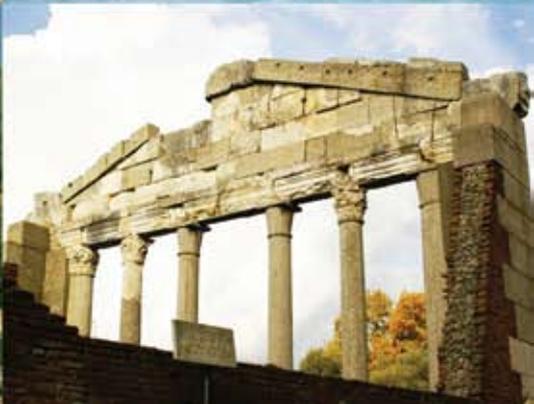


Albania

beautiful
small
different



Welcome to

Albania



Albanian Alps - Thethi



Albania is a land to be loved. In this small Mediterranean country, virgin nature and cultural mysteries come together to create a unique sense of place. From the pure, white snow of the mountains to the red fields of spring poppies, Albania's landscape is ever changing with the seasons, offering visitors a warm summer beach holiday or a challenging mountain trek during the fall. In Albania, visitors are welcomed as guests as part of the country's rich cultural traditions and heritage. The warm hospitality of Albanians will make everyone feel at home in this small, wonderful land.

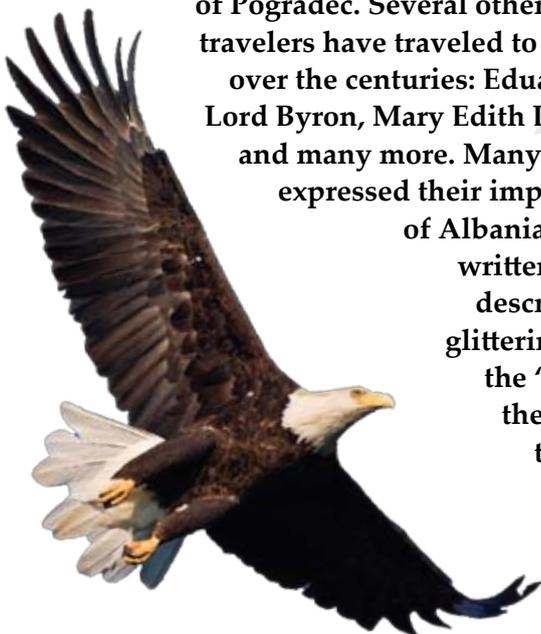
Come to Albania!
We welcome you as our guest!

Albanian

Hospitality

Known as the “Land of the Eagles” (“Shqipëria” in Albanian), the country of Albania has a long history of tourism, dating back to the time of Emperor Justinian. In the fifth century, the Emperor’s family was known to vacation at Lin, a village on the shores of Lake Ohrid, just north of Pogradec. Several other famous travelers have traveled to Albania over the centuries: Eduard Lear, Lord Byron, Mary Edith Durham, and many more. Many of them expressed their impressions of Albania in their written works, describing in glittering terms the “Land of the Eagles” that they came to know.

The first tourist association in Albania was established in 1928 as the “Royal Tourist Automotive Club,” and the first National Tourist Organization was established in 1933. In 1955, the ALBTURIST enterprise was established as a state controlled company and in April 1992, Albania created its first Ministry of Tourism, which has had various names over the years. Today, the Ministry has expanded to encompass the sectors of culture, youth and sports. The Albanian National Tourism Agency (NTA) was established in September 2007 by a special decision given by the Council of Ministers and is now included in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports. Hospitality is just one of the reasons that tourists come to visit this small country. Within a small territory, Albania offers an amazing range of natural environments, including twelve national parks, all of which have something unique to offer. The Albanian coast offers visitors an escape to calm, quiet waters as almost the entire coast is sheltered from winds, making it a paradise for swimmers.



Explore Albania with us!



Albania is located in the heart of the Mediterranean region and stretches along the seashores of the Adriatic and Ionian seas.

It is an important gateway to the Balkan Peninsula, a junction of roads from north to south and from west to east, with the proximity to reach major European capitals within 2 or 3 hours by air. Upon initial contact, tourists will discover an epic country with a rich, historical culture, where the people speak one of the oldest languages in Europe.

As a result of its geographical positioning, Albania displays traces of different civilizations and cultures including Illyrian, Hellenic, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, etc.

This compact country shares borders with a number of countries, including Kosova, Macedonia, Greece, Montenegro and Italy (across the Adriatic Sea).

Although small, Albania offers a diverse range of nature to explore. There are many wonderful beaches, spectacular mountains, river valleys, large canyons, forests rich with flora and fauna, large and small lakes (some of which are unique in the Balkans), and many other surprises for visitors. The culture and history are also impressive and have much to offer tourists. Butrint, located in the south of Albania, is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Program and is appraised as one of the most wondrous places on earth, full of mythology and mystic atmosphere. The site lies in the center of a Mediterranean jungle and was built by in an ancient Trojan style. Two other Albanian cities are on the UNESCO World Heritage List, prominent for their specific architectural style: Berat and Gjirokastra. Albania is proud to host a wide range of archaeological sites, Illyrian castles, medieval fortifications, Byzantine churches and monasteries of the post-Byzantine period.

Who are these

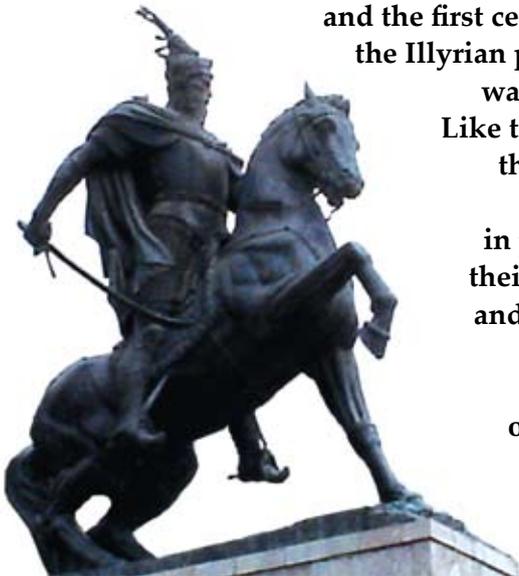
Albanians?



Albania territories have been populated since 100,000 years ago. At the beginning of the third millennium B.C., an Indo-European population was established in the area and as a result of the merge, a population was conceived that retained specific cultural and language characteristics in the Balkan Peninsula (pelazgians tribe).

Between the second millennium and the first century B.C., the Illyrian population was founded.

Like the Greeks, the Illyrians succeeded in preserving their language and traditions in spite of Roman occupation.



The Greeks arrived in Epidamnos (today Durrës), Apollonia and Butrint in the seventh century B.C., and settled self-governing colonies. With the expansion of the Ardiannai Kingdom in the north, based in Shkodra, a new conflict with Rome started, culminating with Rome sending a fleet of 200 ships against Queen Teuta in the year 229 B.C.

In 167 B.C., this war ended with the expansion of the Roman Empire's control over all of the Balkans. The most important trade route between Rome and Constantinople was Egnatia Road, which passed through the port of Durrës. With the division of the Roman Empire (395 A.D.), Illyria fell into the occupation of the eastern empire, later known as the Byzantine Empire. Three of the first Byzantine emperors (Anastasius I, Justin and Justin I) were of Illyrian origin. From 1443 until 1468, the Albanian resistance under the command of Skanderbeg (Gjergj Kastrioti) won 25 battles against the Turks led by Sultan Fatih Mehmet, the conqueror of Constantinople, who failed to invade the city of Kruja.

After the death of Skanderbeg, it was only a matter of time before the Ottomans defeated the Albanian resistance, taking control of the country in 1479; 26 years later, Constantinople was occupied. Albania continued to exist under the Ottoman regime for more than 400 years afterwards. Muslim citizens were favored by the system and were excluded them from the Janissari, a tax that required every Christian family to provide one of their sons to be converted to Islam and serve in the Ottoman army. As a result, many Albanians converted to Islam while maintaining a sense of harmony and religious tolerance.

Numerous efforts and rebellions eventually led to Albania's declaration of independence in November 1912. From that time until the end of the First World War, the country became prey to the attacks of neighboring states. Mussolini's Italy occupied the country in 1939, ending the 11-year monarchy of Ahmet Zogu, and in 1943, Hitler's Germany occupied the country. The resistance to these foreign attacks is known as the Anti Fascist National Liberation Front. When the German troops of the Third Reich left the country in November 1944, the Communist Party came to power. Shortly after, a totalitarian regime was established under the leadership of the communist leader Enver Hoxha.



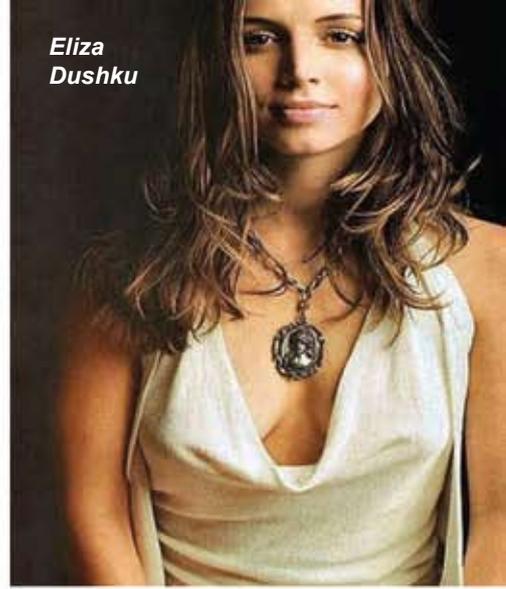
A policy of isolationism was applied during the approximately 50 years of his rule. The self-support system used by the communist regime banned Albania from all foreign investments, leaving the people in great economic poverty until 1991, when Albania eventually emerged from isolation as a budding democracy. The Democratic Party governed the country from 1991 until 1997 but lost governing power to the Socialist Party as a consequence of the failure of pyramid schemes. The coalition of the Socialist Party held power until the last elections when, on 3 July 2005, the coalition of the Democratic Party took power again. Albania is a member of the NATO alliance and is presently involved in a series of processes and reforms aimed at economic growth and the country's admission into the European Union.



Mother Teresa



Eliza Dushku



Stan Dragoti



Ismail Kadare



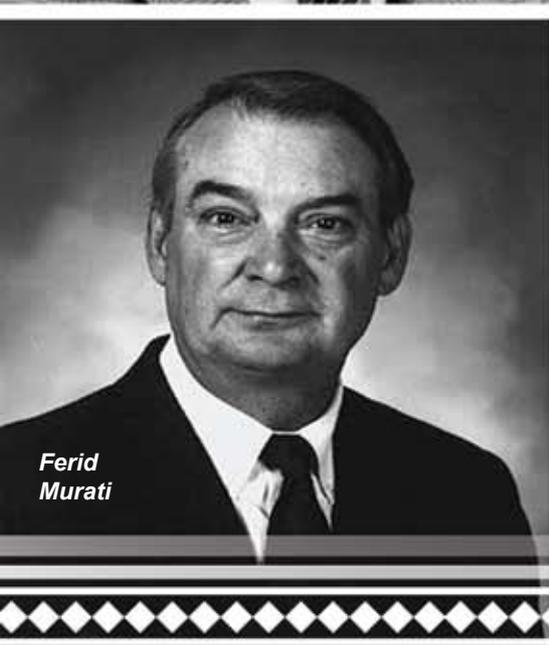
Inva Mula



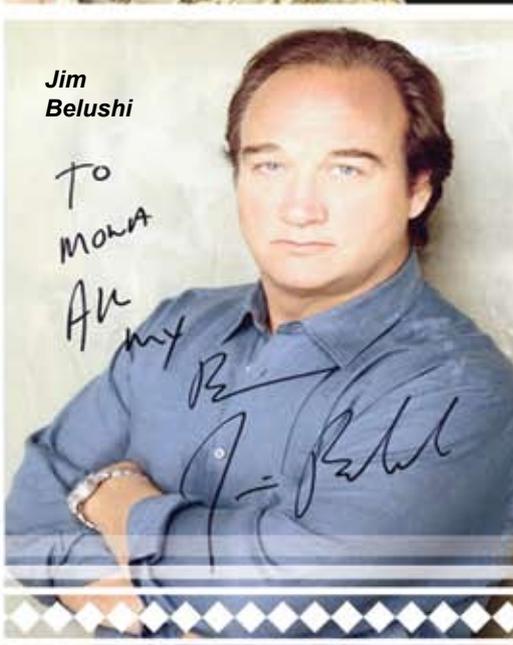
Ibrahim Kodra



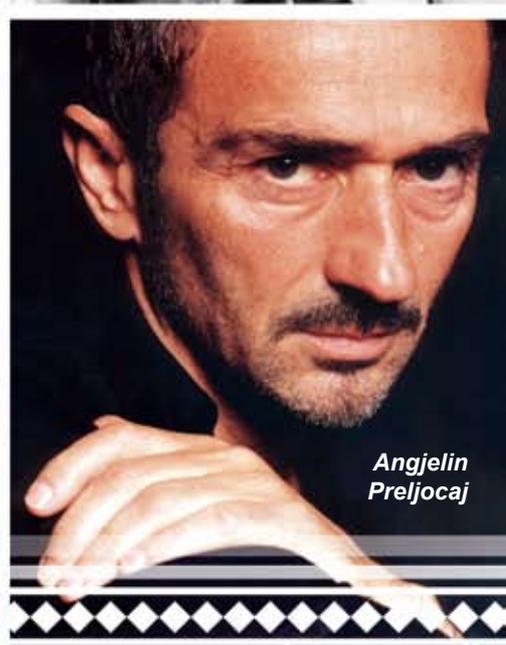
Ferid Murati



Jim Belushi



Angjelin Preljocaj



Albanians: the Great and the Good

These are some of the most prominent Albanians in the international arena, but there are many others with conspicuous success in present times. Most importantly, these sons and daughters of a small country like Albania confirm the vitality and the verve these people hold, by listing us proudly in the big human terrestrial family.

The famous Albanians

The humanity, the geniality, the verve and the vitality of this small nation is revealed and signified in many outstanding figures, each of whom has proudly brought their extraordinary work to the international arena in helping the development of global prosperity, peace, art and culture, science and medicine worldwide. The country is home to the great figure of humanity, **Mother Teresa** of Calcutta, whose maiden name is Gonxhe Bojaxhi and whose parents were both Albanians. Her activities in humanitarian assistance to people in need, poor and victimized by wars, are unprecedented, transforming her in the image of a saint for the entire world.

Ismail Kadare is published in almost every country in the world and has won many prestigious international awards for literature, including the inaugural "Man Booker International Prize." He has also been nominated several times for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The opera singer **Inva Mula** ranks among the ten best sopranos of the world, with a collection of extraordinary arias from nearly all the best opera composers of all time. The soprano appears in the most prestigious opera scenes of the world and is particularly appreciated at La Scala in Milan and at the Metropolitan in New York.



The violinist **Tedi Papavrami** has been described in the media as the "little Albanian virtuoso" because of his skillful violin playing upon the international stages as a child.

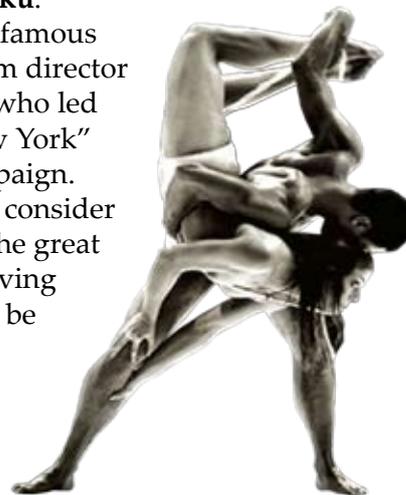
Another major talent, named in the French media as a genius of contemporary choreography, is the Paris Opera House ballet maestro, **Angjelin Prelocaj**, whose works stand alongside the works of the great Nurejev. Born in 1957 to Albanian parents who had immigrated to Paris, he began his career by studying classical dance before turning to contemporary dance. He has received many prestigious prizes, among them the "Chevalier de L'Ordre National des Arts et des Lettres."



To achieve a position in the history of contemporary visual arts is an indisputable merit and such was given to **Ibrahim Kodra**, born in the town of Durrës and formed and shaped as an artist in Italy. His masterpieces stand alongside other famous painters such as Modigliani and exposed in the most well known galleries around the world.

On the other side of the Atlantic, many other famous Albanians are contributing in their respective areas. **Ferid Murad** is the Nobel Prize winning inventor of the Viagra pill. Famous Hollywood actors of Albanian origin include **Jim Belushi**, his brother **John Belushi**, and **Eliza Dushku**.

Stan Dragoti is famous not only as a film director but as the man who led the "I Love New York" promotion campaign. Many art critics consider **Fadil Berisha**, the great photographer living in New York, to be a genius in his field.



Ancient echoes

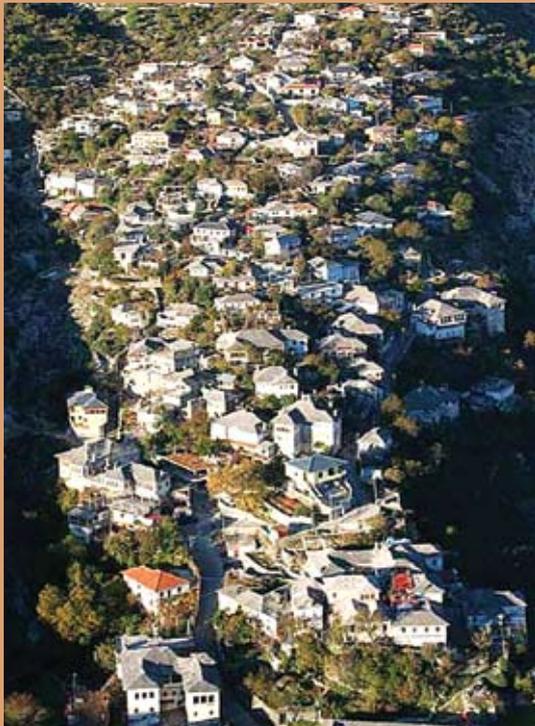
“Masterpiece
of the oral
and
intangible
heritage of
humanity”



Iso-polyphony is an epic form of the oral art of singing in Albania, which has its origin in ancient times. It is now present in southern Albania, especially in the provinces of Gjirokastra, Tepelena, Vlora, and ending in Himara and the surrounding villages along the Ionian coast. One of the masterpieces of iso-polyphony, about immigration and sung in the Himara region, is the song, “The girl of the waves,” written by the poet Neço Muko. On November 25th, 2005, Albanian iso-polyphonic folk music joined the list of “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” protected by UNESCO.



Gjirokastra, the city of stone.



The Albanian UNESCO sites

Albania is as one of many countries with sites included on UNESCO's World Heritage List. The first Albanian site to be included on the list was Butrint, in the south of the country, in 1992. The next two cities to join the list were Berat (the country's major archeological site) and Gjirokastra, both in 2005. Butrint has been inhabited since prehistoric times and was a part of the Greek and Roman colonies. Later, it experienced a period of prosperity under Byzantine administration, which was followed by a short period of Venetian rule and the eventual abandonment of the city in late medieval times. The present state of the archaeological site shows traces of all the time periods the city has gone through.



The culture of Albania has evolved over hundreds of years

The most ancient objects found at the archeological site in Butrint are a stone hammer and a shaft belonging to the second half of the second millennium B.C. Hekateus made first mention of the city at the end of the sixth century B.C., affirming that the city was built according to Troy and that the origin of the name refers to the sacrifice of a bull named "Buthrotos," provided by the Trojan prince Aeneas on his way to Dodona. During its early period, Butrint was the center of the Kaonic tribes, later to become part of the kingdom of Epir. In the years 1926-1936 the Italian archeologist Luigi Ugolini led excavations in southern Albania, focusing his work in Butrint and Finiq, where he discovered the baptistery, the theater, the basilica, the public baths, many houses, and a great number of objects and sand statues of inestimable value. The most extraordinary objects discovered in the theatre of Butrint are the statue of Apollo, the goddess of Butrint, the marble heads of Zeus, the portrait of Agrippina, and many Latin and Greek epigraphs. Parts of the city were rebuilt during the fifth century B.C.

From the fourth to the thirteenth century, the city was mentioned as an Episcopal center. In the years 1080-1085, the city was in the hands of the Normans and then ruled by the Venetian, who in the thirteenth century built up fortifications that secured the city for four long centuries. In future years, the French would invade but in 1798, Ali Pashë Tepelena annexed Butrint and constructed two forts to protect the strategic point from the French attacks coming from Corfu. The ancient city of Butrint passed through the hands of the Ottoman invaders until Albania declared independence. Today, Butrint is one of Albania's hottest tourist spots and is an object of pride in our country's past history.



Tirana:

a dynamic capital city

Tirana is the capital of Albania and also the main economic and cultural center of the country. Tirana is relatively new; Sulejman Pashë Bargjini founded it in 1614. In the place where today is the monument of "The Unknown Soldier," he built a mosque, a hamam, and a stove, which at the time were the main institutions of a newborn city. In 1816, the Toptani family came to rule the city. The most important date in Tirana's history is February 11th, 1920, when the Lushnja Congress declared Tirana the provisional capital of Albania; definitive status would be given in 1925.



Following this act, the city has experienced constant growth, which continues today and has gained particular momentum since 1990.

Famous Italian architects made the center of Tirana their project during the early parts of the 20th century. The main boulevard in Tirana, Bulevardi Dëshmorët e Kombit, was built in 1930, while the central square, Skanderbeg Square, was built between 1928 and 1929. In 1968, on the 500th anniversary of his death, national hero Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg had a monument inaugurated in Skanderbeg Square. Twenty years afterward, in the square was added the monument of the dictator Enver Hoxha. Shortly after on the 20 February 1991 the students and the people oust it from the square.

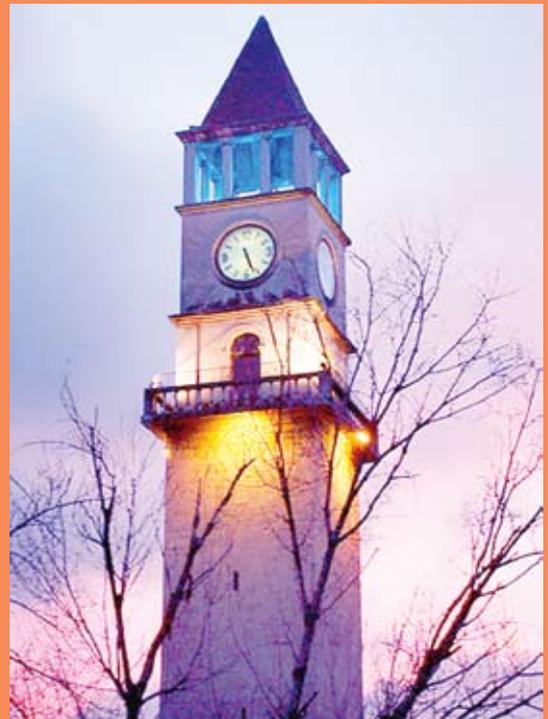
In Tirana, you can visit a network of museums and galleries such as the National History Museum, the Archeology Museum, the National Art Gallery, and many more, including numerous private galleries. Some of the most important monuments and sites in Tirana are the Mosaic of Saint George, the walls of Tirana's Castle, the tomb of Kaplan Pasha (one of the medieval rulers of the city), the Tabak Bridge, the Mosque of Ethem Beut, just to name a few.



Tirana is simultaneously the center of many important institutions such as the Palace of Congresses, the International Cultural Center, the Palace of Culture with the Opera House and the Ballet Theater, and the Sky-Tower complex, as well as the governmental buildings of the Council of Ministers, the Presidency and the Parliament.

In the southeast of the city lies the park with an area of 250 ha, which includes the 55 ha artificial lake, the memorial to the British and German soldiers that died in Albania during World War II, the Botanical park and a swimming pool complex, which helps make the park an ideal place for leisure activities.

The Clock Tower.



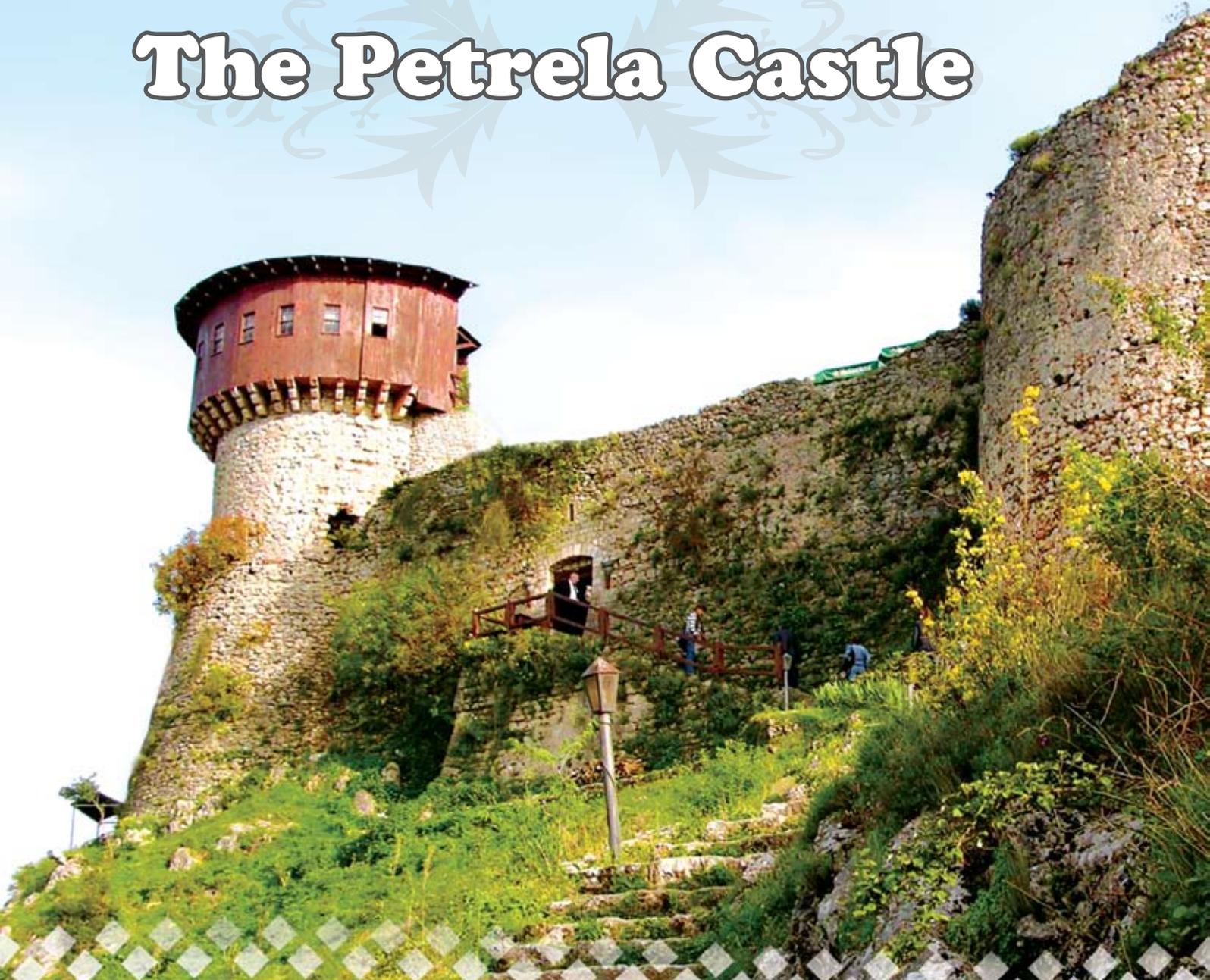


Nightlife in Tirana

Tirana is unquestionably the dynamic center of Albania thanks in part to its lively nightlife, comprised of theaters, restaurants and clubs. There are a variety of places to entertain you and most of them stay open all night. Bars and clubs can be found throughout town, particularly in the "Blok" area, playing all kind of live music, including jazz, house, funk, Latin, etc. You can choose to go to the "Murphy's" Irish pub or to "Hard Rock Cafe" an American-style saloon playing hard rock music. Tirana is home to the Opera House, the National Theater and many other galleries and museums, which in recent years have hosted many artists and world-famous performers. Tirana also offers a wide range of cocktail bars, where you can enjoy some of the best cocktails while listening to music from the best DJs. Downtown, the Regency Casino invites all the warm-blooded people out to test their gambling luck.



The Petrela Castle



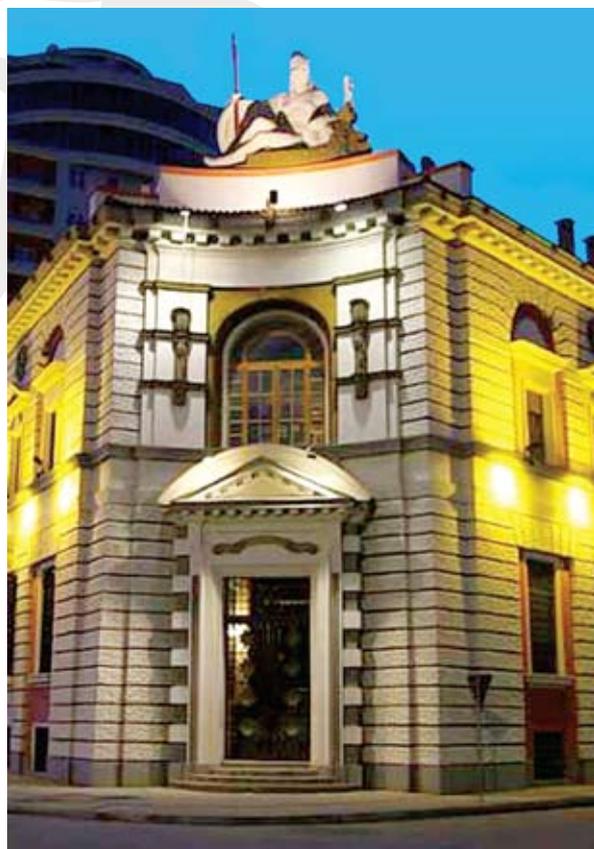
Petrela Castle is located 18 km away from Tirana, alongside the Tirana-Elbasan national road and it is one of the main tourist attractions near Tirana. The castle, which has a triangular shape with two spotting towers, was constructed on top of a high rocky hill. Both the southern and the southeastern side are extremely craggy, which made the fortress protected and unreachable. Below the hill that the castle sits upon is the town of Petrela, from which the castle received the name.

Discoveries show that Petrela Castle is a medieval fortress built at the time of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I, in the sixth century A.D., built at the time that Vila Castle (an ancient stronghold lying in front of Petrela Castle) lost its importance. The fortress was built for military purposes, guarding the branch of the Egnatia Road between Tirana, Durrës, and Elbasan, which at the time had a particular significance. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, the stronghold was part of the Topiaj dominion, the rulers of a region flanked between Mat and Shkumbin. In the walls of the castle can be found the first insignia of Topiaj family.



Part of the UNESCO World Heritage List, **Berat**, a “2400 year old museum,” is located 120 km away from Tirana. Built alongside the Osumi River, the city lies by the foot of the Tomorri Mountain, considered in antiquity as a sacred place. Named, “one on top of the other windows” city, Berat has three characteristic quarters, Mangalem, Kala (the castle) and Gorica, and is described as a rare example of a well-preserved Ottoman city located in central Albania. Part of the city is the castle, which was built in the thirteenth century, but the origins of the site date back to the fourth century B.C. The center of the castle quarter is rich with many Byzantine churches; most of them unique for the wall paintings, icons and the values they hold. The cathedral of St. Mary houses the Onufri National Iconographic Museum. Berat is also home to a considerable number of mosques that were built in the Ottoman period. The King’s Mosque (Xhamia e Mbretit) is the oldest one, built in the fifteenth century at the time of Bayazid II, notable for its fine ceiling.

Mentioned by the Roman poet Katulus as “The Adriatic tavern”, **Durrës** is one of the oldest cities of Albania with 3000 years of history. Founded in the year 627 B.C. by colons from Korinth and Korkyra, its ancient name was “Epidamnos” and later “Duyrrachium”. Currently, Durrës is the country’s principal port and is daily connected by ferry lines to the Italian ports of Bari, Trieste and Ancona. More relaxingly, Durrës is known for its nearby sea resort, which is the largest and most popular in Albania. During the summer season, it becomes home to thousands of tourists from Kosova, Macedonia, and also plays host to many day visitors. In the southern part of the Durrës beach is the “Kavaja rock,” known in Roman times as Petra. It was here that the battle between Julius Caesar and Pompey took place. The most important monument to be visited in Durrës is the Roman amphitheatre, built in the first century A.D. It is the second largest monument of this type in the Balkans. Other things of interest include the archeological museum, the rotunda (the Byzantine forum), the Roman baths, the castle walls, the small Venetian fortress, and much more.





The city of **Korça** is one of the largest and most important cultural and economical centers of Albania, located in the southeastern part of the country. The city is known for its typical quarters, composed of low houses and villas, which are paved with cobblestone. The city of Korça has a range of museums such as "The Education Museum" (located in the building where the first Albanian school opened in 1887), "The National Museum of Medieval Art", "The Prehistoric Museum", the house-museum of the famous landscape painter, Vangjush Mio, the museum of the Oriental Art "Bratko", etc. In the vicinity of the city is the cemetery of French soldiers killed during the First World War. Beyond the museums and monuments, Korça is the city where the largest carnival in Albania is organized, taking place before Orthodox Easter. Musically, the city is known for the local songs, called "serenata". In the city you will find many taverns with tasteful traditional cooking such as various types of pie which perfectly combines with the good music and the traditional drink, raki. Korça is a very good base for exploring many tourist points located in the nearby mountains such as Voskopoja, Dardha, Vithkuqi and Boboshtica. These villages are well known for offering the possibility to practice many outdoor sports and activities. The area is also famous for the Byzantine churches of Vithkuqi and Voskopoja, whose walls were painted by famous medieval Albanian painters. Close to Korça you can visit Prespa Lake (which is the country's largest National Park), Drenova National Park, the Neolithic tombs of Kamenica, etc.

The city of **Pogradec** was built on the southwestern shores of Lake Ohrid and is one of the most notable cities of Albania for its tradition in hosting "family tourism" and for the pleasant, fresh climate during the summer season. The tectonic lake is four million years old and is the deepest of its kind in the Balkan Peninsula reaching a maximum depth of approximately 300 meters. The lake environment is a natural habitat for a variety of old flora and fauna. It houses the rare fish "Koran," a kind of trout, impossible to find in almost any other lake in the world. Lake Ohrid is part of the Natural and Cultural Heritage List of UNESCO. The most visited tourist spots around the lake are Lin, Pojskë, Hudenisht and Tushemisht. Worth visiting are the Driloni water sources, located 5 km from Pogradec. Don't forget about the wonderful restaurants in the area, constructed from wood and offering some of the most delicious dishes of the region; don't miss the Koran's dish (Tavë Korani). Besides nature, Pogradec and its surroundings provide a big number of historical sites such as the Basilica of Lin, with the multicolored mosaic, and the Royal Tombs of the Lower Selca.



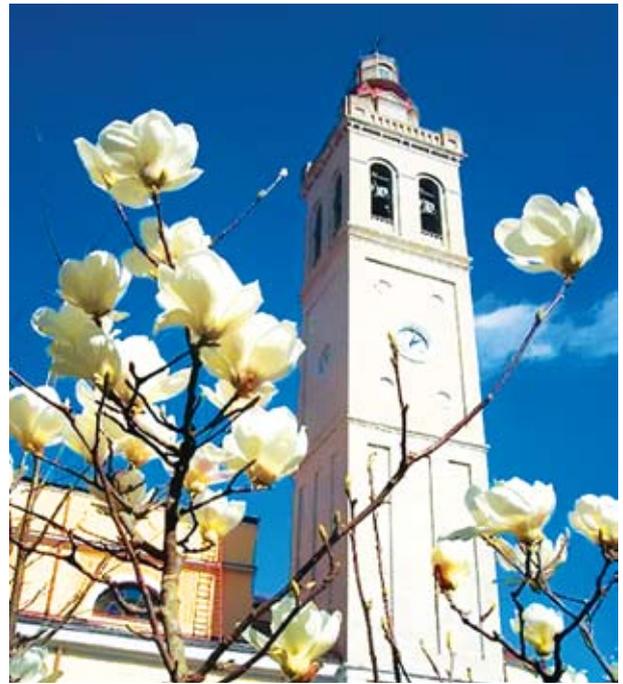


Vlora is an old city founded in the sixth century B.C., originally known by the name Aulona. Vlora is situated in a beautiful location, in the front of the Karaburun peninsula and Sazan Island and surrounded by beaches and rocky sand. The city carries historical importance to Albania as it hosted the First National Assembly, which declared the country's independence from Ottoman rule on November 28th, 1912. The Museum of Independence is dedicated to this historic event. Other museums include the ethnographic and historic ones. Highly recommended is the Muradije Mosque, the only work remaining in Albania from the famous architect Sinan the Great, built in 1542. On the top of the hill overlooking the city is the religious point of Kuzum Baba. Vlora is the starting point of the Albanian Riviera and is one of the most frequented areas of Albanian "Sun and Sea" tourism. Located in this region are the Orikum and Amantia archeological parks, and the Llogara national park.



The city of **Saranda** is located along the Ionian coast, near the Greek island of Corfu. These two locations are connected via ferries, making it possible for tourists to visit all the marvelous sites of the city of Saranda. The city was mentioned in the first century B.C. with the name Onhezmus. This ancient city was unfortunately destroyed by the barbarian invasions, but some ruins remained and today it is possible to visit the old settlement as well as the old synagogue. Saranda is well known for its sunny weather and has traditionally been the ideal destination for honeymooners and young people. In the city and surrounding areas, there are some small and very clean beaches like Ksamil, Krorëz, Kakome, etc., which offer great opportunities for different water activities. The area around Saranda is also blessed with a number of archaeological sites. The most important of these is most certainly Butrint. Part of the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1992, Butrint is only 18 km away Saranda and includes such sights as the Askelapius temple, the theater, the stoa, the portals, the baptistery, the Venetian fortress, and more. The ecosystem surrounding the area is a national park, offering you the opportunity to walk in a real Mediterranean "jungle". Other important sites around Saranda are the ruins of the 40 Saints Monastery, (which denominates the modern city of Saranda), the Mesopotam Church and the small castle near the mouth of the Vivari channel. Only 2 km south of Saranda, on top of a high hill, is the Lëkursi castle, which is a wonderful place to enjoy a meal while enjoying the extraordinary Ionian landscape. Other places of interest are the "Blue Eye" water source, the ruins of the ancient city of Phoinice (Finiq), a former settlement of the Chaonians tribe, etc.

The traditional city of **Gjirokastra** is part of the UNESCO World Heritage List and is one of the most attractive tourist sites of the country. Perched on the eastern side of the Wide Mountain (Mali i Gjërë), the city began as a fourth century castle, which is today the greatest castle in the whole country. Inside the fortress is the Museum of Weapons, where weapons of different periods up until the Second World War are displayed. Gjirokastra is known as “The City of Stone,” and some of the main tourist attractions are old houses, built by stone to resemble small castles, and streets paved with cobblestone. While visiting, you can visit the Ethnographic Museum, located in the house where the former communist dictator Enver Hoxha was born. The city is a very good starting point for reaching the archaeological park of Antigonea, the Tekke of Melan, near the village of Nepravishta, and the untouched natural areas of the Fir of Sotira in Dropull and the water sources of Viroi.



Shkodra is located in northwest Albania, near the lake with the same name, which is the largest lake in the Balkan Peninsula. Shkodra is an ancient city founded in the fourth century B.C. as the main center of the Illyrian Labeat tribe and was originally named “Scodra”. Shkodra is one of the main centers of Albanian culture and history. The main attraction visited by tourists is the Rozafa Castle, which dates back to the Illyrian period. The castle was built on a rocky hill located in the west side of the city, surrounded by three rivers: the Drini, Buna, and Kir. Other interesting and historical places to visit inside the city are the Historical Museum, the Marubi atelier of photography, the Lead Mosque, built by Bushatlliu in 1774, the Englishman’s Clock (Sahati i Inglizit), the Great Coffee (Kafja e Madhe), designed and built in 1900 by the local architect Kolë Idromeno, the typical quarters of Gjuhadoli and Serreq, built with venetian architecture, the Cathedral Church, the Brotherhood Church (Kisha e Fretërve), and much more. There is a great number of natural and architectural places surrounding the city to be visited, such as Velipoja beach, Lake Shkodra, with the picturesque villages of Shiroka and Zogaj where you can enjoy the unique cooking of the carp dish Tava e Krapit, the bridge Ura e Mesit on the river Kir, and the ruins of the medieval city of Sarda in the Vau Dejës lake. Shkodra is also the gateway to the magnificent Albanian Alps.



Elbasani is the country's third largest city and was once a settlement and a station on the ancient Via Egnatia (Egnatia Road). The city was originally known as Skampa but was changed to Ilbasan ("to rule the country") during the rebuilding of the castle by Sultan Mehmed the II in 1466. The city's name would only later be transformed to what we know today: Elbasan. Some of the most interesting objects in the city are the walls of the old castle, which encircle residential quarters. Within the walls, one can visit the Church of St. Mary, complete with very beautiful iconostas, and the King Mosque (Xhamia Mbret). Other objects of interest are the Ethnographic Museum and the thermal waters in the vicinity of the city, which have been used since Roman times. Four km away from the city is the Monastery of St. John Vladimir, built by the Albanian Prince Carl Topia in 1382. In this monastery were found the buried remains of Montenegrin Prince Vladimir, which were respected by local



residents by performing sacred processions on his honor. Other sites near Elbasan are the churches of Shelcan and Valësh, which were painted by the famous Albanian iconographer, Onufri.

Kruja is just 32 km away from Tirana and very close to Tirana International Airport. This historic city is 608 m above sea level and offers an open vista to an amazing panoramic view. There, you can visit the Museum of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg and go shopping in the old traditional market. The name and the importance of the city are closely related to the 25 years of activity of our national hero, Skanderbeg, who in the fifteenth century made Kruja a bastion of uncompromising resistance against the Ottoman. The Gjergj Kastrioti Museum is situated inside the castle walls, which date back to the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. The museum itself was inaugurated in 1981. Within the walls of the castle are also the Ethnographic Museum and the Dollma Tekke. Near the castle's entrance is a traditional market, which dates back to the period of Skanderbeg. Here, tourists can find Albanian craft products such as embroidery, carpeting, silver objects, copper, alabaster, filigree, traditional clothing, antiques, etc.





**The house
is always
open for
guests**



The Hospitality, the Culture and the Art

Hospitality is an old Albanian tradition. In the Kanun of Lekë Dukagjini (Ancient North Albanian civil code) was written, "The house is always open for guests." In this tradition of hospitality, foreigners are always treated with special respect. Albanians are a friendly people who make visitors feel very welcome.

Beside the hospitality that was highly regarded by travelers for centuries, Albania is rich with traditions and folklore. During your visit through ethnographic museums as well as by following artistic folkloric activities, you will be able to enjoy this wealth inherited over the centuries that still continues to blossom nowadays.



Albanian art has left its traces in Europe via artists such as the musician Jan Kukuzeli of the eleventh century, who contributed to the field of Byzantine music by composing a system known as the Kukuzeli system. Onufri, the famous iconographer of the sixteenth century, is also well known for the unique artistic value of his icons.

Now, Albania is part of the contemporary world of arts and culture thanks to the range of artists in Albania that are working in different disciplines.

Your visit to Albania is a good opportunity to visit many art galleries, exhibitions, museums, and to experience the arts through a wide range of different activities.

Inva Mula singing in the Butrint Theatre. She is a regular performer at La Scala where she has sung in "La Bohème", "Manon", and "La Traviata" among others.



Curly Pelicans: on the most western nesting point in Europe



The Curly Pelican

One of the best-known species of wildlife in Albania is the Curly Pelican, also known as the Dalmatian Pelican. What makes the Curly Pelican special in Albania is that the nesting point chosen represents the most western point of this pelican's European habitat. That place is the Karavasta Lagoon on the Adriatic coast, which, with a surface of 4,330 ha, is the largest lagoon of the Albanian coast and one of the largest lagoons of the Adriatic. For this reason the Karavasta lagoon has been protected by the Ramsar Convention since 1994. Inside the lagoon is a small sandy island where flocks of pelicans typically come together. The Curly Pelican is considered an endangered species and the numbers of this bird continue to decrease worldwide. The Karavasta Lagoon presently contains about 5 percent of the entire worldwide population of the Curly Pelican.





Dajti National Park

Located just 26 km east of Tirana, Dajti National Park has an area of 3,300 ha. The park is often referred to as Tirana's "natural balcony" because of the beautiful view of the city it affords visitors. There are a number of 200-year old beech trees in the park that are beautiful and would make the trip worthwhile, even without the magnificent vistas of the country below. For those interested in staying overnight in the park, pleasant accommodations are available.

Thethi National Park

Located in the Albanian Alps, by the Cursed Mountains (Bjeshkët e Namuna), Thethi National Park has an area of 2,630 ha. It is only 70 km away from Shkodra and the Theth River runs through the park with a plentiful supply of mountain trout. The Grunas waterfall is particularly worth seeing, as are the many oak trees and the variety of animals in the park.

Lura National Park

Lura National Park, located to the east of Kunora e Lurës, has an area of 1,280 ha. The most picturesque features here are the 14 glacier lakes of Lura, which are frozen in the winter. To the south, you can visit the Field of Mares, which has a wide variety of colorful plants and coniferous trees. The park offers great possibilities for developing eco-tourism.

Divjaka Pines National Park

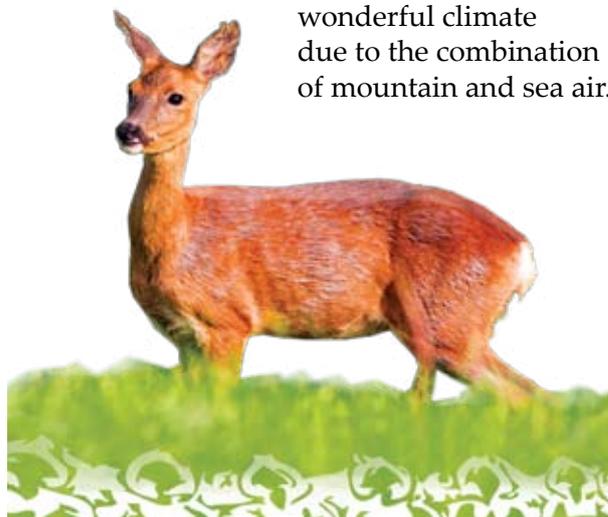
This park is 40 km from the town of Lushnja, 5 km from Divjaka. It has an area of 1,250 ha and is part of the Karavasta Lagoon, which has been under the protection of the Ramsar International Convention since 1994. It is a forest near the Karavasta lagoon, and it contains one of the most interesting faunas of the country. The park is a favorite amongst nature lovers as well as hunters. There is also a beach nearby that only recently has begun to attract tourists.

Shebenik – Jabllanicë National Park

This park is located in the northeastern part of the town of Librazhd (25 km far). The park has an area of 2,092 ha and is the newest one in Albania. Due to his climatic conditions, both types of mountain tourism (white and green) are possible to apply. A beech forest covers eighty per cent of the park area. Further, the park is home to a number of endemic and rare plants. Within the park region dwell a number of different species that are fast becoming rare in Albania, including the brown bear, gray wolf and the endangered Balkan Lynx.

Llogara National Park

About 40 km to the southeast of Vlora, this park is where the Adriatic Sea becomes the Ionian Sea. Near the Llogara Pass, a number of interesting tree shapes, created from wind currents, can be observed (e.g., the Pisha Flamur, or the Flag Pine). From the Llogara Pass, visitors can see the Ionian Sea, the sharp slopes of Vetëtima Mountain and a good part of the Albanian Riviera. It is a great spot for air sports and has a wonderful climate due to the combination of mountain and sea air.



Valbona Valley National Park

With an area of 8,000 ha, this is the gem of the Albanian Alps. It is located 25-30 km northwest of Bajram Curri. It lies between high mountain peaks and is a festival of colors and contrasts. Its biodiversity makes this park a wonderful tourist attraction. The village of Valbona is the focal point of the park. The configuration of the park, the hydrology, forests, flowers, characteristic dwellings and the hospitality of its people make Valbona Valley an ideal place to visit.

Tomorri Mountain Park

This park has an area of 4,000 ha and is situated to the east of the museum city of Berat. From afar, the mountain of Tomorri gives the impression of a gigantic natural fortress. Located in Tomorri Mountain Park is the grave of Abaz Aliu (Kulmak Tekke), 1,200 m above sea level. Every August thousands of pilgrims go up to the tekke for a week, a natural stimulant for religious tourism.

Fir of Hotova National Park

With an area of 1,200 ha in the region of Frashër, this park is located about 35 km northeast of Përmet. The main characteristic is the Hotova Fir, which is one of the most important Mediterranean plant relics of the country. Thanks to its beautiful environment, healthy climate and proximity to living quarters, this park has great recreational value year round.

Shtama Pass National Park

This park, 25 km to the northeast of Kruja, has an area of 2,000 ha. The Queen Mother water source is one of the most attractive spots in the park with clean, cold and curative waters. A large number of visitors frequent the park to visit this spot.



Zall Gjocaj National Park

This park has an area of 140 ha and is located 40 km northeast of Burrel. It is a very picturesque park with a number of underground water sources and creeks.

Prespa National Park

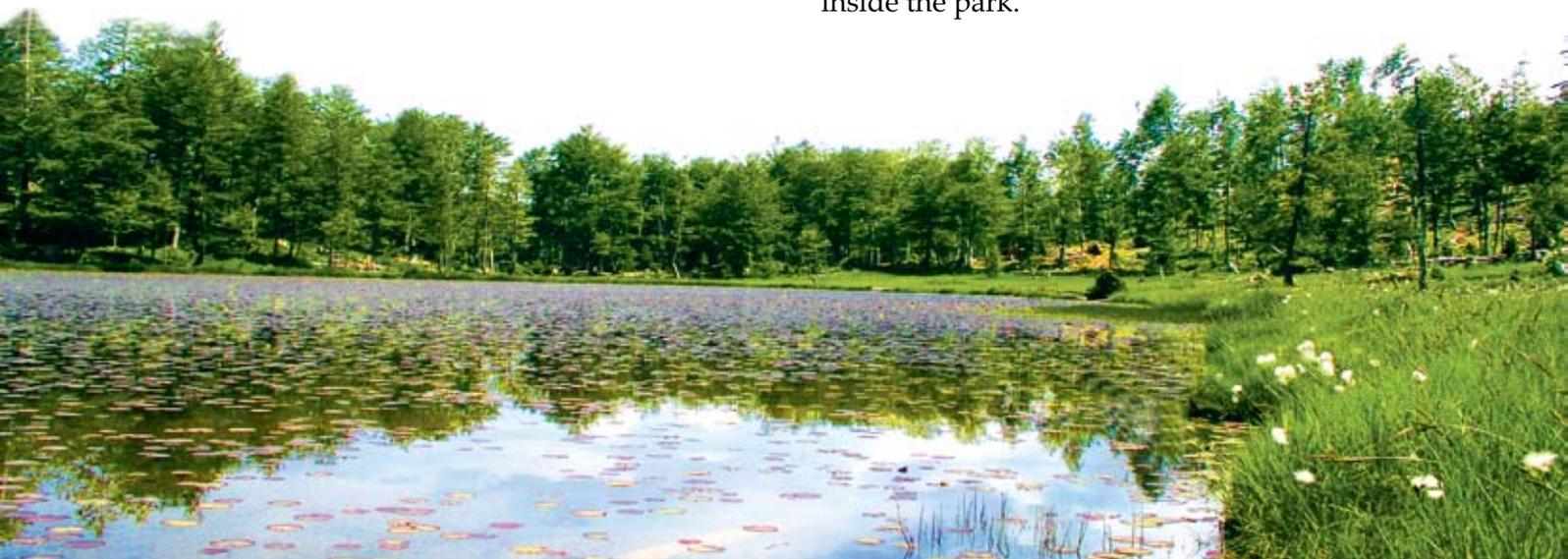
Prespa National Park has an area of 27,750 ha and straddles the borders of three countries: Albania, Greece and Macedonia. It contains the lakes Prespa e Madhe and Prespa e Vogël, as well as their water sources. The park is also rich with cultural history. You can visit the Eremite Byzantine churches in the Prespa Lake, the cave of Treni, Trajani's castle and the St. Mary's Church in the island of Maligrad.

Butrint National Park

This 2,500 ha park is located about 25 km south of Saranda. It has great scientific, tourist and archaeological values, as well as a high level of biodiversity. Blue tourism in Ksamil, ecotourism in Butrint Lake, fishing and water sports are just some of the outdoor activities that this area is well suited for.

Fir of Drenova National Park

Located just 10 km from the city of Korça, the park has an area of 1,380 ha and is frequently visited by both locals and tourists. Many drinking water sources such as Shen Gjergji, Plaka, Pllica and others are located inside the park.





The Republic of Albania has a considerable coastline that stretches for 450 km (including lagoons) and extends along the Adriatic and the Ionian Sea. It is easy to tell the seas apart thanks to their different characteristics.

The Adriatic beaches tend to be sandy with shallow waters, making them suitable for family holidays. The main beaches are those of Velipoja, Shën Gjini, Durrësi, Golemi, Spillenja, Divjaka, Vlora etc.

Besides the beaches, the Adriatic coast is rich with lagoons and natural ecosystems providing wonderful opportunities for those passionate about the study and observation of birds, as well as those interested in ecotourism. The Ionian coastal line is known for having fascinating beaches with deep and very clean waters. Younger crowds tend to visit the Ionian beaches as the area offers many opportunities for those interested in water sports like diving, boat tours, etc. Some of the most exotic and interesting beaches in the south of Albania are Dhërmi, Jali, Himara, Qeparo, Borsh, Saranda and Ksamil.

The small country spread in two seas



There are many lakes throughout Albania, each one differing in size and characteristics.

The most famous is Lake Ohrid with a surface of 362 km², of which one-third belongs to Albania. The lake is 300 m deep, making it the deepest lake in the Balkan Peninsula. The historical value and the diverse flora and fauna have helped Lake Ohrid to become one of UNESCO's Cultural and Natural Heritage sites. There are a variety of aquatic species in the lake, the most famous of which is the Koran, known for being a particularly delicious fish.

The city of Pogradec, well known for its climate, was built on the southwestern coast of Lake Ohrid. Alongside the shore there are several tourist centers such as Lini, Pojska, Pogradec, Drilon and Tushemisht, where many hotels and guesthouses offer comfortable accommodations for a wonderful and relaxing vacation.

Prespa Lake with a surface of 285 km², of which 38.8 km² belongs to Albania, is known for the small island of Maligrad. For those exploring the island, the old

Lake Ohrid

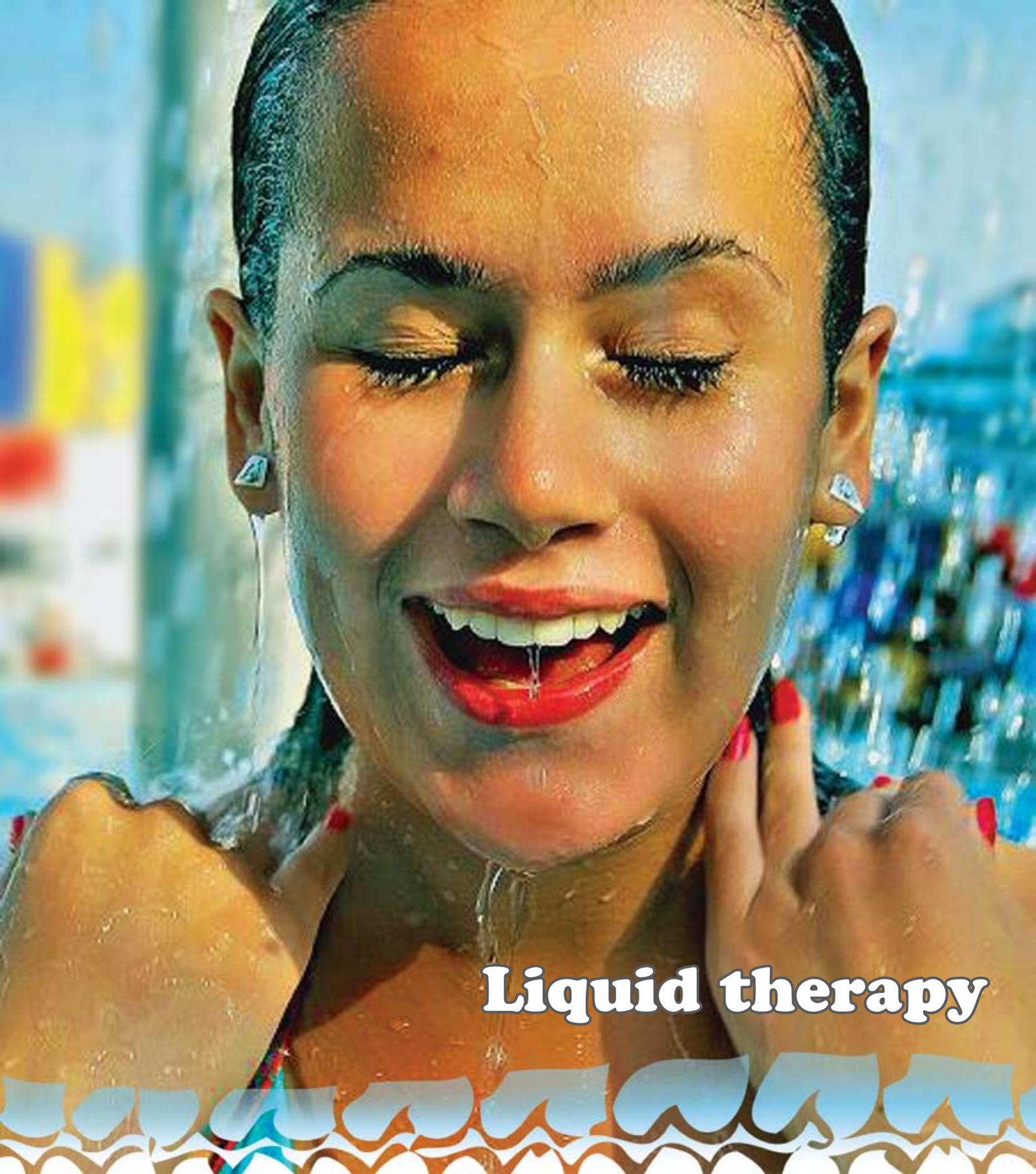


Komani Lake in the North Albania.



Shkodra Lake has a surface of 362 km², of which 149 km² belong to Albania. The main tourist centers are Shiroka and Zogaj, offering numerous hotels and restaurants. This area is famous for its variety of fish, including carp, eel and shtojzë. The main leisure activities here are fishing, swimming, sunbathing and the exploration of the area. Those who are willing to explore more of Albania will be able to see the artificial lakes formed by the Drin's cascade (Vau i Dejës Lake, Komani Lake and Fierza lake), the artificial lakes of Shkopeti and Ulza, the small glacial lakes of Lura, Balgjait, Dobërdol, Sylbice, Rajca and many more.





Liquid therapy



Thermal waters in Albania & Health Tourism

Albania enjoys a number of thermal water sources, located in areas such as Peshkopia, Bilaj in Fushë-Kruja, Elbasan, Vronomero in Leskoviku, Bënjë in Përmet, etc. These thermal waters are famous for having regenerative and curative characteristics. Some of them, such as the thermal waters of Elbasan, were exploited during the period of Roman rule.



The Postenan steam baths near Leskoviku and the drinking water sources of Kroji Bardhë in the Municipality of Selita, in Mirdita, are known for their valuable medical attributes in curing disease like asthma, skin diseases, arthritics, neurologic diseases, gastritis, rheumatism etc. Some of these water sources offer contemporary accommodation services like the Ibrahim Kupa Spa Centers in Bilaj, Elbasan, Peshkopia and Leskovik.



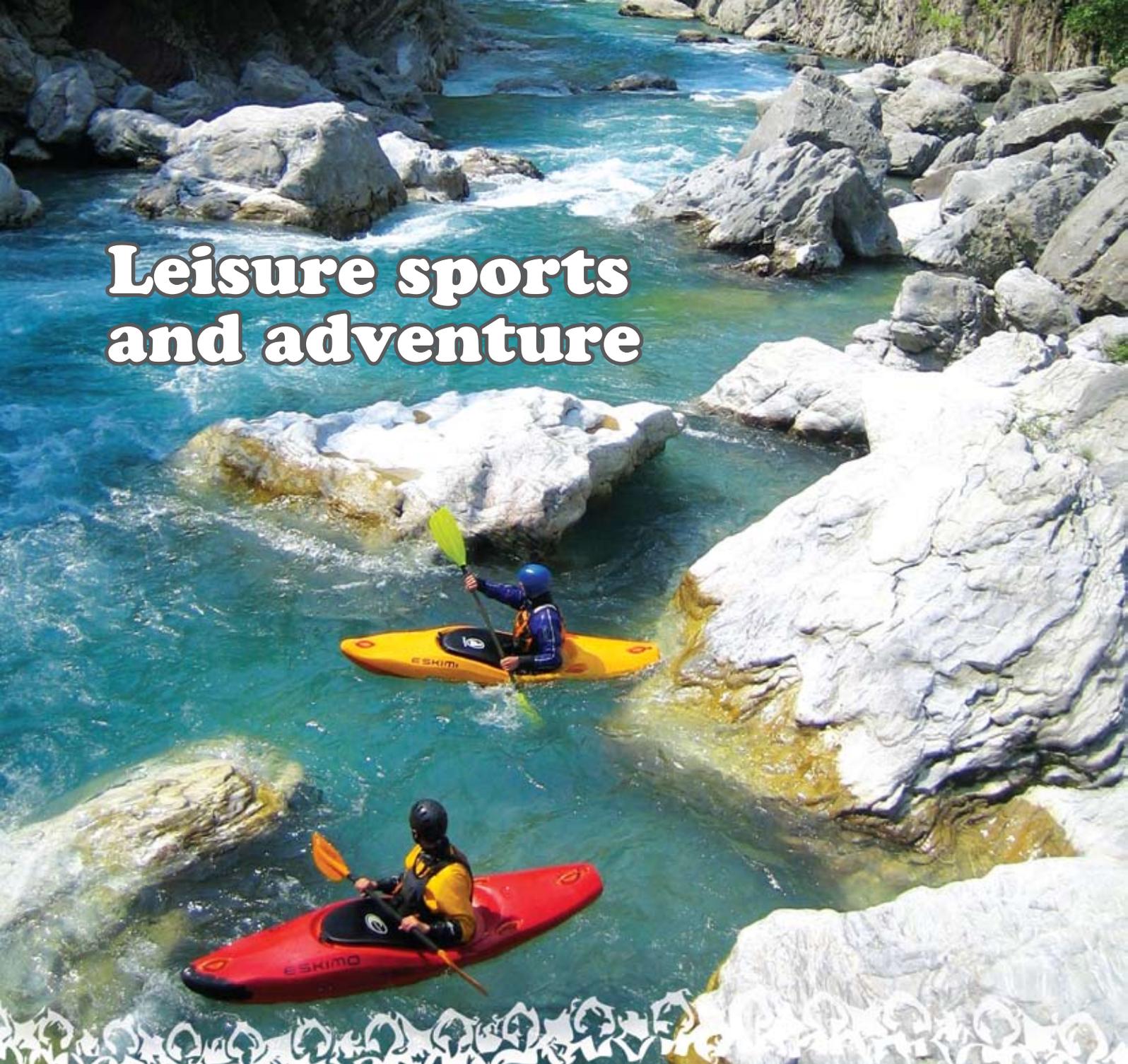
Health Tourism

Dental tourism is a new term in Albania but the trend has been growing in recent years. Durrës is among the cities with the largest number of tourists in the summer season and has begun to practice massively health tourism, primarily in the field of dentistry. Albania offers both low prices and great quality for dental services. In recent years, Albanian's living outside of the country have traveled back to Albania in order to take advantage of this health service.

International tourists have caught onto this trend and have begun visiting Albania for the same reason.



Leisure sports and adventure



Nature in Albania comes in a variety of forms and offers numerous opportunities for exercise and enjoyment through sports and activities, all of which can make for a remarkable vacation. Mountains and hills, which occupy two-thirds of the country and extend from the north to the south, offer opportunities for hiking, trekking, climbing, skiing, mountain biking, cave exploration, etc. The most beautiful and most frequented areas are those of the Albanian Alps, including Thethi, Valbona, Vermoshi, and Razma; the area around Korça with many hot spots like Voksopoja, Dardha, Vithkuqi and Boboshtica; and many other points like Dajti, Llogaraja, Gërmenji, and Tomorri.

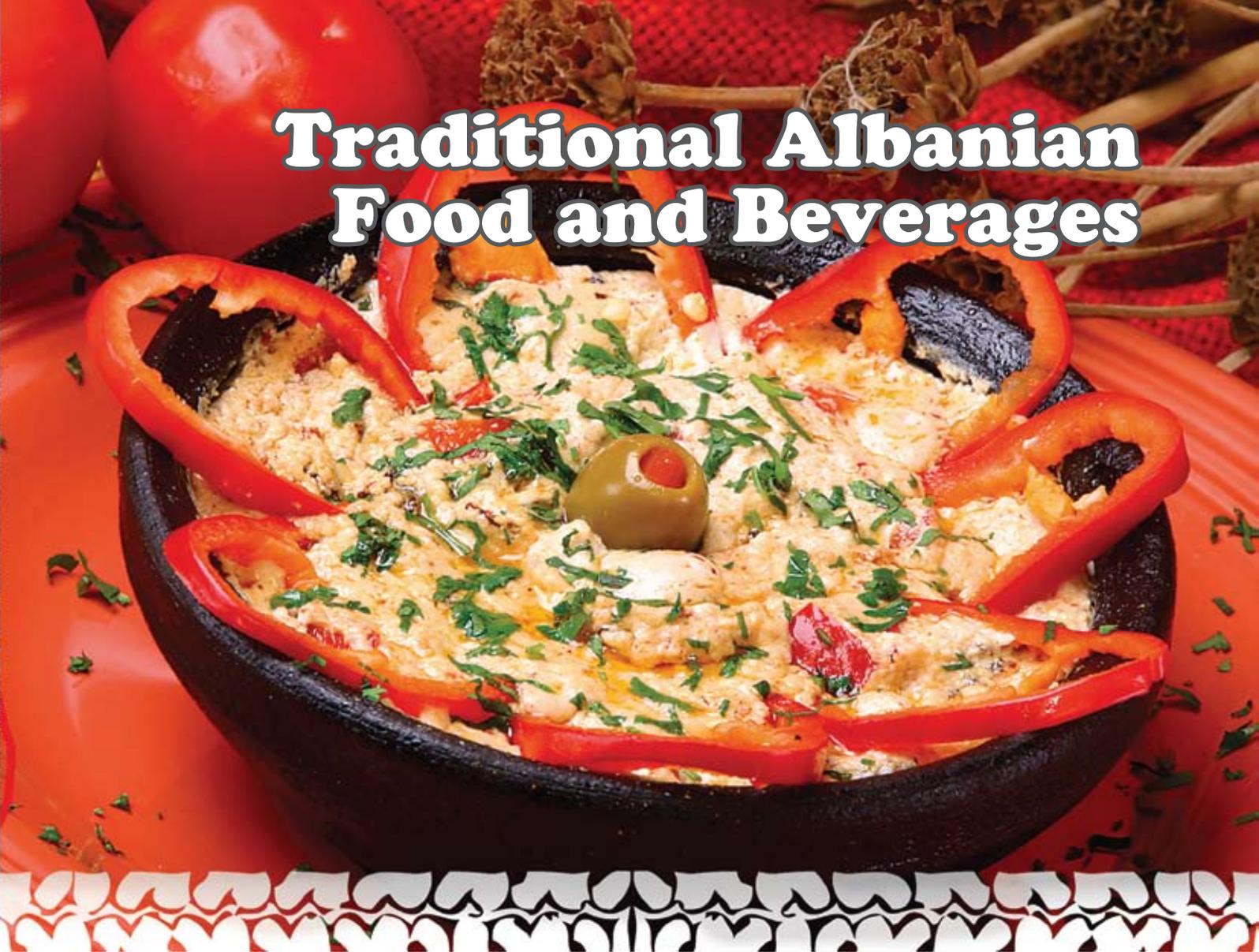
Albania is home to a dense hydrographic network. The country offers numerous rivers and gorgeous valleys that are full of narrow gorges, canyons and other surprises. Water sports such as rafting and canoeing are very popular in the region. Some of the best locations to visit for water enthusiasts are the canyons of the Osumi river, the Këlcyra gorge, the upper Vjosa where it flows into the Përmeti region, the Devolli valley, and the Shala Valley in the Albanian Alps. Albania also has a number of places suitable for air sports, such as paragliding. The best places for these sports are Llogara, and the mountains of Morava in Korça. In recent years, Albania has been the host of many international air sport races.



The Pirogoshi Cave

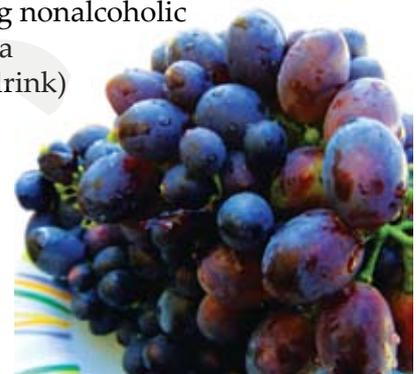
The Pirogoshi cave is located in the Skrapari province and constitutes the largest cave in Albania, with a length of over 1,500 m. It is situated 450 m above sea level near the village of Radesh, 3 km from the city of Çorovoda. The cave has a 12 m wide entrance and a height of approximately 5 m. The inside of the cave is rich with stalactites and stalagmites and perhaps the most interesting places to visit inside the caves are the Major Corridors. And be careful where you step: the cave ends with a deep well where colonies of bats live.

Traditional Albanian Food and Beverages



Turkish, Balkan and European kitchens have had a great influence on the Albanian kitchen, which has become known for highly nutritional and delicious food. Almost every province offers particular specialties, though the cooking of grilled meat, especially lamb, and the preparation of various pies is common throughout the country. Central and Southern Albania are well known for using a large variety of vegetables, olive oil, various spices and lemon. The carp dish Tava e Krapit is especially popular in Shkodra while the Koran with walnuts is particularly loved in Pogradec, and many other fish dishes are very popular within the coastal zones of the Ionian and Adriatic. Albania is also famous for a variety of pastry; a large number of them are common throughout the Balkans and Asia Minor. One of them is Ballokumja, a traditional cake whose ingredients are corn flour, butter and sugar, which originates in the town of Elbasan and is delivered as a treat for the Summer Day's event (March 14).

As a result of the suitable Mediterranean climate, Albania is known for cultivating grapes and producing a variety of red and white wines. The most famous are: Merlot, Cabernet, Pinot Noir, Kallmet, Sangiovese, Riesling, etc. The most famous alcoholic drink in Albania, though, is Rakia (a type of brandy whose main ingredient is typically grapes). Some other areas of Albania (Korça and Dibër) use plums to produce the brandy, while Boboshtica uses raspberries. Albania is also known for producing the famous Skanderbeg cognac, which has won many international awards. Among nonalcoholic beverages, Boza (a corn based drink) is produced in the north of the country, especially in the province of Kukësi and its vicinities.





Typical albanian flavours and souvenirs

You cannot leave Albania without taking a souvenir from this country, so full of tradition. Typical Albanian products stand as examples of the traditions of the Albanian people, which is expressed and maintained from generation to generation. These craft works are applied in different materials such as wool, wood, copper, silver, etc. Since ancient times, artistic craftworks were important components of the Albanian culture. The traditional wool clothes, shajaku (pressed wool craft used in different parts of Albania), and elegant fabric clothes (used especially for festive events) show this heritage with its stylish art too, whose embroidery of various gold and silver threads are unique.

Differing types of filigree can be found, some of it made with copper and some with gold. Other types of jewelry are available alongside wood engravings and weaponry decorated with gold and silver, applied over the centuries. All of these different items come together to help shape the cultural heritage of Albania. The old market of Kruja is famous for the classic souvenirs that can be found there, including wool products, carpets, different styles of fez, wooden pipes, old copper products, filigrees etc. Besides Kruja, tourists and visitors are invited to visit all the other cultural center of Albania such as Berat, Gjirokastra, Tirana and Shkodra, where they will be able to feel the history and appreciate souvenirs of this wonderful tradition, which are the real expression of our ancient origins.

Cultural Events



March 14
"Summer Day"
(various activities and concerts)

May:
"Tirana's Jazz Festival"
"Top Fest"

June 21
"International Day of Music"
(musical bands play music everywhere,
accompanying various activities)

September 16
"Peza's event"
(various activities)

September
"Poeteka"
"AniFest ROZAFa"

November 2
"Tirana's autumn"
(concerts with chamber music)

November 29
"The White Night"
(music and various festive activities)

November:
The International Book Fair

December:
Tirana Film Festival
(the most important cinematographic event)
The Albanian Song Festival
(transmitted by the National Radio Television)
"The Magical Song"
(music festival)

These events are organized annually with no
specified opening day

**The International Visual
Arts Competition "Onufri"**

**International Music Festival
"Marie Kraja"**

Tourist Map

MONTENEGRO

KOSOVA

REPUBLIC OF
MACEDONIA

ADRIATIC
SEA



LEGEND

-  National Capital
-  District Capital
-  Town
-  Village
-  International Airport
-  Seaport
-  Marina



GREECE



-  Boarder Crossing
-  Country Boarder
-  National Road
-  Secondary Road
-  Railroad
-  Cable Car
-  UNESCO Site
-  Archaeological Site
-  Old Mosque
-  Christian Monastery
-  Orthodox Church
-  Catholic Church
-  Bektashi Tekke
-  Fortress
-  Old Bridge
-  Traditional Tower
-  Museum
-  Vineyards
-  Beach
-  Water Sports
-  Skiing
-  Spelunking
-  Paragliding
-  Fishing
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-  Tourist Information

Ionian Coast



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