

*Full Itinerary*

## ABSOLUTE ALBANIA



TALK TO OUR WELL  
TRAVELLED TEAM OF  
EXPERTS

0844 3350 197

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00  
GMT



### JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

**ACTIVITY LEVEL:**

Level 2

**DESTINATION:**

Absolute Albania

**DURATION:**

10 days / 9 nights

**FLIGHT INFORMATION:**

Please arrange your flights to arrive into Tirana Airport [TIA] on Day 1 and depart from there on Day 10

**PICKUP LOCATION:**

Tirana Airport [TIA]

## OVERVIEW

Choose your own departure day for your group

Albania is an undiscovered gem, just waiting to show its natural beauty & fascinating history. Ruled by the Greeks, Ottomans, Romans & Communists, this jewel of the Mediterranean boasts stunning coastlines, picturesque mountains, history galore & fantastic food - why wait to visit!

Lying just north of Greece along the Balkan Coast, Albania is one of Europe's undiscovered gems. With history dating back thousands of years, and many rulers during that time being at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, the country is a melting pot of history and culture.

From the capital Tirana, we discover historic medieval hilltop fortresses and learn of espionage under Communist rule, visit Roman amphitheatres and ancient monasteries, drive through mountains and along the Albanian Riviera whose beautiful turquoise waters and quaint coves have made it one of Europe's new must-see destinations! We'll enjoy traditional food, wine tasting and lunch at local farms along the way.

Dive into Albania with the Big Journey Company to unearth this absolute undiscovered gem.

## ITINERARY SUMMARY

**DAY 1** - Welcome to Albania

**DAY 2** - Krujë, Albania's Ancient Capital

**DAY 3** - Tirana & its Communist Past

**DAY 4** - Beautiful Berat

**DAY 5** - The Ottoman City of Gjirokaster & Sarandë, Albania's Riviera Resort

**DAY 6** - Butrint National Park, Picnics & Panoramas

**DAY 7** - The Amazing Albanian Riviera

**DAY 8** - Albanian Independence in Vlorë & Zvernec Island

**DAY 9** - Discovering Durres

**DAY 10** - Farewell Albania

## FULL ITINERARY

### DAY 1 - WELCOME TO ALBANIA

Welcome to Albania.

Upon arrival at Tirana Airport, you will be met and transferred to your hotel in the city, Albania's capital.

The rest of the day is at leisure for you to explore and relax before we join together this evening for a dinner in a local restaurant to start our week of exploring.

**Included meals:** Dinner

**Accommodation:** Tirana

### DAY 2 - KRUIË, ALBANIA'S ANCIENT CAPITAL

This morning, after breakfast, we head out of the city to Krujë. Located about 20km north of Tirana, between Mount Krujë and the Ishëm River, Krujë was originally inhabited by the ancient Illyrian tribe of the Albani. Krujë became the capital of the first Albanian state in 1190 and later the capital of the Kingdom of Albania.

We will visit the town's old bazaar and the medieval castle before visiting the Scanderbeg Museum, the leader of the League of Lezhë, who successfully defended the city against three Ottoman sieges until his death in 1468.

From here we transfer to Mrizi I Zanave where we will enjoy lunch at local farm. Here we will also visit the farm where a variety of different products are made, before heading to a local pottery to see some more local handicrafts.

We transfer back to Tirana in the afternoon where the rest of the day is at your own leisure.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Tirana

### DAY 3 - TIRANA & ITS COMMUNIST PAST

We check out of our base in Tirana this morning as we head off of a sightseeing trip of the modern Albanian capital.

Whilst history here can be traced back to the Iron Age with continuous settlements under the many different rulers the region has had, the city itself dates to only 1614, founded around the Ottoman's old mosque.

Along our way, we will visit the House of Leaves Museum, or Museum of Secret Surveillance, which tells of espionage during the Communism era.

We will enjoy lunch together and visit the newly opened Armed Forces Museum, which shows pieces from the 1400s through to modern times.

Afterwards, we start our journey south through Albania's beautiful countryside through the Belshi region as we make our way to the city of Berat. Here we will check in and enjoy dinner together.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Berat

### DAY 4 - BEAUTIFUL BERAT

After breakfast, we will today head out into Berat on a city sightseeing tour. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008, Berat is a historic city surrounded by mountains and hills and lies on the banks of the River Osum and one of Albania's main cultural centres.

The city is famous for its unique style of architecture with influences from several civilizations that have coexisted there for centuries. Like many cities in Albania, Berat comprises an old fortified city filled with churches and mosques painted with grandiose wealth of visible murals and frescos.

We'll visit the Berat's old town, overlooked by its hilltop castle, as well as the Onufri Museum inside of St. Mary's Church to see the beautiful murals painted on the walls.

After lunch, this afternoon we visit of a local family in a typical Ottoman-style building where we'll enjoy a Turkish traditional coffee, jam and raki, the local spirit flavoured with aniseed.

The rest of the afternoon is free for you explore at your own leisure and enjoy the main promenade of the city.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Berat

## DAY 5 - THE OTTOMAN CITY OF GJIROKASTER & SARANDË, ALBANIA'S RIVIERA RESORT

We depart Berat this morning as we head south towards to Gjirokaster.

This UNESCO World Heritage site is a fine example of the typical Ottoman-style city. The city first appears in historical records in 1336 under its medieval Greek name, Ἀργυροκάστρο, and passed under Albanian, Ottoman and Greek rule until it was awarded back to Albania in 1913. Due to this, along with Muslim and Orthodox Albanians, the city is also home to a substantial Greek minority.

Here we will visit the magnificent castle and learn about the story of the Gjirokaster, as well as stop by a local house dating back more than 300 years and learn how life was organized during different periods of time before enjoying a traditional lunch featuring many local specialities.

From here we head towards the coastal town of Sarandë, our base for the next two nights and the heart of the Albanian Riviera. Sandwiched between the Ionian Sea and hills lined with olive groves, the town lies on a horse shoe-shaped bay, lined by beaches and a stunning promenade. The city is built around many archaeological remains, including that of a 5th-century synagogue and an early Christian basilica. After a short city visit, we'll check in to our hotel and enjoy dinner.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Sarandë

## DAY 6 - BUTRINT NATIONAL PARK, PICNICS & PANORAMAS

We head south this morning as we travel to Butrint National Park, lying close to the border with Greece.

The park is full of hilly terrain with freshwater lakes, wetlands, marshes, plains, reed beds and islands and has a huge significance for conservation to over 1,200 different animals and plants, as well the archaeological site, that provides valuable remains of ancient civilisations.

Here, we'll visit one of the most important archeological sites of Albania, showcasing thousands of years of history before making our way to a farm in the nearby area of Xarra for a picnic lunch organized by a local family of farmers.

After lunch, we transfer to Sarandë and the hillock 16th-century Lëkurësi Castle for a beautiful panorama, where if the weather is good, we can see over the Ionian Sea to the Greek island of Corfu which lies just a few miles off the coast, as well as the surrounding region.

Enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure exploring the beautiful riviera resort.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Sarandë

## DAY 7 - THE AMAZING ALBANIAN RIVIERA

We leave Sarandë this morning as we drive along the stunning coastline of the Albanian Riviera.

Our first stop will be to visit the castle of Porto Palermo. Due to its strategic position, the shores of Porto Palermo have been utilized for defensive purposes for millenia. The fortress offers great views along the coast.

From here we travel to nearby Himarë and visit of the old town, which has a high Greek population and where the locals are bilingual, before we make our way through the beautiful Llogara National Park.

We will stop for lunch at a local restaurant before continuing our drive along the Riviera coast to Vlorë. Located on the Bay of Vlorë and surrounded by the foothills of the Ceraunian Mountains along the Albanian Adriatic and Ionian Sea Coasts, Vlorë has been an important port town since the 11th Century BC!

After checking in, the rest of the afternoon is free before we enjoy dinner together this evening.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Vlore

## DAY 8 - ALBANIAN INDEPENDENCE IN VLORË & ZVERNEC ISLAND

This morning, we set out on a guided tour of Vlorë to learn more about the city of Albanian independence.

Between the 18-19th centuries, the Albanians gathered both spiritual and intellectual strength for national consciousness, which conclusively led to the Albanian Renaissance. Vlorë played an instrumental role in Albanian Independence as an epicenter for the founders of modern Albania, who signed the Declaration of Independence on 28 November 1912 at the Assembly of Vlorë.

Afterwards, we transfer to Zverneq Island to visit the monastery located there, one of Albania's oldest monasteries and set in a unique location. At just under 500m long, the pine covered island is set in a lagoon and nowadays connected to the mainland by a wooden walkway.

We will lunch together before returning to Vlorë where the rest of the afternoon is at leisure to explore the city or walk on the promenade.

**Included meals:** Breakfast & Lunch

**Accommodation:** Vlorë

## DAY 9 - DISCOVERING DURRES

We depart Vlorë after breakfast and make our way north to our final stop of the tour, Durres.

The coastal city of Durres is Albania's second city and one of the oldest continuously inhabited, with records dating back some 2,500 years! As you can imagine, the city has had many rulers over the centuries, amongst which the Ancient Greeks, Romans, Bulgarians, Venetians, Ottomans, the Kingdom of Italy, Nazis and Communists to name a few, who have all left their mark on the town.

We'll discover about Durres' history on a sightseeing tour, visiting the Roman Amphitheater, whose capacity of 20,000 people made it the largest in the Balkans!

After lunch, we head out of the city for a wine tasting at Albania's oldest winery, a great chance to buy some of the local produce before you head home.

We transfer back to Durres city centre for some free time before we rejoin one final time for dinner to round off our time in Albania.

**Included meals:** Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner

**Accommodation:** Durres

## DAY 10 - FAREWELL ALBANIA

**Included meals:** Breakfast

**Accommodation:** none

## WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Meet & Greet at Tirana Airport [TIA] on arrival
- Transport in an air-conditioned deluxe vehicle
- Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Meals as detailed in the itinerary
- English speaking tour guide
- All activities, visits and excursions as detailed in the itinerary
- Tour Director from The Big Journey Company as well as the local tour guide (subject to minimum group size being reached.)

## WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- ATOL protection
- Return international flights to/from Tirana Airport [TIA] - flight quotations available on request, please contact us for further details
- Drinks
- Gratuities
- Travel and medical insurance
- Any personal items and anything not mentioned under included in price above
- Any meals not mentioned in itinerary
- Any optional activities offered
- Any COVID tests or related entry & exit requirements

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- **Please note, flights to/from Albania are not included in this package. The Big Journey Company would be happy to provide a quotation for your flights - please contact us for further details**
- Please let The Big Journey Company know prior to travelling if you have any medical needs or take any medication that we need to be made aware of to ensure that you have a safe and pleasant tour.
- Check in is after 2:00 - 3:00 pm and check out is before 10:00am unless otherwise specified in the itinerary.
- Cancellation 90 – 0 days prior to departure cancellation fee is 100%. It is your responsibility to ensure the correct travel insurance in place to protect you against the need to cancel your holiday. Deposits are non-refundable. Final payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure.
- Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation request. This does not affect your statutory rights. This offer is subject to availability and space is limited.

## BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

*Choose from the list of dates below*

*Call to Book*

**0844 3350 197**

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00 GMT