EXPLORE! Tour Notes

PRICE GUARANTEE 100% NO SURCHARGES

Walking Albania (ALW 2015)

WALK & TREK

TOURDURAT
8
DAYS

Tour Style: Classic
Tour Comfort: Standard
Tour Type: Small Groups
Trek Grade: Easy to Moderate
tour Code: ALW

Tour Highlights - Walking Albania

- ✓ Kruja - Visit the bazaar and the strategic fortress of Skanderbeg, Albania's national hero
- ✓ Albanian Alps - Rural villages, traditional cultures and some of the most spectacular landscapes in the country. Explore Theth Valley and hike the 'Mutton Path'
- ✓ Llogora National Park - Enjoy stunning vistas of the Llogora Pass, Karaburuni Peninsula and the coastline
- ✓ Tirana - Hike up to the Black Cave of Pellumbas

Tour Essentials

Accommodation:	3 nights Standard Hotel 2 nights Simple Guesthouse
Included Meals:	7 breakfasts, 3 lunches, 4 dinners
Start Point:	Join tour: Durres
End Point:	Tour ends: Kruja
Maximum Altitude on Trek (m):	1830
Transport:	Bus
Countries:	Albania

Walking Albania

Explore the mysteries of Albania on this scenic trekking holiday. The highlight of the trip will be the little visited north of the country where we trek in the stunning Albanian Alps region. We also walk along dramatic coastlines in Llogora National Park. As well as scenic walks, we will visit several traditional coastal villages and historical and cultural monuments.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Tour Comfort: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Trek Grade: Easy to Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate level walks on the same tour. You'll be walking mainly on good paths and at low altitude, with occasional more demanding ascents or descents.

Your tour itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

A Tour Leader is an integral part of any Explore tour and your tour will be led by one of our experienced tour leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Tour Leaders are the key to the success of our tours; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your tour Leader will also take care of all the planning and organization throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this tour fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join tour Durres

Join tour at Durres on the Adriatic Sea. Depending on your arrival time you may have some time to explore on your own today.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: None

DAY 2 Drive to Llogora National Park; afternoon walk on the Karaburuni Peninsula

This morning we will drive to Llogora National Park via Vlora. We then take a walk through the forest, along a trail that starts just beside our hotel. Following a well trodden path we climb to the Qafa e Thelle (Deep Pass), negotiating our way through dense pine forests towards the wild beauty of the Karaburuni Peninsula. In the afternoon there is the opportunity of an additional short walk to Caesar's Pass before returning to the hotel for the evening.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3 Hike to Dhjopuri Pass, afternoon visit to Dhermi Village

Following a short drive to the Llogora Pass we begin our morning's walk up to the Dhjopuri Pass, a 600m ascent that provides us with some great views of the mountains and the coast. At the end of the hike we meet up with our bus to drive on to the village of Dhermi, nestling among the rocky slopes of the Ceraunian Mountains. Taking in its lovely old houses and orthodox churches, we then head to the beach for the afternoon, before making our way back to the hotel later this evening.

Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4 Drive to Tirana, afternoon hike to Pellumbas Cave

Today we head for Tirana, the capital city of Albania. En route we will stop for a short visit at the Monastery of Ardenica. Often referred to as 'The Castle of Myzeqe', it is an orthodox site, and the only inhabited monastery in Albania. It is believed that its beginnings date back to about the 10th Century and that Skanderbeg, the Albanian national hero was married at the St. Triadha Church, in May of 1451. This afternoon we then hike up to the Black Cave of Pellumbas, a four hour walk that takes us to a large cave (used also as a prehistoric settlement) lying in the rural hills above Tirana.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 Drive to the Albanian Alps

After breakfast we leave the city and head north, driving towards the mountain village of Thethi deep in the heart of the Albanian Alps. Our journey takes us by way of Shkodra, and continues on to the picturesque village of Boga, spectacularly situated amongst a ring of 2000 metre peaks. We then drive over the Qafa e Thores (Diagonal Pass) to our traditional village guesthouse in the centre of Thethi National Park. This afternoon we start walking the Mutton Pass (1830m) and pass by the Shepherd's Kraal before reaching the Thore Pass (1676m). During this walk we can enjoy the views which take in the expanse of the Thethi Valley and peaks of the 'Bjeshket e Naumna' (Accursed Mountains). Here we will be transferred back to our guest house by minibus Please note that the guest house has shared facilities.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6 Exploring the Thethi Valley

Heading out of the village this morning we pay a visit to the church and the Kulla e Ngujimit, an old 'lock-in tower' that dates back to a time when blood feuds blighted these Albanian highlands. This region is still isolated enough to provide a haven for wild boar, bear and eagles and, as we head past a waterfall and into the Grunasi Canyon, we pass by the remains of ancient bronze aged terraces. After stopping for lunch in a local house, we then walk through the beautiful alpine landscapes of the Kaprea Valley before heading back to Thethi.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 Drive to Kruja via Shkodra

Today we drive through the Boga Valley back to Shkodra where we visit the Rozafa Castle and enjoy views out across Shkodra Lake. We have lunch by the lake where there is a possibility of taking a dip. We then continue our journey onto to Kruja. This afternoon we visit Kruja's impressive castle, dramatically perched on the cliffs above the town with views out across the surrounding countryside towards the Adriatic. We also visit the Ethnographic Museum, the Skanderbeg Museum and the Dollma tekke (Sufi church) before enjoying dinner at one of the castle's panoramic restaurants.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 8 Tour ends Kruja

The tour ends in Kruja after breakfast.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodation and Meals

Food & Drink

Included meals: 7 breakfasts, 3 lunches,4 dinners included in the price of this tour. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Tour

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the tour price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide.Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Albania

Lunch £: 4.00

Dinner £: 10.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Albania

Bottle of Beer £: 1.50

Water £: 0.50

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Some free time has been allowed for you to explore on your own or with your travelling companions

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approx. €20 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

Foreign Exchange

Albania

ATM Availability: Most larger towns.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are not widely accepted in Albania.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques are not widely accepted in Albania, though you should take some as a back-up in case of emergencies.

Local Currency: Albanian Lek.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Sterling, US Dollars and Euros cash is widely accepted in bureaux de change in major towns and cities. Most transactions in Albania are done on a strictly cash only basis using the Lek.

Where to Exchange: Bureau de change in major towns and cities.

Joining your Tour

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of joining any of our tours that you must have valid travel insurance. It must indicate that you have cover for (at least) medical expenses and emergency repatriation in the event of illness or injury. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling in England and Scotland. We also strongly recommend your policy includes curtailment, personal effects and cancellation protection as all deposits paid are non-refundable. You will also need to ensure your travel policy covers you for all activities you intend to do whilst on tour.

We are delighted to include FREE travel insurance **for all qualifying customers** who book an Explore trip from 01 January 2015.

For more information about Travel insurance and to check whether you are eligible to receive free cover, please visit www.explore.co.uk/insurance. Explore Worldwide Ltd are an Appointed Representative of Campbell Irvine Limited. who are authorised

and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. The registration number can be checked by visiting the the FCA's website www.fca.gov.uk or by contacting them on 0800 111 6768.

Visa Information

Albania: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

Vaccinations & Protection

Albania

We recommend protection against hepatitis A, typhoid, polio and tetanus. Rabies vaccination is recommended by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office due to the large number of stray dogs in Albania. You should seek further advice from your travel clinic. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Check latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/ and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Tour

Maximum Altitude on Trek (m)

1830

Trekking Details

We walk for 5 days for 4 to 6 hours each day. Most walks are on well-defined footpaths and some dirt tracks. We have graded this tour as easy to moderate.

Walking Boots

Lightweight walking/trail boots required.

Climate

Albania

Albania has a mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers (ranging from 9 - 11 hours of sunshine a day in Tirana). Temperatures can reach up to 40°C in July. October to April is much cooler and can be wet. Albania is a mountainous country and the high peaks are snow-capped all year. Additional information and climate charts can be accessed at http://www.explore.co.uk/weather. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable.

Clothing

Weather is changeable in the mountains and it can be cool, especially at night, so bring a warmer jacket/fleece. A raincoat is essential at all times in case of the odd shower. You should dress with respect in the rural villages so bring some long trousers. Don't forget your swimming costume.

Equipment

Take a water bottle, a sun hat and suncream. A torch is useful in case of powercuts/emergencies.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes or sandals for visiting the sites and towns.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don’t overload yourself. Please bear in mind there are lots of stairs in Albania and no portarage in the hotels.

Luggage allowance on tour: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Albania

Population: 4,000,000

Size of Country: 28,748 sq km

Major Language: Albanian, Greek, Vlach, Romani, Slavic dialects

Religion: Muslim, Albanian Orthodox, Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Electric Supply & Plugs

Albania

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailormade holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, elephant, or any number of unusual forms of transport . Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to – and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Our commitment to the environment

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures and traditional, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people), Dekamer (a turtle rescue centre in Turkey) and Kids Saving the Rainforest (a wildlife rescue centre in Costa Rica supported through the LATA foundation). We also care passionately about the world's wildlife. We are patrons of the Born Free Organisation and Friends of Conservation.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

- The Travel Foundation

  Explore are active members and supporters of the Travel Foundation which has established a variety of sustainable tourism projects in destinations and works with industry to improve practice. Visit their website www.thetravelfoundation.org.uk
- Tourism Concern

  Explore support the work of Tourism Concern who campaign for fairly and ethically traded tourism, and are part of its Ethical Tour Operator Group www.tourismconcern.org.uk
- For further information on responsible travel go to http://www.explore.co.uk/ResponsibleTourism/

Know before you go

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety andÂ security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. ForÂ UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link atÂ http://www.explore.co.uk/essential-travel-information/travel-resources/travel-safety

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's LicenceÂ granted by the Civil Aviation Authority.Â Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is ‘Available’ or ‘Guaranteed’ we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015.

Tour Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2015 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2015. 2016/17 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2016.

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