



ALBANIA INBOUND
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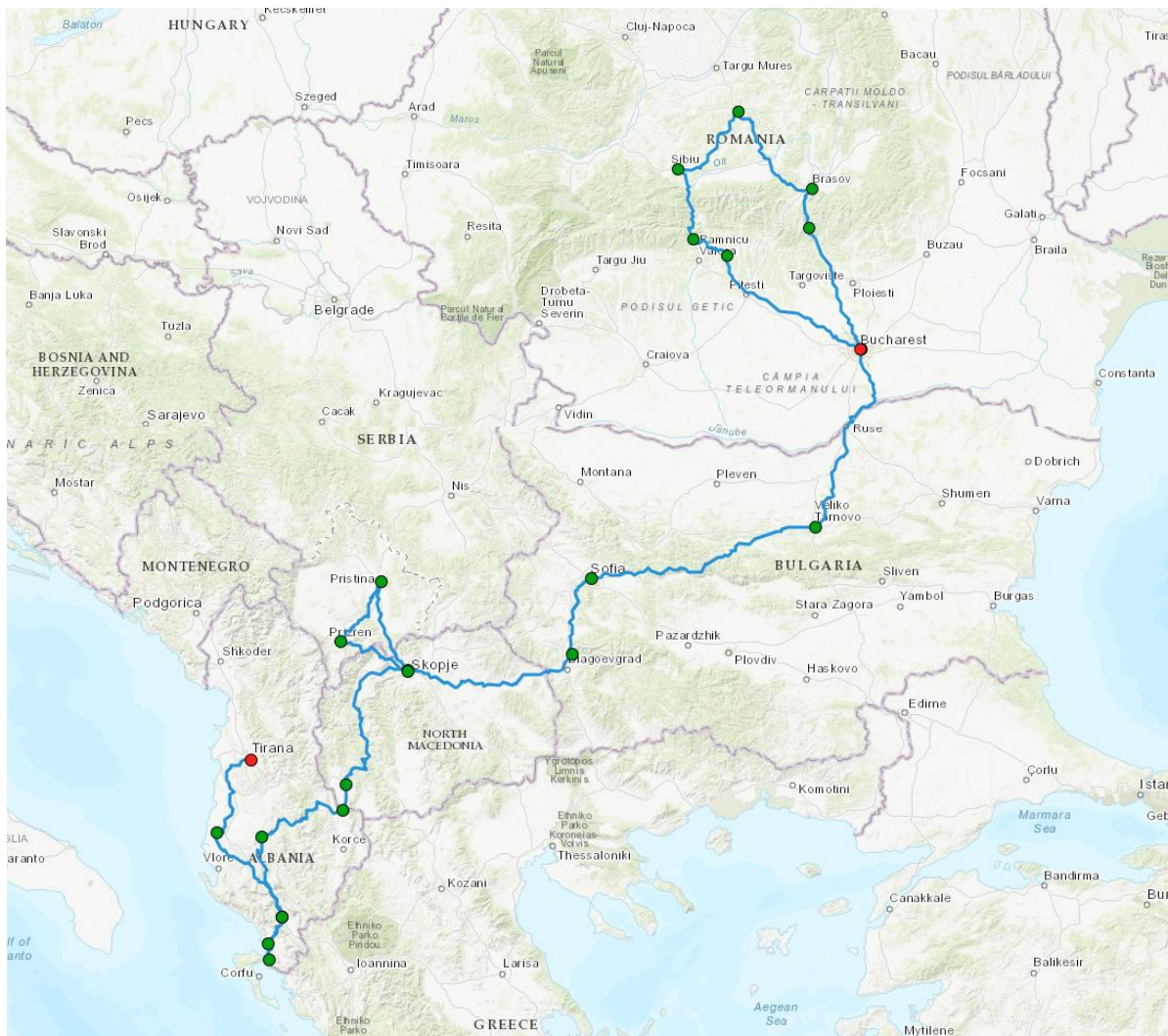
14 Day East Balkan Tour



Rruga Tish Dahia, Tirana 1060, Albania

Travel Route Overview

(Tirana – Bucharest)





Lead Traveler:
Email:
Phone number:
Date:

Day 1: Arrival in Albania. Explore Tirana City, Traditional Dinner and Folk Music

- Arrival at Tirana International Airport at 13:40 PM. When you exit the airport building you will find the tour guide holding a sign of ALBANIA INBOUND. After the meet up, you will be swiftly transported to your hotel in the city center to check in.
- Embark on a 1.5-hour walking tour of the city center where you will be introduced to the culture of Albania and the history of Tirana city. Several facts and information will be provided to you while you visit several landmarks like: Skanderbeg Square, Et'hem Bey Mosque, The Clock Tower of Tirana, The Castle of Tirana, The main Boulevard and Pedestrian street, Blloku Region, The house of our old dictator Enver Hoxha, house of the leaves and much more.
- Take some time to explore BunkArt 2 and enjoy free time in the evening.

Hotel: *(free time in the evening, Tirana)*

Day 2: Discover Apollonia & Gjirokastra

- Depart Berat for Apollonia, a vital center for education, philosophy, and arts in antiquity.
- Explore the ancient archeological park and visit several landmarks like: Temple of Apollonia, the Amphitheatre of Apollonia, Triumph Arch, the museum of Apollonia and much more.
- Your first stop upon arriving in Gjirokastra will be the bustling Gjirokastra Bazaar, a vibrant marketplace where local crafts, textiles, and traditional Albanian products beckon visitors.
- Ascend the winding road leading to the magnificent Gjirokastra Castle, a true architectural marvel.
- Within its walls, you'll discover the castle's museum and the castle's notorious old prison.
- Continuing your journey within the castle, you'll make our way to its highest point, where the iconic clock tower is located.
- A last stop is made in the Zekate House, a local fortress house where you can learn how rich families used to live back in the day.

Hotel: *(free time in the evening, Gjirokastra)*

Day 3: Ksamil Islands and Butrinti Archeological Park

- A mere 30 kilometers from Gjirokaster, a hidden gem awaits you within the heart of the forest. Explore the awe-inspiring natural wonder of the Blue Eye.
- Ascend to the highest hill in Saranda and visit the Lekursi Castle, overlooking the city.
- Very close to Saranda you will come across Ksamil Village. Experience the breathtaking shoreline of the village, encompassing three islands situated just 100 meters from the coast.
- Enjoy your time by the sea.
- Discover the ancient Greek Colony and Roman city of Butrinti, a UNESCO protected site.
- Return to Gjirokastra and visit Ali Pashas Bridge, a unique Ottoman construction, part of a large aqueduct system commissioned by Ali Pasha Tepelena in the *early 19th century* to supply water from Mount Sopot to the castle of Gjirokastër, which lacked a natural water source. This is a historic marvel in Albania.

Hotel:

(free time in the evening, Gjirokastra)

Day 4: Berat City & Wine Tasting in Peshtan Village

- Drive towards central Albania to visit “The city of 1001 Windows”.
- Ascend the castle hill for a visit to the castle itself. On the walking tour of the castle, we will learn the history of this ancient city while visiting several sites.
- Descend to the city center and explore the renowned Mangalemi neighborhood.
- Explore significant landmarks such as: The city gate and former Pasha's residence, The Sultan's Mosque, Berat's bustling boulevard, and more.
- Pass by the famous Gorica Bridge and explore the old Gorica neighborhood.
- Take some time to relax in the hotel to prepare for an exceptional Wine Tasting Tour at one of the local wineries in Berat.

Hotel:

(free time in the evening, Berat)

Day 5: Enter North Macedonia: Ohrid Lake

- Depart Berat for Ohrid, North Macedonia. After a 3-hour journey, drive along the lake perimeter to arrive in Saint Naum.
- Visit the 1000-year-old monastery build by Saint Naum. Enjoy the stunning lake views.
- Head towards the picturesque Ohrid. Embark on a walking tour of the old town, exploring several landmarks like: Tsar Samuel's Fortress, the Ancient Theatre, and the awe-inspiring frescoes in the Church of St. Sophia, Saint John church and the famous Hand Made Paper Museum.
- Immerse yourself in the lively Old Bazaar, shopping for souvenirs and visiting local mosques. Enjoy an overnight stay in Ohrid.

Hotel:

(free time in the evening, Ohrid)

Day 6: The Capital City: Skopje

- Start your journey towards Skopje. A merely 16km before Skopje we will stop in one of the most famous nature attractions of North Macedonia, Matka Canyons.
- Take a boat tour by the canyon and explore the cave and the secret lake of Matka Canyon.
- Visit Skopje. Situated in the northwestern part of North Macedonia, along the Vardar River, Skopje is the capital and largest city of North Macedonia.
- Uncover Skopje's neoclassical charm, wandering through Macedonia Square, the Art Bridge, and the Old Bazaar.

Hotel:

(free time in the evening, Skopje)

Day 7: Kosovo from Skopje: Prishtina & Prizren

- Today, you will spend your whole day visiting Kosovo from Skopje. Thanks to the proximity of the cities (5-hour total drive time from Skopje), you can visit both the Capital city and the most important cultural city of Kosovo in 1 day.
- First reach Prishtina and embark on a walking tour of Prishtina city and visit several landmarks like: Skanderbeg Statue, NEWBORN and HEROES monument, Mother Theresa Cathedral, the boulevard of Prishtina and Gazimestan monument.
- Enjoy free time in the city.
- Depart Prishtina for Prizren. Immerse yourself in the city's rich history, exploring landmarks like Kalaja Fortress, the Albanian League of Prizren House, Carshia e Vjeter, Sinan Hoxha Mosque, and St. George's Orthodox Cathedral.
- Visit the Castle of Prizren and enjoy the breathtaking views of the city from the top.
- Return back to Skopje.

Hotel:

(free time in the evening, Skopje)

Day 8: 7 Lakes of Rila and the capital city, Sofia

- Today we will start our drive towards Sofia, but before we cannot miss the famous Rila lakes and monastery. Enjoy some breathtaking views of the 7 Rila Lakes. You will have several short tracks you can choose from once there.
- Visit Rila Monastery, the biggest and most important symbol of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church.
- Embark on a city tour visiting several sites like: Sofia Palace of Justice, Sveta Nedelya Church, Sofia Monument, Saint Joseph's Cathedral, Saint Petka Church, Banya Bashi Mosque, St George Rotunda Church, Bulgarian National Art Gallery and in the end the famous Hagia Sophia.
- Enjoy some free time in the city to explore on your own paste.
- Check in the hotel and enjoy an overnight stay in Sofia.

Hotel:

(free time in the evening, Sofia)

Day 9: Visit Veliko Tarnovo

- Today you will explore the charming city of Veliko Tarnovo, the historic capital of the Second Bulgarian Empire.
- Visit the majestic Tsarevets Fortress, a medieval stronghold that has stood proudly since the 12th century. Embark on a short walking tour of the town and enjoy a traditional Bulgarian lunch in the city center.
- Take a short detour to Arbanasi Village. Nestled on a high plateau between Veliko Tarnovo and Gorna Oryahovitsa, Arbanasi offers spectacular views and stunning examples of medieval architecture dating back several centuries.
- Check into hotel and enjoy the city.

Hotel: *(free time in the evening, Veliko Tarnovo)*

Day 10: Enter Romania, visit Bucharest

- Depart Veliko Tarnovo for Bucharest. Before we cross the Romanian border, we will delve deeper into Bulgarian religion and culture with a stop at either the Holy Trinity Cathedral Church in the quaint Old Town of Ruse or the unique St. Basarabov Monastery, the only monastery in Bulgaria carved into a cliff, depending on the activity day.
- Upon arrival enjoy lunch in a local restaurant. Then we will start with city tour. The city tour includes sightseeing at the following sights: Stavropoleos Monastery, Caru' cu Bere, Lipsani Street, Hanul lui Manuc, Calea Victoriei, Palace of the Parliament, Cismigiu Gardens,ewish Quarter & Holocaust Memorial and much more...

Hotel: *(free time in the evening, Bucharest)*

Day 11: Explore Transylvania, Sibiu Town

- In the final three days you will explore some of the most important sites in the legendary Transylvania region.
- Depart from Bucharest and visit the Moorish-style Curtea de Argeş Monastery, built in 1514 by Prince Neagoe Basarab, ruler of Wallachia. Continue to the small Cozia Monastery, one of Romania's most important monuments of national medieval art.
- After a traditional Romanian lunch, journey through the breathtaking Transylvanian landscape to Sibiu, the historic capital of the former Principality of Transylvania. Documented as early as 1191, this former German medieval citadel is considered one of Romania's most beautiful towns. You will explore its many historic buildings on a guided walking tour of the Old Town.

Hotel: *(free time in the evening, Sibiu)*

Day 12: Visit Biertan & Sighișoara

- After breakfast, depart Sibiu and travel to the Biertan commune, one of the most significant Saxon fortified villages in Transylvania. Here, you will explore the largest fortified church in the region, constructed between 1490 and 1524.
- Continue to the medieval citadel of Sighișoara, founded in 1280 and renowned as the only inhabited medieval citadel in Europe. During a guided walking tour, visit the iconic Clock Tower and enjoy panoramic views over the historic town.
- After lunch, proceed to Brașov, a city surrounded by the Southern Carpathians. First documented in 1235, Brașov is the birthplace of the Romanian national anthem and was briefly renamed “Stalin City” during the Communist era. On your guided walking tour, you will discover its impressive Gothic churches, medieval architecture, and the narrowest street in Romania.

Hotel:

(free time in the evening, Brasov)

Day 13: Explore Brasov & Sinaia, return to Bucharest

- Following an overnight stay in Brașov, begin your day with a visit to the iconic Black Church, built in 1383 and considered the city’s most important landmark. Continue your journey to the legendary Bran Castle, known as Dracula’s Castle, dramatically positioned on the border between Transylvania and Wallachia. Associated with Bram Stoker’s fictional Count Dracula, the site offers fascinating castle grounds and a museum, which you will explore before enjoying a traditional lunch.
- Next, travel to Sinaia, a picturesque mountain resort in the Prahova Valley, to visit Peleș Castle, built between 1875 and 1914 by Romania’s first king, Carol I. Admire this exquisite Neo-Renaissance masterpiece before concluding your tour of Transylvania’s architectural heritage at Sinaia Monastery, founded in the 17th century by Prince Mihail Cantacuzino after his pilgrimage to Mount Sinai.
- After visiting both the Old Church and the 19th-century Great Church, you will return to Bucharest.

Hotel:

(free time in the evening, Bucharest)

Day 14: Departure Day

- From Bucharest, you will be swiftly transported to the airport where your long Balkan journey finally concludes. Departure time: 17:15 PM
- Have a safe flight back and welcome back!

more information on the next page)

INCLUDED:

- Accommodation: City-center locations, 4-star hotels with breakfast (*13 nights*)
- Highly experienced English-speaking private tour leader
- Comfortable SUV transportation with all necessary features
- Welcoming dinner (*Day 1*)
- Wine tasting (*Day 4*)
- Boat tour (*Day 5*)
- Boat tour (*Day 6*)
- Traditional lunch (*Day 8*)
- Entrance fees: Gjirokastra Castle, Gjirokastra Arms Museum, Blue Eye, Onufri Museum, Saint Naum Monastery, Church of Saint Sofia, Samoil Fortress, Rila M-onastery, Sofia Archaeology Museum, St. Sophia Basilica, Curtea de Argeş Monastery, Cozia Monastery, Black Church, Bran Castle, Peleş Castle
- Border taxes
- Online support from dedicated travel agent

ACTIVITIES:

- Cultural visits
- Guided tours
- Nature exploring and sightseeing
- Culinary experience
- Beach visits
- Boat Tours
- Hiking Options

TOUR ESSENTIALS:

- PASSPORT AND TRAVEL DOCUMENTS
- Comfortable shoes.
- Clothing for 14 days.
- Luggage.
- Sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat.
- Protection from sun.