



Albania

Situated just across the Ionian Sea from Corfu, Albania offers one of the Mediterranean's most intriguing and least explored travel experiences. For those familiar with Greece, it feels both comfortingly close and wonderfully new; a neighbouring land where historic towns, Ottoman architecture, dramatic mountain landscapes and ancient ruins remain largely untouched by mass tourism. One of Europe's most captivating yet fast-developing destinations, we would urge a visit sooner rather than later.

Travelling in Albania is a journey through layers of culture and history. The beautifully preserved towns and remarkable archaeological sites, each shaped by centuries of shifting empires, showcase heritage still lived in today. Tirana, the capital, is vibrant and expressive, its past reflected in museums and galleries while its present unfolds in a swirl of cafés, street life and creativity.

Nature lovers will find the landscapes unforgettable. Albania's mountains rise sharply

from fertile plains, dotted with traditional villages. Lakes shimmer between steep valleys and rivers snake through untouched National Parks. It is little wonder the Albanians call their homeland Shqipëria, the Land of the Eagles.

Albania's coastline is among its greatest joys. North of Saranda, the Albanian Riviera unfurls. The coastal road climbs high above the water, revealing sweeping panoramas. Himare, a developing yet charming resort town, offers long sand-shingle beaches, crystal-clear waters

and access to secluded coves both north and south. Behind the coastline, the high mountains hide traditional communities where life has changed little over generations.

For travellers seeking discovery, Albania offers the perfect blend of culture, coast, history and nature. It is a land that rewards curiosity, where the warmth of the people and the richness of the landscapes create memories long after the journey ends.



Saranda

The large bustling town of Saranda is set in a beautiful horse-shoe bay, fringed with pebble beaches and with lovely views to northern Corfu. High on the hill above is the 16th century Lekursi castle, which is worth a visit for the views alone and you can dine there. The town has an attractive palm-lined promenade and there are many restaurants, cafes and shops, all of which give a warm welcome. For some superb beaches not too far from town, head for pretty Ksamili 14km to the south (there are regular buses). Here, you will discover a string of sandy bays and beaches, and several islets just off shore.



Gjirokastrë

Gjirokastrë, Albania's evocative 'City of Stone', rises above the Drino Valley with cobbled streets, Ottoman-type tower houses with stone roofs, wooden balconies and stone walls, and a mighty 4th century castle that has watched over the region for centuries. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, the city blends ancient origins (recorded as Argyrokaastro) with layers of Byzantine, Ottoman and later Albanian history. Considered one of the prettiest spots in the country.



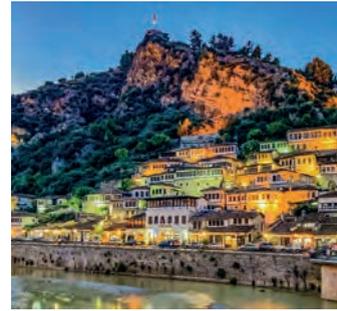
Tirana

The Albanian capital, Tirana blends vibrant modern energy with a fascinating past. Once shaped by Ottoman influence and decades of communist rule, the city has reinvented itself with bold colours, lively cafés and expressive street life. From Skanderbeg Square to its museums, bunkers and eclectic architecture, Tirana offers a compelling mix of history, creativity and warmth - a capital that feels both culturally rich and brilliantly alive.



Shkodër

Shkodër, one of Albania's oldest cities, blends ancient Illyrian roots with Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman architecture and influences. Over 2,000 years of heritage are on display. The city itself is dominated by the dramatic Rozafa Castle and is considered the cultural heart of northern Albania. Set between rivers, lake and mountains, it is also a city with its sights on the future with a lively art scene and a vibrant cafe culture.



Berat

Berat's white Ottoman houses cascading down the hillside give the 'City of One Over One Windows' its timeless, poetic charm. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, Berat weaves together layers of history, from its ancient origins as Antipatreia (its original name - founded in 313BC) to its Byzantine fortifications and long Ottoman rule. Its 13th-century castle, fresco-filled churches and elegant mosques reflect centuries of cultural coexistence, creating a town where Albania's past is always evident.

It would be amiss to not highlight Berat's natural surroundings, a backdrop of the Tomorri mountains and the valley of the meandering Osum river.



Two Centre with Greece

Many of our travellers enjoy pairing Albania with a stay in Corfu less than an hour away by ferry, or using road links to our Greek destinations of Sivota or Parga - a combination that highlights the contrast between Greece's well-established hospitality and Albania's exciting, emerging identity. Together, they create a holiday of depth, contrast and unforgettable charm.



Private Cultural Tour of Southern Albania

We offer an in-depth 1 week tour with your own English-speaking driver/guide. The tour is for 5 nights/6 days with an overnight in Saranda at either end, covering the highlights of this fascinating region – three places on the tour are UNESCO World Heritage sites. The tour can be combined as a two-centre with Greece. The easiest centre is with Corfu as it's only 30 minutes away by ferry, but you can also stay at Lefkas, Meganissi, Parga or Sivota by flying via Preveza Airport (note: longer taxi transfers).

Day 1 - Saranda

Flight to Corfu. Transfer by ferry to Saranda (30-50 mins). Overnight Saranda.

Day 2 - Ancient Butrint

Guided tour to ancient Butrint (Ancient Buthrotum), an important and impressive Greco-Roman city, now a UNESCO World Heritage site, south of Saranda on a bluff of land half-circled by a large lake. Inhabited continuously from the 7th C BC until abandoned in 18th C. Impressive cyclopean walls and deep well within the gate, reminiscent of Mycenae – but most excavated remains are Roman. Drive to Gjirokaster via the Blue Eye spring for overnight (2 hours drive in total).

Day 3 - Gjirokaster

Explore two UNESCO-listed towns. Walking tour of Gjirokaster including the castle and museum. Drive to Berat (c 2 hrs 40 mins). Walking tour and visit to icon museum. Overnight Berat



Day 4 - Tirana via Durres

Drive to Tirana via the coastal town of Durres (total drive time c 2 hrs 40 mins). Sightseeing tour of Tirana including the National Museum. Overnight in Tirana.

Day 5 - Kruja

Drive to historic Kruja (c 1 hour) and explore the town, castle and old bazaar. Overnight in Tirana.

Day 6 - Apollonia

Turn west towards the sea. Visit Ardenica 12th C monastery; it occupies the whole of a rocky outcrop amid pine and cypress trees and is a landmark visible for miles across the plain. The church, dedicated to the Virgin, is characteristically

Greek, and has a magnificent iconostasis and high-quality wall-paintings. Then onto the famous site of Apollonia. Then head south for the attractive small seaside resort of Himara for overnight (total drive time c 4 hours).

Day 7 - Himare

Enjoy a well earned morning's R&R - perhaps a swim from Himare's splendid beach. After lunch a scenic coastal drive along the Albanian Riviera to Saranda for overnight (c 90 mins drive).

Day 8 - Day of departure

Transfer to Corfu Airport or to a NW mainland Greek resort for your second week.



Duration

7 nights

Itinerary includes:

- Return flights to Corfu Airport
- Transfers and ferry crossings
- 2 Nights in Saranda (Bed and Breakfast)
- 1 Night in Gjirokaster (Bed and Breakfast)
- 1 Night in Berat (Bed and Breakfast)
- 2 Nights in Tirana (Bed and Breakfast)
- 1 Night in Himara (Bed and Breakfast)
- 6 lunches whilst on the tour (Days 2-7)

Guide price

Based on 2 sharing from **£2166 per person**

Highlights of Albania

10 nights Fly Drive

Discover the essence of Albania on this captivating ten-night fly-drive journey, travelling from vibrant Tirana through UNESCO-listed towns, dramatic mountain landscapes and the sunlit shores of the Ionian coast. Of course, as with all our holidays this itinerary can be amended to suit personal tastes and interests.

Day 1 - Day of arrival

On arrival at the airport, you will be transferred to your hotel in the centre of the city.

Overnight in Tirana.

Days 2 and 3 - Explore Tirana and Kruja

Enjoy one of Europe's most colourful and engaging capitals. Tirana is wonderfully walkable, with most key sights radiating from Skanderbeg Square: the National Museum with its striking mosaic facade, the Palace of Culture, and the beautifully restored Et'hem Bey Mosque. For a deeper insight into Albania's 20th-century story, the Cold War—era Bunk'Art Museum is a must-see. Alternatively, take the Dajti Express cable car for sweeping views across the city and surrounding mountains. A short distance to the north is the historic town of Kruja, well worth a visit

Overnights in Tirana.

Day 4 - Berat

After breakfast your hire car will be delivered to your hotel. Drive south towards the UNESCO-listed town of Berat, known as 'the town of a thousand eyes' due to its many windowed hillside Ottoman houses and timeless photogenic charm. The journey takes around two hours, but those travelling at a relaxed pace will find rewarding stops en route, including Bovilla Lake,

Belshi Lake and the town of Belsh, as well as several excellent wineries.

Overnight in Berat.

Day 5 – Gjirokastër

Spend the morning exploring Berat. Wander the labyrinth of cobbled lanes inside the citadel, visit the castle ramparts for views over the Osum River and Mount Tomorri, and enjoy the atmosphere of the pedestrianised lower (new) town with its cafés and traditional sweets.

In the afternoon, continue south to Gjirokastër, a drive of around 2 hours 45 mins. Gjirokaster is also UNESCO-listed, being an historic stone-built town with dramatic views over the valley to the mountains beyond, and watched over by its imposing fortress.

Overnight in Gjirokastër.

Days 6 and 7 - Albanian Riviera

After a relaxed morning, drive west towards the Ionian coast (c 2 hours drive). The route over the mountains and along the Albanian Riviera is, in our opinion, one of the most spectacular coastal drives in the Balkans. Expect turquoise bays, traditional villages perched on hillsides and unforgettable views at every turn. Time for some R&R - Himare is a small seaside resort with super beaches, a good choice of taverna restaurants and a stunning mountainous backdrop.

Overnight in Himare.

Days 8, 9 and 10 - Shkodër

The longest drive of the itinerary (c 4 1/2 hours) takes you north towards Lake Shkodër and the striking landscapes of northern Albania. Nature is never far away here. Lake Shkodër, the largest in



the Balkans, offers serene waters ideal for boat trips, kayaking or lakeside walks, while the surrounding wetlands and mountains attract birdwatchers and hikers in search of quiet paths and traditional rural communities.

Overnights in Shkodër.

Day 11 - Day of departure

Drive back to Tirana Airport (c 90 minutes) for your flight home. Alternatively, consider extending your holiday with a stay on the Greek island of Corfu or exploring the mountain villages and dramatic landscapes of Epirus across the border to the south - a region deeply connected to Albania by history, culture and the Ionian Sea.

Duration

10 nights

Itinerary includes:

- Return flights to Tirana Airport
- Transfer on arrival
- 3 Nights in Tirana (Bed and Breakfast)
- 1 Night in Berat (Bed and Breakfast)
- 1 Night in Gjirokaster (Bed and Breakfast)
- 2 Nights in Himare (Bed and Breakfast)
- 3 nights in Shkoder (Bed and Breakfast)
- Car hire for 7 days

Guide price

Based on 2 sharing from **£1465 per person**

Kruja Castle

