



Rediscover the
meaning of travel

Tour Notes

Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia - Hidden Europe

Tour Duration – 16 Days



Tour Rating

Fitness ●●●○○ | Off the Beaten Track ●●●●○ | Culture ●●●●○ | History ●●●●● | Wildlife ●○○○○

Tour Pace

Busy

Tour Highlights

- ✓ Explore the least visited corner of Europe
- ✓ Kosovo, Europe's newest nation
- ✓ See relics of the Roman, Ottoman, and Greek empires
- ✓ Historic old towns
- ✓ Traditional rural villages and beautiful mountain scenery
- ✓ The wonderful coastline of the Albanian Riviera
- ✓ Splendid expanse of Lake Ohrid in Macedonia
- ✓ One of the great boat trips of the world on Koman Lake
- ✓ Optional extension to the atmospheric towns and dramatic scenery of Montenegro





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Tour Map



Tour Essentials

- Accommodation:** Comfortable hotels and local guesthouses at Valbona
- Included Meals:** Daily breakfast (B), plus lunches (L) and dinners (D) as shown in the itinerary
- Group Size:** Maximum 12
- Start Point:** Tirana – you can arrive any time on day 1
- End Point:** Tirana or Podgorica/Tivat if doing the optional extension – you can depart any time on day 16 (or 19 if doing extension)
- Transport:** Minibuses
- Countries Visited:** Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia
- Extension:** Montenegro (4 days/3 nights)





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Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia - Hidden Europe

Tucked away in a little visited corner of Europe lie Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia, three charming and delightful countries that few people know much about. For years Albania was a closed society, ruled by the iron fist of Communism, but since the end of the Cold War it has been showing curious travellers its many charms, while as Europe's newest state, Kosovo is best known for its terrible war that it suffered in the last years of the 20th century – not the best image for outsiders to have of it. The location of these countries between some of Europe's most important empires has left them well endowed with a wealth of attractions from the Greek, Roman and Ottoman eras. The region is home to a wealth of old Ottoman architecture which sits side by side with elaborately decorated Orthodox churches and from more recent times the civic buildings of Communist Yugoslavia, as well as impressive Roman ruins and well-preserved historic towns. This part of Europe is also blessed with incredible scenery with imposing mountains, pristine lakes and traditional villages tucked away in pretty valleys. But as with many countries it is the people who leave perhaps the most lasting impression – having come through recent strife there is an overwhelming sense of optimism about the people that cannot fail to raise your spirits. Albania, Kosovo and Macedonia are some of the last frontiers of Europe, complex and fascinating destinations imbued with history. Discover them for yourself on a tour which takes in the highlights of each. You may also wish to extend your stay in the Balkans with a scenic journey through the enchanting nation of Montenegro.

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 and on occasions alternative accommodation, of a similar standard to that named below, will be used.

Tour Guide

Our guides are a key strength, chosen for their knowledge of and passion for the areas in which they work. All of our guides are carefully hand-picked, and are not just passing through these countries, but are usually locally born. Unlike some companies it should be noted we do not send a guide or tour leader from Undiscovered Destinations in the UK as we have every confidence in our locally appointed representative who is responsible for operating the tour on our behalf. Where possible you will have the same guide throughout your trip but on occasions it may be necessary to change the guide at one or more points during the tour. If the group size is very small the tour may be conducted by a driver/guide.

Itinerary

Day 1: Arrival in Tirana

Arrive in Tirana and transfer to your hotel. Depending on when you arrive there may be time to explore the city. Overnight Boka Hotel or similar. No guided arrangements nor meals are included today.

Tirana

Located on a plain on the site of an old Byzantine fortress, Tirana has been the capital of Albania since 1920, although it was founded much earlier. A mixture of architectural styles it has rather an Italian feel to it – many Italian architects were involved in the modernisation of the city in the early 20th century – and is blessed with many public parks and green spaces where people gather to walk, play board games and share conversations. Tirana has been home to an unusual experiment in which many buildings have been painted in rather bright colours, giving parts of the town a very unique look.

Many of the older buildings of the city were demolished during the Communist period but quite a few still remain, notably the Ethem Bey Mosque and the Clock Tower, both of which date back to the early 19th century, and you can still find excellent examples of Ottoman architecture in Tirana's streets.



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Day 2: Kruja – Shkoder (2.5 hours travelling time approximately)

Start the day exploring Albania's capital. We visit Skanderbeg Square, dedicated to Albania's national hero, the Mosque of Ethem Bey, one of the oldest buildings in Tirana, and the Archaeological Museum among other sites. We then head to Kruja, one of Albania's most important towns due to the part it played in resistance against the Ottomans. Visit the Skanderbeg Museum and castle as well as the old bazaar. Today lunch will be included and the opportunity to eat some traditional food in Kruja. Later we continue to Shkoder which is one of the oldest cities in the Balkans and was once a capital of the Illyrian state. We visit its old bazaar, cathedral and mosque before heading to Rozafa castle for spectacular views of the city, lake and the surrounding mountains. Overnight Hotel Alis or similar (BL)

Kruja and Skanderbeg

Kruja occupies a special place in the heart of Albanians – it is the home town of the national hero Skanderbeg from which the Ottoman invasion was resisted for almost 35 years in the 15th century. Skanderbeg was sent as a young boy into the Ottoman army, along with three of his brothers but returned to Albania to spearhead the resistance against the Sultan's forces who were continuing to make devastating inroads into the region. Uniting Albanian forces and building an army he was able to withstand the Ottoman onslaught and inflicted crushing defeats on them until his death in 1468. The army at Kruja managed to hold on for another ten years before finally succumbing to the Sultan and being formally incorporated into the empire.

Shkodra

Perched on the shores of Lake Shkodra, Shkodra is an ancient city with a rich history that many feel is the soul of Albania. It was founded around the 4th century BC and was the capital of the Illyrian state before being conquered by the Roman Empire a couple of hundred years later. Shkodra is imbued with Italian influence - as well as having been captured by Rome it was also part of the Venetian Republic for some time. Its most impressive site is Rozafa castle, a fortress dating back to the town's earliest beginnings with underground stairways, tunnels and vaults.

Day 3: Koman Lake – Valbona (3 hours travelling time by vehicle, 2.5 hours by boat)

Today we journey from Shkoder to Valbona via Koman Lake. The 2-hour trip on Lake Komani was called "One of the Great Boat Trips of the World" by the Bradt Guide, and certainly the scenery is stunning. The Drin River was flooded along part of its most mountainous passage to create the lakes in this region. The journey takes you along glassy clear water, twisting and turning through narrow passes and past silent mountain peaks. After the completion of this memorable leg of the journey we continue to Valbona. Overnight Hotel Margjeka or similar (BD)

Valbona

The name "Valbona" is used to refer to the Valbona Valley and its river with the same name, which in turn flows through the valley bearing its name, and a small village in the valley, as well the general area informally. It is located in the Tropoja District of Northern Albania. This district, bordering Kosovo to the northeast and Montenegro to the northwest, in combination with the adjacent district to the west, encompasses a region called the Malësi in Albanian, which translates roughly as "The Highlands." A wild, high, mountainous region inhabited by strong and fiercely independent people, the Malësi has for the history of Albania been the region which was never really conquered or subdued by the various waves of invaders during the last 2,000 years of Balkan history. While the proper name of the mountains around Valbona specifically are the Malësi e Gjakovës (after the town of Gjakova in Kosovo), their name is most often translated in English as "The Accursed Mountains," based on the name given to them by disgruntled Serbian would-be invaders.

Day 4: Junik - Gjakova (3 hours driving time approximately)

We cross the border into Kosovo and drive to Junik where we visit the famous Kullat e Junikut (Junik Tower). The towers are castle-like houses with a special architecture built in white rock, where Albanians have for centuries sheltered to survive wars and conflicts. Then continue to Decan Monastery (UNESCO). The



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medieval church houses some of the most preserved fresco decoration in the Balkans and the grounds are also a delight. Continue to Gjakova which lies on the banks of the River Erenik where we take in the sites of the old town including the old bazaar and clock tower. Overnight Hotel Çarshia e Jupave or similar (B)

Gjakova

A mixture of oriental and modern architecture, Gjakova is a pretty little town which has played an important role in the region. Like many in Kosovo it suffered badly during the war; its market was burnt to the ground but has now been lovingly restored to maintain the character of this old Ottoman town. Gjakova is also home to a number of tekkes (religious buildings) associated with dervish sects who are known for performing pain defying rituals while in a trance.

Day 5: Prizren (2 hours driving time approximately)

We continue to the city of Prizren, probably the most attractive town in Kosovo with superbly preserved buildings from the Ottoman era. We explore the city of Prizren; an absolute highlight of any visit to Kosovo to see the old houses of the old town in low light as the sun sets is a delight. Overnight at Hotel Centrum or similar (B)

Prizren

Prizren has around 70,000 inhabitants, and it is a true open-air museum, one of the most beautiful towns of Kosovo. It is situated on the slopes of the Sharri Mountains and on the banks of the river Bistrica. Prizren was established as an important trading town, through which passed old roads towards the Adriatic coast and the interior of the Balkan Peninsula. The area of the Prizren valley has been settled by Illyrians since ancient times. The city already existed in Roman times, and in the 2nd century it is mentioned with the name of Theranda and in the 5th century it is mentioned with the name of Petrizên by Procopius of Caesarea. Of all the cities in Kosovo, Prizren has best preserved the architectural heritage of the past.

Day 6: Pristina (2.5 hours driving time approximately)

Drive to Pristina. Explore the city visiting its main sites such as the Orthodox Church and the Carshi Mosque, dating back to the early 15th century. We then head to the ruins of Ulpiana, an ancient Roman city that was once one of the most powerful in the Balkans. Overnight Begolli Hotel or similar (B)

Pristina

Pristina is the capital and the largest city of Kosovo with a total population of over 400,000. It is the administrative, economical, and cultural centre of the country, with a long history; in its vicinity archaeological discoveries have been found which date back to the early Neolithic period. Growing from the ruins of the Roman city of Ulpiana, Pristina is situated at the centre of Balkan trade routes, and became an important city in the region. As part of the former Ottoman Empire it is home to a number of excellent old Turkish buildings including old townhouses and mosques dating back to the time of Sultan Mehmet II in the 15th century. In contrast it also houses some fairly bizarre communist architecture, making this a city with two very distinct personalities. It's also surprisingly cosmopolitan, with a good number of bars and restaurants making it a great place for exploring in the evening.

Day 7: Skopje (3 hours driving time approximately)

This morning we visit the spectacular Gračanica Monastery, one of Kosovo's most beautiful sites and containing some impressive frescoes. We continue to Macedonia stopping first at Gadime Cave. We cross the border and head to its capital Skopje. Upon arrival we visit some of the most important parts of the town, including the old Ottoman market, the monastery of Sveti Spas and the ancient Kale Fortress which dates back to Illyrian and Roman times. Overnight Ibis Hotel or similar (B)



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Gadime Cave

The entrance to Gadime Cave was discovered in 1966 by Ahmet Diti, a villager who was cutting stones in his yard and by chance came upon a glowing hole in the ground. Upon closer examination, he was amazed to find that the glow was emanating from a cave full of crystallized stalagmites. The cave was first open to visitors in 1976. Its total length is 1,260 m with a walk way that measures 440 m in length. Stalagmites and stalactites are its main attraction. Their creation over millions of years has made it possible for the formation of various shapes and figures which the locals have since named.

Skopje

Skopje is the capital and the largest city of the Republic of Macedonia. Located on a major north south Balkan route between Belgrade and Athens, Skopje has had a tumultuous past; with the Roman's, Serbs and Ottoman Turks all occupying the city before it became part of Yugoslavia in 1918. A devastating earthquake then struck Skopje in 1963 when more than 1000 people died and a huge proportion of the city's buildings were lost, as a result much of Skopje's architecture dates from the 1960s and 1970s. Fortunately Skopje's entire heritage was not lost, as much of the northern half of the city escaped untouched, leaving many architectural reminders of the city's past as an important trading town of the Ottoman Empire. As a monument to the loss the earthquake caused the clock at the Old Train Station, is forever stopped at the moment the earthquake struck. Most of central Skopje is a pedestrianised, with the 15th-century Turkish stone bridge over the Vardar River linking the old and new towns. North from the bridge you will find the Daud Pasha Baths which date back to 1466, once the largest Turkish baths in the Balkans they are now home to the City Art Gallery. Skopje's eclectic past has had an aesthetic impact on the city which is in evidence when visiting the Church of Sveti Spas, which is half buried due to the fact it was constructed in the 17th century (Ottoman Turks' rule), when no church was allowed to be higher than a mosque. Skopje's old Oriental bazaar district is the largest and most colourful of its kind left in Europe, with an abundance of small shops in the narrow streets and numerous cafes serving Turkish-style coffee it is a great place to explore.

Day 8: Skopje - Mavrovo National Park – Ohrid (3.5 hours driving time approximately)

After breakfast continue to Mavrovo National Park, the biggest in Macedonia covering 73,000 hectares. We follow the Radika River along the way and stop at monasteries and churches en route. We then drive to the beautiful town of Ohrid (UNESCO). On arrival we will explore its mixture of western and oriental architecture including the Orthodox Cathedral, the 11th Century church of St Sofia and the Roman amphitheatre. Overnight Hotel Belvedere or similar. (B)

Day 9: Ohrid (UNESCO)

Today is at leisure for you to enjoy the beautiful town of Ohrid at your own pace or relax before the second half of the tour. Overnight Hotel Belvedere or similar (B)

Lake Ohrid

Lake Ohrid is probably the oldest lake in Europe and one of the oldest lakes in the world, as it was formed tectonically between 4 and 10 million years ago. Water is supplied by the unusual means of spring water from numerous surface and underwater springs and the lake is home to a unique aquatic ecosystem with more than 200 endemic species that are of worldwide importance. Known for its beauty, excellent fishing and its several beaches it's located on the border between Macedonia and the Republic of Albania. The Macedonian section of the lake is beautiful, set amid mountains with stunning views of the water from the beach and hills. The town of Ohrid itself is one of Macedonia's most popular tourist destinations; with plenty of cultural monuments to keep you occupied, especially in the old town where amongst other highlights you can see part of a Roman amphitheatre.

Day 10: Sveti Naum Monastery – Voskopoje – Korce (2 hours driving time approximately)

Before crossing back into Albania we visit Sveti Naum Monastery, a truly beautiful site with impressive views over Lake Ohrid across to Albania. We then continue to the ancient village of Voskopoja where we explore



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the village including the Monastery of St. John the Baptist with its original structure from the 15th Century. Continue to the historic town of Korçe and explore the town including the Old Bazaar. Overnight Hotel Cathedral or similar. (B)

Korçe

Korçe was originally a trading town but is better known for its role in promoting Albanian culture and fostering a national identity. The first school to use the Albanian language opened there in 1887; its building is now a museum of education. Occupied by the Greeks in 1912, Korçe was awarded to Albania in 1920 by the International Boundary Commission, following a four-year French occupation. Enver Hoxha, the Albanian communist leader, attended and later taught at the school that the French founded there in 1916. Used as a military base by the Italians for operations against Greece during World War II, the city was occupied by the Greeks in 1940–41 and then by the Germans. Korçe was restored to Albania in 1944.

Day 11: Benja – Permet (4 hours driving time approximately)

Today we take an amazing drive through spectacular scenery to Permet. The road is bumpy in parts but the views of this remote part of Albania are incredible. We visit the village of Benja situated close to Permet. Spend a relaxing afternoon at the famous thermal waters of Benja which form 6 beautiful small natural pools. Each pool can be used for the treatment of different ailments. The water temperatures range from 25°C - 28°C. The Ottoman Bridge of Katiu is the frame of this wonderful place and lies over the Langarica's river. Overnight in Permet – Hotel Alvero or similar. (B)

Day 12: Gjirokastra (3.5 hours driving time approximately)

We continue our scenic drive to Gjirokastra. At Gjirokastra, visit the local museum, housed in the building in which the former communist dictator Enver Hoxha was born, as well as the pre-Ottoman era citadel which affords spectacular views and houses an impressive range of artillery and also bizarrely a reconnaissance US Air Force plane that was forced to land after losing its way in the 1950's. Gjirokastra is a pretty town with traditional houses and cobbled streets spilling down the sides of the mountain. Overnight Hotel Vila Sharm or similar. (B)

Gjirokastra

Gjirokastra is a picturesque town, perched on the side of a mountain above the Drino River and has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Like many Albanian towns, it is home to an impressive citadel, but it is Gjirokastra's houses that are perhaps the biggest drawcard, dating back 200 years and with a distinct architectural style that make the town an incredibly enchanting place to wander around. The houses are often decorated with elaborate entrance arches and carved wooden doors and all are slightly different from one another. Gjirokastra has been preserved as a museum city by the Albanian government.

Day 13: Blue Eye National Park – Butrint – Llogara (6 hours driving time approximately)

This morning we travel to Syri i Kalter (Blue Eye National Park). Continue to the ancient city of Butrint, Albania's most important archaeological site and given special status by UNESCO. Spend time exploring this impressive site with the added bonus of it being situated in a beautiful natural setting. The walls, basilica, acropolis and theatre at Butrint are truly impressive. We then drive towards Albanian Riviera, via some picturesque seaside villages and narrow roads overlooking the sea. Our final destination is the National Park of Llogara situated at over 1000 metres above sea level and overlooking the turquoise waters of the Ionian Sea. Overnight Hotel Alpin or similar. (B)

Butrint

Butrint dates from the 7th century BC, later becoming a Roman colony, then falling under the sway of the Venetians and Turks. Virgil claimed that the Trojans settled Butrint, but no evidence of this has yet been found. Within a century of the Greeks arriving, Butrint had become a fortified trading city with its own acropolis, the ruins of which we can still visit. The rediscovered city is a microcosm of almost 3,000 years of



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Mediterranean history, and its 6th century BC fortification evokes the city's military power and symbolizes the rich culture of the once thriving ancient city.

Day 14: Apollonia – Berat (4 hours driving time approximately)

Visit the ancient city of Apollonia, dating back to the 6th century BC. We then drive to Berat, one of the oldest inhabited regions of Albania and with a superbly preserved historic centre that has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We visit its citadel which contains old churches, mosques and museums before heading to a vineyard to sample some of the excellent local wines. This evening we enjoy a traditional dinner in this historic town. Overnight Hotel Onufri or similar. (BD)

Apollonia

Founded in 588 BC by Greeks from Corinth, the city quickly grew to 50,000 residents by the 2nd century BC. Apollonia later became a free Roman city after it sided with Julius Caesar during the war against Pompey. It developed into a cultural centre of the arts until the 3rd century AD when an earthquake rerouted a river and led to the city's decline. Austrian archaeologists started excavating the site during W.W.I and the French later continued the work through the 1920s and 30s. While Albanian archaeologists have made some progress over the last few decades, much of this ancient city still remains buried in the hill.

Berat

Berat is renowned for its historic architecture and scenic beauty, and is dominated by its ancient citadel which is still inhabited today. Inside the citadel are eight churches, many of which date back to the 13th century, as well as a 15th century mosque and a superb museum with examples of religious iconography. Outside of the citadel Berat has some excellent examples of traditional architecture – the houses and mosques are so pretty that many areas of the city have been designated as museum zones, albeit living ones. Berat is a lovely place to wander around and it is easy to grasp a sense of the past events of the town when wandering through its charming streets.

Day 15: Dures – Tirana (2.5 hours driving time approximately)

Enjoy a morning tour of Berat. We visit the citadel which contains numerous churches and an interesting museum, and has been listed by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. Visit the Iconographic Museum of Onufri located inside the castle walls. We then continue to Dures and visit the largest Roman amphitheatre in the region, dating back to the 2nd century which we will visit. Drive back to Tirana for our final night where you will enjoy a farewell dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Boka Hotel or similar. (BD)

Dures

Founded in the 7th century BC by Greek immigrants, Dures is one of the oldest cities in Europe and is home to a rich cultural heritage incorporating Greek, Roman, Venetian and Byzantine influences among others. Briefly the capital of newly independent Albania in the early 20th century it is most noted for its impressive amphitheatre but also has some good examples of Ottoman architecture as well as the palace of King Zog, Albania's first ruler.

Day 16: Departure from Tirana

Transfer to the airport for your flight home. (B)

Optional Montenegro Extension

Day 16: Tirana – Skadar Lake – Sveti Stefan – Budva (4.5 hours driving time approximately)

After breakfast we journey towards Montenegro. After the border crossing we stop at Skadar Lake, the largest lake in the Balkan Region. The lake is known for its diversity of flora and fauna. Enjoy a boat ride on the lake and spend some time enjoying the beautiful scenery before continuing our drive to Budva. Before reaching



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the old town we stop for a panoramic view of the fortified island of Sveti Stefan, connected to the mainland by a narrow causeway and of the most iconic views in Montenegro. This afternoon we spend time in the old town of Budva and you will also have time for a walk on the promenade. Overnight in Budva in a centrally located mid-range hotel. (B)

Day 17: Njegusi Village – Cetinje – Budva (5 hours driving time approximately)

This morning we drive through the mountain road, known as the serpentine road, and further stop in the village of Njegusi, an authentic village located on the slope of Mount Lovcen at an altitude of 900 m above sea level. The village is also significant for its well-preserved traditional folk architecture and its contributions to Montenegrin cuisine. Here we enjoy degustation of homemade cheese and hams, with local wines in a local restaurant. Continue to Cetinje, the old Royal Capital of Montenegro and the official residence of the President of the country. Cetinje is a town of immense historical heritage, founded in the 15th century, with numerous points of interest, with Cetinje Monastery being the main draw. Later after some time to explore we return to Budva. Overnight accommodation in Budva. (BL)

Day 18: Perast – Kotor (UNESCO) – Budva (2 hours driving time approximately)

Travel along the stunning Boka coast observing the small towns and settlements along the way. We stop at the mediaeval town of Perast. Weather permitting; we take a boat trip to visit the Our Lady of the Rock church, one of the most beautiful examples of baroque architecture on the Adriatic. The adjacent museum is very small but focused on the rich local maritime history with a fascinating collection of local art crafts. We continue to Kotor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and we spend time enjoying the atmosphere of the old streets and stop at some points of interest including the Cathedral of St Tryphon. Overnight accommodation in Budva. (B)

Day 19: Budva – Transfer to the Podgorica or Tivat Airport and Departure from Montenegro

After breakfast transfer to the airport for your flight home. (B)

Tour inclusions/exclusions

Inclusions:

Arrival and departure transfers
All accommodation
Transportation throughout
Services of English-speaking guide / tour leader
Meals as listed (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner)
Entrance fees for sites listed as part of the itinerary

Excluded:

International flights
Travel Insurance
Visas if applicable
Drinks
Items of a personal nature
Tips (discretionary)



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Important Information

Foreign Travel Advice Warnings

We constantly monitor the advice posted by the British Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). In particular we will always advise clients of any travel warnings. At present there are no warnings against travel to Albania or Macedonia, and no warnings against travel to the parts of Kosovo that we visit, apart from the general warning in place for COVID-19. Please feel free to contact us should you have any specific concerns or would like to know in detail what measures are being taken to ensure visits remain trouble free and without incident.

It should be noted that this information applies to British citizens. Other nationals are asked to check the current position of their respective government.

Accommodation and Meals

Hotel Check-in Times

As a general rule most hotels will allow guests to check-in from 2pm. Please note that the price of your tour does not include guaranteed early check-in. Therefore, please advise us if you would like to ensure that your room is available for an earlier arrival. This is particularly relevant on the first day of the tour and for early morning arrivals. One option is to pre-book and pay for an extra night at the beginning of your tour which will guarantee your accommodation is available irrespective of what time you arrive. Please contact us for information and costs.

It should also be noted that on many of our tours we have set-aside Day 1 of the itinerary as an 'arrival day'. For this reason and because tour participants are likely to be arriving at different times, and often from different countries, guided sightseeing or other activities are not included. If you are arriving early or before the start date of the tour and would like to organise some extra arrangements on a private basis please contact us.

Accommodation Rating

On this tour you can expect to stay in comfortable, clean small-scale accommodation. Accommodation on the Hidden Europe tour has private bathrooms. Air Conditioning will be provided when necessary. In general, you will find your hotel has a restaurant and/or bar.

We welcome solo travellers and single rooms will be allocated subject to the applicable tour supplement. Please note that on occasions you may not always be allocated a double or twin room, as some hotels have designated single rooms. These may be smaller in size. However, the supplement payable takes this into consideration.

Food & Drink

The daily meal basis is shown in the tour itinerary; breakfast (B), lunch (L) and dinner (D). Please note that lunch may be a picnic. Drinks are not included and will be payable locally in cash.

Dietary Requirements

If you have any special dietary requirements, you must notify us at the time of booking. While we will make every effort to cater for you, we cannot guarantee that this will be possible.



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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 £10 - £15 / Dinner £10 - £15

Kosovo

Lunch £5 - £10 / Dinner £7 - £15

Macedonia

Lunch £7 - £12 / Dinner £10 - £15

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 / Kosovo / Macedonia

Bottle of Water £0.50 / Bottle of local beer £2

Tipping – Guide and Drivers

Tipping is commonly recognised as a way of rewarding guides and drivers for good service. If you are happy with your guide and driver, please consider leaving a tip for them. For our Hidden Europe group tour, a reasonable amount would be between EUR3-5 per person per day for the guide, and EUR1-2 for the driver (you may have different guides in different countries). If you are travelling privately, then a reasonable amount would be around EUR7-10 per day for the guide and EUR3-5 per day for the driver. Waiters and bar staff in the region are generally low paid and it is common practice to leave a small tip – around 10% of the bill.

Foreign Exchange

Albania

ATM Availability: Most towns have ATM's

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are not widely accepted in the region although can be used to draw cash at ATM's

Local Currency: Lek

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euro or US Dollars

Where to Exchange: Your tour guide will advise you

Kosovo & Montenegro

ATM Availability: Most towns have ATM's

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are not widely accepted in Kosovo although can be used to draw cash at ATM's

Local Currency: Euro

Where to Exchange: Your tour guide will advise you



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Macedonia

ATM Availability: Most towns have ATM's

Credit and Debit Card Acceptance: Cards are not widely accepted in the region although can be used to draw cash at ATM's

Local Currency: Dinar

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euro or US Dollars

Where to Exchange: Your tour guide will advise you

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.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive an airport transfer, both on arrival and departure include in the tour price. In order that the transfer can be arranged please ensure that you advise us of your flight information once available. Please advise the date, time and flight number for your arrival/departure. If we have not been advised of this information at least 2 weeks before travel, then you will be required to make your own way to the hotel on Day 1 of your tour.

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Undiscovered Destinations that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country and be valid for the entire duration of your holiday.

Visa Information

At the time of writing British, US and Australian nationals do not require a visa for a short-term tourist visit to Albania, Kosovo or Macedonia.

As it is the travellers' responsibility to ensure that they meet all entry requirements it is essential that you check the rules and any other conditions at the time of booking and again when making your balance payment. In addition, we would strongly advise that you make a final check around two weeks before your arrival. This is important as requirements can change at short notice. Undiscovered Destinations, when possible, will provide guidance about entry rules, but in the first instance please contact the relevant authorities, including the applicable embassy or consulate for assistance.. Contact details can be found by visiting the following websites.

British Nationals - www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

US Nationals - <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/international-travel.html>

Australian Nationals - www.smartraveller.gov.au/

Other nationals should check the latest requirements with the authorities in their home country, or with the destination's nearest embassy or consulate.

Passports

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, valid for at least six months after the date of return to your country.





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We strongly advise that your passport contains a minimum of two blank pages for each country visited, as this may be a requirement of the local immigration authorities. In addition, certain countries will stipulate that the two blank pages are opposite each other. If you are unable to meet these requirements you may be refused boarding by your airline or denied entry by the immigration authorities.

For specific information about the requirements for your destination please check with the country's embassy or consulate. Alternatively, UK citizens can visit www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Vaccinations & Protection

There are no compulsory vaccinations required for travel to these countries. However, we recommend that you speak with your doctor or travel clinic for the most up to date advice regarding any vaccinations that may be recommended.

The legal status and regulation of some medicines prescribed or purchased in your home country can be different in other countries. If you're travelling with prescription or over-the-counter medicine, read this guidance from NaTHNaC on best practice when travelling with medicines. For further information on the legal status of a specific medicine, you'll need to contact the embassy, high commission or consulate of the country or territory you're travelling to.

Preparing for your tour

Climate

All three countries can be visited year-round. However, the best times to visit are generally considered to be spring to early summer and early to mid-autumn. In the high summer months of July and August it can get very hot – temperatures of 40°C are not uncommon, while in the winter snow is common and it can be very cold, although the mountains are beautiful around this time. In spring you can expect occasional rain showers or longer periods of rain but at the same time many days without rain is also common. Autumn tends to be slightly drier and temperatures are usually most pleasant. Note that in spring and autumn early mornings and at night it can be quite cool especially at higher elevations. In short unless you are travelling in mid-summer you should expect a range of conditions and temperatures.

Clothing

When it comes to clothing it is usually recommended that lighter clothes are worn through the day, and warmer ones at night. A hat is also advised to be worn through the day to protect from the sun, along with at least one piece of waterproof/windproof clothing for any days that the weather may be wet or windy. Please note that it can get quite cool in the mountains in the evening so some warm clothes are advised even in the summer. There will be some opportunities for swimming on our Hidden Europe tour so you may wish to take a costume and towel.

Equipment

The first thing on your list should be a first aid provisions. Whilst there is no undue cause for alarm, travellers are best advised to travel well-prepared: adequately immunized, with sufficient supplies of prescription drugs, along with a medical kit. Suncream/sunblock is a must. Insect repellent, including a bite spray will also be useful to have. A torch or head torch is useful for any unexpected electricity outages or to assist in dimly lit areas.



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Driving times

The driving times stated in the itinerary are given in the best of faith. Driving times may on occasion be longer due to unforeseen circumstances such as poor weather, road construction activity, mechanical problems etc. In some areas of Albania in particular, the roads are not well maintained and the driving will be quite slow.

Footwear

Footwear is a main priority on this tour. Comfortable walking shoes are recommended. When travelling something comfortable like sandals would be sensible.

Luggage on tour

Your luggage should not exceed 20kgs (44lbs). One large suitcase/rucksack, and one small hand luggage rucksack is acceptable.

Electric Supply & Plugs

Electrical supply is 220V/50 Hz and plugs have two round pins.

Tour Itinerary Versions

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. These tour notes were updated 4 July 2023.