Hiking Highlights of the Albanian Alps

Trip Code: SGAA

Version:

WALK & TREK	SELF-GUIDED	5 MODERATE



HIGHLIGHTS

- Sail along the stunning fjord-like Komani Lake
- Immerse yourself into Valbona, Queen of the Mountains
- Brave a cold water dip in the alluring turquoise waters of the Blue Eye of Theth
- Experience the farm to table philosophy of a local agrotourism farmstay
- Enjoy magnificent hiking in the stunning scenery of the Albanian Alps

AT A GLANCE

- 6 days walking
- Transfers included
- Daily departures
- Suitable for 2+ travellers
- Join at Tirana Airport

ACCOMMODATIONS & MEALS

VIEW DATES, PRICES & BOOK YOUR HOLIDAY HERE

Introduction

Albania has been an under-the-radar destination for years, but is on the rise. Unsurprisingly so, as this fast emerging destination has a winning combination of stunning scenery, absorbing history, rich traditions, and delightful hospitality. On this one-week self-guided walking holiday, you will explore the remote Albanian Alps on foot and stay in small local guesthouses to experience the genuine welcome of your Albanian hosts, like a warm embrace.

From Shkodra, you will travel deep into the spectacular Accursed Mountains. The impact and majesty of your surroundings are felt early on, as you sail on the impressive strait of Komani Lake to reach Valbona, Queen of the Mountains, where you will stay for two nights to explore this beautiful and secluded valley. Mid-week, you will tackle a challenging but fantastic crossing of the Valbona Pass to reach the green valley of Theth; here you will be based for two nights to give you the time to discover the history and pleasant trails of this green valley, before you hike out to Nderlysa where the enrapturing Blue Eye pool awaits. Rounding off your week, you will get to experience the rural charms of a farmstay - we have no doubt you will be beguiled by this unforgettable country.

Is this holiday for you?

This holiday is perfect for those who enjoy discovering the beauty of a destination on foot, at your own pace. This one-week walking holiday has six consecutive days of hiking, including some shorter days of around 2-3 hours walking, and some longer days of around 7-8 hours walking.

The most challenging day is the crossing of the Valbona Pass on Day 4, a committing 6-7 hour hike with around 800m ascent followed by a big descent of 1,125m. On this day there is a short section of narrow, exposed path (around 250m in length) which may feel challenging for those suffering from vertigo. This is a committing day, and the only option to avoid it is a long (full day) transfer around the mountains at additional cost.

Walking trails in the Albanian Alps are often rough and uneven underfoot and there are some steep rocky sections to tackle. While there is no official trail maintenance, the trails are well-trodden and have been used by people or animals for years. A small handheld GPS device is provided locally for additional confidence and assistance with route finding on your walks.

On this holiday you will stay in carefully selected simple hotels or comfortable family-run guesthouses,

always in rooms with private bathrooms. These rural guesthouses give an authentic experience of the character of the destination. Staying two nights in Valbona and in Theth, you also have the option to take a day off at each of these locations to rest the legs if desired.

For safety considerations on the more remote mountain trails, this trip is suitable for groups of 2 or more travellers. Due to the nature of the terrain, there are some sections on the trip when mobile signal is patchy or unavailable.

Itinerary

Version:

Holiday Information

What's Included

- All accommodation as described
- Tourist taxes
- Meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Self-guided information pack containing your map and route notes
- Luggage transfers
- Transfers to/from your walks as described in the itinerary
- A transfer from Tirana (airport or city) to your accommodation on Day 1
- Ferry on Komani Lake
- A transfer from Fishte to Tirana (airport or city) on Day 8
- Small handheld GPS device & simple mobile phone with local SIM card
- GPX tracks supplied

What's not Included

- Travel insurance
- Travel to/from Tirana
- Visas (if applicable)
- Some meals as described in the Meal Plan
- Any additional costs involved for contingency arrangements in the event of snow on Day 4
- Any charges incurred for loss or damage of loaned GPS & mobile phone devices
- Personal equipment
- Any additional activities/excursions indicated as optional

Important Notice

Should there be snow cover on the Valbona Pass, for safety reasons it will be mandatory to hire a local guide to aid you over the crossing on Day 4. Our local agent will monitor the ground conditions prior to your arrival. In such an event that a guide becomes necessary, our local agent will engage the services of the guide for your party, and you will be advised of this at your welcome meeting on arrival. The guide can operate on a ratio of 1:8. Payment for the guide's services would need to be made in cash directly to the guide. As an indication, a guide's fee is typically between €80-€100 for the day.

If conditions are deemed too difficult for a winter crossing, a transfer around the mountains to Theth will be arranged (approx. 8 hours). The cost of the transfer is usually around €150-€200 and is payable locally in cash. This will be explained in more detail during your welcome meeting should this be the only viable option on Day 4.

Any additional cash payment can be made in Euro or in Albanian Lek.

Your Self-Guided Pack & Route Notes

Each self-guided holiday comes with comprehensive route notes and a map or pocket guidebook of the area you are exploring. The route notes contain information about the places you will visit and the local transport you might need, along with the detailed route notes for your daily walks or cycle rides. We even include some tips for the best places to stop for lunch.

You can expect to receive your Self-Guided Pack containing your route notes, a map or guidebook, and all your relevant documents, no later than 3 weeks before your holiday start-date. We will send your documents using a signed-for courier so that you can track your package and know that it is safely on its way to you. For bookings of more than 4 people we will send an additional Self-Guided Pack. If you do not need this additional pack please inform our Sales Team. Your pack will be sent to the lead booker, so please remind them to pack it before setting off.

Should your self-guided trip be part of a longer adventure requiring you to leave home more than three weeks before your holiday start-date, please inform our Sales Team so that we can make alternative delivery arrangements.

Joining Arrangements & Transfers

The trip starts and ends at Tirana Airport. All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. For this trip we have included a return transfer for you from Tirana Airport.

Please ensure you inform our customer sales and support team as early as possible of your flight times so that we can arrange your transfers for you.

On this holiday, the included transfers are shared where possible to minimise environmental impact and reduce demand on local services.

Meal Plan

All breakfasts, 6 lunches and 6 dinners are included on this holiday. Drinks (water and other drinks) are not included.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide for special diets. Due to the nature of some of the trips that we operate and the countries in which we operate them, it can be very hard (and sometimes impossible) to cater for a wide range of dietary choices and you may have to supplement your meals with food/snacks from home. If you have specific dietary requirements please do speak to our sales team and they will be able to advise you whether or not we will be able to offer your specific choice. Please note that we are unable to provide separate menus and cannot accept liability for any problems arising from special dietary requirements or intolerances.

Food & Water

It is not recommended to drink untreated water from the taps. You should take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a Water-To-Go bottle) to treat your water. We do not encourage the purchasing of single use plastic bottles.

With a mix of Balkan, Greek and Italian influences, Albania offers a rich variety of dishes with a Mediterranean flair, utilising the seasonal produce of the region. In the mountains, you can expect hearty meat dishes such as stews or grilled meats, typically with lamb. A national specialty to try is Tave Kosi, a baked casserole of lamb, yoghurt, eggs and rice. The popular side dish of stuffed peppers filled with rice and herbs, or even meat or cheese are delicious.

For breakfast, you can typically expect to be fuelled by bread and jam, meat, cheese, eggs and sometimes fruit. You may also have the chance to try a more traditional Albanian breakfast of flavoured rice. If you have the opportunity, sample the petulla – a traditional fried dough from the Balkans that can be eaten both sweet (with honey or jam), or savoury (with cheese or vegetables).

Included picnic lunches usually include bread, vegetables such as tomato, cucumber or pepper, cheese, boiled egg, sometimes with some cured meat. You may wish to bring some supplementary snacks; it is often nice to have your favourite trail food with you on your hikes.

Dinner is the main meal of the day and consists of multiple courses of shared dishes – a great way to sample multiple different options.

Accommodation

On this holiday, we have chosen a selection of small, traditional hotels and simple, family-run guesthouses surrounded by the majestic scenery of the Albanian Alps. At all locations, your stay will be in private rooms with ensuite bathrooms.

In Shkodra, you will stay at a comfortable city hotel of typically 3* standard, in double/twin rooms (single room occupancy available).

While facilities are more basic at the guesthouses in Valbona, Theth and Nderlysa, they provide an authentic reflection of the character of the destination and your stay at these locations will directly benefit local businesses and communities. At many rural establishments, single rooms are not available and odd numbers of travellers will be accommodated in a triple sharing room.

For the final night of your holiday, your accommodation is a charming agrotourism farmstay in Fishte whose restaurant follows a sustainable farm to fork philosophy. Here you have the chance to experience the freshest of produce in their restaurant serving up traditional Albanian fare. Rooms here are also in double/twin rooms with limited single room occupancy available.

Please note that not all places are able to accept payment by credit card so having a supply of cash is a good idea.

It is possible to extend your stay with additional nights in Tirana at the beginning or at the end of your trip if you wish to spend some time exploring the capital city. It is also possible to have additional nights in Shkodra prior to the start of the trip if you would like more time to delve into this city. Just get in touch with our sales team for further details.

Additional Information

Please note that due to the nature of the remote mountainous terrain, there are significant areas on some of the walks with patchy or no mobile signal. If you wish to have a back-up form of communication in case of an emergency, you should consider carrying a satellite communication device such as Garmin InReach or satellite phone.

Baggage Allowance

Your main luggage will be transferred between each of your lodgings while you are out on your walk. On Day 4 your luggage will be transported by pack animals over the mountain pass. We ask that you please ensure your luggage is limited to one soft bag (duffle bag or rucksack) under 15kg per person and that your luggage is ready for collection in the morning. Suitcases or flight cases are not suitable for this trip. You will also need a daypack to carry your daily essentials with you.

General Information

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.

For other nationalities, please refer to your own Government website for the latest information.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates *(see Health & Vaccinations below),* **and visas for your holiday.** Please ensure that you check the FCDO for the latest advice for **each country visited** before travel.

Visa Albania

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

Health & Vaccinations

Vaccinations:

You should be up to date with the routine vaccinations recommended in the UK for overseas travel.

You must also contact your doctor or travel clinic to check if there are specific vaccinations or other preventive measures that you need for the area you are visiting, in good time before you are due to depart.

Please ensure you are looking at the recommendations for all countries visited on your holiday plus recommendations for any borders you cross.

On holidays to more remote areas you should also have a dental check-up.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct travel documents including vaccinations and health certificates.

Please check the FCDO and Travel Health Pro. For all of your intended destinations for up-to-date advice.

Severe Allergies:

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.

Currency

The unit of currency in Albania is the Lek.

Preparing for your Holiday

The advantage of a self-guided walking holiday is that you decide the pace however, getting some additional exercise before coming on an active holiday makes a lot of sense. The fitter you are, after all, the more enjoyable your walks will be. You should be comfortable with walking on average 4 to 6 hours a day for multiple days in mountainous terrain. We suggest that you try to fit in a number of daily walks in hilly countryside before your trip and it is always a good idea to spend some time walking in the footwear you are going to use on this holiday. Running, cycling and swimming are also good for developing cardio vascular fitness and stamina.

Climate

Albania has a Mediterranean climate which varies by region. The summer sees stable mountain weather with daytime temperatures of 20-27°C. The occasional torrential thunderstorm rarely lasts more than 30-45 min. Before the first week of June you may encounter snow. When autumn colours start in late September and throughout October, rain and fog become more likely, daylight hours shorten and night time temperatures drop. Prepare for lowland heat in Shkodra and Tirana, especially in July and August. Mountainous regions generate their own microclimates so you should always be prepared for all eventualities.

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 and read the FCDO Travel Advice for their chosen destination. All other nationalities should check their government websites for relevant information.

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

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.

Equipment Information

Self Guided Equipment List

- Hiking boots with good-grip soles
- Hiking socks
- Long / short hiking trousers
- Functional base layer top and leggings
- T-shirts
- Fleece / extra warm layer
- Windproof jacket
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Hat, gloves, and neck gaiter
- Sunscreen
- Sunglasses

- Sunhat
- Small first aid kit inside your rucksack
- Water bottle or hydration pack
- Mobile Phone (ensure your data package covers your destination)
- Power bank
- Waterproof phone cover
- Camera (and batteries / memory card)
- Reusable sealable picnic boxes for picnics
- Reusable cloth bag for shopping to avoid the use of plastic bags
- Walking poles
- Headtorch with spare batteries
- Personal wash kit
- Your self-guided route notes
- Rucksack (approx. 20L)

Land Only Information

Please note our 'from price' listed is based on 4 persons in double or twin occupancy, however we can quote for groups of 2 or more travellers - contact our Sales Team for a quote.

When considering your travel dates, you might like to investigate any seasonal opening times of attractions and points of interest.

All of our self-guided holidays are sold on a Land Only basis allowing you the flexibility to choose the travel method which best suits you. You may even wish to make this holiday part of a bigger adventure or pair it with one of our other holidays. We can arrange additional nights' accommodation before or after your self-guided trip - ask our Sales Team to find out more about this.

Our Sales Team will be happy to provide you with a quote for scheduled flights or alternatively you may wish to book your own flights with a low cost carrier from your nearest regional airport.

Please DO NOT book your flights before you have received your booking confirmation and your deposit has been taken.

Why Choose KE

Why KE

Expanding our well-established collection of trekking holidays in the Balkans, you can now hike independently and go self-guided in the Albanian Alps with KE.After a week of superlative hiking and warm hospitality, you will culminate your holiday at an agrotourism farmstay and support the sustainable practice of their farm to table ethos - a unique experience exclusive to KE.

Please Note This document was downloaded on 23/11/2026 and the trip is subject to change