

# Walking the Albanian Alps

Trip Code: ALB

Version:



WALK & TREK



GUIDED GROUP



MODERATE



## HIGHLIGHTS

- Experience homestays and lovely walks in the valleys of Valbona and Thethi
- Look out for Golden Eagles in wild Albania and hike across the Valbona Pass
- Stay in the cultural gems of Kruja and Shkodra and explore alpine Cerem
- Sail across charming Lake Koman and explore Albania's magnificent alps

## AT A GLANCE

- 6 days trekking
- Max altitude - 1960m
- Join at Tirana

## ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

[VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE](#)

# Introduction

A land of jaw dropping scenery, wonderful hospitality and fascinating culture, Albania is a Balkan gem and perfect for a unique walking holiday. Known as the land of smiles, Albanians are proud of their strong traditions and stunning scenery including the magnificent Accursed Mountains. This European wilderness is home to spectacular alpine landscapes and superb wildlife including lynx, chamois, wolf, deer, golden eagles, buzzards, owls and falcons. We start in the Shkodra, the most historical town in the Balkans, the home of Gheg culture and a true cultural gem. We'll sail through the fjord of Lake Koman and walk in the beautiful valley of Valbona, fondly called the Miracle of the Alps. Valbona is charming with its rich biodiversity, ancient traditions and excellent walking. After Valbona we head over the spectacular Valbona Pass and down into Thethi in the heart of the Albanian Alps. We finish the holiday in magnificent Kruja nestled in the lap of the mountains. With its Ottoman bazaar and impressive castle, Kruja is a wonderful end to our Albanian adventure. Unforgettable Albania offers that unique opportunity to step back in time and experience stunning scenery, unique cultures and the biggest smiles in Europe.

## Is this holiday for you?

The spectacular Accursed Mountains (Albanian Alps) offers low-level (max 2000m) but challenging and remote walking alongside traditional homestays. During this holiday we follow well-established footpaths and mule tracks between valleys and villages that are rocky but non-technical. A couple of days involve out and back walks up to truly dramatic locations, which are holiday highlights. Whilst based in Thethi and Valbona you are free to opt in or out of the daily walk if you prefer to enjoy the surroundings of the homestay. A holiday highlight is the challenging Valbona Pass which takes you into the next valley and unfortunately cannot be avoided apart from a long road journey. Before this holiday it's good to prepare yourself for walking between 6 and 7 hours each day and be comfortable with steep ascents and descents. Albania is an amazing country and perfect for walkers who are looking for challenging hiking and longer days in amazing mountain scenery.

# Itinerary

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Version:

## Holiday Information

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### What's Included

- A professional and qualified tour leader
- Single timed Tirana Airport transfers on arrival and departure
- All accommodation as described
- All meals
- All land transport required by the itinerary
- All activities/excursions/entrance fees mentioned except where specified as 'optional'
- Baggage transfers by pack-horses or mules during the trek

### What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Tips
- Miscellaneous expenses - drinks and souvenirs etc.

### Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The group will meet at Tirana Airport in the early afternoon of Day 1.

A single transfer from Tirana Airport to the group hotel in Shkodra is provided mid-afternoon on Day 1.

Hotel contact details and an emergency number will be provided with your booking confirmation.

### Meal Plan

All meals, from dinner on day 1 to breakfast on day 9, are included.

## Food & Water

Water from the taps may not be drinkable in all locations on this trip - please check with your guide. We recommend taking water purification tablets and a reusable bottle with a filter such as [Water-to-Go](#), which can both be used to help make safe other water sources. Please note that we do not encourage the purchase of single use plastic bottles.

With a mix of Balkan, Turkish and European influences, Albania offers a rich variety of dishes. In hotels breakfast are continental style, with cereals, bread and jam, tea, coffee and sometimes eggs. You may also have the chance to try a more traditional Albanian breakfast of flavoured rice. At the guesthouses, breakfasts are simple but filling. Picnic lunches are provided (bread, meat, cheese, tomatoes, cucumber etc. There will also be fruit and a snack/muesli bar etc. Evening meals include traditional soups, locally-grown vegetables, local dairy and meat dishes. The village accommodation is based deep in the heart of the Albanian mountains and the lifestyle here is very simple therefore “packed lunches” or sandwiches will not be the same as you are used to at home. However what is prepared is all freshly cooked and evening meals are based on what the local family would have themselves. If you are someone who enjoys chocolate/sweets/nuts on the trail then please feel free to bring extra snacks from home. Water is provided, but very often this is from local wells or mountain streams and is not chlorinated. If you are concerned about drinking untreated water, we suggest you bring a supply of water treatment tablets.

## Accommodation

During this holiday, the group will spend 1 night at a comfortable hotel in Shkodra and 1 night at a similar establishment in Kruja. These hotels provide twin-sharing accommodation.

There will also be 6 nights in simple village guesthouse / farmhouse accommodation in Thethi, Nderlysa and the Valbona Valley. Rooms here are basic, but welcoming. Up to 6 persons will share a room, and it may be necessary for male and female group members to share. The village guesthouses, whilst charming and friendly have basic facilities however the warm welcome more than makes up for the lack of hotel facilities! Staying with local families is all part of the overall Albanian trekking experience and allows us to experience a genuine side to the Albanian Alps.

If you are travelling by yourself, you will be paired up with another single client of the same sex for the 2 hotel nights. Single rooms are available for a supplementary cost for these 2 nights. If you are planning on extending your holiday additional nights at the group hotel are available on request.

## Group Leader & Support Staff

The group will be led by a professional and qualified tour leader, one or more support vehicle drivers (on Days 1, 2, 8 and 9), and a team of pack-animals and their handlers during some of the trekking days.

## Spending Money

Approximately £150 should be allowed for miscellaneous expenses including your bar bills and reasonable tips to the support crew. If you intend to buy expensive souvenirs, you should budget accordingly. Albania's unit of currency is the Lek. ATM machines are available at Tirana Airport, in Shkodra and in Kruja. Credit cards can be used to purchase goods and services in some shops, hotels and restaurants in Albania.

## Guidance on Tipping

Tips do not form part of the wages of local staff but they are very much appreciated. It is important to remember that tipping is voluntary and should be dependent on good service. It is best if the tip is given at the end of the trip by the group as a whole. We recommend that each group member contributes around £25 and that tips are then distributed between the guide and support staff as the group feels is appropriate.

## Baggage Allowance

Baggage will be transported between overnight stops by vehicle, other than on day 5 when it will be transported by mules. There is no weight restriction other than that imposed by your international carrier but we do ask you to limit your luggage to one piece which weighs no more than 15kgs plus your day pack. For this holiday we recommend a soft holdall or rucksack (not a suitcase) which is easier to secure and more comfortable for the mules.

## Group Size & Holiday Status

For each holiday there is a minimum number of participants required to enable it to go ahead. Once the minimum number is reached, the trip status will change from 'Available' to 'Guaranteed to run'. You can check the trip status for each departure in the 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status so you are free to proceed with your international flight booking and other travel arrangements.

## Flight payment

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary joining in Tirana. For clients making their own flight arrangements, Tirana Airport is the most convenient for transfers to the group hotel. Please refer to 'Joining Arrangements and Transfers' in the trip dossier for further details.

Flights SHOULD NOT be booked until you have received your booking confirmation and the trip is showing 'Guaranteed to Run' or 'Limited'.

# General Information

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## Passport & Visas

The information that we provide is for UK passport holders. A passport with 6 months remaining validity at the end of your stay is generally required, and you should have at least 2 blank pages for each country that you visit.

**It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check for the latest advice before travel. For the most up to date information on entry requirements, please visit the [UK Government website](#).

### Visa Albania

UK and USA passport holders do not require a visa for shorts stays.

## Health & Vaccinations

If you have a severe allergy please inform the KE office before you travel. We will do all we can to help, but we cannot guarantee an allergy free environment on KE trips. You will need to carry your own treatment for the allergy with you, as 'adrenaline auto-injectors' are not carried as standard by KE leaders and staff. You should inform your leader on arrival of your allergy, and let them know where you keep your adrenaline pen.

## VACCINATIONS

You should contact your doctor or travel clinic to check whether you require any specific vaccinations or other preventive measures. You should be up to date with routine courses and boosters as recommended in the UK e.g. diphtheria-tetanus-polio and measles-mumps-rubella, along with hepatitis A and typhoid. A good online resource is [Travel Health Pro](#).

## Currency

The unit of currency in Albania is the Lek.

## Preparing for your Holiday

It makes a lot of sense to spend some time before coming on an active holiday getting some additional exercise. Whilst regular hiking in hill or back country is the best preparation, running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing better cardiovascular fitness and stamina. Before departure, we suggest that you try to fit in a number of long walks in hilly country.

## Climate

Daytime temperatures in the lower valleys will vary between 20°C and 30°C at the times of year we operate this trip. The weather in summer is generally excellent - with hot days, clear skies and little rain. Note that temperatures do drop in the evenings by several degrees. High up, we may encounter cooler conditions and stormy weather cannot be ruled out at any time of year in this mountainous region.

## Travel Aware

As a reputable tour operator, KE supports the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office's '[Travel Aware](#)' campaign to enable British citizens to prepare for their journeys overseas. The 'Travel Aware' website provides a single, authoritative source of advice for all kinds of travellers and we recommend that before travel, all KE clients visit the official UK Government website at [travelaware.campaign.gov.uk](http://travelaware.campaign.gov.uk) and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: [www.travel.state.gov](http://www.travel.state.gov) for essential travel advice and tips.

KE treat the safety and security of all clients as the most important aspect of any trip we organise. We would not run any trip that we did not consider reasonably safe. Should the FCDO advise against travel for any reason, we will contact everyone booked to travel to discuss the situation. We receive regular updates directly from the FCDO and are in constant touch with our contacts on the ground. If you have any questions about government travel advice, please call our office.

## Single Use Plastic

KE do not encourage the use of single use plastic items. We are ensuring that our agents all over the world are working together to reduce the problem and educate those around them. We are leading by example in our KE office by reducing our plastic use.

## Books

- The Accursed Mountains - Robert Carver
  
- Broken April - Ismail Kadare
  
- General of the Dead Army - Ismail Kadare
  
- High Albania - Edith Durham
  
- The Albanians : A Modern History - Miranda Vickers

## Maps

### Albania Road Map. Freytag and Berndt. 1:400,000.

Road map of the entire country of Albania.

## Travel Insurance

It is an essential condition of joining a holiday with KE Adventure Travel that you have a valid travel insurance policy to cover the cost of medical treatment and to protect the value of your holiday in the event of cancellation. When taking out insurance please ensure the policy you choose covers you for the activities and altitude included in your itinerary.

For appropriate insurance cover we recommend Campbell Irvine Direct. Please go to our [Travel Insurance](#) page for further information and to get a quote.

## Explore International

This holiday is part of our Explore International range. Participants on these trips can book through KE or through one of our international partners. This helps us to gather together sufficient numbers of like-minded adventurers to get your holiday up and running quickly. Led by an English-speaking guide, the cosmopolitan nature of these groups can be an important part of the experience!

# Equipment Information

## Equipment List

The following checklist should help you with your packing. As a general rule, you should always try to keep the weight of your equipment to a minimum.

### You should bring the following items:

- Hiking boots
- Trekking trousers / shorts
- Baselayer shirts (1 short sleeve, 1 long sleeve)
- T-shirts or casual shirts
- Socks & Underwear
- Light fleece shirt or mid-layer
- Warm fleece jacket or jumper
- Waterproof jacket & overtrousers
- Lightweight thermal gloves
- Sunhat
- Warm hat
- Sunglasses
- Daypack 30 litres
- Headtorch and spare batteries



- Sun protection (including for lips)
  - Water bottle (we encourage re-filling water bottles rather than single use plastic)
  - Water purification tablets
  - Washbag and toiletries
  - Travel towel
- Basic First Aid Kit including: Insect repellent; antiseptic cream; throat lozenges; diarrhoea treatment (Diocalm or Imodium); painkillers; plasters and blister treatment; and re-hydration salts (Dioralite).  
Glucose sweets and vitamin tablets are a useful addition.

### The following items are optional:

- Training shoes or sandals
- Trekking poles (highly recommended)
- Camera
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping (to avoid plastic bags)

### Cotswold Outdoor

Many of the equipment items listed above are available from [Cotswold Outdoor](#) - our '**Official Recommended Outdoor Retailer**'. When you book a holiday with KE you will receive a 12.5% discount with Cotswold Outdoor, Snow+Rock and Runners Need. The discount code can be downloaded from your MyKE account and you can use this code at the checkout, either in store or online.

### Land Only Information

The LAND ONLY dates and prices are for the itinerary starting and ending at Tirana Airport. A group transfer from Tirana Airport to Shkodra will be provided in the early evening on Day 1. A single transfer back to Tirana Airport from Kruja is also provided on the final day of the holiday.

There are a number of low cost carriers offering direct flights to and from Tirana. If you would like to take advantage of these schedules please check the timings of the provided transfers on Day 1 and Day 9 with the office team.

### Flight Inclusive Information

The FLIGHT INCLUSIVE dates and prices are based on UK flights from London to Tirana with Austrian Airlines. Outbound flights will usually depart from the UK in the morning, arriving in the early evening of the same day (Day 1 of the itinerary). Return flights will depart Tirana at around midday on the final day of the holiday, arriving in the UK later that same evening.

## Why Choose KE

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## Why KE

With KE you'll enjoy your final night in the medieval town of Kruja complete with walled fortress and cobbled streets. We believe it's the perfect place to raise a glass of raki and celebrate a trekking adventure. Kruja also gives you a real taste of Albanian life with its fantastic bazaar and atmospheric coffee houses.

**Please Note** This document was downloaded on 21/11/2024 and the trip is subject to change