

Walking the Albanian Alps

Trip Code: ALB

Version: ALB Walking the Albanian Alps



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

- All meals included
- 2 nights Hotel
- 6 nights Guesthouse

[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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DAY 1

Meet at Tirana Airport and transfer to the historical gem of Shkodra.

Meet at Tirana Airport for the early evening group transfer to Shkodra. The journey north to the oldest city in northern Albania takes about an hour and a half. Shkodra is a city full of character with narrow streets, stone walls, tall gates and a castle which sits on a commanding position on a rocky hill above Lake Shkodra. In the evening we can enjoy our first taste of local Albanian dishes.

Meals: **D**



Accommodation
Hotel

DAY 2

Spectacular sailing across Lake Koman and transfer to the Valbona Valley.

After breakfast we leave Shkodra and follow a scenic road which takes us east along the shores of Lake Vau Dejes. On reaching the port of Koman we hop on a ferry for an exploration of Lake Koman. This fjord-style landscape is home to a rich variety of bird species including kingfishers, quails, grey heron, Eurasian wryneck, great spotted woodpecker and the black-headed gull. The ferry takes us through an incredible landscape surrounded by steep cliffs as if we're sailing through a Norwegian Fjord. After leaving the ferry we drive to the valley of Valbona which is described as one of the most beautiful valleys in Albania and where we will stay for the next three nights.

Meals: **B L D**



Accommodation
Guesthouse






DAY 3

Hiking and exploring Albania's hidden gem of Çerem.

Today we start the day with a short scenic transfer (30 - 40mins) to the hamlet of Çerem. This off the beaten track destination is an area of outstanding natural beauty. From Çerem we start a spectacular

circular walk through an area that is rich in alpine flora and fauna and has the feeling of stepping back in time. The hamlet has a small number of hardy families that live in this incredible area all year round. We start by walking along a lovely trail that passes alpine springs before the valley opens out. We'll be rewarded with spectacular views, especially of Sqaipit Peak which is on the Albania and Montenegro border. We'll find lovely a place to enjoy our picnic before spending the afternoon descending back down to Çerem along a different footpath. On reaching Çerem a short transfer takes us back to our guesthouse in Valbona.

Meals: **B L D**






	Accommodation Guesthouse		Ascent 835M		Descent 840M		Time 7 hours of walking		Distance 14KM
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DAY 4

Panoramic hike to see Mount Jezerca the highest peak in the Dinaric Alps.

Starting directly from our accommodation we start hiking towards the side valley of Kukaj, home to some excellent examples of traditional houses. Next a shepherd's path takes us high up into one of the most remote parts of the Albanian Alps. We'll pass through meadows and rich forest whilst surrounded by amazing views on Mount Jezerca the highest peak in the Albanian Alps. We'll be surrounded by dramatic cliffs and rocky peaks before arriving at a simple shepherd hut at 1670m. Here at the foot of the rocky dome of Mount Rosi we'll stop for lunch and take in the views. Depending on the weather and group we may ascend for another 400m to a pass at 2000m which offers spectacular views over into neighboring Montenegro. We'll then descend towards the valley and on our way we'll stop for a cup of mountain tea in a garden in one of the houses of Kukaj. After our refreshment stop we'll return to our accommodation for our final night in the Valbona Valley.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Guesthouse		Ascent 860M		Descent 860M		Time 6 hours of walking		Distance 12KM
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DAY 5

A challenging but spectacular day of walking as we cross the Valbona Pass (1800m).

Today is a real highlight in our mountain journey as we pack our back and loads them onto our pack horses as we prepare to cross over into the neighboring valley of Thethi via the Valbona Pass. Initially we leave Valbona and warm up by walking along a level path as far as the last house of Rrogam. Here we start our ascent on a trail which brings us up to Valbona Springs with its adjacent alpine meadows. In the past, shepherds from the valley used to spend the summer months grazing their flocks in this lovely location. As we start to approach the Valbona Pass (1800m) we're on a true mountain track leading us up and into the a rockier Alpine zone. From here we'll have views over the Sheep and Diagonal Passes and

down into Thethi and the canyon of the Shala River. After crossing the pass we descend via fir trees, rich beech forest and meadows until we reach the bottom of the valley and the remote village of Thethi. We'll finish this fantastic day at a homestay which will be our base for the next two nights. After checking in and freshening up there will be time to relax before dinner.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Guesthouse		Ascent 900M		Descent 1150M		Time 6 - 7 hours of walking
	Distance 15KM						

DAY 6

A day of wild walking up to the magnificent Pass of Peja.

After yesterday's challenging day crossing the pass, today you are free to either have a day at leisure and relax independently around the guesthouse or join the days walk. The leader will organise a walk directly from the guesthouse today so we'll leave Thethi and hike towards the end of the valley. Our footpath passes the hamlet of Okol before a beautiful trail ascends to the Pass of Peja (1710m). The trail zig zags up and crosses the slopes which lie below the rocky dome of Mount Harapit (2218m). We'll have time to admire the superb views towards the Thethi and Radohima mountain ridges as we continue walking until the meadows of Gropat e Bukura on the foothills of Mt. Jezerca 2694m. This incredible peak lays only 5kms from the Montenegro border and sits in the national parks of Thethi and Valbona. Here we are surrounded by some of the wildest scenery in the country so we'll enjoy eating our lunch surrounded by an incredible panorama. In the afternoon we'll pass a small glacial lake as we slowly descend to our guesthouse in Thethi. Tonight we'll enjoy our final dinner in Thethi.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Guesthouse		Ascent 1150M		Descent 1150M		Time 6 - 7 hours of walking
	Distance 15KM						




DAY 7

Explore the highlights of Thethi before hiking to the hamlet of Nderlysa.

Today is a slightly more relaxed day as we explore the surroundings and highlights of Thethi before making our way to Nderlysa. Thethi and its surroundings are charming and the village is known as one of the most enchanting places in northern Albania because of its stunning nature and traditional wooden-tiled houses. We'll leave the guesthouse and visit the church, Lock-in Tower, Thethi Waterfall, Grunasi Canyon, and stone walled terraces dating from the late bronze era. Located in Thethi National Park, the

pretty church dates back to 1892 and is famed for opening the first Albanian language school for children in the area in 1917. A fascinating highlight is the Lock in Tower or Kulla, a fortified building which was a place of isolation and safe haven during blood feuds. After the highlights of Thethi we'll follow the Shala River towards the hamlet of Nderlysa where we spend the night. There will be time to relax by the pools of Kaprea creek until we meet up for dinner.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Guesthouse		Ascent 355M		Descent 105M		Time 4 hours of walking		Distance 7KM
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DAY 8

Walk out of the mountains via the Thore Pass and transfer to atmospheric Kruja.

After breakfast we leave Ndërlysa and ascend towards the Thore Pass where our trekking adventure ends. Our trail heads along the right bank of the rocky creek of Kaprea which we follow until the spectacular Blue Eye spring. After the spring we continue through woods and meadows which have fantastic views of the Biga e Gimajve Mountain. We keep continue ascending and say goodbye to the mountains until we reach the top of the pass where we'll relax and enjoy our lunch. After our picnic we'll transfer to Kruja one of the most historical towns in Albania and home to the magnificent Kruja Fort. The town was home to Skanderbeg, the Albanian national hero who led a legendary resistance to the Ottomans in the 14th century. Late afternoon we'll explore Kruja including its traditional Ottoman bazaar before enjoying a final dinner in this excellent town.

Meals: **B L D**

	Accommodation Hotel		Ascent 1300M		Descent 110M		Time 5 - 6 hours of walking
	Distance 9KM						

DAY 9

Departure Day. A single timed transfer to Tirana Airport is provided.

Your holiday ends after breakfast. A single group transfer (1 hour) to Tirana Airport is provided.

Meals: **B**

Holiday Information

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

Many places on this holiday have drinkable water from the tap to fill your personal water bottles. Please check with the leader at the various locations. Please take purification tablets or a filter bottle (such as a [Water-To-Go bottle](#)) for days when drinking water out of the tap is not available. We do not encourage the purchasing 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.

Special Diets

Whilst we can cater for vegetarians, albeit sometimes with a more limited choice, we cannot always provide 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 diet 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.

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 'Dates and Prices' table. Other than in exceptional circumstances, we will not cancel a trip once it has achieved this guaranteed to run status and 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

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 short 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 prior to 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. North Americans can also check out the U.S. Department of State website: 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 direct 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.

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 12.5% discount voucher from Cotswold Outdoor and other retailers. [>> Find out more](#)

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

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 18/05/2024 and the trip is subject to change