



BEST SELLER

## Undiscovered Balkans

ALBANIA, KOSOVO, MACEDONIA - TRIP CODE KOA

DISCOVERY

### Why book this trip?

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Discover the history and incredible scenery of Albania, North Macedonia, and one of the world's newest countries - Kosovo. It's a great introduction to a region that is off the beaten track and that most travellers know little about.

- **Balkan Capitals** - Experience the contrasting architecture and cultures of Tirana, Skopje and Pristina
- **Valbona Valley** - Walk through this dramatic alpine valley surrounded by the jagged peaks of the Accursed Mountains
- **Lake Ohrid** - Explore this glistening lake and mountain setting boasting many cultural monuments including the Saint Naum Monastery.



**INCLUDED MEALS**  
Breakfast: 13  
Lunch: 2  
Dinner: 2



**TRIP STAFF**  
Explore Tour  
Leader  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)



**TRANSPORT**  
Bus  
Cable Car



**ACCOMMODATION**  
13 nights  
comfortable hotel



**TRIP PACE:**  
Moderate



**GROUP SIZE:**  
12 - 18

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join trip in Kruja

Arrive in Kruja. The town was home to Albania's best-known national hero, Skanderbeg, who fought to defend the country from the Ottoman Empire. The town sits under a mountain topped with a mighty fortress.

For those arriving on time our Leader plans to meet you in the hotel reception at 6pm for the welcome meeting and for those that wish, there is the chance to go out for dinner. There are no other activities planned today, so you are free to arrive in Kruja at any time. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you'll need to arrive into Tirana International Airport (TIA), which is about 40 minutes' drive. Should you miss the welcome meeting, your Leader will inform you of any essential information as soon as you catch up.

If your flight arrives earlier in the day, perhaps you might choose to visit the bazaar or the Ethnographic Museum.

Whilst in Albania we'll have the opportunity to sample the delicious cuisine, which is a real mix of Turkish, Greek and Italian influences, like byrek - a spinach and feta stuffed filo pie, and in the more rural mountainous areas barbequed lamb and 'earthy' vegetables such as griddled aubergines and mushrooms are particularly popular. Along the coast there will of course be the chance to sample fresh seafood. Albanian red wine is especially good and also local beers, such as Birra Korca.



**ACCOMMODATION:**  
Hotel Panorama (or similar)

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**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: NONE

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### **DAY 2 - Visit Kruja bazaar; drive to Shkodra and visit Rozafa Fortress**

The main highlight in Kruja is the citadel, from where Albania's greatest hero, Skanderbeg, led the resistance against the Ottoman domination. He succeeded in ousting the Turks in 1443 and Albania was free for the next 30 years. Today the fortress is a place of pilgrimage and inspiration for Albanians; it enjoys a classic setting high on a ridge staring out to the Adriatic coast, approached via pine clad hills. We will visit the fortress and the bazaar before continuing to Shkodra. Shkodra is the traditional centre of the Gheg cultural region and is one of the oldest cities in Europe. We visit the Rozafa fortress, which enjoys a panoramic views of the town and lake. The afternoon is free to explore.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Tradita (or similar)

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**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 3 - Scenic journey through Kosovo to the Valbona Valley**

Today we leave Shkodra and head for the Valbona Valley. Depending on the time of year and the ferry schedule we will either take a scenic ferry ride across Lake Koman to Fierza (taking around two and a half hours) or drive on the National Road through the scenic mountain landscape. Your Leader will advise on the day which option we will be taking. We'll then cross the border into Kosovo and continue our drive to Gjakova where we have time for lunch.

This afternoon we pass through the small town of Bajram Curri, as we enter the picturesque Valbona Valley. We check-in to a mountain hotel located in the centre of the vale, amidst the jagged peaks of the Accursed Mountains. We enjoy the afternoon exploring the village on foot.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Margjeka (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & DINNER

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#### **DAY 4 - Alpine hike in the scenic valley and meet a local shepherd's family**

Valbona is one of the most beautiful alpine valleys of Albania. Today we will hike to the side Kukaj Valley, making our way through forest towards alpine pastures that offer stunning views of the valley and the surrounding mountains. We will have a picnic lunch and later visit a shepherd's family to taste a cup of fresh mountain tea.

In the afternoon, there is time to relax before a traditional dinner of lamb on the spit is served (vegetarian options also available).

Our walk today takes about two hours and is five kilometres. There is the opportunity to walk further on the day. It's along quiet village roads (asphalt and dirt) and well-trodden paths, but some sections are uphill, so is classified as easy to moderate.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Margjeka (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

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#### **DAY 5 - Enter Kosovo and visit the Decani Monastery on the way to Peja**

Today we cross the border into Kosovo where we spend the next five days. Kosovo is the world's newest

country and has been independent only since 2008. Unfortunately, to most people Kosovo is most known for its war. However, it is a fascinating country boasting lots of treasures from past empires including Greek, Roman, Turkish and Ottoman. Driving through the town of Gjakova, we will than stop to visit the \ kulla\ of Junik (traditional Albanian mountain houses) before arriving at the beautiful Decani Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Monastery was established in 1327 by the Serb King Stefan Uros III Decanski and is a superbly situated showpiece of Orthodox art. Then, we drive to the town of Peja. The afternoon will be spent visiting the town's attractions on foot.



**ACCOMMODATION:**

Hotel Dukagjini (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## **DAY 6 - Explore the Peja Highlands and the church complex of Peja Patriarch**

Today we will visit the highlands of Peja. As we exit the town we stop to visit the church complex of Peja Patriarch, boasting amazing frescoes and surrounded by the peaks of the Rugova Bjeshk Highlands, the Kosovo part of the Accursed Mountains. Our day will continue with an impressive drive through the dramatic Rugova Gorge to the alpine location of Boga, where we will stop and take a hike to a nearby lake. In the evening, we return to Peja and spend the evening in town.

Our walk today to the lake covers five kilometres and will take around five hours. We will climb and then descend from 1,400 metres to 1,800 metres. We will follow a fairly steep mountain trail with rocky sections that are prone to be slippery when wet. We will go up and down following the same path. The walk today is graded as moderate.



**ACCOMMODATION:**

Hotel Dukagjini (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE





MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 7 - Visit a waterfall, war memorial and monastery en route to Prizren**

This morning we leave Peja and our first stop is at the Drini Bardhe Waterfall near to the Montenegro border. Known as White Drin because of the white water that rushes down these 25 metre high falls, it's one of the most picturesque in the area. After time here for photos our drive continues towards the outskirts of Pristina where we visit the Kosovo Battle Memorial. The memorial is devoted to the martyred Serb knights and is located where the Battle of Kosovo took place on 28th June 1389.

Next we visit the splendid Monastery of Gracanica, which is one of the finest examples of Byzantine architecture in the country. It was built on the site of a ruined 6th century basilica by the Serbian King, Stefan Milutin, in 1321 and was declared a Monument of Exceptional Cultural Importance in 1990.

We drive the short distance into Pristina, Kosovo's capital, which largely escaped damage during the war. Our Explore leader will take us on an orientation walk of the main sights and we'll have some free time here for lunch. Pristina isn't the most attractive city that we visit on this trip, but it has an energetic atmosphere and a great coffee culture and locals boast that they make the best macchiato in the world. You'll find numerous cafes along the main pedestrianised Nena Tereza Boulevard. In Old Pristina you'll be able to see a 26 metre high clock tower in the central bazaar area, which reminds stall holders and shoppers when it's time for prayer. The city's oldest mosques are found in this area as well. The National Library with its brutalist architecture is definitely eye catching. There are some unusual pieces of Americana in the city too, such as a mini replica of the Statue of Liberty on top of Hotel Victory and a bronze statue of Bill Clinton on the corner of Bill Clinton Boulevard.

We continue our drive to Prizren - a town dominated by Ottoman villas and is perhaps the most authentic town in Kosovo. We'll spend the next two nights here and the rest of this afternoon is free for you to relax and settle in. Prizren is set at the foot of the Sharr Mountains and is Kosovo's second city. It's rich in history and you can see the architectural marks left by both the Byzantine and Ottoman empires. You can discover the 14th century UNESCO listed Church of the Virgin of Ljevis and Church of Saint George, which are both Serbian Orthodox in faith. There are a number of traditional handicraft shops to explore and a good selection of restaurants to choose from. Prizren is especially known for its filigree jewellery, which has been handmade locally here since the 15th century. In terms of food barbeque restaurants are very popular and the grilled meats and Sharr cheese are a local speciality. It's also a good spot to try the baklava for dessert.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Centrum (or similar)



**Grade: Comfortable Hotel**



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



### **DAY 8 - Wine tasting in Rahovec and visit to a Serbian enclave village**

This morning we will stroll down the narrow cobbled streets of Prizren and around the Shadervan area we'll find the city's main Ottoman influences including the Sinan Pasha Mosque and the Old Stone Bridge. We'll also be able to see the outside of the old hammam (Turkish bath) before heading for Prizren Fortress, which dominates the skyline and you can get great views from its hilltop position. On the opposite side of the river to Shadervan we'll visit Prizren League House, which was once the headquarters where a failed uprising began to unite all Albanians within the region into a singular state.

This afternoon we drive through rolling hills until we reach nearby Rahovec - the wine cellar of Kosovo. Wine has been made in this area for over 2000 years and we will visit a few wine makers before making our way to the village of Hoqa e Vjeter - a Serbian enclave village, where we will visit a monastery that also makes wine. Later this afternoon we return to Prizren for a free evening.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Centrum (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 9 - Walk in Sharr National Park; arrive in Skopje in North Macedonia**

The day will start with a wonderful drive from Prizren through the forests of the Sharr National Park. A short walk on a forest trail near to Preval will bring us to tranquil meadows where we can taste a picnic lunch made from fresh local produce and enjoy the stunning scenery around us. Our walk will take around two hours and will cover a distance of four kilometres. The walk today is graded as easy.

In the afternoon we will continue to drive on a beautiful forest road along the Kacanik Valley that will lead to the border crossing at ElezHan, where we will say farewell to Kosovo and hello to North Macedonia. We'll make a stop in the vast and magnificent Matka Canyon before arriving in the capital city of Skopje.

The historic city of Skopje was rocked by a huge earthquake in 1963 which unfortunately destroyed an estimated 75% of the city's buildings, but it is still rich in culture and Ottoman heritage. Skopje has been used a pawn in many wars, including World War II and many empires have ruled over the city, all having influenced the architecture, religion and traditions. Despite the turbulent and sometimes violent history, Skopje is now a peaceful city where residents are free to practice all religions, the main faiths being Macedonian Orthodox and Islam. It boasts many beautiful churches and mosques, although you'll notice

mostly minarets on the skyline due to a historic law that was enforced by the Turks stating Christian buildings could not be taller than mosques.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Orange Inn (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST & LUNCH

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## DAY 10 - Discover Skopje, Tetovo Mosque and drive to Lake Ohrid

This morning we visit the main attractions of the North Macedonian capital including the Kale Fortress, the Sveti Spas Monastery and the Ottoman Bazaar, which is the largest and most well preserved in south-east Europe. The fortress is found on the highest point and gives us great views back over the city and Vardar River below. It is believed to have originally been constructed in the 6th century, but has been reconstructed and expended over the years, as different wars were fought and new empires took over. Sveti Spas Monastery, or the Church of the Holy Saviour as it's also known, is a small and modest building tucked away in the corner of a courtyard, but inside you'll find an elaborately carved wooden iconostasis (screen separating the sanctuary and nave) and a few 16th century frescoes.

A short transfer will then bring us to the town of Tetovo where we visit Sarena Dzamija, literally meaning decorated mosque. On the banks of the Pena River in the oldest part of the town we'll visit this brightly painted building with its detailed exterior and interior. After our visit we drive to Lake Ohrid, which is situated against a dramatic mountain backdrop. Founded over 2400 years ago, Ohrid has a wealth of heritage and is today an important cultural and spiritual centre. To help its protection both the town and lake were classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1980. The lake is one of the oldest in the world and allegedly there are some 365 churches, monasteries and other religious sites around the lake. Tomorrow we will visit some of these sites, but the remainder of this afternoon is left free for you to relax on the shores of the lake or wander around the city.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Su Hotel, Ohrid (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel





SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 11 - Explore Lake Ohrid and Saint Naum Monastery**

This morning we will travel by bus to Saint Naum, an imposing sight on one of the lakes peninsulas, close to the Albanian border. The monastery of Saint Naum is surrounded by sandy beaches and inside we find impressive frescoes. We enjoy some free time here; perhaps you might decide to have some lunch in one of the restaurants alongside the beautiful springs, before having the option to take a boat across the lake back to Ohrid town. Alternatively you can return by bus.

In the afternoon we will explore Ohrid with our Explore leader, soaking up the mix of Ottoman and Byzantine architecture in the city including the Old Bazaar, the Amphitheatre and the Old Castle Walls. Tonight it is possible to have dinner on one of the waterfront restaurants, perhaps trying some fish fresh from Lake Ohrid that day.



ACCOMMODATION:

Su Hotel, Ohrid (or similar)

Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### **DAY 12 - Drive to Albania's capital Tirana and take a walking tour**

Before starting the climb of the Thana Pass, we will visit the fisherman village of Lin where the ruins of a paleochristian church are found as well as Roman mosaics. We will continue our drive through the valley of Shkumbin and Elbasan town, until we reach Tirana.

Tirana was made the capital of Albania in 1920 in order to provide a power base in the geographical centre of the country. There has been a fortress on the fertile Plain of Tirana since Roman times, although the city only really came into its own in the 18th century. Today it is Albania's largest city. We will take a walking tour of the city's main sights including Skanderberg Square and monument, the Opera House, Albanian National Bank and Et'hem Bey Mosque. This evening you may wish to visit the sky tower with views over the city.





ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Vila Tafaj (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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### DAY 13 - Cable car up Mount Dajti and free afternoon in Tirana

This morning we drive the short distance to the base of the Dajti Express cable car, which is the longest cableway in the Balkans. Our 15-minute journey takes us almost to the top of Mount Dajti at around 1,049 metres. From here we'll hike to the summit of Tujani for views over the city below and the surrounding highlands. Our trek will take us around three to four hours and will cover a distance of about five kilometres. The maximum altitude reached will be 1,503 metres. The walk today is graded as easy to moderate.

There will be the opportunity to have lunch in a traditional mountain restaurant before taking the cable car back down and returning to the city where you have the afternoon free to explore. The city comes to life in the evening and especially in the animated Blloku district. During the communist regime, this area of the city was restricted and only members of the Albanian Politburo (main political party) were permitted to enter and own villas in this upmarket area. We'll have the opportunity to enjoy a final dinner in this district this evening in a traditional Albanian restaurant.



ACCOMMODATION:  
Hotel Vila Tafaj (or similar)



Grade: Comfortable Hotel



SINGLE ROOM AVAILABLE



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## DAY 14 - Trip ends in Tirana

The trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Tirana.

There are no activities planned today, so you are free to depart from Tirana at any time. If your flight is departing later in the day, luggage storage facilities are available at our hotel. If you would like to receive a complimentary airport transfer today, you need to depart from Tirana International Airport (TIA), which is about 30 minutes' drive.

On this trip we have packed in as many highlights of Tirana as we can, but there is very little free time in the city, so if you wish to spend some time discovering more on your own, we would recommend extending your stay for a night or two.



MEALS PROVIDED: BREAKFAST

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## Trip information

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### Country information

#### Albania

##### Climate

Albania has a mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers (ranging from 9 - 11 hours of sunshine a day in Tirana). Temperatures can reach up to 104°F in July. October to April is much cooler and can be wet. Albania is a mountainous country and the high peaks are snow-capped all year with seasonal weather patterns in the mountains that can be unpredictable.

##### Time difference to GMT

+8 (PST)

##### Plugs

2 Pin Round

##### Religion

Islam, Albanian Orthodox, Roman Catholic

##### Language

Albanian, Greek, Vlach, Romani, Slavic dialects

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#### Kosovo

##### Climate

Kosovo has a largely continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers.

Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the mid to high 20's (in °C) and reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August - although sometimes it can reach as high as 40°C.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+1	2 Pin Round	Islam	Albanian and Serbian

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## Macedonia

### Climate

Macedonia has a transitional climate from Mediterranean to continental. Summers are hot and dry and winters are moderately cold. It is a land locked country, so isn't cooled by coastal breezes and is separated from both the Adriatic and Aegean Seas by mountain ranges. The wettest time is in late spring and autumn, but rainfall isn't abundant in the valleys, such as around Skopje. Rainfall in summer is uncommon. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the mid to high 20's (in °C) and reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August - although it can reach as high as 40°C sometimes.

Time difference to GMT	Plugs	Religion	Language
+1	2 Pin Round	Orthodox Christian	Macedonian

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### Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Some free time has been allowed for you to explore on your own or with your travelling companions.

### Clothing

Weather is changeable in the mountains and it can be cool, especially at night, so bring a warmer jacket/fleece. A raincoat is essential at all times in case of the odd shower. You should dress with respect in the rural villages so bring some long trousers. Women should have a scarf for visiting mosques. Don't forget your swimming costume.

### Footwear

Lightweight walking/trail boots for any optional day walks and comfortable shoes or sandals for visiting the sites and towns.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself. Please bear in mind there are lots of stairs in Albania and no portarage in the

hotels.

## Equipment

Take a water bottle, a sun hat and suncream. A torch is useful in case of powercuts/emergencies. Walking poles are useful for the included countryside walks, as it can be steep and slippery in some areas.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

Tipping isn't compulsory, and we work hard to ensure that our leaders all receive a fair wage. You may however, want to recognise a leader that has done a great job or really added to your trip by giving them a tip. We're often asked about the recommended amount. It is a tricky one, and down to personal preference, but we would recommend £15 to £20 per person per week as a guideline.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow approximately £20 of local currency for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

## Albania

### Food and drink

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.

<b>Lunch price</b>	<b>Dinner price</b>	<b>Beer price</b>	<b>Water price</b>
£4.00	£10.00	£1.50	£0.50

### Foreign Exchange

#### Local currency

Albanian Lek.

#### Recommended Currency For Exchange

Sterling, US Dollars and Euros cash is widely accepted in bureaux de change in major towns and cities. Most transactions in Albania are done on a strictly cash only basis using the Lek.

#### Where To Exchange

Bureau de change in major towns and cities.

#### ATM Availability

Most larger towns.

#### Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are not widely accepted in Albania.

## Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques are not widely accepted in Albania, though you should take some as a back-up in case of emergencies.

## Kosovo

### Food and drink

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.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£6	£13	£1.2	£1

### Foreign Exchange

#### Local currency

Euro.

#### Recommended Currency For Exchange

Pound Sterling and US Dollars can be exchanged for local currency. The Serbian Dinar is sometimes accepted in Serb-majority areas. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

#### Where To Exchange

Banks or official Forex Offices in the main towns and cities.

#### ATM Availability

There are some ATMs in the capital Pristina and other major cities, but not in more rural areas.

#### Credit Card Acceptance

Credit cards are not widely accepted and most monetary transactions are made in cash.

#### Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques are not widely accepted and can only be exchanged in some banks.

## Macedonia

### Food and drink

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.

Lunch price	Dinner price	Beer price	Water price
£4	£8.5	£2	£1

## Foreign Exchange

### Local currency

Macedonian Denar.

### Recommended Currency For Exchange

Euros, US Dollars and Pound Sterling can all be exchanged for local currency. However, Euro is the best currency for exchange in most places. Please note if using Pound Sterling then only Bank of England issued bank notes are accepted. Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not accepted. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

### Where To Exchange

Banks or official Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. British banks don't generally exchange Macedonian Denar, so you should exchange any unwanted local currency before you leave Macedonia. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

### ATM Availability

Major towns and cities have ATMs for cash withdrawal, but these are limited in more rural areas.

### Credit Card Acceptance

Accepted in major restaurants and hotels.

### Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can only be exchanged in some banks.

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## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Cable Car

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## Essential Information

### Government Travel Safety Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

## Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

## Visa and Passport Information

Albania: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

North Macedonia: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Kosovo: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may be able to apply through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

## Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

## Transfers

Find out more about [Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions](#) before you book.

### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The complimentary transfers will be arranged from the Explore designated airport or train station to your trips joining point, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. Generally the airport or station that Explore have selected will be the one that is closest to the town or city where the trip starts, or the one nearest to the joining point. It will be either an airport or train station but not both.

The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.



Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers. If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

## Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore 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. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

### 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.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Included activities

We walk on four days of this 14-day trip and these are mountain walks that are graded as easy to moderate. The walks do involve hilly sections and can be muddy and uneven under foot, so we therefore recommend taking comfortable walking boots with good grip and ankle support, spare walking socks, a water bottle and snacks, sun screen, insect repellent, sun hat, layered clothing (including waterproofs), a backpack and walking poles with you.

If you don't wish to do any of the walks then you can speak to your leader about sitting these out and joining the group again after the walks.

Exploration of the towns and cities visited on this trip will also mostly be done on foot, so that you can get a proper feel for all the fascinating places that are visited.

## **Ability to swim**

No

## **Albania**

### **Vaccinations**

We recommend protection against hepatitis A, typhoid, polio and tetanus. Rabies vaccination is recommended by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office due to the large number of stray dogs in Albania. You should seek further advice from your travel clinic. Tick-borne encephalitis is recommended by some medical sources if travelling in certain areas of Eastern Europe, at specific times of the year. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## **Kosovo**

### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## **Macedonia**

### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at Explore Travel Health and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## **Additional Information**



## Why book this trip

On this multi-country adventure to Albania, Kosovo and North Macedonia we'll get off the beaten track and discover areas that most travellers still know little about. The trip gives you a great introduction to the region with a blend of cultural highlights and walking amongst the impressive mountain scenery. For 2017 we'll now spend two nights in Tirana and we've included a new excursion by cable car up Mount Dajti for a highland walk and we'll also have dinner in Tirana's famed Blloku District.

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## Reviews



**AWARD WINNING  
EXPLORE LEADERS**



**PRICE GUARANTEE  
PROMISE**



**AIRPORT  
TRANSFERS**