



GRAND TOUR OF ALBANIA

EUROPE'S HIDDEN GEM



DURATION
14 Days



GROUP SIZE
Small Group



ACCOMMODATION
Boutique hotels, guesthouses



MEETING POINT
**Tirana
International
Airport**



TRANSPORTATION
Private



DIFFICULTY
Moderate

It is required hiking experience and a reasonable level of fitness and the ability to handle 4-6 hours of activity a day.

In a Europe that's been tamed and explored, with rules and order in every single corner – from the supermarket to the bus stop – Albania is the last defender of the rugged. A place where the mountains have no roads, the rivers flow wild, and the beaches unspoiled by the concrete and promenades of the West. Where adventure isn't guided by velvet ropes or lonely planet guides, but simply by the feet in your shoes, and the spirit in your heart. Where a holiday can melt away your routine, and reinvigorate your zest for the undiscovered and the grit of nature beyond the maps.

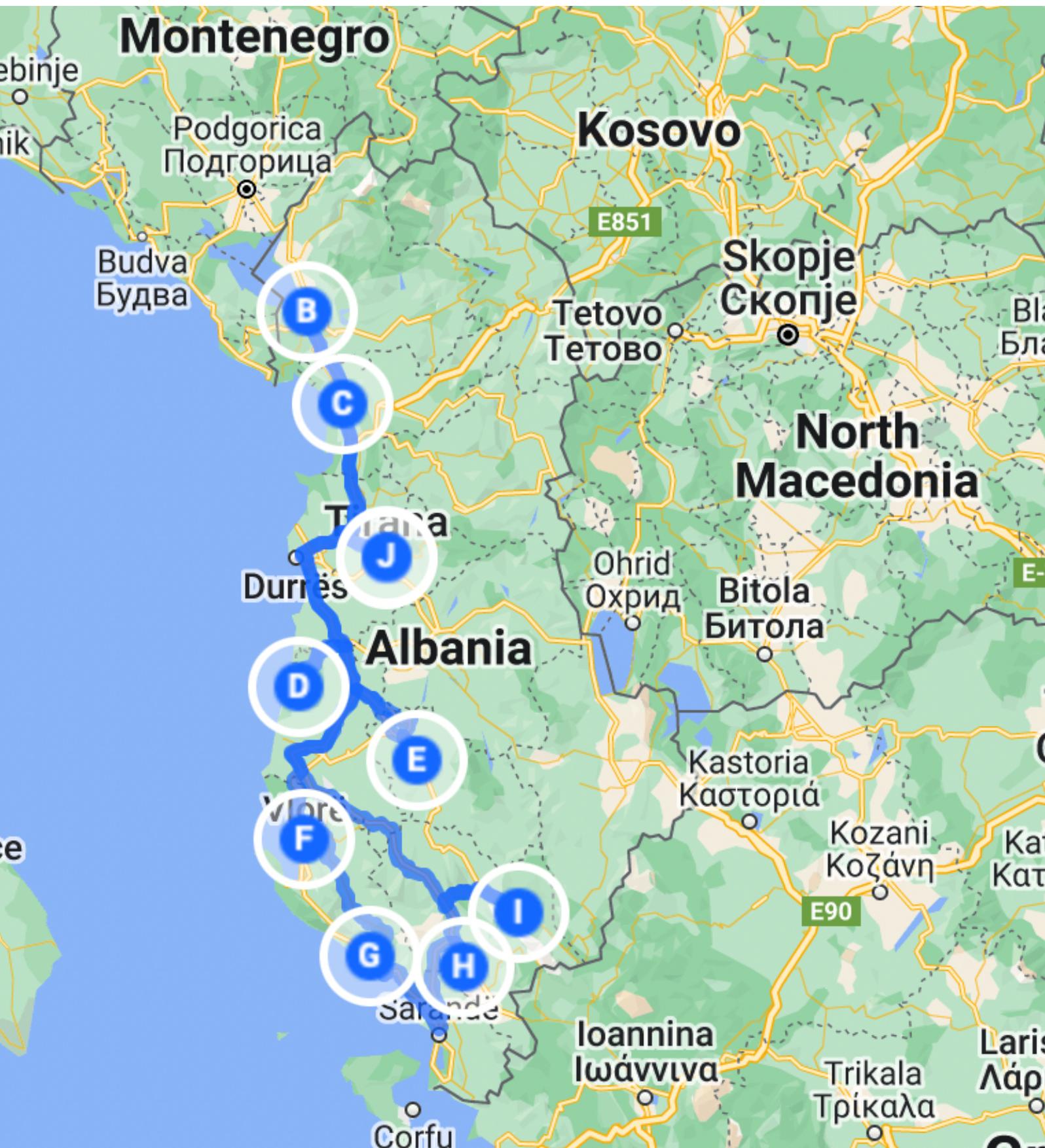
Discover the adventurous, mysterious, un-tamed, Albania.

Highlights

- ⊗ Discovering the Karaburun - Sazan Marine Park
- ⊗ Canoeing in Shkodra lake
- ⊗ Discover UNESCO sites
- ⊗ Rafting in Europe's First Wild River National Park
- ⊗ Birdwatching in Karavasta National Park
- ⊗ Meet the locals and taste delicious fresh food



Itinerary



DAY 1 Tirana - Embrace the Capital Energy

As you touch down in the bustling and vibrant capital city of Tirana, your adventure amidst Albania's natural and cultural wonders begins. While the exact time of your arrival is yet to be confirmed, one thing is undeniable: you're on the brink of an exhilarating journey tailored for outdoor enthusiasts. You'll find comfort at the charming La Boheme Hotel, your home for the first two nights, as you prepare to immerse yourself in Albania's cultural and natural beauty.

The rented vehicle will be handed from an appointee of Active Albania representative, at the airport.



DAY 2 Tirana - Tirana Exploration & Gastronomic Delights

Your adventure starts with an enticing cooking class, led by food activist Dhurata Thanasi. Here, you'll master the art of preparing traditional Albanian dishes using fresh, local ingredients. Following the cooking class and a savory lunch, you'll dive into the heart of Tirana with a walking city tour with our culture guide Frosina, immersing yourself in its lively culture and rich history. As the day unfolds, you'll relish a sumptuous vegetarian dinner at Fustanella agro tourism. Your night in Tirana is filled with anticipation for the reinvigorating experiences that await.

Duration of cooking activity and lunch: 4 hours

Tirana City Tour: 2-3 hours

Level of difficulty: easy

Drive: About 30 min



DAY 3 Shkoder- **The city of Art & Culture**

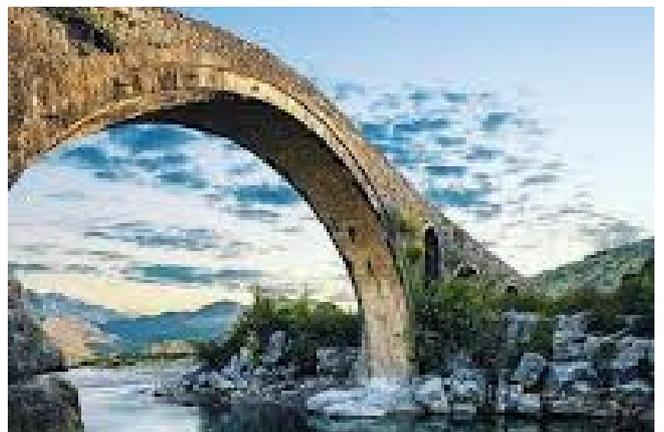
Shkodër embodies a perfect blend of cultural richness, art, history, stunning nature, vibrant bazaars, and more. The city's enchanting restaurants lining the promenade and its iconic cafes contribute to an energetic urban ambiance, all while preserving the delightful charm of this traditional Albanian destination. You will experience a canoeing experience in the beautiful Shkodra lake and a visit to the photography museum Marubi.

Paddling Shkodra lake: 3-4 hours

Level of difficulty: easy

Drive Tirana - Shkoder : About 2 hours

Free evening to explore your city by your own.



DAY 4 Shengjin - **Relaxing day beach at Rana e Hedhun**

This morning you depart to get immersed into the Adriatic sea. Rana e Hedhun is perhaps one of the most fascinating destinations in Lezha. Named in the Gheg dialect of Albanian, in English, its name literally translates as “poured” or “thrown sand”, referring to the untouched sand dunes and formations along its coastline. You will enjoy a local lunch of fresh caught fish. Your journey includes a stop in the historic city of Lezha. During dinner we'll be delighted by the world-famous farm-to-table and fine dining restaurant “Mrizi i Zanave” offering the most updated traditional cuisine in the country.

Level of difficulty: easy

Drive Shkoder - Rana e Hedhun - Shkoder : About 2,5 hours

Local fish based lunch and dinner at the famous “Mrizi i Zanave” agrotourism.



DAY 5 Divjake- Birdwatching at the National Park Divjake Karavasta

You will embark on a mesmerizing birdwatching journey in Divjakë Karavasta National Park, where the enchanting Karavasta Lagoon unfolds its natural wonders. Nestled between the embrace of the Adriatic Sea and a vast strip of sand, this lagoon boasts a captivating landscape of lagoons, small sandy islands, and coastal pine forests adorned with majestic sand dunes. The allure of this habitat lies in its irresistible charm for a diverse array of birds, with a staggering 230 different species recorded to date. Among the avian treasures that grace the skies and waters of Karavasta Lagoon, the Dalmatian Pelican reigns supreme, comprising a remarkable 6.4% of Europe's population. After the day spent in the Park you will leave to the eternal city of Berat.

Duration of birdwatching: 3-4 hours

Level of difficulty: easy/moderate

Drive Shkoder- Karavasta -Berat: About 4,5 hours

Local lunch in Karavasta. Free evening to explore Berat city by your own.

*Optional tour: Afternoon cycling into the park with an extra fee of 30 Eur/person.



DAY 6 Berat- **The Eternal City**

Berat stands as a pivotal national hub for culture and heritage, offering delightful walks through cobblestone lanes in its renowned Mangalem, Gorica, and Castle districts, among other treasures. As one of Albania's oldest and most historically significant cities, Berat promises a day filled with breathtaking landscapes complemented by its abundant cultural and heritage offerings. This UNESCO-protected site encompasses three expansive neighborhoods—Mangalem and Gorica, separated by the flowing Osum River, and the medieval castle, remarkably still inhabited.

Duration of culture tour 2-4 hours

Level of difficulty: easy

Drive Lezhe - Berat: About 3,5 hours

Local lunch. Free evening to explore the city by your own.

*Optional tour: Afternoon hike on the ruins of Gorica fortress with an extra fee of 30 Eur/person.



DAY 7 Berat- Wine tasting on the foot of the holy Mount of Tomor

Today, your adventure takes us to Alpeta, a family-owned winery and agrotourism haven surrounded by natural beauty. You'll start with a short hike through Tomor Mountain, discovering its hidden treasures and enjoying panoramic views.

After our exploration, immerse yourself in Alpeta's winemaking traditions, savoring flavors cultivated through generations. The winery offers a journey through the heart and soul of the region's winemaking. To culminate our day, indulge in a local lunch, celebrating the farm-to-table ethos and the region's culinary heritage. In the embrace of Alpeta, you will create lasting memories amidst vineyards, Tomor Mountain trails, and a table laden with the bounty of the land.

Duration of hiking tour 2-3 hours

Level of difficulty: easy

Drive Berat - Alpeta -Berat: About 1,5 hours

Wine tasting and Lunch at Alpeta Agrotourism. Free evening.



DAY 8 Vlora - Discover the only Marine Park of Albania

The day begins with the promise of exploring Vlora's captivating coastline through a private speed boat tour, treating oneself to stunning panoramic views, discovering pristine beaches, and immersing in the rich tapestry of history. Your first stop brings you to the renowned Haxhi Ali Cave, offering an opportunity to explore its wonders. As you cruise along the inner coast of Karaburun National Marine Park, be prepared to be captivated by the beauty of the landscape and the hidden gems that await. This will be a day filled with exploration, relaxation, and the magic of the sea as we navigate through these fascinating destinations.

Duration of speedboat tour 4-5 hours

Level of difficulty: easy

Drive: About 2 hours (Berat-Vlore)

Barbecue lunch.

Free evening to explore the city by your own.



DAY 9 Vlora - Hiking to Mount Qorre

Today you embark on a scenic journey through the National Park of Llogara, ascending the Qorre Peak, which proudly stands at an elevation of 2018 meters, ranking as the second-highest peak in the Ceraunian Mountains. This vantage point offers a breathtaking panorama, allowing you to marvel at the enchanting views of the Çika peak and the expansive Ionian Sea. Following the ascent to the Qorre Pass, the final climb involves tackling a hill with a modest ascent of less than 200 meters over a 500-meter hike. Reaching the summit is a triumphant moment, offering a panoramic reward of untamed mountains and idyllic beaches stretching along the coastline.

Distance: 9.4 km

Elevation: 1000 m

Route: Out and Back

Difficulty: Moderate/Hard

Drive: About 2 hours (Vlore-Himare)

Free evening to explore the city by your own.

*Optional tour: Visit of an olive/wine factory and oil tasting with an extra fee of 25 Eur/ person.



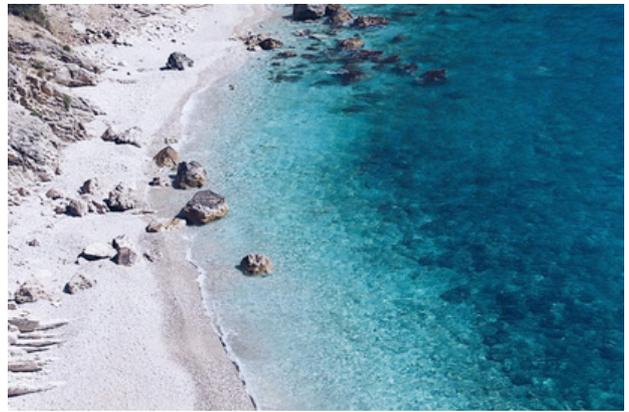
DAY 10 Himara - **Lazy Beach Day**

Nestled along the Ionian Coast, Himara is not just a popular beach destination; it houses the enchanting old town—a medieval fortress atop a hill. With the Ionian Sea to the west and a protective mountain range to the east, the old town resembles an amphitheater. Himara, a top summer spot, holds a significant part of Albanian cultural heritage within its medieval fortress, showcasing ruins spanning over 3500 years. Perched 1 km from the Ionian shore, the Himara Castle on the cliff of Barbaka is hailed as one of the most beautiful castles in the south, offering history and stunning views.

Today you will have a relax day on the beach and we do a short visit to Himara castle before dinner.

Drive: About 2,5 hours (Vlore-Himare)

Seafood based dinner in Himare.



DAY 11 Gjirokaster - Visit the Stone City of Gjirokastra

You will embark on an enchanting experience through the rugged landscapes of Gjirokastra, Albania's UNESCO World Heritage gem. With its rich history and stunning architecture, we will explore the ancient streets, marveling at the well-preserved Ottoman-style houses that reflect the city's unique character. Get ready to immerse yourself in the vibrant local culture and food as we navigate the bustling bazaar, where we can indulge in traditional crafts and experience the authentic flavors of the region tasting a local lunch. In the afternoon we will enjoy a cooking class.

Duration of the culture tours : 2-3 hours

Level of difficulty: easy

Savor the evening with cocktails in Gjirokastra Bazaar.



DAY 12 Permet - Experience Europe's First Wild River National Park

Get ready for an unforgettable adventure in Europe's very first Wild River National Park, where nature's wonders and exciting experiences come together. This unspoiled sanctuary is home to more than 1,100 different plants and animals, and you'll have a chance to meet the friendly locals who call this place home. As you explore the lush, peaceful riverbanks, you'll also uncover hidden caves and tunnels beneath the ground. And for thrill-seekers, there's no shortage of excitement with activities like rafting and thermal baths of Benja- all set against the backdrop of Europe's very first Wild River National Park. Vjosa valley is more than just water; it's an incredible blend of nature and adventure waiting for you to discover. Local lunch with fresh caught river fish.

Duration of rafting activity: 2-3 hours

Level of rafting: Class II with a few rapids of class III

Duration of visit of thermal baths: 1-2 hours

Drive: About 2,5 hours (Gjirokaster - Rafting Departure Point - Gjirokaster)

Free evening to explore Gjirokastra city by your own.



DAY 13 - Bylis Archeological Park

You leave to the vibrant capital of Tirana. On the way you will explore the historic Tepelena Castle and marvel at the engineering brilliance of Ali Pasha's aqueduct along the Bença River. A poignant visit to the worst labor camp will be followed by a scenic drive to Bylis, where we'll savor lunch close to the archaeological park. Afterward, your journey takes us back to Tirana for a thriving evening in "Blloku".

Level of difficulty: easy

Drive: About 4 hours (Gjirokaster-Bylis-Tirane)

Local lunch in Bylis agrotourism.

Free evening to explore the capital by your own.



DAY 14 Tirana - **Time to Say Goodbye Albania**

You will begin our day with a fascinating exploration of Bunkart in Tirana, delving into its historical narratives and gaining a deeper understanding of Albania's past. Following this enriching experience, your journey continues with a scenic drive towards the airport, allowing you to savor the last glimpses of Albania's diverse landscapes. As you embark on this final leg, it's time to reflect on the remarkable moments and cultural encounters that have defined our Albanian adventure. With gratitude for the memories, you bid farewell to this captivating journey.

Duration of the BunkArt visit: 2-3 hours

Level of difficulty: easy

Drive: About 1 hour (Tirane - BunkArt - Tirana International Airport)

Farewell lunch.



NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS THE FOOD LIKE AND CAN MY DIETARY REQUIREMENTS BE CATERED TO?

Albanian food is hearty and healthy, usually based around meat and vegetables much of which is seasonal and sourced locally. Popular dishes include turkey, lamb or goat Pershesh, served with a local bread known as kulac, a meat and leek pie made with thin pastry called Byrek and freshly caught fish served in a Mediterranean style. Fish dishes are often flavored with white vinegar and olive oil grown in Southern Albania and many dishes are served with wine from one the local vineyards. If you've got specific dietary needs, contact us before you book and we'll take care of to accomplish them.

WHAT IS THE WEATHER LIKE?

The best months to explore Albania are from February to July and from September to November when the weather is warm and sunny, reaching temperatures of around 30 degrees. August can be hotter, however this is usually broken up by cool coastal breezes.

WHAT SHOULD I PACK?

Recommended packing includes: - Comfortable boots - Lightweight, breathable clothing that's suitable for walking/ hiking/biking - Wind/waterproof jacket - Hat - Water bottle - Sunglasses - Sunscreen - Swimwear in case of water activities - Towel in case of water activities- A small backpack in case of outdoor activities.

PRICE

Starting from 1200 Eur/person

WHAT'S INCLUDED

Rented Vehicle

For all the days of your stay with unlimited mileage

Accommodation

9 nights in hotels, 4 nights in guesthouses

Meals

13 breakfasts, 11 lunches, 4 dinners

Equipment & Activities

Everything you need for canoening, birdwathcing and rafting

24-hour emergency service

NOT INCLUDED

Flights to and from the meeting point

Personal expenses

Meals & Beverages other than those specified in the itinerary

Travel insurance

Visas where required

Gratuities to local hosts for included services

Any item not mentioned as included

Personal expenses

**DID NOT FIND WHAT YOU ARE
LOOKING FOR?**

LET US CREATE YOUR DREAM TRIP

Our team leader Blerina Ago will be delighted to tailor a completely personalised itinerary to suit your interests, time and budget.

Email/ Call/ WhatsApp Blerina on

blerina@activealbania.com/ +393498949201

SOME INSPIRATION



VJOSA NATIONAL PARK

[HTTPS://WWW.ADVENTURETRAVELNEWS.COM/VOTE-WITH-YOUR-PADDLE-VJOSA-NATIONAL-PARK-NOW](https://www.adventuretravelnews.com/vote-with-your-paddle-vjosa-national-park-now)

ADVENTURES NOT DAMS

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/OIDS2X4OA4C](https://youtu.be/oids2x4oa4c)

ALBANIA: UNPARALLELED, EXCEPTIONAL & AUTHENTIC

[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=LOD7-GQELYS](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOD7-GQELYS)

TAKEN BY ALBANIA

[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/HOH2EIQC3MS?FEATURE=SHARED](https://youtu.be/HOH2EIQC3MS?FEATURE=SHARED)