditional Albanian markets of the 18th - 19th centuries CE. The market of Kruja covers a wide area, stretching from the center of the city to the western gate of the castle. The cobblestone street is lined with a variety of small shops displaying a range of products for sale, as well as artisans working in their studios. The roofs are made of wood, covered with tiling to protect both the shoppers and the products on display. Nowadays the original wooden facades of the market of Kruja are very well preserved. The market is famous for its diversity and for the eldest forms of merchandising, playing a special role in Albanian culture and tradition.

The **Ethnographic Museum of Kruja** is one of the most visited museums in the country. It is housed inside the walls of Kruja Castle and is known as one of the most organized museums of Albania. It opened in 1989 in a traditional house of the noble Toptani family, originally built in 1794. The construction is classified as a "first class building." It is a large, two story house with 15 rooms, a garden and a water well. 90 percent of the objects displayed in this museum are original, some of them over 500 years old. Here the visitor will have the opportunity to see the guest room, the living room (with a separate section for women), the children's room, the Turkish bath, the kitchen with its equipment, olive oil processing tools, the smithy and more. Various clothes are also on display, including Catholic and Muslim costumes. Pottery, wood works and silk, cotton and wool clothes are also on show. The **Skanderbeg Museum of Kruja**, housed inside the castle walls, is also worth a visit. It is dedicated to Skanderbeg, Albania's national hero. In the cape of Rodon you can also visit the **Church of Saint Anthony and the ruins of a castle**.



*Albanopolis
(Zgërdhesh)*

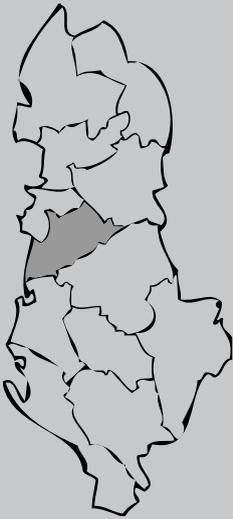
The ancient town of **Albanopolis** is located in the vicinity of the modern town of Kruja. It was thought that the Illyrian castle of Zgërdhesh might actually be the site of the ancient city, Albanopolis, capital of the Albans, from whom the present day country is named. The city was built on a hill and covers an area of approximately 10 hectares. The protective walls, now measuring 90 m and still relatively intact, once stretched 1,400 meters. The large acropolis dominates approximately one third of the area that was once enclosed within the walls.

Among the items unearthed at the site is a small marble statue of Artemis which is particularly beautiful. The ancient city flourished for three or four centuries but then was eventually abandoned around the second century CE.



Amphitheater of Durrës





TIRANA

- The Përsqop Fortress
- The Tirana Mosaic
- Kapllan Pasha's Tomb
- Preza Castle
- The Tunners Bridge (Ura e Tabakeve)
- National Historic Museum
- Archaeological Museum
- The Mosque of Ethem Bey
- Ethnographic Museum of Kavaja
- Bashtova Castle

TIRANA



The **Tirana Mosaic** can be found on “Naim Frashëri” street. It is the oldest object found in Tirana, and the archaeologists think that it was part of the floor of a Roman villa from the 3rd century CE. The place was later used as a site for the construction of an early-Christian church. It is also known by the name “The Mosaic of the Church of Saint George’s Spring.”



The National Gallery of Fine Arts

In Tirana, you will have the opportunity to visit the largest and the most important museums in Albania: the **National Historic Museum** and the **Archaeological Museum**, the **Mosque of Ethem Bey** and the newly excavated walls of the **Justinian Castle**. In the region of Kavaja you may also visit the **Ethnographic Museum of Kavaja** and the **Church of Çeta** near the village of Zig Xhafaj.

The **Përsqop Fortress** is located south of Tirana, near Petrela Castle. The inhabitants of Petrela Castle once used this fortress perched atop the Vila Mountain.

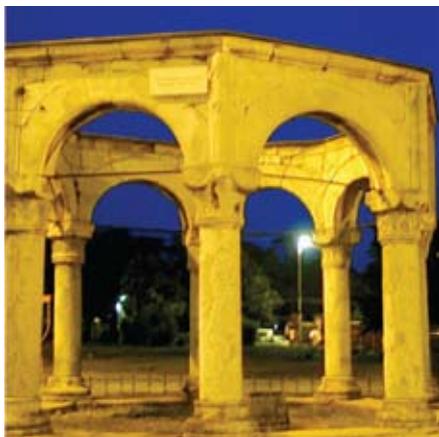
The Illyrians constructed the basic structure and then eventually the Romans expanded it. Remnants of an aqueduct are still visible to the northeast of the fortification.



The **Tunners Bridge (Ura e Tabakeve)** is a small stone bridge, 7.5 meters high, located on “Jeanne d’Arc” Boulevard in Tirana. It was also called “Saint George’s Bridge.” Today it is a restored monument, originally built in The National Gallery of Fine Arts the first half of 19th century CE.



Kapllan Pasha's Tomb is located on "28 Nëntori" street in Tirana. It is part of a monumental cemetery complex of the first Tirana Mosque, which was destroyed during the Second World War. The complex included six other monumental graves of the same type, but with varying dimensions. The only tomb remaining today is that of Kapllan Pasha, a former ruler of Tirana. The tomb has an octagonal shape reaching 4 meters in height. Kapllan Pasha's remains were later exhumed and reburied in Istanbul.



Preza Castle overlooks the village with the same name and is located on a hilltop. It is a small castle, the construction of which was started in the 14th century CE and was completed in the early 15th century CE. It belonged to the Topias, a local feudal family. It has four towers, one in each corner. The clock tower was erected between 1800-1850 CE. People appreciate it for its location, with a view overlooking the plain of Tirana. The castle is quite close to the "Mother Theresa" International Airport. A restaurant and other service facilities are located inside the castle.

Bashtova Castle is situated close to the village of Bashtova, about 3-4 km north of the Shkumbini River estuary. The castle was built in the 15th century CE and was used by the Venetians. In the past, the Bashtova region was known as a harbor on the Shkumbini River and as a center for the export of cereal grains. The castle has a rectangular shape, 60 x 90 meters, with 9 meter high walls. The western part of the castle was rebuilt in the 18th century CE.

Bashtova Castle

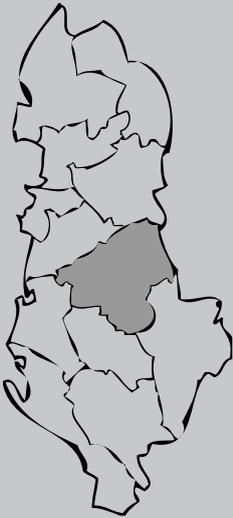


Petrela Castle





ELBASAN



- The Castle of Elbasan
- The Monastery of Saint John Vladimir
- The Roman Road Station of Ad Quintium
- The Church of Saint Nicolas in Shelcan
- The Ethnographic Museum of Elbasan
- The Castle of Peqin

ELBASAN

The **Castle of Elbasan** is a field castle in the city of Elbasan. Cristobel, the second Mehmet historian, referred to it first. The Ottoman chronicler, Evlia Çelebiu, visited the city in the 18th century CE and described the castle in detail. During the Austrian invasion, the castle became subject to extensive study. Austrian archaeologist Prashniker and Shcober, who visited the castle during the First World War, noticed that there are ancient fortifications under the medieval walls. The castle has a quadrangular shape with 308 x 48 m dimensions.

Today there are only eight towers remaining from the original twenty-six at the beginning of its construction. During the late antiquity period, Skampini, the city within the castle, started as a center on the "Egnatia Road," connecting Rome to Constantinople. Turks reconstructed the castle for strategic purposes. The castle is still inhabited today, and important Muslim and Christian religious objects can be found within



The **Monastery of Saint John Vladimir (Shën Gjon Vladimiri)** in Shijon is located only 4 km away from Elbasan. It was built in 1381 CE by the Albanian prince, Karl Topia, who brought the remains of Saint John Vladimir. Saint John Vladimir was the Duke of Krajina (Montenegro). He was declared a Saint and is well known in the Balkan Peninsula. A large pilgrimage was organized in his honor at this monastery until 1967 CE, when the communist regime forcibly closed religious institutions all over the country. Nowadays this pilgrimage is organized every 3-4 June. The monastery, with its rich library, was a very important cultural center for Albanians. Unfortunately, Nazi Forces burned a part of the monastery during the Second World War. The monumental gate of the monastery, carved from stone, is currently being preserved at the National Historic Museum in Tirana.



The **Roman Road Station of Ad Quintium** is located in Bradashesh village, in the vicinity of the modern city of Elbasan. Based on the construction techniques used, the site has been dated back to the 2nd - 4th centuries CE. Excavations are ongoing.



The **Church of Saint Nicolas in Shelcan (Kisha e Shën Nikollës)** is located in the village of Shelcan in the district of Shpati, southeast of Elbasan. Inside the church there are valuable frescoes painted by Onufri, a famous Albanian painter from the 16th century CE.



The Ethnographic Museum of Elbasan

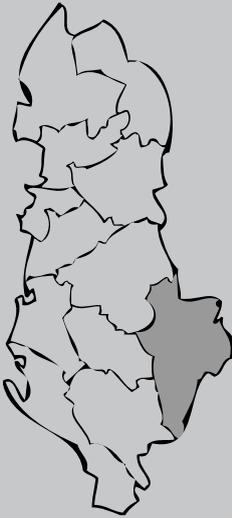
In Elbasan you may also visit the **Ethnographic Museum of Elbasan**, the **Peqini Castle** (15th century CE), the **Church of Good Friday (Shën e Premtes)** in Valësh and the **Church of Saint Nicolas** (18th century CE) in Grabova, district of Gramsh.

The Mosque of Peqin with the Clock Tower



“Naziresha” Mosque





KORÇA

- The Tumuli Burials of Kamenica
- The Monumental Tombs of “Selca e Poshtëme”
- The Mosaics of Lin
- The “Ristozi” Church of Mborje
- The Churches of Voskopoja
- The Churches of Vithkuqi
- Goliku Bridge
- The Mosque of “Ilias Bey Mirahori”
- The Museum of Medieval Arts
- The Island of Maligrad
- The Village of Boboshtica

KORÇA

The **Tumuli Burials of Kamenica** are located in the southern part of Korça, along the national road linking Korça with Erseka. This is one of the most important monuments, representative of Albanian prehistory. Visiting the site, you will have the chance to be acquainted with prehistoric community life from the 13th - 6th centuries BCE.



The basilica, where the mosaics can be found, is located in the village of **Lin**, 22 km north of Pogradec. They date back to the 6th century CE and have different motives, including floral and geometrical. They are similar to other mosaics found in Durrës.

A Detail from the Mosaics of Lin



The **Monumental Tombs of "Selca e Poshtëme" (Lower Selca)** are 2,400 years old, located 40 km from the modern city of Pogradec. Selca was a town founded by the Illyrian tribe of Desartes in the 6th century BCE. It is thought that Pelion was the residence of the Illyrian king, Klit, located in Selca. The settlement reached its greatest prominence in the 3rd - 4th centuries BCE, when its protective surrounding walls encircled an area of 3 hectares. Five monumental tombs in Ionic style have been excavated from this archaeological site. Four of the carved tombs are located inside tunnels. Although examples of these types of tombs can be found throughout southern Italy, few are known to exist in the Balkans. It is suspected that vast treasures were buried inside the tombs.

Goliku Bridge is a medieval bridge with a hunch, or hump, upon the main cantilever. It lifts up on two circled vaults divided by a discharger window. Along the causeway the bridge has a length of 37 meters, and the vault's width is 2.8 meters. The large vault has a light area of 7.4 meters, 9.4 meters from the water, and a width of 90 centimeters.

At the big vault's end are 20x20 centimeter holes for gripping the crib's balk. The right vault has an opening of 6.3 meters and a thickness of 75 centimeters. The discharger window has an opening of 1.2 meters wide by 3 meters high. The causeway was made with river stones, with brace girdles every 1.2 meters, and it has a right incline of 16% and a left incline of 11%. The vaults were made with scale stone and the front walls of lime and stuff stones.



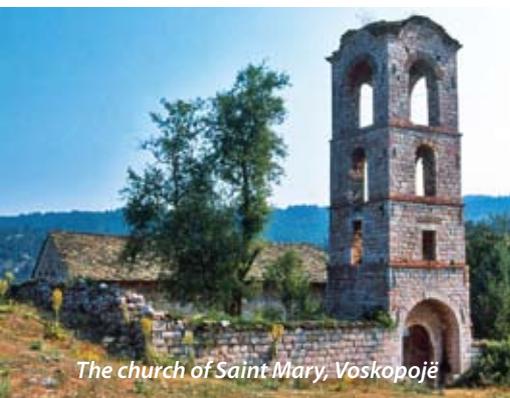
The **Ristozi Church of Mbroje** in Korça is defined and framed by the naos, a porch that lies in the western and southern parts. The church structure is an inscribed crosstype. In the eastern wall, we find the semicircular Abside, with an arched Nike. Two other Nikes, reaching the ground, are in the southern and northern walls. The church has two entrance portals, one in the southern part and the other in the eastern part.

At the junction point of the cross beams, an equiangular tumbler lifts up on a podium. According to the building techniques and its form, studies suggest that the church was likely built during the 14th century CE.



KORÇA

The **Churches of Voskopoja** are in a small mountain village perched at a height of 1200 meters above sea level, 21 km west of Korça. It was once a very prominent city along the "Egnatia Road," reaching its height in the middle of the 18th century CE with 24 churches and monasteries. Only seven of these twenty four churches remain today.



The church of Saint Mary, Voskopojë

The **Monastery of Saint Prodhom** was built in 1632 CE and the **Church of Saint Nicolas (Shën Kollli)** in 1721 CE. The famous masters of iconography, David Selenicasi and the Zoografi brothers, painted the frescoes of the church.

The Monastery of Saint Prodhom, Voskopojë



The **Church of Saint Michael (Shën Mëhilli)** was painted 1726 in by the Zoografi brothers.



The Church of Saint Athanas, Voskopojë

The **Church of Saint Athanas (Shën Thanasi)**, together with the cemetery, are from 1724 CE. The church was built by five masters from Kastoria. The **Church of Saint Ilias (Shën Ilia)** and the **Church of Saint Mary (Shën Mëria)** are from 1722 CE.



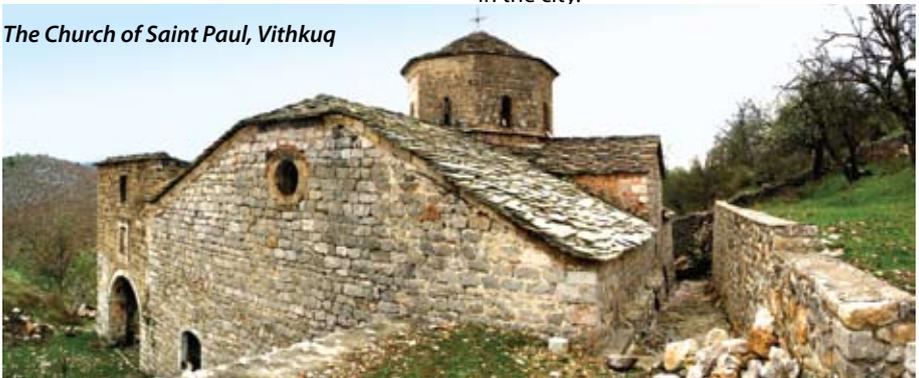
Vithkuqi is a mountain village in the district of Korça, 26 km southwest of the city. In the 17th century CE, Vithkuqi was an important urban center with 27 churches.



The Church of Saint Paul, Vithkuq

The site is well known for the **churches of Saint Michael (Shën Mëhillit)** (18th century CE) together with the cemetery, **Saint Peter's Church (Shën Pjetri)** and **Saint Paul's Church (Shën Pavlli)**. The famous Zoografi brothers painted the frescoes of the **churches of Saint Michael and Saint Peter**.

The Church of Saint Paul, Vithkuq



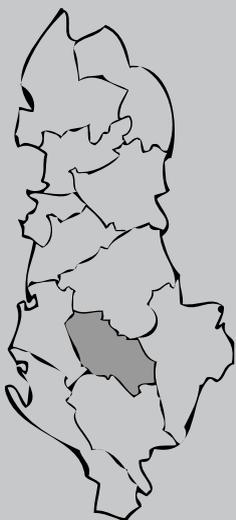
The Church of Saint Michael, Vithkuq

In the region of Korça there are also a number of old churches in the villages of Boboshtica, Shipska (17th century CE), on the island of **Maligradi** in Lake Prespa, the **Eremitic Churches** on the coast of Lake Prespa and the **Church of Saint Nicolas** in the village of Vodica (1799 CE) in the region of Kolonja.

In the city of Korça there are also several museums. You may pay a visit to the **Prehistoric Museum**, the **Museum of Education**, the **Museum of Medieval Arts**, the **Museum House of Vangjush Mio** (a notable painter) and the **Museum of Oriental Art Collection, Bratko**. In the city of Korça you may also visit the **Mosque of Ilias Bey Mirahori**, the oldest monument in the city.

Maligrad Island





BERAT

The Ancient City of Dimal
The Saint Triad Church
The Red Mosque
The Gorica Quarter
The Gorica Bridge
The Ethnographic Museum

BERAT

Dimal: The first excavations began at this site in 1963 CE. Since that time, a 30m long stoa (covered walkway) has been unearthed. The monument clearly resembles the stoa of Apollonia, indicating the strong links between these two cities. Many stamped tiles have also been found, bearing the names of the workshop owners, but also the word "DIMALITAN" indicating that the workshops were property of the city. The writer Polybius mentions the role of the city in the Second Illyrian-Roman war, around 218 BCE. An effort was undertaken to further fortify the city at this time. The Roman historian, Titus Livius, mentions Dimal again in the events of 205 BCE when the city was ruled by Romans. The excavations discovered several inscriptions hinting at the advanced political status of the ancient city. When the Illyrian regent Demeter Fari organized the uprising against Rome after the year 228 BCE, he gathered his army in Dimal. The campaign against him was led by Roman general Paul Emilius.



The remains of the **Red Mosque** are visible to the south of the upper fortress, near the west surrounding-wall of the castle. It is believed that this monument is the mosque that Elvia Çelebiu identifies as Sultan Bajaziti's mosque when he was writing about the castle. The building contains the hall for prayers with an almost square-shaped floor plan and forms a vestibule in front of it with the same width. On the left side of the hall is the minaret. This placing, different from other mosques, seems to be due to the close proximity of the boundary wall to the southwest. The shrine's walls, as well as the foundation of the minaret, were built using the opus mixtum technique with two lines of horizontal bricks and one or two vertical bricks between the calcareous stones. The date of the mosque is uncertain, however, based on Çelebiu's data, the technique used and its position, the likely conclusion is that the mosque is from the 15th century CE. Whether Sultan Bajaziti built it, or if it is an earlier construction, makes it even harder to give a precise date. The Turkish garrison was stationed here between the second half and the end of the 15th century CE.





The **Saint Triad Church** was built between the second half of the 13th century CE and the beginning of 14th century CE. It is the best example of the inscribed cross-type churches with a cupola. It is composed of a *naos* supported by four pillars and *narthex* that was built later on. It has side wings made by an archway system, and in the center is the cupola. The church's walls contain stones, pieces of brick in the lower part and *opus mixtum* in the upper part. There are also mural paintings in the interior of the church.



The “**Lead**” **Mosque**, known as a charity of Ahmet Skura, was built in the middle of 16th century CE. The social, cultural and religious structure embodies the topology of classic Turkish portico style halls with a cupola and the mosque at the right side of the entrance. Together with the mosque a *tekke*, a *halveti tarikat* and a bathroom were built with water supplied from the aqueduct built in 1640 CE by the imperial architect Reiz Mimar Kasemi. It is unknown when these constructions were ruined, but at the end of 19th century CE, the portico of the mosque was reconstructed. According to Evlija Çelebiu, the old portico had arcades and was covered with seven cupolas. The remaining traces indicate that it is not according to the original plans, but the reconstructions hinder exact detailing.



BERAT

The **Gorica Quarter** home has two floors and a basement. A porch, a crib on the left side and a stercorator on the right side form the ground floor. Two pairs of stairs are connected to the balcony on the first floor. The first floor is shaped like a horseshoe, with the church at the center. The house passed through various phases of construction and restoration. Originally, the home was of the garret type, where the wooden columns that hold the joist, upon which the roof sits, joined with a carved wooden pillar at the roof's zenith.

The Monastery of Saint Spiridhon, Berat



Later, the house went through three more phases of construction and restoration. The first phase was the construction of additional areas on the left of both floors. In the next phase, they extended the areas on the right side and closed the garret. In the last phase, the house was divided in two parts, suited for two families. At the threshold of the basement there is the inscription "the year 1864", which was made during the third phase of construction. Though the home itself is thought to have been built in the 18th century CE.



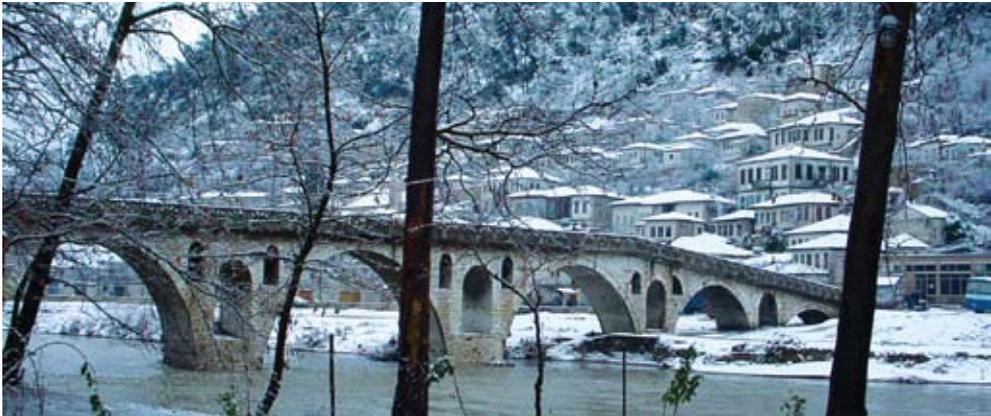
Gorica Bridge is one of the biggest stone medieval bridges in Albania, with a length of 129.3 meters. In the 13th century CE, during the war between the Byzantines and the Anzhuins, it was only possible to cross this spot on the Osumi River by raft. In 1670 CE the Turkish traveler Evlia Çelebiu was very impressed by this monument and made a short, but very interesting description of it: "Gorica Bridge had nine cantilevers, which lay upon stone bank seat and oak joints. This monument had a particular interest for the local inhabitants, who preserved with extra care the woods near the neighborhood, where the raw material for the bridge reparation was to be found."

In 1777 CE the local lordship Ahmed Kurd Pasha built the Gorica Bridge with stone cantilevers. In December 1888 CE, the Osum River damaged Gorica Bridge, which then suffered more damage during the First World War 1914-1918.

The Gorica bridge is made of seven vaults with light openings that vary in height from 6.7 m (the first vault right) to 16.5 m (the second vault right). In six of its bank seats discharger windows were opened, and in five of them there are two smaller windows.

This bridge on the Osumi River has linked the administrative center of the city of Berat with the Gorica neighborhood. According to a local legend, the original wooden bridge contained a dungeon, in which a girl had to be incarcerated and starved to appease the spirits responsible for the safety of the bridge.

Its current state is due to a total restoration, done on the same spot and on the same foundations. The monument presents a stone bridge with many vaults, with a flat causeway and inclined ramps on both sides.



BERAT

The **Ethnographic Museum of Berat** is inside a traditional house, which dates back to the end of 18th century CE. The house of the Xhokaxhi family is composed of two floors, using stone as the construction material for the first floor and wood for the second floor. The most attractive part of the house is the “garret”, which is noted for its high architectural value. The house is a real complex indeed, where all the elements, such as the garden and the museum complex of the other houses around, are witness to a rich ethnographic culture. In the interior setting of the museum, there are 1000 objects on display that belong to the region of Berat.



The first floor is organized as a medieval bazaar with many objects and crafts. What catches your eyes are clothes for both men and women with filigree. Other objects include various items of decoration like copper works. On the first floor, equipment for olive oil processing is on display, as well as equipment for making other drinks, the pottery and the smithy. On the second floor, the most interesting parts are the “garret” and the living quarters equipped with many ethnographic objects and valuables. One of these is the guest room, which has a separate area where the women used to stay. Other objects include the chimney, the sofas around the room, one hanging gun and a 100-year-old flag. Next to the guest room is the kitchen, equipped with all cooking tools. On the second floor there are also two other rooms, the “country room” and “loom room”.

These two rooms depict the ambience of working and living. In the “loom room” you may see all the tools for wool and cotton processing. Carpets and rugs are also on display.

The **Bridge of Vokopola** is in the village of Vokopola, upon the watercourse of Çoragjafi near the spring of "Ujit të Zi" (Black Water). The bridge was built during the time of Ali Pasha Tepelena and has been considered the most important connection point between the valley of Osumi and the valley of Vjosa. The branch that connected Berat with Tepelena covered these villages: Vokopola, Çorgjaf, Qafa e Gllavës, Luftinjë and Memaliaj. The bridge of Vokopola is a made of stone with a big archway, circular segments and two discharge windows. The bridge is 43 meters long and includes three arches and two recesses. The pavement of Vokopola Bridge was constructed with black flagstones, while the archway was built with two rows of stones. The bridge of Vokopola is one of the largest, most monumental and well preserved bridges in the district. The bridge was recently restored and is now being used by the inhabitants of the surrounding area.



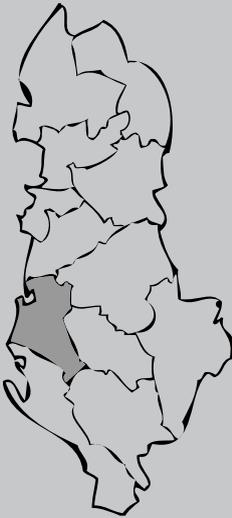
The church of Saint Nicolas, Perondi

In the region of Berat, you may also visit the interesting churches in the villages of **Kozare** and **Perondi**, close to the town of Kuçova.





Saint Michael's Church



FIER

Apollonia
Byllis
Nikaia (Klos)
Gurëzeza
The Monastery of Ardenica
The Monastery of Saint Mary in Pojan

FIER

Apollonia: Cicero, the famed Roman orator, was captivated by the beauty of Apollonia, and in his "Philippics", referred to it as "magna urbs et gravis," or "the great and important city." The ancient city, founded in the 7th century BCE by Greek settlers from Corinth and Corcyra, is located 11 km west of the modern city of Fier. A French mission lead by Prof. Leon Rey discovered Apollonia. Archaeological excavations have shown that Apollonia reached its zenith during the 4th – 3rd century BCE.

Studies estimate that around 60,000 inhabitants lived inside the city gates. The city has a 4 km long wall encircling an area of 137 hectares. Sources depict a flourishing culture with a busy harbor along this active trading route. Among the most interesting remains are the city council building, the library, the triumphal arch and the temple of Artemis.

The Marble Head of Artemis, Apollonia



The Agonothetes Monument, Apollonia

The odeon, from the 2nd century BCE, is also noteworthy, as it once accommodated approximately 10,000 spectators. There is also a spectacular 77 m long stoa with a covered walkway. An earthquake in the 3rd century CE, in addition to causing damage to infrastructure, altered the path of the Vjosa River and the harbor eventually silted up. This effectively changed the trading route, and the once proud city declined until it was nearly uninhabited. Apollonia was "rediscovered" in the 18th century CE, and archaeological efforts have continued intermittently throughout the 20th century CE. Today the site is easily accessible from the nearby city of Fier and it offers both unique views of the Adriatic coastline and numerous historical and archaeological items of great interest to visitors.



Byllis, established in the 3rd century BCE, once flourished as a political, economic and cultural center in the region. Being governed by a body of civil servants, the introduction of a bronze currency system and a reputation for having skilled artisans were the hallmarks of this powerful society. The surrounding wall of Byllis is very well preserved, measuring 2,250 m long, 3.5 m wide and 8 - 9 m high. It surrounds an area of 30 hectare and has a triangular shape. The theater built in the middle of the 3rd century BCE is located in the southeast corner of the agora. The theater exhibits several unique features including a sculpture display area. It was an immense construction with the ability to accommodate an estimated 7,500 spectators. Interestingly, historians believe that the design of the individual steps would allow for standing room only.



The adjacent stoa, measuring 60 x 11.4 m, remains partially preserved. The basilica located in the site measures an impressive 33 x 22.8 m. Inside are many beautiful examples of mosaics depicting a variety of subjects. To the south of the basilica lies the remains of a school, which dates back to the 3rd century BCE. This area features a series of alcoves and the rectangular footprint of the original building. The cathedral is perhaps the most impressive area within Byllis. It consists of the basilica, the baptistry and the diocese complex. The cathedral underwent several reconstructions, first in 470 CE and again in 547 CE. After each reconstruction, the cathedral increased in size. The basilica of the cathedral exhibits a much more elaborate configuration than the other basilica in Byllis. The threshold leading to the entryway is made with an extensive mosaic. Notably, it is the largest mosaic discovered in Albania to date. It displays diverse motifs and scenes reflecting the daily life of shepherds, anglers and others. The walls of this cathedral had beautiful frescoes at the time, and several depicting geometrical shapes remain.

FIERI



Gurëzeza is located near the modern town of Cakran, dominating the plain of Vjosa and offering visitors a view which extends to the Karaburun peninsula and the island of Sazan in the bay of Vlora. The partially preserved walls cover an expansive area of over 15 hectares. Settlements of the site appear divided into three distinct phases: the Protourban, Urban and Late Antiquity periods. Several important coin hoards were found in the vicinity of this site, one with about 2,000 bronze coins from Apollonia and Epirus. 200 silver coins were included in this find, forty of which belonged to the Illyrian king Monunios. Based on this find, some archaeologists and historians speculate that this may have been Monunio's actual residence. In the town of Ballsh you may also visit the **Basilica of Ballsh**.

Nikaia (Klos) is an ancient city located southeast of the modern city of Fier, near Byllis. The city features a protective wall that is notable for its length, 1850 meters, dating back to 425 BCE. The use of polygonal and trapezoidal blocks for its construction is typical. Three defensive towers guarded the single entrance to the city. Among the most important archaeological finds are a small theater, a stoa and the ruins of a stadium. The theater had a capacity of approximately 900 spectators. There are even inscriptions preserved on one of the theater walls granting citizenship to several individuals. They date back to the 3rd century BCE. The stoa (covered walkway) is partially excavated and measures 10 x 40 m. Life in Nikaia came to an abrupt end in 167 BCE when the invading armies of Paulus Aemilius ravaged the region.

The Basilica of Ballsh



The **Monastery of Ardenica** is a Byzantine structure occupying a surface area of about 2,500 m². This monument consists of the Saint Mary Church, the Saint Triad chapel, the konake, the oil mill, the oven and the stall. In the center is situated the Church of St. Mary, partly built with pumice stones brought from Apollonia. It occupies a large area, covered by a wooden roof and a flat ceiling. The church is composed of a naos, a narthex and a two-story *exonarex*, which at the one end connects with the 24 meter tall bell tower. At the southern part of the complex is an open portico built with columns and cantilevers. The naos is made of three parts, each of them divided in two lines by wooden columns. An iconostasis divides the naos from the altar. The church floor is paved with stone tiles, as are the narthex and exo-narthex. In 1743 CE, with the initiative of Berat's bishop, Metod, the monastery, including Saint Mary's Church, underwent restoration. The Saint Triad chapel lies at the northwest part and its dimensions are 7.5 x 3.7 m. Its entrance is situated to the west, and it has two small windows on its southern facade.



This chapel was built with pumice stones and its semicircular wall divides it from a rainwater collection tank. A stone cantilever covers the chapel's portal. Near the eastern window is a ceramic basso relief.

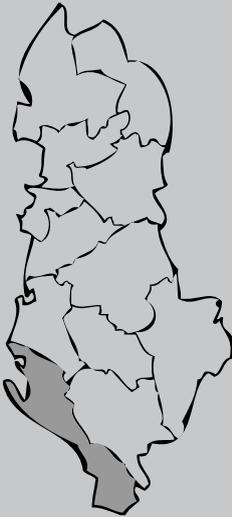


The **Monastery of Saint Mary** in Pojan is located within the complex of the Apollonia Archaeological Park. It was built in the 13th century CE. By the end of antiquity, Apollonia was largely depopulated, hosting a small Christian community that built this monastery on a hill, probably the site of the old city. Byzantine Emperor Andronicus Paleologus the Second reconstructed it. The chapel was built in the Byzantine style. The Monastery of Saint Mary is one of the most beautiful structures of this kind in Albania.

In the region of Myzeqe you may also visit several churches in the villages of Kolkondas, Karavasta, Vanaj, Libofsha, Hoxhare, Krutje and Kadipashaj.

The Church of Kurjan





VLORA

- The Ancient City of Amantia
- Butrint (Bouthrotos)
- Finiqi (Phoenice)
- Orikum (Orikos)
- Aulona (Vlora)
- Cape of Treport
- Onchesmos (Saranda)
- The Fortified Settlement of Karos
- The Porto Palermo Castle
- The Monastery of Saint Nicolas in Mesopotam
- The Muradie Mosque

VLORA

Amantia was the historical capital of the Illyrian tribe of Amanties, founded around the 5th century BCE. Its present location is near the village of Pllloça in the river valley of Vlora. At its peak, Amantia featured an acropolis and a Doric style temple dedicated to Aphrodite. The most notable archeological object among the preserved features is the stadium, measuring 60 x 12.5 meters. A significant sculptural object is the bas-relief of the God of Fertility, which can be seen at the National Historic Museum. Additional relics from Amantia are on display at the Archaeological Museum.



Finiq (Phoenice) is located near the modern city of Saranda and is about 20 km north of Butrint Lake and the Albanian border with Greece. During antiquity the territory surrounding the settlement belonged to Chaonia, part of the Epirus kingdom. The site is rich in findings from the Classical to the Byzantine period. Ancient sources mentioned the wealth of the city, especially during the Hellenistic period, between the 3rd and 2nd centuries BCE, when Finiq was a prominent city in the Epirote League. The city of Finiq hosted the historically significant signing of the treaty ending the first Macedonian War. This document took the name of "The Peace of Phoenice." The city's prosperity continued throughout the Roman and Byzantine periods. The Ottoman occupation appears to have caused the shrinking of the city of Finiq. Phoenice boasts several archaeologically important relics, including a small prostylos temple, a theater, exemplars of Hellenistic houses, and several Roman water cisterns. This picturesque site also contains an important Byzantine church.



Butrint (Bouthrotos) is located on the southwestern coast of Albania. A narrow stretch of sea separates the city from the Greek island of Corfu. The site has been occupied since approximately the 8th century BCE, but legends hint at the city's foundation by Trojan exiles. By the 4th century BCE, a walled settlement had been established and the city began to develop through trade. Augustus founded a colony at Butrint and the town remained a relatively small Roman port until the 6th century CE. Following the fall of the Roman Empire, the city shrank in population and significance. Butrint then entered a turbulent period and control of the city was bitterly fought over by the Byzantine, Norman, Angevin, and Venetian states. The Ottoman Turks and briefly the French disputed ownership later on. By the time it became a part of Albania in 1912, it was virtually deserted. Various archeological efforts began in the 1920's, and continue today.

Butrint was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992. The ground of Butrint features an impressive array of historically significant archaeological sites. Foremost among them is the theater, which dates back to the 4th century BCE, hosting approximately 1,500 spectators. Performances are still staged there at a summer festival each year. An impressive baptistery (with extensive mosaics) and a basilica from the 6th century CE attest to the various occupations of the city. A canal and vestiges of Roman courtyard houses lie near the theater. Additionally, kilometers of imposing walls surround much of the site. Nearby, the recently renovated Butrint Museum houses many fascinating objects unearthed during the various archeological digs. Though one must travel to the National Historic Museum in Tirana to view the famous head of Apollo, unearthed by the Italian archaeologist Luigi Maria Ugolini during his excavations in the 1920's.



VLORE

Behind the Independence Monument Square in Vlorë, the excavated remains of a rectangular castle are visible. The castle comprised a portion of the ancient city of Aulona and was built in the 4th century CE to withstand Gothic invasions. Other finds in the area indicate that it was first settled during the 4th century BCE.

The most famous find from this period is a sculpture known as “the aulonian girl”, depicting a girl wearing an Illyrian dress. Historical sources mention Aulona in the 2nd century CE, in relation to Roman efforts to improve roads in this part of the western Balkans. In various itineraries, Aulon is mentioned as a principal stopping place on the main road from Dyrrachium to Butrint. Following the Gothic invasions of the 5th century CE, an archdiocese was established inside the castle. During the reign of Justinian, the castle was further fortified by his direct orders. Late in the 6th century CE, Slavs invaded the city, causing widespread damage and an evacuation by many citizens to the island of Sazan, where traces of this settlement have been discovered. The city might have never regained its status, appearing to have diminished significantly in size and importance. Aulona is mentioned again in Byzantine documents, around 1100 CE.

The Archaeological Ruins of Aulona, Vlorë



Treport: Excavations near the Cape of Treport, located in the lagoon of Narta, have revealed traces of an ancient settlement dating back to the 7th century BCE. Over the centuries, the settlement expanded and a new wall was built around it in the 4th century BCE. Between the 4th and 2nd centuries BCE, the city prospered. The original name of the city is unknown, but according to finds in the area, the indicated name is Daulia. The city was mysteriously abandoned after the 2nd century BCE, but this might have been related to the Illyrian-Roman wars.

The Independence Museum of Vlorë



Orikum (Orikos) is located in southwest Albania, about 40 km south of the archaeological site of Apollonia. According to Pliny, colonists from Colchis established the city of Orikum. Its geographical position made it an important harbor and a trading center on the Adriatic coast. Orikum was important to military strategists as well. It was used by the Romans as a defensive base in the wars against the Illyrians as well as in the 3rd century BCE against the Macedonians, who later occupied it in 214 BCE. Julius Caesar used the area as a troop encampment for several months until Pompeius Magnus took them. Being subject to such varied cultural influences, Orikum became a thriving urban center. This is evident by various archaeological ruins, such as part of an orchestra platform

and a small theater with the capacity to hold 400 spectators. Additionally, ruins of protective walls and streets are visible lying underwater in a lagoon. The emperor Theodore commissioned the nearby Marmiroi Church, of Byzantine origin, in the 13th century CE. It has a small 6m x 9m main hall and a dome approximately 3m in diameter that is supported by four Roman arches. Its internal walls feature fragments of murals that reflect various aspects of Byzantine culture. The church has three entrances and is renowned for its elaborate construction and architectural significance. Today Orikum is an important city, which has been part of many regional development programs and has seen a distinct increase in the tourism sector. This is a result of its proximity to the Adriatic Sea and its relative position to other nearby cities.



VLORA

Onchesmos (Saranda) is the name of the ancient town derived from Anchises, the Trojan warrior whose mythological union with the goddess Aphrodite resulted in a son named Aeneas. Aeneas, along with his father and his son, Ascanius, escaped the sacking of Troy, and journeyed throughout the Mediterranean. Dionysos of Halicarnassus calls Onchesmos the Harbor of Anchises, and the Byzantine historian, Procopius, mentions that Anchises died at Onchesmos. During the 6th century CE, the town's name changed to Hagia Saranda or "Forty Saints". The circumstances of this name change are unclear, but might be related to the construction of a great basilica overlooking the modern city of Saranda. Various monuments and archaeological finds of the city have been excavated. Among the more impressive finds are the ruins of a Roman imperial archway, a portion of a Roman imperial archway, and the ruins of a late antiquity house. Also noteworthy are an apsidal building, an odeon, a cemetery, and an elaborate mosaic widely known as the Dolphin Pavement.



Porto Palermo Castle, located in the Vlorë region, was built by Ali Pasha Tepelena in the late 18th century CE. It has a rectangular shape with four bastions in its corners. Along the terrace's parapet is a positioned loophole for canons. The inner space is made of halls, stores and other areas. Stone stairs leading to the terrace are located in the central part. Walls protect the entire area with gun loopholes at the front and at the side. On the outside, in the archway entrance, is a stone balcony in the form of a cantilever.





The **Monastery of Saint Nicolas** in Mesopotam is a beautiful monument located in the village of Mesopotam, not far from the touristic city of Saranda. It is quite accessible thanks to its location on the national road linking Saranda with Gjirokastra. It is a Byzantine church, reconstructed two times in the years 1793 and 1843 CE. The main characteristic of the monastery is its distinctive defense features. The fortified wall surrounding the monastery includes rectangular towers. As it is also near the National Park of Butrint, it attracts numerous visitors.



Muradie Mosque is located in the very heart of the city of Vlora. It is a sultan style mosque, with a dome built in the second half of the 16th century CE. It consists of a prayer hall and a minaret built of carved stone. This monument has a harmonious distribution of its windows. Mimar Sinan Aga the Great, an architect of Albanian origin who was one of the most important mosque builders in the Ottoman Empire, carried out the design and construction of this mosque. It is supposed that he was born in the village of Gjergaj (modern day Sinanaj) in the region of Tepelena, southern Albania. He is considered the greatest architect of the classical period of Ottoman architecture, often compared to Michelangelo. Muradie Mosque is the only structure that has remained from this master in Albania.



VLORA

The **Fortified Settlement of Karos** is located near the village of Qeparo, along the Qeparo River. The location was clearly chosen for its natural defenses, as the fortress is situated atop a hill. Approachers from virtually any direction would face a difficult climb up a rocky slope. The original defensive walls apparently had only one entrance. The present state of the walls is a mere shadow of what it used to be, but it still extends for 350 m and is approximately 3 m thick. It varies in height, but reaches a maximum of 1.5 m in its ruined state. Two structures behind the entrance gate would have provided additional barriers for attackers and suggests just how heavily fortified this location once was. Origins of the settlement are unknown, but artifacts unearthed during the archaeological dig represent a wide range of inhabitants from the Early Iron Age to the 4th century C.E.



The Towers of Dervish Aliu, in Dukati



The region of Vlora is very rich with other sites. We should mention a number of orthodox churches along the Albanian Riviera, including the Church of Saint Mary of Mesodhia (1783 CE) and the Church of Saint Spiridhoni (1778CE) in Vuno, the Church of Ipapandia in Dhërmi, the Church of Saint Mary of Athali in Himara and the traditional houses of Odise Kasneci in Vuno and Lilo LLazari in Himara.

The Church of Qeparoi



Other monuments in the district of Vlora include the Church of Marmiroi (13th century CE) close to **Orikum**, the towers of Dervish Aliu in the village of Dukat, the Castle of Kanina and the Gjon Boçari Castle in the village of Tragjas. In the district of Saranda, you may also visit the ruins of the Monastery of the 40 Saints (close to Saranda), the Lëkursi Castle (2 km south of Saranda) and the small castle at the entrance of the Vivari channel near Burtint.

The Monument of Independence, Florë



The Lëkursi Castle

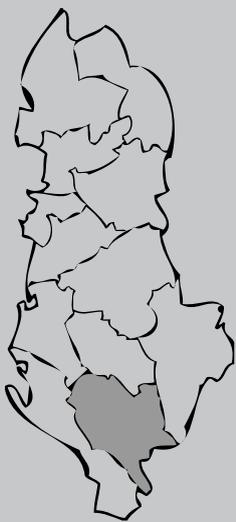
As regards museums in the city of Vlora, you may visit the **Museum of Independence**, the **Ethnographic Museum** and the **Historic Museum**.

The Kanina Castle



Church of Marmiroi





GJIROKASTRA

The Ancient City of Antigonea

The Ruins of Hadrianopolis

The Tepelena Castle

The Bazaar of Gjirokastra

The Residence of “Zenaja of Zekatëve”

The Church of Saint Mary in Labova e Kryqit

The Tekke of Melan

The Libovoha Castle

The Church of Saint Mary in Leusë

GJIROKASTRA

The Ancient city of **Antigonea** lies on the east side of the Drinos Valley, near the modern day village of Saraqinishtë. The ruins of an extraordinary wall, which measures approximately 4 km in length, surround it. Until recently the significance of the site was unknown. Excavations spanning the last fifty years, however, have positively identified the site through the discovery of a bronze tesserae inscribed with the word "ANTIGONEΩN". Unearthed coins from many once-powerful regional economies hint at the thriving trade that once fueled this civilization. The historical origins of the city are unclear, but literary sources suggest that Antigonea was founded either by King Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, or, more probably, by the Molossian King Pyrrhus around 300 BCE. Several other prominent features grace the landscape of Antigonea. Near the central agora, an impressive stoa with a covered walkway measuring 9 x 59 meters has been excavated. An early-Christian basilica with a triangular design dating back to the 6th century CE boasts extensive mosaics depicting a variety of historical subjects.

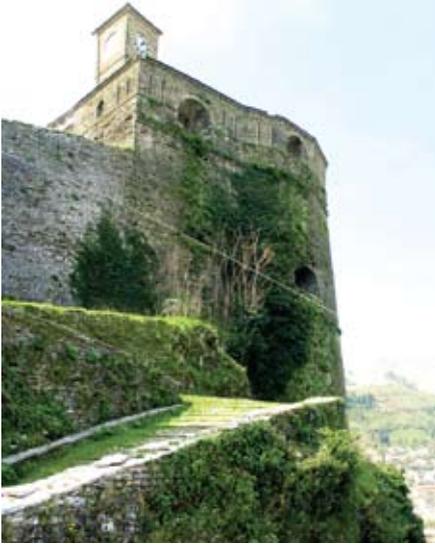


Hadrianopolis is located in the Drino River Valley near Gjirokastra. This city was known as Adrianopolis in Roman times, and the site features a theater which could accommodate approximately 4,000 spectators. It was excavated in 1984.



Tepelena Castle was built by Ali Pasha in the end of 18th century CE in the town of Tepelena. The construction of this monument was finished in the year 1819. It has an area of 4 - 5 hectares and is protected by three towers. The height of the walls reaches 10 meters. The eastern entrance is called "Porta e Vezirit," upon which is an inscription.





Gjirokastra Castle is mentioned for the first time as a city and a castle in 1336 CE. At that time, it was the center for the Albanian feudalist family, Zenebishëve. Later, during the lordship of Gjin Bue Shpata, it was included in the Despotate of Epir. According to them, the castle underwent two construction phases, the first one during the Gjin Bue Shpata rule, and the second in the 19th century during the regime of Ali Pasha of Tepelena, who in 1812 CE occupied the fortress with a garrison of 5,000 soldiers. The castle has various underground storehouses, which were used to secure munitions and food storage. Chronicles of the period mention that 1,500 people worked on the construction of Ali Pasha's castle. During the First and Second World Wars, the castle served as a bomb shelter for the town inhabitants.

The **Bazaar of Gjirokastra (Pazari i Gjirokastrës)** is situated on top of the castle hill, where even today the site is known as "The Old Bazaar". The urban location of this site indicates that the bazaar belongs to the 17th century CE. According to Elvia Çelebiu, from around 1771 - 1772 CE the old bazaar started gradually relocating towards the city center, where it exists today. At the end of the 19th century CE, a destructive fire destroyed the entire bazaar. After this tragedy, the bazaar was rebuilt according to contemporary architectural standards. Changes were made to the original urban plan to reconstruct the bazaar with fragmented blocks and steps, due to the rugged terrain. The top front of the shops are made of wooden and metallic eaves, while later, the entrances of the shops were closed with metallic roller curtains. The narrow streets of the bazaar spread out from a small city center in five different directions. Every street is lined with fragmented blocks of buildings.



GJIROKASTRA

The **Residence of “Zenaja of Zekatëve”** has been through two phases of housing. The first phase was during 1811 - 1812 CE, and the second phase was around the beginning of 20th century CE. The residence of Zekatëve was constantly utilized for habitation until the 1990s CE, but today it is unutilized. “Zapanaja,” a secondary construction inside the space of the first yard, is inhabited today. The residence of Zekatëve is a typical representative of Gjirokastra homes, while at the same time it is unique amongst Gjirokastra residences. It is representative of Albanian homes during the 18th - 19th

centuries CE. The residence of Zekatëve has three yards. In the yard to the west is the building of “Zapanaja”, an auxiliary construction and a grass depot. One residence is a variant marked by two cantilevers. Due to the rocky, slanting land, the house widens, and where the eastern cantilever has three stories, the western cantilever has four. In its design, the building is separated into three complexes, the central, courier and two laterals with equal operation. The ground floor and the first of the eastern cantilever are uninhabited. The stairs climb in the central part, while in the eastern cantilever is the “katoj.” In the western part is the main area for the accumulation of rain water with the harvesting of water by the courier spaces that dominated under the “divan”. Above that is cellar or “zahirese,” the only space for storing food products. The mezzanine formed two areas, where the family would spend the winter. The top floor is more notable because it widens at the mezzanine with two alcoves for cooking, one for each floor. Also, in the central part, a pervious garret with a kiosk was added. In the western cantilever, a guest room was built, while on the left side are two habitable alcoves. In the central part, the design appears dynamic, lavished by decorations almost void in the upstairs, with full lighting and amenities. Inside, with lavish furnishings and architecture, the guest room shows prominence with a special ceiling inside an arch. The two ceilings are visually decorated with furnishings, rosettes, borders, partly painted floral figures, decorative chimneys, tapestries and more.



In its present condition, the Zekatëve residence does not suffer from serious structural problems.



A Decorated Chimney in the Zekate House

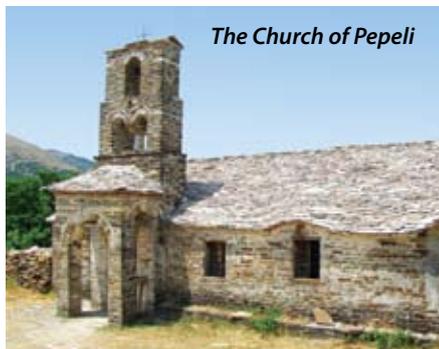
The **Church of Saint Mary in Labova e Kryqit** has an inclusive cross-style with a typical provincial Byzantine type roof. Inside, arches on two floors are used to support the roof, thus making reference to some of the churches of Constantinople. The date of origin has not yet been precisely determined due to a lack of written documents, but verbal accounts indicate that it dates back to the 14th -18th century CE. This is further confirmed by the similarities to churches in Kosturi and Ohrid at that time.

The wall construction is similar to the other churches of Southern Albania, using an opus mixtum style (a decorative combination of stone, bricks and plaster).



The Church of Saint Mary, Labova e Kryqit

In Gjirokastra you may also visit the **Ethnographic Museum of Gjirokastra**, the **churches of Saint Mary in Leusë** and **Kosinë** near the town of Përmet, the **Libovoha Castle** (18th century CE), the **Holy Virgin Monastery in Goranxi**, (Dropulli), and the **Tekke of Melan** (close to Libohova).



The Church of Pepeli



Church of Leusa

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www.akt.gov.al
www.albaniantourism.com

info@akt.gov.al
info@albaniantourism.com

“Muhamet Gjollësia” Str.,
former Publishing House “8 Nëntori”,
4th Floor, AL 1010 Tirana, ALBANIA,
Tel: +355 42 273 281, Tel/Fax: +355 42 260 224