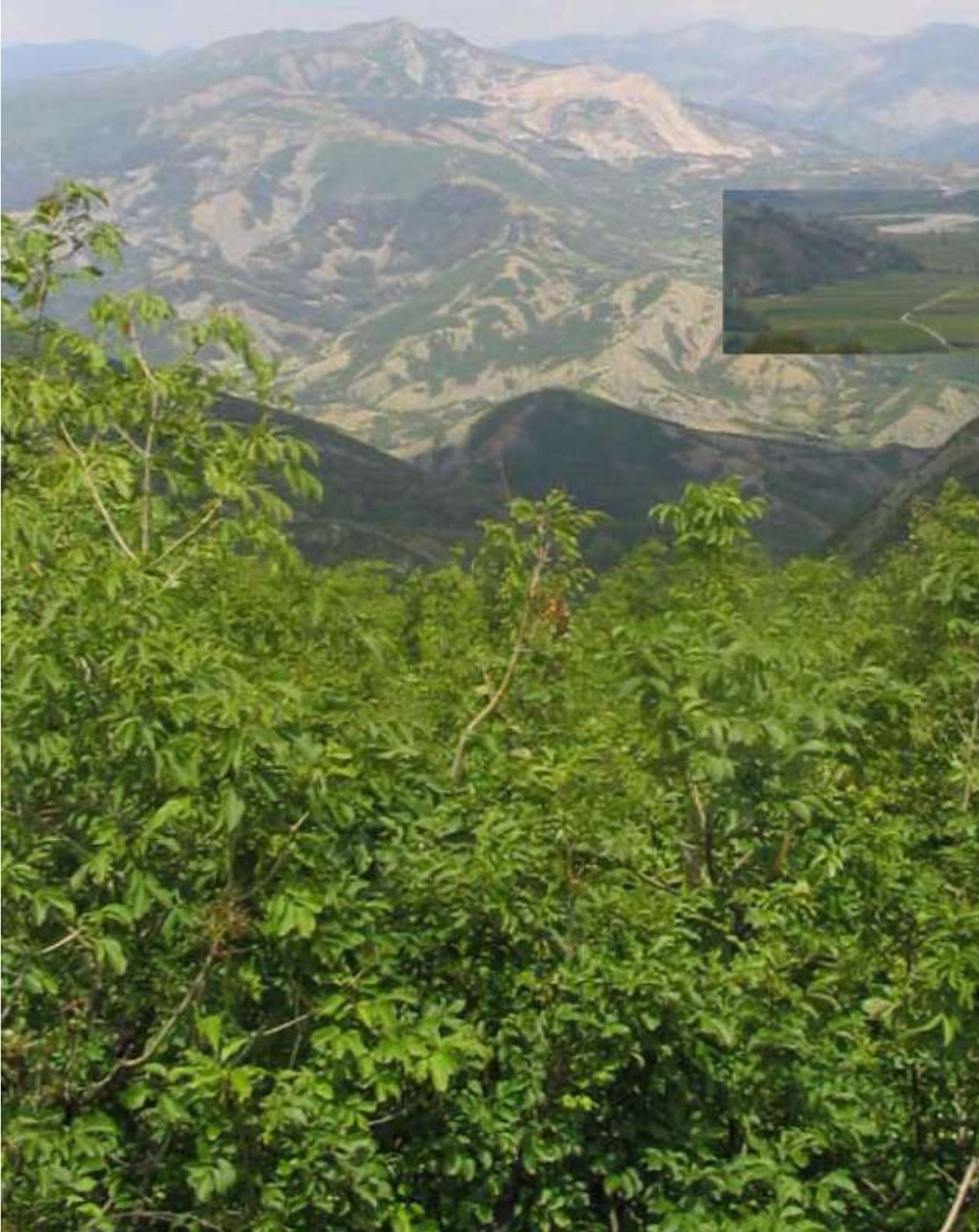


Trekking Albania



Includes North and South Albania.

Contents

South Albania

This tour consists of a balanced mixture of hikes, cultural visits and relaxing days in the beautiful south of Albania.

North Albania

This is `the genuine trekking tour` in the heart of the Alps of Albania.

Additional Information

Includes information on the terrain, recommended equipment and more.

Trekking - South Albania



Full Itinerary

Trekking in South - Western Albania

This tour is composed by a balanced mixture of hikes, cultural visits and relaxing days in the beautiful south of Albania. Passing from the Adriatic to the Ionian coast, you will enjoy the outstanding landscape of Llogora pass, with the mighty Cika peaks towering above the crystal waters and the white gravel beaches of the Ionian Sea.

Before a few days at the picturesque villages of the Riviera, the tour continues in a succession of archaeological sites and important historical towns, like Butrint, Gjirokastër and Berat. This tour offers you a good insight of the best of southern Albania.

Day 1 – Welcome to Tirana

ARRIVAL The journey from the airport to the Hotel is anything from 20-30 minutes depending on the traffic. The hotel is located right in the centre of Tirana and has a cozy atmosphere.

Day 2 – Tirana

Morning at leisure, in the afternoon you will meet your guide and go over the program of the coming week. Later we will take **a walking tour through the city's most known spots like Scanderbeg Square, The Clock Tower, the Mosque of Tirana, etc.** We will also walk to Blloku district, before we stop in a traditional restaurant for dinner, and then return in the hotel for overnight. **Optional: after dinner, people can go for a drink in "Blloku" - once the district of the communist polit-bureau, now the "hip" bar-district of Tirana (in walking distance from our hotel).**

Day 3 - Driving South

Today we will drive south towards the coastal city of Vlorë. Before getting there, we will visit the ancient ruins of Apollonia, its Byzantine Monastery and at will, the Museum of Archaeology. Founded in 588BC by Greeks from Corinth, the city quickly grew to 50.000 residents by the second century BC. Apollonia later became a free Roman city after it sided with Julius Caesar during the war against Pompey. It developed into a cultural center until the 3rd century AD when an earthquake rerouted a river and led to **the city's decline. We will have lunch under the shadow of the trees in the restaurant of the Apollonia Park.**The last leg of driving will end at our hotel by the sea.

Day 4 - Over the ridge of Saint Thanas

After breakfast, we will drive to our next "station": the Llogora National Park. We will check-in at a family run mountain hotel right in the middle of the park, The hotel specialises in home made wine and raki, spit roast lamb and a variety of tasty mountain dishes to enjoy for dinner.

The surroundings of Llogora Park have been described as one of the most "dramatic" mountain & sea panoramas. It will be here that our first trekking will take place. The trekking will offer splendid views of the Vlorë bay and of the western steep slopes of the Karabruni peninsula, dropping to the waters of the Ionian Sea. (Gradient 600 meters) In the afternoon, on return, we will have an optional walk or the possibility to relax in the hotel until it is time for dinner.

Day 5 – The Riviera of Flowers

In the morning, we will hike up to Mount Cika. The Cika mountain is the highest point of south western Albania. **From the summit, one can admire the mighty view of the highlands of "Labëria" – land of southern shepherds; and the splendor of the Ionian Sea with Corfu and other minor Greek islands on the horizon.**After completing the hike, we will drive further along the Ionian coast, via Himara, until we reach the village of Qeparo at the sea.

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Before reaching the village we will stop to visit the bay of Porto Palermo and the Ali Pasha Tepelena fortress. The splendid bay of Palermo, served as an important submarine secret base during the regime days. The semi abandoned base, its tunnel and structures can still be seen and the main attraction of the bay is the 19th century fortress in the central promontory, built by the powerful Ali Pasha Tepelena. After the visit, we will drive for 15 minutes to the nearby Qeparo, where we will check-in at a guesthouse by the sea. In the afternoon, we have also the possibility to walk up to the old village on top of the hill.

Day 6 - Saranda and the ancient town of Butrint

The drive will bring us further south along the splendid Albanian Riviera. Saranda is set in a horseshoe bay and has been a holiday resort since communist times. Mentioned by Cicero, it acquired its current name in honor to forty (Saranda in Greek) Christian legionnaires who were put to death in 320AD. Nearby, following a panoramic road along the homonymous lagoon are the remains of the ancient Butrint that we are going to visit. "Butrint is undeniably a beautiful place. Close to modern civilization yet with its monuments in thick woodland. With remains dating from so many different periods covering two and a half thousand years. Set in a marshy landscape besides the busy straits separating Corfu from Albania, it is also an environmental haven rich in bird life". We will have lunch in a restaurant near to the ruins and then drive to the hotel by the sea where we can relax at the beach or stroll in the city, until it is time for dinner at a fish restaurant.

Day 7 – The City of Stone

We will leave the coast and drive inland towards Gjirokaster – the City of Stone. Here, we will visit the Castle, the Museum of Weapons, the Ethnographic Museum and we will make a walk along the stone paved alleys of the town. Gjirokastër is one of the most beautiful Albanian historic towns, with a citadel dating from **the 13th century. From the walls of the castle, one can admire the view** of its districts and the large valley of the river Drinos. Walks along the stone paved streets will provide the discovery of the charming Albanian traditional architecture. It was in these grey colored streets that Enver Hoxha (notorious dictator) and Ismail Kadare (notorious writer) grew up. At the end of our visit in Gjirokaster, we will drive to our next night-stop: Berat.

Day 8- The city of thousand windows Berat is the best preserved historic town of Albania. It has Illyrian, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman and Socialist buildings built over 2400 years, and show the importance and the rich history of Berat.

We will walk in the characteristic neighbourhood of "Mangalemi" to visit the Ethnographic museum. Then we will hike up to visit the citadel district of Berat, its splendid orthodox churches and the Onufri Icons museum – named after the famous 16th century master painter of icons and murals. The building where the museum is housed shows the important architectonic values of **Berat's buildings. In the afternoon**, we will drive on to Durres (92km/1hr30min), where we will stay by the sea.

Day 9 - Leaving Albania

Today you can relax at the beach, before it is time to go back to the airport. Price of the tour: From £625 per person Single supplement: £95 per person

Minimum group size: 4 people Maximum group size 15 people.

The tour includes: Airport transfers, transport, guide, museum, park/resort fees and full board accommodation during the entire itinerary above described.

Transport: (mini)bus or car. Guide: English speaking. Food: Traditional restaurants and home-made dishes. Vegetarian meals: available by prior request.

Accommodation: hotels and family run guesthouses. The price does not include: Flights [or other transport] to Albania. Drinks. Meals on day 1. Lunch and dinner on day 9. Insurance [compulsory]

Please read the additional information page contained within this brochure prior to booking or undertaking a trekking holiday.

Trekking - North Albania



Full Itinerary

Introduction: This is 'the genuine trekking tour' in the heart of the Alps of Albania. The journey will bring travelers to discover amazing mountainous landscapes with isolated charm-full valleys, ancient traditions and pagan legends.

We recommend this journey to people already experienced in long walks and with a good adaptation spirit, because the only accommodation in the mountains will be the traditional houses and hospitality of the Albanian "malesore" – highlanders.

Best period: May – September

Level: Challenging: Tours of this level demand that you be in really good shape. The paths are not always in the best condition and the marking can be scarce. There are day-treks with big ascents and descents. Changing weather conditions, even in midsummer, play an important role when trekking in remote areas and may cause changes of the scheduled route. Normally, the treks are 6/8 hrs per day. Preliminary trekking experience is an advantage, but not necessary if you are in really good shape. During the hikes, you should personally carry your own day rucksack, while the main luggage will be transported by mule/horse and/or vehicle.

Special highlights:

1. Lake Koman - The ferry trip along the Lake of Koman is an outstanding experience. The lake is narrow and twisting, and it stretches along the bed of river Drini that turned into a lake after the construction of the dam in the 80-ies. The vertical cliffs on both sides create a spectacular landscape that might make many think about the Norwegian fjords.
2. Valbona Valley - Probably the most beautiful valley of Northern Albania. The turquoise waters of the Valbona river, flow in the middle of a spectacular landscape of steep mountain peaks. The jewel in the crown of the Albanian Alps!
3. Theth Valley - Hidden paradise in the heart of the Albanian Alps. Centre for all tracks to the highest peaks of the region and passes leading toward Slovenia to the north, Kosovo to the east, and Shkodra to the west.
4. The Fortress of Kruja - The city was the epicenter of the Albanian resistance against the Ottoman Turks in the XV century, led by the Albanian national hero George Kastrioti - Skanderbeg. The fortress has a spectacular location, towering above the hills and fields that reach the Adriatic Sea.
5. The fortress of Shkoder - Rozafa Castle - The ruins of this mighty castle are situated on top of a hill, giving a spectacular view to one of the largest lakes of Europe.

Day - 1 Tirana Transfer from airport to central Tirana for overnight stay.

Day- 2 Tirana and Kruja

Morning walking tour of Tirana to include Skanderbeg Square, Clock Tower, mosque of Ethem Bey, and other places of interest. Afternoon transfer to Kruja to check in to the hotel. We will have a drink and meeting with the guide at 18.00 hours and discuss the program for the coming week. Depending on the time of arrival you can visit the Kruja Bazaar and Kruja castle, epicenter of the legendary Albanian resistance to the Ottomans led by Scanderbeg in the 14th century. (Entrance fortress fee: 100 Lek – approx. 1 €)

Dinner: Traditional restaurant. Accommodation: Hotel in Kruja.

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Day- 3 The holy mountain of Sarisalltik Today we will hike up the holy mountain of Sarisalltik and visit the Bectasci Teqe (Sufi Dervishes Sanctuary) located at 1900m . After the decent, we will start driving north (100km), and have lunch on the way to Shkodra. At the entrance of the largest city of the north, we will visit the Rozafa Castle and admire the superb view of the Shkodra Lake surrounded by mountains. In the evening, we will relax at the Shkodra lake and walkabout in town, until dinner. Dinner: Traditional restaurant. Accommodation: Hotel in Shkodra.

Day 4 - The lake of Koman and the canyon of Drin. Car transfer : Shkodër – Koman; Fierzë – Quku i Dunishës: 40km; Ferry 20km: Koman – Fierzë. In the early morning, we will drive to the ferry, which goes through the spectacular canyon of river Drin. The lake was created, after the construction of the dam of Koman, in the 80-ies. The transfer will continue along the beautiful valley of river Valbona, until the picturesque location of Dunishë where we will stay overnight. Dinner and accommodation: Village house hosting in Dunishë - the best location to start all kinds of hikes in the surrounding mountains. The lovely little lake at the back of the house is the perfect spot to relax after a tiresome day.

Day 5 - Qafa e Rosit The trekking will start from the house in the direction of the village of Kukaj (900m a.s.l). From there, a shepherd's path will bring us to remote landscapes of the eastern Alps of Albania until reaching Qafa e Rosit (2000m a.s.l - approx. 7-8 hrs of walk). The path climbs smoothly in the middle of green meadows, with gorgeous views of Jezerca Mountain and Rrethi i Bardhë - The White Circle. At the end of the day, we will rest at the same place as the night before in Dunishë and enjoy the tasty homemade food.

Day 6- The Pass of Valbona After breakfast, we will drive for 10 km to the village of Rragam, where our next trekking begins. It points to the Pass of Valbona (1966m a.s.l) and is the classic pass of the Albanian Alps that for centuries linked the two most known valleys of the area, Valbona and Thethi. We will use mules to carry the luggage to the next house. Highlanders from late spring use the path commonly, until the first snow of winter. Several springs of water will make the stops pleasant and refreshing, while admiring the steep and jagged surrounding peaks of Jezerca, Radohima, etc. From there the group will start the descent towards the village of Thethi (800m a.s.l), where we will stay overnight after up to 8 hrs of walking. Thethi is the best-preserved alpine village in Albania. It has typical houses still roofed with wooden tiles and its location is spectacular. We will stay overnight in one of these houses and experience the unforgettable hospitality of the place.

Day 7- **Thethi's attractions** Today we will have a nice day going around in the surroundings of Thethi, one of the most known charming villages of northern Albania, because of its stunning nature and traditional wooden-tiled houses. We will start walking downhill from the house, and visit the attractions near by the village, like: the Church, the Kulla e Ngujimit (a tower house used in the past by men as a shelter against on going vendetta), the Thethi Waterfall, Grunasi Canyon, and the 2007 revelation: cyclopean stone walled terraces dating from the late bronze era! We will overnight at the same house as the night before.

Day-8 Tirana We will leave Thethi (800m a.s.l) to start another day of spectacular trekking in direction of the village of Boga. During this day we will walk along Shtegu i Dheneve - the Path of the Sheep, which is another classic way of the Albanian Alps that connects the villages of Thethi and Boga. After Pass (1830m a.s.l) and the stunning views it offers of Bjeshket e Namuna – The Accursed Mountains, the walk will continue downhill along the side Radohima mountain range until we reach the village of Boga (900m a.s.l). We will have lunch in this picturesque village surrounded by vertical slopes with peaks above 2000m high, and than leave through the Boga valley towards Shkodra and then Tirana (120km – 3hrs).

Day- 9 Tirana If you leave in the afternoon you will have some time to spend in Tirana where you can just relax or visit the National Museum of History or one of the many markets.

Additional info:

Public transport experience!

For people who like hiking, **but are not capable of doing the "big 8 hour hike" between Valbona and Thethi, we offer a "public transport experience"**.The guest, instead of hiking to Thethi, will get a taxi early in the morning, to be dropped off at the ferry. At the other side of the ferry ride, there will be a taxi waiting, to bring the passenger to Thethi (5 hours drive). Your driver might pick up some locals on the way, so it will be a great experience to meet the local people!We use a network of trusted taxi drivers, who are experienced with the roads and our tours.

The price of the public transport is not included in the tour price and will have to be paid directly to the locals.

In case of: 1 person the price is 8000 Lek (66 euro) 2 persons the price is 4000 Lek (33 euro) per person 3 persons the price is 2700 Lek (22 euro) per person etc.etc. (Payment should be given in LEK)

Hiking test

The 3rd day of the tour, the "hiking test" will be at the Holy mountain of Kruja. The guide will look at your walking style and your level of hiking. Together with the guide, you decide, if you are ready for the big hike to Thethi, or if it is better to take public transport.

Terrain during the hikes

This trail is saturated with lots of descends and ascends. The route passes over engraved relief representing alpine terrain with steep slopes, mountain river valleys incised on the mounts, rocky peaks, belts of mountain pine, etc. However, the chosen paths are mostly well trod underfoot and safe.

Weather:

Temperatures expected for this period are between + 10 and +35C. Noontime could be quite exhausting for trekking or simple walking over open territories. Rainfall or short but heavy showers are possible, being a bit prolonged during spring and late autumn.

Luggage transport

The hike from Valbona to Thethi, is accompanied by a mule/horse, which carries the luggage. You will carry your own day backpack. From Thethi to Boga, there will be a vehicle, which will transport the luggage to Boga, from where we drive back to Tirana.

Price of the tour: £675 per personSingle supplement: £90 per person (only available in Kruja, Shkodra and Tirana).

Minimum group size: 4 people . Maximum group size 15 people. The tour includes: Airport transfers, transport, guidance, museum, park/resort fees and full board accommodation during the entire itinerary above described ***. Transport: minibus or car. Guide: English speaking. Food: Traditional restaurants and home-made dishes. Vegetarian meals; available by prior request Accommodation: hotels, guesthouses and village houses.

The price does not include: Flights to Tirana. *** Meals on Day 1 and lunch/dinner Day 9. Drinks. Insurance [Compulsory]

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Additional Information - Please read prior to booking a Trekking Holiday

Recommended equipment: breathable lightweight waterproof gear (gore-tex, sympatex, etc), fleece/wool pullovers, wind-stopper jackets and gloves, small backpack with rain coverage, caps, sun block, mosquito repellent, headlamp, trekking poles, water bottles, and sunglasses.

Meeting time Southern Trekking

The tour starts with a meeting with the guide on day 2 of the tour, in the lobby of the Hotel in Tirana. (1st hotel) The tour leader will be introduced to the group and the tour program will be discussed. You will have the possibility to ask questions and you will get to meet the other guests. The tour ends the last day after breakfast.

Meeting time Northern Trekking

The trekking part of the tour starts with a meeting time at 18.00 the second day at the top terrace of the hotel in Kruja (1st hotel) The tour leader will be introduced to the group, the tour program will be discussed, there is a possibility to ask questions and you will get to meet the other group members. The tour ends the last day after breakfast, though the tour leader will stay around for some time longer, to assist the guest with going back to the airport and explaining the way in Tirana.

Weather:

Temperatures expected for this period are between + 10 and +35C. Noontime could be quite exhausting for trekking or simple walking over open territories. Rainfall or short but heavy showers are possible, being a bit prolonged during spring and late autumn.

Luggage transport

The hike from Valbona to Thethi, is accompanied by a mule/horse, which carries the luggage. You will carry your own day backpack. From Thethi to Boga, there will be a vehicle, which will transport the luggage to Boga, from where we drive back to Tirana.

Early rising

As Albania knows high temperatures, you need to be willing to rise early in the mornings, as later in the day it might be too hot for hiking. Especially in the summer months, it can get up to 35 degrees during daytime.

Tour Dates - 2011

South Tour North Tour

2011 dates to be confirmed – please contact

Derek Crane Travel

Also for 2011 the two holidays can be booked as one 2 week tour!

