

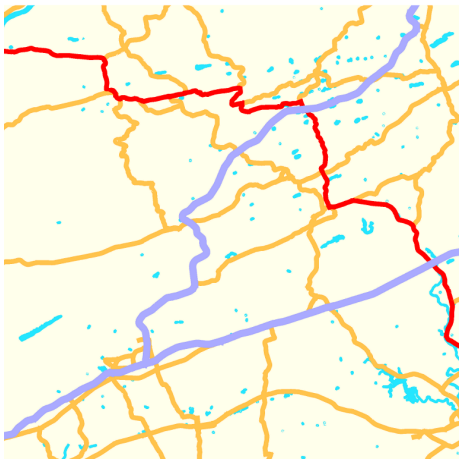
SPRING & AUTUMN

type :	Hiking Tours Self-Guided
level :	
duration :	8 days
period:	Apr May Jun Sep Oct
code:	ALSWHVT

Albania Hidden Valley Trek - Albania

Albania Hidden Valley Trek

8 days, PRICE FROM *€ 954*



Europe's last wild river, the Vjosa, winds its way across southern Albania, carving through dramatic landscapes and pristine nature. This **Albania Mountains Hiking** experience follows one of its most impressive branches — the **Zagoria River Valley** — framed by towering peaks and endless greenery.

Trek from doorstep to doorstep through **remote, idyllic villages** where time stands still. Along the **Albania Mountains trails**, you'll walk past **flower-covered meadows** and **snow-capped peaks** that burst into life in spring and glow golden during autumn harvest time.

Follow the ancient footsteps of caravans, crossing **historical Ottoman stone bridges** and exploring **orthodox churches** decorated with **centuries-old frescoes**. Stop to bathe in a refreshing **waterfall** or soak in the natural **thermal pools** that dot the valley.

End your **Albania Mountains Hiking** adventure by stepping into history at the grand mansions of the **City of Stone, Gjirokastra**, before concluding your journey in the vibrant capital, **Tirana**.

Route

Day 1 Welcome to Albania!

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Day 2 From Peshtan to Limar, 11 km

The trek starts at the doorstep of the valley. Zagoria is not yet visible - Dhembeli, Nemercka, Lunxheria and Bureto, four mountain ranges, encompass and shield it from the outside world. Only an almost forgotten caravan route leads inside this hidden place. Through open woodland, the route ascends to a pass that reveals the full extent of the valley, out of which mountains rise on both sides. Over terraced fields, the path leads to the almost deserted village Kala, where only three inhabitants remain, and then down to the river. It's crossed via one of Ali Pasha's impressive Ottoman stone bridges and climbing up to Limar, remains of the cobbled caravan path are visible. The views of the distinct Mt Strakavec (1.958 m), remote feeling and vernacular stone architecture of Limar leave a lasting impression. A stroll through the village reveals its whole extent. and you can learn more about life here from your hosts. Overnight in the teacher's house, who takes care of the 2 pupils who remain in school regardless of the seclusion.

Distance: 11 km

Altitude difference: +750 / -425m

Day 3 From Limar to Hoshteve, 14,5 km

Only footpaths connect the villages en route to the next overnight location, where your luggage is transported by horse. Passing several hamlets gives you the opportunity to experience rural lifestyle, meet locals and admire the mountain splendor above as well as the Zagoria River below, where the cooling Doshnica Waterfall awaits. Depending on the river level, you can continue along the stream or backtrack into the village and over grassy meadows before the reascent to Hoshteve marks the final stage. Animal husbandry, beekeeping and the collection of medical herbs have been the only sources of meager income, triggering mass emigration to Greece. The hosts lived and worked there too for 17 years, then returned to spend their golden years and open a B&B in their home village. They're a good example of the returning diaspora, equipped with new skill sets and savings to invest. Don't miss out on the Church of the Holy Apostles, a fine example of Orthodox heritage and one of the best preserved in the country.

Distance: 14,5 km

Altitude difference: +725 / -575 m

Day 4 From Hoshteve to Sheper, 12,5 km

Today's shorter and easier route with views of Mt. Cajupi (2.145 m) allows for a relaxed, yet rewarding walking day. The villages Vithuq, Koncka, Nivan, and Sheper are connected by roads, their influence is manifested in newer buildings that serve as weekend and retirement houses. Nivan served as the center of the commune - remains of military installations and storage depots are visible, while its central square is dedicated to William Tilman. Described as "the 20th Century's last true explorer", Tilman was a famed British mountaineer and sailor who, during WW2, fought based out of Zagoria with the resistance against German occupation. Only once more, the trail takes you down to the river, the old monastery, and (on an optional detour) to the last of Ali Pasha's stone bridges. After a shortcut across meadows you reach Sheper, where many ex-nomadic, Aromanian shepherds were forced to settle during communism. Time can be spent with the family or exploring the village, in particular the neglected museum and buildings adorned with weathered Marx and Lenin quotes. This will be the last village overnight.

Distance: 12,5 km

Altitude difference: +600 / -550 m

Day 5 From Sheper to Permet, 10 km

The crossing of the Dhembel-Nemercke Range is the last stage of the trek through the secluded valley, leading back into the outside world. As the drive around takes almost as long as the walk across, the challenging route remains in use by locals to this day. Enver Hoxha's bunkers still protect the entrance to a crack that climbs with fabulous views of Mt. Cajupi (2.145 m) to the top of the mountain. Shepherds come from as far as Konispol, the southernmost point of Albania, to these summer pastures. It isn't uncommon for flocks to travel two weeks to reach the fertile meadows. The alpine valley is bare of trees and flanked by steep slopes, the Dhembel Pass (1450 m) sits at its end and offers views of the Eastern Mountains, across into Greece and to the city of Permet far below. The long rocky descent requires attention and leads into Leuse, another stone village with an imposing, fresco-covered church - perhaps the most beautiful in Southern Albania? From here it's only a short walk to the centrally located hotel. After a long day, you can put up the tired leg and look forward to the city's cuisine, wines and raki.

Distance: 10 km

Altitude difference: +125 / -1250 m

Day 6 From Permet to Gjirokaster, 6 km

The scenery alone is worth the 45 min drive to today's trailhead. Below, the turquoise waters of Vjosa have dug deep into the rock, above the river towers the rugged Mt. Nemercka (2.485 m). From afar, the sheer, 650 m high wall of Southern Albania's second highest summit looks impressive, but only a walk along water channels towards the Sopot Waterfall at the wall's base reveals its full extent. Returning from the hike, another unique nature gem at the nearby entrance of the Langarica Canyon waits to surprise. The warm thermal pools of Benje are said to have a healing effect on many ailments. They are a welcome treatment after the last days of hiking. Soak and relax in their sulfuric waters or explore the river canyon on foot. From here it takes a good 90 min to transfer to Gjirokaster, where you will stay at one of the vernacular mansions of Ottoman architecture in the old town. Start exploring the streets of the "City of Stone" and absorb the atmosphere in one of the many small cafes, tomorrow there's time for more.

Distance: 6 km

Altitude difference: +350 / -350 m

Day 7 **Gjirokastra and the modern Tirana**

Famed for its intricate Ottoman mansions, it's also known as the birthplace of dictator Enver Hoxha and Albania's Nobel-nominated writer Ismail Kadare. Protected by the status of "Museum Town", Gjirokaster survived socialist modernization campaigns and is today inscribed in the World Heritage List. Get lost in a maze of narrow, cobbled streets, visit the ethnographic museum in Hoxha's birth house and climb to the towering castle above. Inside the walls, oddities like an American "spy plane" sit on display, the city museum enlightens with unique insights and the views from the iconic clock tower over the Drino Valley remind of the trekking days. One can easily spend more days walking through the neighborhoods or visiting nearby sites. Butrint, the Blue Eye (a karst spring) and beaches of the Albanian Riviera are also less than two hours driving from here. A private transfer or public transport takes you to the centrally located hotel in Tirana (up to 4 h), the modern capital that wants to be everything but Albanian. Visit the Skanderbeg Square and trendy "Blloku" district to watch the city come to life at night.

Day 8 **Farewell Albania!**

Time permitting, Tirana invites you to explore its streets and sights on a stroll. Sip an espresso in one of the charming bars, observe the busy morning flow and select special treats as edible souvenirs at the lively "New Bazaar". Interested to learn more about the communist past? "Bunkart 2" and "The House of Leaves" provide insights and are only a 5 min walk away from Tirana's main "Skanderbeg Square". Your multi-faceted journey in Albania ends with a 40 min transfer to the airport. Thank you for joining our adventure, we hope to see you again in the country of warm hospitality, countless mountains and sun-kissed beaches.

Practical info

Airport to fly into and from is Tirana. The airport transfer to the first accommodation is included in the price.

Included

What is included

- 7 Nights in double room in ** hotels, guesthouses with breakfast
- 4 lunches
- 4 dinners
- luggage transportation from hotel to hotel (max 15 kg per person) - **only backpacks or duffelbags**
- transfers as described in the day by day program, including the airport transfer
- maps and detailed description of the itinerary in digital form, app
- Medical and luggage travel insurance
- 24h phone assistance

What is not included

- Transfers to the starting location and from the arriving location of the tour
- lunches and dinners, if not otherwise stated
- visits and entrance fees - tips
- personal expense
- possible sojourn taxes
- everything that is not mentioned in the "What is included" section.

Optional Services

These services can be added to the ones included in the base price of the tour:

- Single room supplement
- cancellation insurance