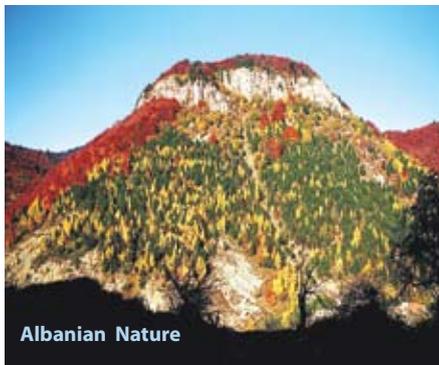


Albanian Nature & Activities

Albania
yours to discover







Albanian Nature



Albanian Seaside



Sport and Adventure

Relief and Climate

Albania covers a total area 28,748 km² and is distinguished for its spectacular and diverse terrain. One-third of the country consists of lowlands located primarily in the west and extending along the Adriatic and Ionian coasts. The remainder of the country is hilly or mountainous and offers tremendous views and vistas. The highest point in Albania, at 2,751 m, is Mount Korabi in Dibra district. As one might expect, this beautiful and varied terrain offers visitors many opportunities to enjoy Albania's natural beauty.



The beauty and unique climate offered by the highlands is often just a short drive away from all that the coast and its Mediterranean-like climate have to offer. Albania also enjoys long periods of pleasant weather. Summer is the most sunny and beautiful of the seasons, but the remainder of the year is beautiful, as well.





Relief and Climate



The Albanian seashore is an expansive 450 km and includes numerous lagoons. The sea has influenced Albanian history and culture since antiquity through the trade and fishing opportunities it provides. Heading north and/or east from the sea, visitors will gain altitude and truly begin to appreciate the highlands and, eventually, the alpine areas. The mountainous terrain in the northern Alps is breathtaking. Snow cover lasts for nearly half the year and affords numerous outdoor recreation possibilities, particularly in the Albanian Alps in the north of country. The landscape is also strewn with numerous lakes and rivers for travelers to enjoy.



Albania's climate is varied and seasonal. From average annual seacoast temperatures around 17.5°C, to the cooler highlands averaging 7.5°C, Albania offers tremendous diversity. Summers tend to be hot and dry, while the winters are mild and offer an autumn-like beauty. This pleasant weather supports a wide variety of recreational activities.

The Sea

The Albanian coast begins in the northwest at the Buna River delta, which marks the Albania-Montenegro border, and extends southward until it reaches Cape Stillo at the Albanian-Greek border. Including various lagoons and harbors, the coast stretches for a total of 450 km and touches two seas: the Ionian in the south and the Adriatic in the north. Along its length, the coastline is dotted with beaches ranging from large and sandy to hidden and private. Beautiful rocky coastlines comprise portions of this landscape as well. The coastline of Albania is particularly picturesque because of its relative lack of development. This unspoiled coast has been preserved as a natural beauty and is ripe with outdoor recreation possibilities. Teeming with rich sea life, the water offers many treasures. Remnants of ancient civilizations dot the coastline and demonstrate the centuries-old relationship that this area shares with the sea.





The Lakes





Although relatively small, Albania is home to a large number of lakes. Three of the largest are Shkodra, Ohrid, and Prespa. Each of these lakes is significant: Shkodra is the largest lake in the Balkans at 368 km². Ohrid is the deepest lake of the Balkans, and Prespa is the highest, at 850 m above sea level. There are many other small lakes throughout the country that provide beauty and enjoyment, as well.



Lake Shkodra is located along Albania and Montenegro's shared border. The beautiful shore consists of marshes in the north and rocky shores in the south, with two notable beaches located at Shiroka and Zogaj. The southern part of the lake is called "the hither coast," while the northern part is called "waterfront." There are several villages nearby which are attractive to tourists, such as Kosani, Flaka, Kamnica, Jubica and Kalldrun. The lake is home to a tremendous variety of living creatures, including 45 species of fish and 281 species of birds.

The Lakes

Lake Ohrid is one of the most beautiful tectonic lakes of the Balkans, located on the shared border between Albania and Macedonia. It is 695 m above sea level and accordingly remains temperate and cool even in the warmest summers. At an estimated four million years old, it is also one of the oldest lakes in the world. It too boasts a tremendous variety of fish, some of which are unique to Ohrid. Notable among them is the Belushka Salmon, a delicious and highly prized fish, and Koran, which is the most famous and is exclusively found in this lake.

Recreational opportunities abound, particularly near Pogradeci, Lini, Pojska, and Tushemishti.





The Lakes





Prespa lakes. Big Prespa Lake measures 285 km² and straddles the borders of Albania, Macedonia, and Greece. Little Prespa Lake, located on the Albanian-Greek border, is significantly smaller, at 44 km². As with other Albanian lakes, the Prespas enjoy beautiful, clear water.

The region surrounding them offers myriad opportunities for recreation, including sightseeing, wildlife observation, ecotourism, and water sports. The area features some of the best Albania has to offer - a rare combination of resplendent natural beauty and warm, hospitable locals will make any visit to this region memorable.



The Lakes

The small lakes. Albania also features many small, beautiful glacial lakes. Most notable among them are Doberdol and Sylbice Lakes in Tropoja, Balgjai Lake in Bulqize, and the beautiful and 60 m deep Black Lake in Martanesh. Other beautiful examples include Dushku Lake in Gramsh, the four Rajca Lakes in Librazhd, and Sheleguri Lake on Mount Gramozi (Kolonja District). Others still worth visiting are the 69 wonderful lakes of Dumre Plateau, near the expansive 960 ha Merhoja Lake, and the 61 m deep Çestija Lake, among others.



The Balgjai Lake - Bulqiza



The Lura Lake - Dibra



The artificial Lake - Tirana

Artificial lakes (Man-made lakes).

Artificial lakes and reservoirs are popular for fishing and recreation. Several large ones exist in Komani, Mati (Ulëza and Shkopet), Tirana (Farka reservoir and the artificial lake of the city), Lushnja (Thana reservoir), and Korça (Gjançi reservoir). These small, man-made lakes have a lot to offer. In addition to sporting opportunities, they provide habitats for a rich variety of flora and fauna. The Komani Lake also functions as a traveling waterway.

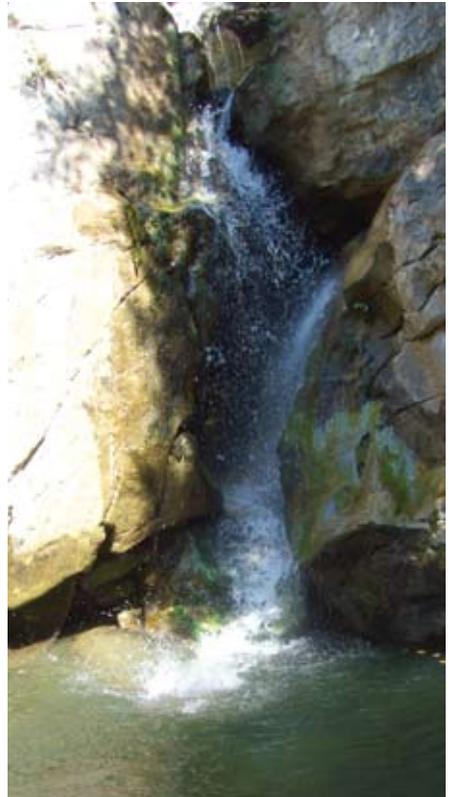


The Koman Lake - Tropoja



Viroi - Gjirokaštër

The Albanian countryside is rich with springs, rivers, and streams. There are an estimated 200 springs, each of which bursts forth with over 200 liters of water per second. Some springs have been noted for their medicinal or curative powers and have thus been the site of spas since antiquity. These spas are located throughout the country, but several noteworthy ones exist in Leskoviku (Vronomero) Dibra, Elbasani, Benja, and Fushë-Kruja (Bilaj).



Vronomero - Leskovik



The Buna River - Shkodra

Four springs which are remarkable for their natural beauty are the Blue Eye in Saranda, Cold Water in Tepelena, Viroi in Gjirokastra, and Syri i Sheganit at Lake Shkodra. The network of inland Albanian waters consists of 11 major rivers and their 150 tributaries. Measuring 285 km, the Black Drini River is the longest and it flows from Lake Ohrid to the Adriatic Sea. Other large rivers include the Valbona, Buna, Fani, Mati, Erzeni, Shkumbini, Seman, Vjosa, Osumi, Shushica, Devolli, Langarica, Drino, and Bistrica rivers.



"Syri i Kaltër" (Blue Eye) - Saranda

The Rivers

Some valleys and canyons created by these ancient flows offer tremendous natural beauty as well. Among these are the Valbona and Shala Valleys in the Northern Alps, Tomorica Valley, Këlcyra Outfall on the Vjosa River, and the Bënça and Osumi Canyons. The canyons, in particular, offer a beautiful backdrop for a variety of paddling sports. Waterfalls are also a part of this vast network, such as those located at Grunas and Thethi, Shoshan and Kurveleshi.



The Vermosh River

The Shala River



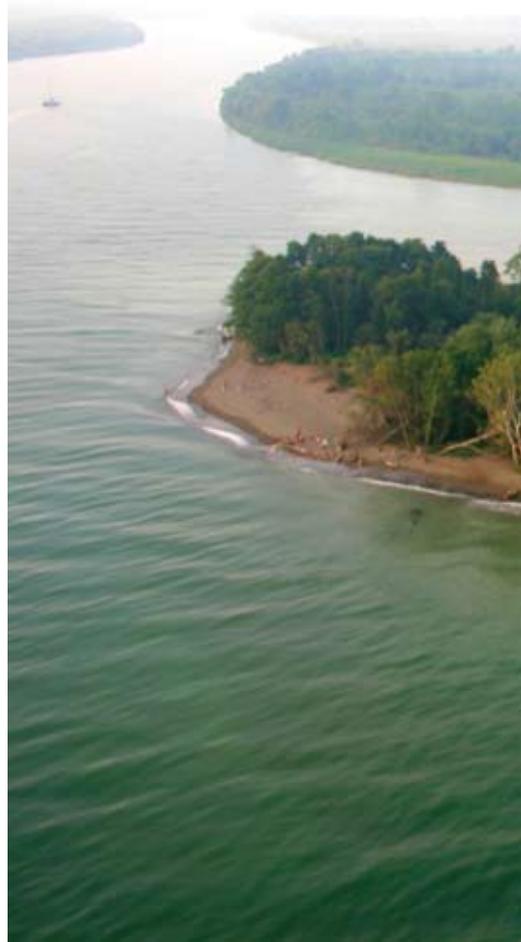
The Osumi Canion



The Islands

Franc Josef is a small island located in the Buna River delta. This island is rich with waterfowl and other bird species. The island is also covered in beautiful lush greenery and provides a peaceful place to refresh and relax.

The Sandy Island of Kune has an area of 125 ha and lies in the Drini River delta. This island features extravagant and varied plant life, including everything from small Mediterranean shrubs to ash and willow forests. Island wildlife is abundant as well, boasting 70 bird species, 23 species of mammals, 22 reptiles species, and 6 species of amphibians. Since antiquity, hunters have prized this island for its variety of prey. Located nearby, the secluded and private beach of Tale is also worth visiting.





The Islands

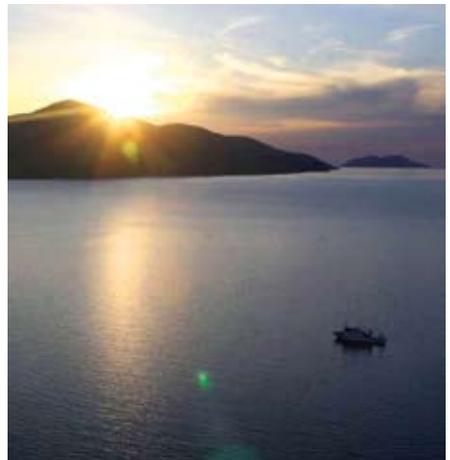




Zverneci Island is one of two islands in Narta Lagoon in Vlora. It is very picturesque and its landscape is dotted with beautiful cypress trees. The island is also home to the historically significant Santa Maria Church. Access to the island is via a wooden bridge, which offers spectacular views of the lagoon.

Shurdhahu Island is a small, but picturesque island located in Vau i Dejës Lake. On this island, visitors will find the ruins of the medieval town of Sarda. It has also served as the residence of the prominent feudal Dukagjini family.

Sazani Island is Albania's largest island, measuring 5.7 km². It sits approximately 15 km off the shore at Vlora and features mostly rocky shores, except for the magnificent Admiral Beach. In antiquity, this island was known as Sason, and it has long been a destination for divers and fishermen.



The Islands

Maligradi Island is located in Grand Prespa Lake. It is frequently visited by boaters who come to enjoy the beauty of the varied fauna and the historic Saint Pavllo eremite church.



Ksamili Islands. The four marvelous Ksamili islands total only 8.9 ha when measured together, but feature some of the most unspoiled beauty in all of Albania. They remain covered in lush, green vegetation throughout the year, and can only be accessed by small boats. The clear water surrounding these islands makes the pristine beaches in the area that much more special.



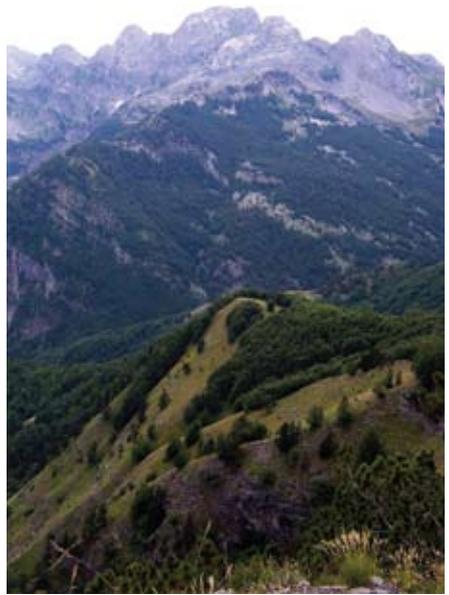


The Mountains





Approximately two-thirds of Albania's geography is either hilly or mountainous. These elevations offer myriad outdoor recreation possibilities, including everything from paddling sports to paragliding. These areas also host a variety of tourism ventures, including eco and agritourism. There is a renewed interest in alpine climbing and exploration as well, with the 2,018 m Çika Ridge being a highly desirable climb. Various destinations in the Northern Alps, with elevations as high as 2,700 m, beckon to the climber as well. Specifically, the towns of Vermosh, Thethi, Razëm, Bogë, and Valbona can all serve as starting points for an expedition.



The Mountains

Cultural experiences also abound in the mountains. Tomorri Mountain hosts the Baba Tomorri, Abaz Aliu celebration, a festival featuring aspects of Albanian and Bektashi cultural traditions. The catholic Saint Ndou gathering in the Laçi highlands represents a pilgrimage destination for many of Albania's faithful. The highland areas near the Drenova, Dardha, and Voskopoja regions in Korça offer rich cultural experiences as well. Among other landmarks in Albania are Enrichment Rock, an outcropping southwest of Pogradeci, and Korabi Mountain in Dibra, Albania's highest peak at 2,750 m. Moving south, travelers will encounter historic Kruja. Perched among mountainous peaks, this is the location where Skanderbeg united warring tribes and defended Albanian lands from Ottoman attacks.





The Mountains





Throughout Albania, intrepid explorers will also find many vast caves just waiting to be discovered. Professional and amateur spelunkers alike will find no shortage of underground chambers to conquer. Near Shkodra alone there are at least 35 significant caves. Pirogoshi, the largest cave in Albania, is 1,500 m long and is located in Skrapar. Other notable caves are Good Cave and Pëllumbas Cave, located near Tirana. Nestled in the beautiful Skorana Canyon on the Erzeni River, Pëllumbas is ripe for exploration and is Albania's second-largest cave. No fewer than 68 of Albania's caves are designated as natural national monuments.



Natural National Parks

Dajti Park is located atop Dajti Mountain, 26 km east of Tirana. A magnificent and beautiful park, Dajti is 300 ha large, boasting lush vegetation and groves of 200 years-old beech trees. There are significant archaeological monuments nearby, as well as opportunities for hiking and climbing. A recently built cable car transports visitors from the outskirts of Tirana to the park in just a few minutes. This area, known locally as “Tirana’s Balcony”, features several eateries that offer spectacular views of the city.





Natural National Parks



National Park of Thethi is situated in the Albanian Alps near Bjeshkët e Namuna (the Cursed Mountains). It is 3,300 ha large and through it flows the beautiful Thethi River. A magnificent place to visit is the waterfall at Grunas. Significant wildlife populates this park, as well; a large community of lynx calls this tranquil area home.



Natural National Parks

National Park of Lura. This park is situated on the eastern slope of the majestic Kunora e Lures (Crown of Lura). Natural beauty is everywhere, with ancient stands of pine and no fewer than fourteen picturesque glacial lakes. In summer and winter alike, recreational opportunities abound for outdoor enthusiasts.



Divjaka Pine National Park. This park is located in Karavasta lagoon and has been protected since 1994 by the Ramsar International Convent. Recognized in this way for its ecological treasures, the park offers some truly unique spectacles. The park is home to many diverse and beautiful plant and animal species, including rare birds like the endangered Crispy Pelican. This park is the most western nesting point of this kind of bird in all Europe.

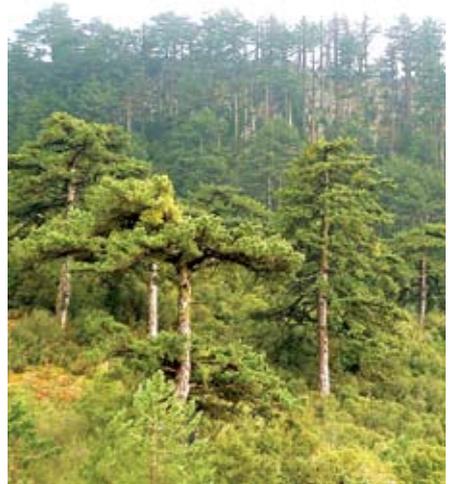




Natural National Parks



National Park of Llogarais situated 40 km south of Vlora at the dividing point between the Adriatic and Ionian Seas. This park is notable for its expansive pine forests. The Flag Pine is among the most massive species and is remarkable for its ecological significance. Aerial activities are popular here, with numerous paragliding competitions being held within the boundaries of the park. Vistas of the nearby Vetetima Mountain Range and the picturesque beaches serve as the perfect setting for a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities.



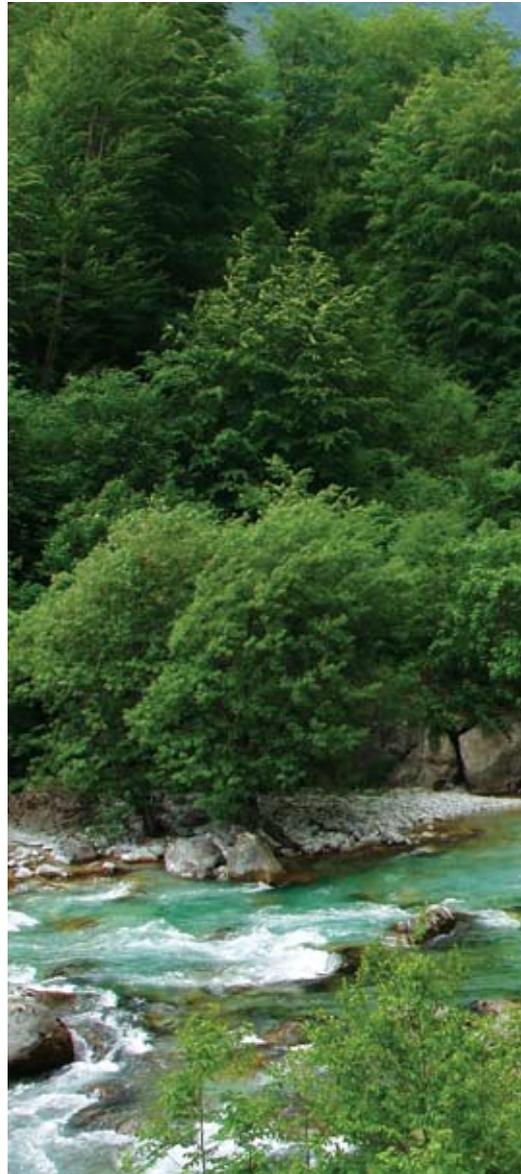
The Fir of Hotova National Park is located in the region of Frasheri, 35 km northeast of Permeti. The Hotova Fir is a significant regional species and graces the countryside throughout the park. Nature lovers flock here and appreciate the park for its many recreational and camping opportunities.

Natural National Parks

Valbona Valley National Park. This park is considered one of the most beautiful in all of Albania. Located 25 km from Bajram Curri, the park features impressive scenery comprised of high alpine ridges and the Valbona Valley. Diverse plant and animal species invite recreation, sightseeing, and scientific study.



Gjocaj Grit National Park is another wonderful park 40 km northeast of Burreli. Featuring a variety of springs and ravines, it is resplendent in natural beauty.





Natural National Parks

Shtama Pass National Park is located 25 km northeast of Kruja. The spectacular views and high peaks of this location are truly breathtaking. Additionally, this park is home to Mother Queen Spring, which flows with crystal clear water noted for its healthful properties.

Tomori Mountain National Park. Just east of Berat lies this scenic mountainous gem. Resembling a natural castle framed by lofty peaks, Tomorri Mountain covers 4,000 ha and reaches upward to a height of 1,200 m. It is snow-covered in the winter and holds tremendous religious significance for the Abaz Aliu tribe, which lives nearby. The Bektashi sect also calls this area home and organizes a large religious festival every August.



National Park of Drenova Fir boasts an area of 1,380 ha and features the magnificent Morava Mountain. Located in Korça, the elevations and views draw enthusiasts and nature lovers throughout the year. Springs with intriguing names like "Old Woman" are abundant and serve to enhance the natural beauty.



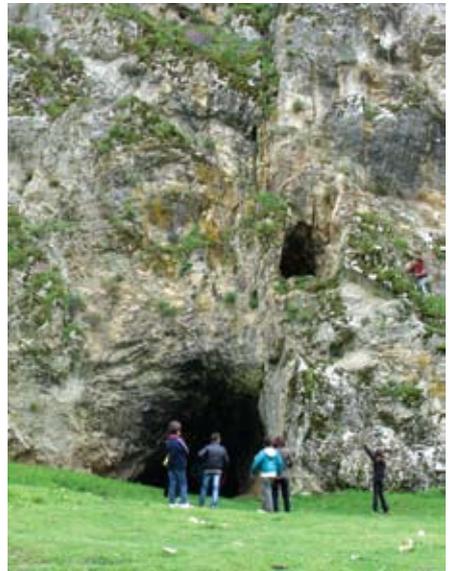






Prespa National Park is the largest of Albania's national parks. It is immense at 27,750 ha and touches the Prespa lakes. The park extends to the borders of Macedonia and Greece and is known regionally as Balkan Park under an agreement signed by the three countries. Archeological treasures mingle with varied plant and animal species, forming a truly unique and spectacular park. The Castle of Trajan and several Byzantine-era churches feature magnificent frescoes, which draw historians and sightseers alike. The Treni Cave is also located within the park boundaries and is noted for its ancient cave paintings. Remnants of Neolithic settlements hint at the rich history and serve to further enhance the natural beauty.

The Treni Cave



Natural National Parks

National Park of Butrinti has a total area of 2,500 ha. A warm, mild climate and significant archaeological artifacts draw both Albanian and foreign tourists to this beautiful area. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the park offers much more than the ruins and associated museum. Natural beauty abounds here as well, with Butrinti Lake and the clear blue waters of the nearby sea beckoning to those who enjoy the water and all it has to offer. Culinary delights are everywhere and a mussel unique to this area is one of the most delectable of all the area's seafood.





Velipoja Beach

The Albanian seaside has a considerable length of 450 km and is rich in varieties of sand beaches, small gravel beaches, capes, coves, covered bays, lagoons, sea caves, etc. Some areas of the seaside are ecologically very clean, which represents prospective unexplored areas, something very rare in Mediterranean areas. In the north, the seaside begins at the Buna River delta, which is also the country border between Albania and Montenegro. The small island of Franc Josef can be found here, though sometimes it becomes a peninsula depending upon the water level of the river. This is a place of great importance for vegetation and sea birds in the area. The vegetation is a typical one of groves with a predominance of poplars and other leaf trees, while seagulls are the dominant sea bird in the area.

Franc Josef is recommended for people that love nature and prefer relaxing away from the sounds of civilization.

Velipoja beach is the northernmost beach of the country, situated 22 km away from Shkodra. There are 250 sunny days and temperatures above 20°C normally begin by mid-May. The beach, with 4 km of high quality sand, is suitable for family vacations and is generally populated by northern Albanians. Near to **Velipoja beach** is the lagoon of Viluni with a surface area of 130 ha. This is a very important natural eco-system, hosting a number of varieties of sea birds. Velipoja beach also has a legal hunting area of 700 ha situated nearby.





Shengjini Beach



Shëngjini beach is another sandy beach in the Lezha district, situated 8 km away from the city of Lezha. Shëngjini beach is well known for its high quality sand and has 200-300 sunny days per year. In the north of Shëngjini, before the Renci Hills, is the wonderful beach, Rana e Hedhun (Powdered Sand), which is well protected from the winds of this area. The Lezha seaside has a wonderful natural ecosystem ideal for the development of ecotourism, bird watching, etc. Because of the winds of this area, the Drini River delta is highly recommended for surfing. The lagoon system of Kune-Vain is found at this delta, where tourists can easily observe a large number of sea birds.

There are two lagoons comprising this system: Ceka, with an area of 235 ha, and Merxhani, with an area of 77 ha. The biggest surprise for tourists in this area is the sandy island of Kune, situated at the right side of the Drini River delta. This island is covered with hygrophilous vegetation and more than 227 kinds of plants, including wildly growing green Mediterranean bushes and willows. Regarding fauna, there are a number of birds on the island, including wild ducks, pheasants, big redheaded ducks, and many more. Of the 353 species of birds found throughout Albania, 70 can be found in this area along with many mammals and amphibians. South of Kune are additional beaches in the less-populated Tale area.



Lalezi Bay

One of the most attractive areas of the Albanian Adriatic is **Lalezi Bay**, situated between Rodon Cape and Bishti i Pallës. Rodon Cape is a wonderful natural masterpiece of 7.5 km and is a highlight for those who enjoy diving. The beaches of Lalezi Bay are sandy ones, some of them surrounded by strips of pine trees. Some of the most outstanding beaches are the ones of **Shën Pjetri** and **Rrushkull**, well known for their clean and deep blue waters.





Durrës Beach





Durrësi beach, situated only 39 km away from Tirana, is the biggest and the most populated beach of the country. It has a length of 6 km with a considerably wide strip of sand. The sea depth increases very gradually, which makes this beach very attractive to families with children, and the location of Durrësi Bay keeps it very protected from the winds. Situated here is the largest number of tourist facilities including hotels, motels, villa compounds, bars, restaurants, discos, etc. During the last few years this beach has become the destination not only for tourists from Tirana but also from Kosova and Macedonia. In the northern part of Durrësi is **Currila beach**, where the water is deeper and the beach is protected from the warm wind coming from the land.



Golemi Beach

The nearby beaches of **Golem** and **Mali i Robit** comprise nearly the same unit amount of land as Durrësi beach and have similar characteristics. Here you can find a pine forest decorating the seaside. Like in Durrësi beach, the concentration of tourist facilities here is very high (hotels, restaurants, bars, pubs, etc.). Regarding the beaches in Kavaja district, it is worth mentioning the **Karpen** and **Spilleja** beaches, which are known for the high quality sand (rich in iodine), sea waters, and dense vegetation of pine trees.



The Cape of Lagji closes the Durrësi bay in the south. It is a suitable natural object for diving. Nearby are the small beaches of rare beauty: **Bardhori** and **Gjenerali**. Bardhori is a rocky beach, while Gjenerali is surrounded by lush vegetation and appears like a natural amphitheatre. Both are secluded beaches, excellent for those who wish to escape noise.





Karavasta Lagoon





Karavasta Lagoon is the biggest lagoon along Albanian coast, with an area of 4,330 ha. It is one of twelve National Parks of Albania, and it has many important values for bio-diversity. Karavasta Lagoon is the western point of Europe where nests curly pelican (*pelicanus crispus*). There is 5 % of its worldwide population. For these values Lagoon of Karavasta is under protection of International Convention of RAMSAR, since 1994.

It is a very interesting experience the observation of these pelicans if you go by boat near the island where they usually perch. In this ecosystem there are 210 kinds of birds, 12 kinds of mammals and 16 kinds of reptiles. Lagoon waters which reach approximately 1.5 meters deepness are rich of fishes, especially mullet and eel, which are offered in many restaurants of **Divjaka beach**. The flora of National Park of Divjaka excels for its beauty and special freshness. There dominate conifer areas of soft and wild pines, where stand out large crown pines. The multistory forest is very rich of herbals and high woods. There excels accompaniment with ash, fir etc.

Divjaka's sea sand is rich of a considerably amount of iodine and the temperatures over 20 grade Celsius start since second half of May and continue until the beginning of October. This is an area when are combined beach activities with eco-tourism. The embouchure of Vjosa, which lies in south, constitute in a natural protected area in both sides of river that are called Pish Poro Fier and Vlora.

This is a natural area with seaside pines, isolated sandy beaches and a convenient nesting place for seabirds.

Narta Lagoon

In the south, at the embouchure of the Vjosa River, is the **Lagoon of Narta**, which has an area of 4,180 ha, making it the second largest lagoon in Albania. Narta Lagoon is another natural ecosystem with the potential to be developed for eco-tourism, bird watching, fishing, etc. It is one of the best locations in Albania for bird watching, as there are 195 kinds of birds in Narta and during the winter, there nest about 48,700 seabirds, or 23% of the birds that come to Albania for the winter. This number includes thousands of different ducks, white-tailed eagles, flamingos, peregrines, black kites, etc. In the lagoon's waters are many fish, including eels and Narta's bass. The area of Narta is also known for its production of high quality wine. In the future, natural tourism in the lagoon could be coupled with wine tourism.





Vlora Beach





Vlorë is the second biggest harbor of the country and one of the most important points for Albanian tourism, offering both "sea and sun." The area near the city along the Vlorë beaches is known for its new and modern hotels along with other facilities like bars, restaurants, discos, clubs, etc. This is one of the most exciting tourist areas of the country. The tourist area starts directly south of the city along the small and rocky beaches of Vlorë's bay. There are beaches here with very interesting configurations. In front of them is the peninsula of Karaburun, the largest peninsula of the coast, and the island of Sazani, the largest island of Albania. This configuration helps Vlorë's beaches to be protected from the winds. Jonufri's beaches, which lie in this area of Vlorë's bay, extend to the stream of Dukat, near the small town of Oriku. The beaches are surrounded by a hilly area of citrus which contrasts nicely with the blue waters of the sea.



Vlora Beach

In the southern part of Vlora's bay is **Orikumi**, where a harbor for yachts was recently built. Orikum's beach is about 2 km long. In this area are the Pana and Rrapi sea caves. This entire area is of interest for divers because of the archeological remains and sunken ships. One of these is the Italian ship "PO," sunken in 1941 during World War II. It is also said that Julius Caesar sank the ships of Pompeii's troops here. The area of Uji i Ftohte is convenient for observe different algae while diving and in the area of Zhiron, black and green algae can be found. In the west, Vlora's bay is closed by the peninsula of Karaburun, the largest peninsula in Albania, about 16 km long and 4.5 km wide. The west coast of Karaburun is amazing, with high, scrappy coasts, small bays, and beaches, making it one of the most attractive points of the Albanian coast for passionate divers. In the north of the peninsula is the Cave of Haxhi Ali, the largest cave in the country: 30 meters deep, 18 meters high, and 12 meters wide. These dimensions allow for the entrance of boats. The cave's name comes from a sailor from Ulqin, who sailed in these waters during the 17th century. There are many small beaches such as **Arusha Bay**, **Grama**, and **Dafina** beaches that are recognized for their depth, high quality waters, and isolated positions, which protect them from noise. Near Grama's beach is the Cave of Slaves, named such as it is believed that slaves worked in this cave during antiquity. There is ancient graffiti on the walls of Grama's beach and it is thought that the Temple of Dioskure was located here.



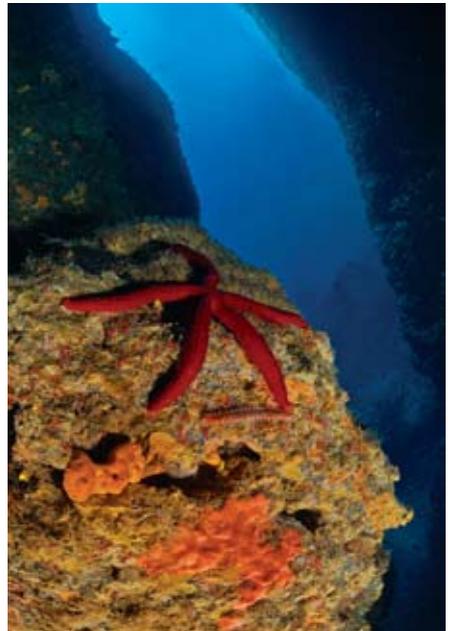






Near the peninsula of Karaburun is the island of Sazani, the largest island in Albania. It is about 19 km from Vlora's harbor and has an area of 5.7 km²; it is 4.5 km long and 2 km wide at the largest spots. In antiquity, the island was called Sason. The island presents a sharp, rocky coastline especially along the western part of the island. In the southeast area of the island is the Admiral beach, which is known for its very clean waters.

Sazani has become known as a diving location and together with Karaburun, they make for a wonderful and unique diving experience. After the saddle of Llogara lie Jon's beaches, the beaches of the Albanian Riviera, which make for one of the most beautiful regions in Albania.





The Albanian Riviera is the place where the sun stretches across the deep sea, the splendid configurations of rocky and isolated small beaches, the mountains and hillsides covered in Mediterranean vegetation, and the villages constructed between the mountains and sea. This is the warmest region of Albania, where the average temperature in January is 10°C and the average temperature in July is 25°C. This area is blessed with 300 days of sun. From the saddle of Llogara, which is 1,057 m above sea level, the exquisitely beautiful littoral zone can be seen as if from the vantage point of an airplane. The first beach here is **Dhraleos in Palasë**, which has a length of 1.5 km. This is one of the most exotic and tranquil beaches of the Albanian littoral zone, complete with deep, blue waters.

This beach is popular for water sports and is even sometimes the destination for the parachutes that launch from the saddle of Llogara. Dhermiu is located a little further south and is one of the most frequented and important tourist places along the Albanian coast. The crystal-clear waters, isolated beaches, water sports, and diving make this the preferred beach of younger generation. The different beaches that are part of **Dhërmiu** are **Jaliksari**, **Shkambo**, and **Gjipea**.









The **beach of Gjipea** has beautiful form. After the beach, there is a stream that has made a canyon with 70 m high walls. Located near the beach of Dhermiu is the Cave of Pirates, which tourists can access by ferry. There are also some hotels, restaurants, and summer discos located here. Throughout this entire area, “familiarity tourism” has been developed, where tourists can choose to rent a house as their accommodations instead of staying in a hotel.



8 km south of Dhermiu is **Vunoi**, near **Himara**, which is the central area of the Albanian Riviera. It is a touristy place that comes to life during the summer season thanks to the younger generations that come here. In this area are the beaches of **Spilea**, **Potami**, **Llamani**, and **Livadhja**. All of them stand out for their deep waters, navigability, and rocky characteristic. After Borshi is the beach of **Qeparoi** and the small tectonic gulf of Porto Palermo, which is located near Ali Pasha Castle. **Borshi** is one of the longer littoral zones of the Albanian Riviera and girding this beach is a collection of massive Mediterranean vegetation, primarily citrus and olive plantations). Familiarity tourism has also become very popular in this area.

Riviera

Between here and the city of **Saranda** can be found the beaches of **Bunecit**, **Kakomesë**, and **Krorëzit**, whose collective length runs about three km and each with beautiful, crystal-clear water. The city of Saranda is the most populous city on the Albanian Riviera and is a big tourist destination, especially preferred by newly married couples on their honeymoon. The city and surrounding areas offer a range of hotels catering to five-star travelers as well the more budget-conscious, while home rentals also remain an option. The city is positioned well upon the coast in that it only 9 km away from the island of Corfu. Ferries offer daily connections between Saranda and Corfu, which makes Saranda a good base for European tourists. In the city of Saranda are the small beaches **Centralit**, **Pllakave**, and **Liman**. Usually, tourists prefer to visit one of the most frequented places, **Ksamil**, which is located between the peninsula of Ksamil and Lagoon of Butrinti and hosts a number of hotels and restaurants. In front of it expands Corfu and near the beach of Ksamil are 4 small islands covered by Mediterranean vegetation and with a surface of 8.9 ha.





Butrinti Lagoon

The **Lagoon of Butrinti**. On account of its natural beauty and important archeological value, Butrinti, located 18 km south of Saranda, has been made a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This tectonic lagoon is an important natural ecosystem with great tourist value. The surface is 16 km², the depth is 20 m, and the lagoon is connected to the sea by the 3.6 km canal of Vivar. As a result of favorable wind directions, this is an ideal place for sailing sports. Regarding animal life, this area is great for bird watching and in the forest of the archeological area near the lake, at least 90 species of birds can be seen, including drakes, black neck ducks, eagles, and falcons. Various types of reptiles and amphibians can be found her as well, including the Epirote frog, which exists nowhere else in Albania. Until the Cape of Stillos, the remaining southern Albanian coastline consists of beaches and untouched marshes.





Sport Destinations



Albania is located east of Italy across the Adriatic Sea and thus enjoys a gentle and temperate Mediterranean climate with mild winters and warm, dry summers. The varied regions, from the towering mountains in the north to the coastal areas in the west, make Albania a beautiful and intriguing destination. Diverse plant and animal life cover this expanse and provide the perfect backdrop to a variety of activities. The clean, blue waters of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas beckon the traveler with both their scenic vistas and the culinary delights they contain. Rivers crisscross this land and offer both the beauty of the canyons they have carved and the opportunity to traverse them via raft, kayak, or canoe. Here you will find a rich cultural history woven into the very fabric of everyday life – from cuisine to music. Situated at the crossroads of east and west, Albania is also a convenient and nearby destination for many places throughout Europe and Asia.

The topographical surface of Albania is mostly mountainous. The highest peak is Mount Korabi (Dibra district), which towers 2,751 m above sea level. Mountains offer travelers a variety of opportunities, from spelunking to skiing. Some of the areas where activities can be found are: Dajti, Llogara, Dardha, Bozdoveci, Voskopoja, Valbona, and Thethi. The remainder of the landscape transitions to lowland plains along the coast and then continues to the southeast. Large rivers flow throughout the country: the Vjosa, Erzen, and Drini are some of the longest. These rivers supply irrigation efforts for the vast agricultural industry that flourishes here.



Mountain Climbing, Hiking, Walking & Trekking



Alpinism is a common sport here. A combination of mountaineering and hiking, this activity can range from a simple day trip to a multi-day summiting expedition atop some of Albania's loftiest peaks. The Alpine Association has been in existence since 1958 and offers guided excursions into some of Albania's most beautiful and remote mountain locales. Some areas which offer a multitude of trip varieties are: Biza, Razma, Llogara, Qafe Shtama, Lura, and the Hotova Fir forests of Permeti.





Mountainous regions draw other outdoor adventurers, as well. In milder weather, camping and backpacking are popular and draw enthusiasts seeking cooler weather and a change of pace from bustling city life. In addition to the areas listed above, the Gemenj forests and the area surrounding Kurvelesh provide a scenic backdrop with myriad camping opportunities. Hikers will find ample trails and many places to explore in the aforementioned locations. One popular trip is the “Trekking of Cika,” which leads explorers through the Dukat Valley, up portions of the Cika Mountain Range, and finally terminates at the coast near Jon’s Seashore. Other hiking opportunities abound in the Alps region of the north and the regions surrounding Tomorri Mountain, the Drini Valley, and the fir of Sotira in south of the country, amongst other places.



A variety of nature trails bring the beauty of Albania’s countryside within reach for the less adventurous traveler. While less strenuous, these treks are no less beautiful and often offer unique views of rural villages and the areas surrounding them. A vast network of trails connects these villages with each other and with other vital resources, offering a dramatic change of pace from the hectic pace of Tirana and other large cities.

Skiing



Skiing is yet another activity that allows the intrepid explorer to experience the beauty of the mountains and surrounding areas. The deep powder and steep slopes of the Alps in the north offer spectacular skiing. The industry has enjoyed recent development around the area of Korça and several resorts can be found here. The most important is the platform of Bigëll near Boboshtica (Morava mountain), and the Voskopoja Range, 20 km west of Korça, where one can find the renowned “Skiing Tracks,” home of the National Skiing Championship. Towering 1,160 m above sea level, Voskopoja Village is known for its crisp air with flowing waters with purported curative powers. The village of Razma, located 41 km north of Shkodra, is also an ideal location to ski. Many of the previously mentioned hiking and trekking areas are suitable for cross-country skiing. Additionally, the Terbun mountain, the platform near the town of Puka, Shishtavec (Kukës district), Grabova (Gramsh district), e Korab, and Lura Mountain Ranges offer potential skiing venues.





Mountain Biking & Spelunking

Mountain biking is gaining popularity in Albania and the varied terrain and numerous trails offer many venues to explore. Some organized tours exist in the north around Thethi and Boga, but some of the best and most rewarding rides require only an adventurous spirit and the willingness to look around. Only a short drive from Tirana, many opportunities await both skilled and novice mountain bikers.





The countryside of Albania is also dotted with a variety of caves. They offer a unique exploring opportunity and are, in many cases, very accessible from all areas. In the areas around Shkodra alone there are more than thirty large caves. Many tourists have enjoyed exploring one of Albania's largest caves, Pëllumbasit, or the Black Cave. Located southeast of Tirana, it ranges from ten to thirty-five meters wide, fifteen to forty meters high, and is approximately three hundred meters long. In Tirana district there are other caves such as Vali (Biza) and Shpella e Mirë (Good Cave) in Mount Brari. Another attractive option for cave explorers is Albania's largest cave, Pirrogoshi, located near the village of Radesh in the north. Other intriguing spelunking opportunities exist in the following places: Juban, Zhylës, Murriqan and Pusi in the Shkodra region, the cave of Lekë Petës in Kurvelesh, and the cave of Neziri (Mati district).



Fishing & Horseback Riding

Fishing is a popular activity throughout Albania. Salt and fresh waters are rich with fish and a variety of aquatic species. Fishing provides the primary source of income for many of the residents of coastal areas and has played a role in Albania's history since antiquity. As in many areas of the world, Albania's stocks are at risk from over fishing, and a campaign has recently begun to

disseminate information and protect this valuable natural resource. Mountainous areas offer many creeks and cool, running water and excellent fishing opportunities. The Valbona River and Thethi Creek are also popular, and provide areas to catch Marble Trout. Lastly, the mouth of the Vjosa River provides an unforgettable setting for the angler.





Horseback riding is intertwined with Albania's history and has no doubt been practiced since antiquity. From the use of horses by members of the military, competitions arose which sought to determine which horse and rider were the fastest and most agile. Horse farms are common in Shkodra, Durrësi, Elbasani, Korça, and Berati. Trail rides and other opportunities can be arranged at a variety of riding centers in these areas. Peza, in particular, offers some resources and lessons and is favored for its close proximity to Tirana.



Paddling Sports

With so many bodies of water, from small reflective ponds to the class III rapids of the Osumi River, there are many venues in which to try kayaking or rafting throughout Albania. Osumi is a particularly popular location for rafting in late spring and early summer, when waters are highest. The inner walls of the canyon are beautiful here, and represent millennia of erosion by this impressive river. Other areas of interest include Lengarica Canyon, near Vjosa, and the Shala and Valbona Valleys in the north.







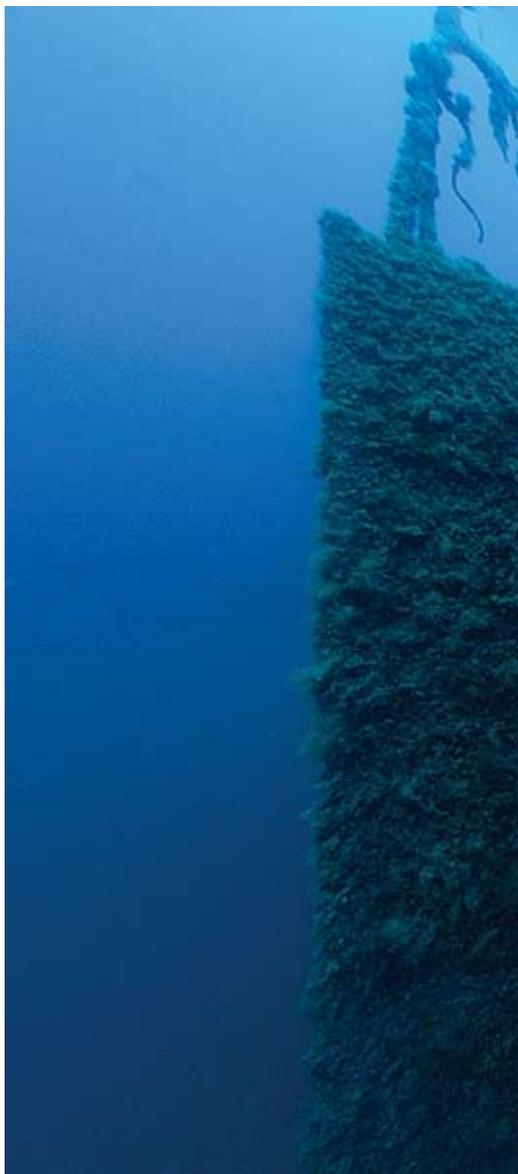


Aerial sports such as parachuting and paragliding began to gain popularity in Albania in the early 1990s. A core group of enthusiasts had a vision for developing the sport and increasing interest among people. What has resulted from these initial efforts is a network of professional pilots and instructors that can guide both the novice and the advanced skydiver through a variety of parachuting excursions. Additionally, Albania has a beautiful and varied terrain that is conducive to this sport, and offers tremendous vistas while the participant glides back to Earth. One of the most spectacular places to try paragliding is Llogara's Neck. Towering 1,052 m above sea level, the site offers favorable winds and sweeping vistas of the surrounding terrain. Divers glide down to Palasa Beach, and can enjoy the natural beauty there following the descent. Since 2000, this place has hosted the International Albanian Open, which draws participants from throughout the Balkans and beyond. Although this is thought by many to be the best place to paraglide, other destinations include Sheshica (novice), and Morava, Dajti, and Taraboshi (for those more advanced).



Diving

Professional diving opportunities have only been developed over the last decade. The rich underwater finds in Albania's seas offer a unique setting for divers to encounter sea life and shipwrecks. Diving locations are limited north of Vlorë (the Adriatic coast) as the water has significant suspended solids and thus, reduced visibility. From Vlorë to Saranda in the south, however, there are myriad locations and opportunities to engage in this increasingly popular sport. The best spots are the furthest reaches of the Karaburun Peninsula and Sazan Island, where several recreational sites can be found. There are several historical shipwrecks within Vlorë Bay. The most popular and accessible is the Italian hospital ship PO, which was sunk in March 1941 by a torpedo from a British Swordfish. It lies in 33 m of water and measures an impressive 150 m long. Weather conditions may affect visibility during this dive, as winds can stir sediment, but the location is protected from the high seas and thereby suitable much of the time. Several companies offer guided dives of the wreck. Ionian Sea abounds flora and fauna. Fish, crustaceans and countless shellfish inhabit reefs and underwater caves and caverns. For amateur of free diving and underwater photography we offer professional courses and care during the dives. Dives sites and fishing places surroundings provide incredible experiences and abundant fishing. "The Dive Club" is equipped with complete training equipment for SCUBA, free diving, photo and videos as well.









Sazan Island offers more in the way of sea life, with several vertical underwater cliffs that serve as habitat to a wide variety of fish and plant life. The west side of the island is the preferred area for diving and offers the most interesting scenery. The somewhat remote location of the island has helped to preserve its beauty and protect its treasures from encroaching development.

Karaburuni Peninsula is a large, pristine area, perfect for diving and underwater exploring. A southern current keeps the waters clear and the visibility excellent. This area is completely unspoiled and development as a diving destination is ongoing, but its beauty is impressive and its potential is great. Other areas that offer some promising dives are: Dhermi Beach, Jali, Porto Palermo, Lukova, and the Cape of Lagji. The development of resorts and cities has impacted these areas, though, and they tend to be over fished and somewhat less pristine.





USAID | **ALBANIA**
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
MINISTRY OF TOURISM, CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORTS
NATIONAL TOURISM AGENCY

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

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

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