



Trek the Peaks of Northern Albania

Inclusions:

• Accommodation and camp facilities throughout on twin-share basis, but please carry your own sleeping bag and sleep mat. NB: As some accommodation is provided in homestays, with local households taking turns, it is not always possible to advise in advance the room breakdowns • English/Albanian speaking guides • All transfers and land transportation • Park/resort fees • Full board accommodation during the itinerary (except meals on Day 1 and lunch/dinner on Day 9)

Exclusions:

• International flights and taxes • Personal spending money • Travel Insurance
Albanian tourist visa • Arrival and departure taxes • Drinks • Telephone calls, laundry or any expenditure of a personal nature, tips

Unique holiday features

• Discover Europe's newest emerging destination, before everyone else! • Valbona Valley, probably the most beautiful valley in Northern Albania • Theth Valley - hidden paradise in the heart of the Albanian Alps • A rich culture little changed since Ottoman times

Extensions available?

• Yes - tailor-made on request. Tailor-made extensions may also be organised to other sites in Southern Albania, Montenegro and Belgrade

Min/Max passenger nos.:	2 to 12
Local departure dates and city of departure:	Tirana - This tour is best carried out from May to mid-September. Scheduled departures: 3 rd - 11 th Sept 2010, 4 th - 12 th June 2011 6 th - 14 th Aug 2011 We can run this trip with a min of 2 persons
Total local duration:	9 Days
Climate Care supp. per person: (optional)	£6
Grade:	Challenging
Land Only Price per person:	£1475 based on 2 pax £975 based on 4 pax

Description

This is 'the genuine trekking tour' in the heart of the Alps of Albania. The journey will bring travellers to discover amazing mountainous landscapes with isolated charm-full valleys, ancient traditions and pagan legends.

This trekking holiday in the mountains of northern Albania takes you to the Peaks of Shala, in the Shala Valley. The village of Thethi, a preserved alpine haven with wooden houses, is magnificently set amongst the forbidding snow peaks of Shala, and the centre of a huge wilderness region. The route also passes through the Valbona Valley, home to the turquoise waters of the Valbona river which flows in the middle of a spectacular landscape of steep mountain peaks - the jewel in the crown of the Albanian Alps!

We recommend this journey to people already experienced in long walks and with a good adaptation spirit, because the only accommodation in the mountains will be the traditional houses and hospitality of the Albanian "malesore" - highlanders.

Public transport experience!

For people who like hiking, but are not capable of doing the "big 8 hour hike" between Valbona and Thethi, we offer a "public transport experience". Instead of hiking to Thethi, you can get a taxi early in the morning, to be dropped off at the ferry.

At the other side of the ferry ride there will be a taxi waiting to bring you to Thethi (5hrs drive).

Your driver might pick up some locals on the way, so it will be a great experience to meet the local people!

We use a network of trusted taxi drivers, who are experienced with the roads and our tour. The price of Public transport is not included in the tour price and is paid directly to the locals.





Day-by-Day Itinerary

Day 1 Tirana - Transfer from airport to central Tirana for overnight stay.

Day 2 Tirana and Kruja - Morning walking tour of Tirana to include Skanderbeg Square, Clock Tower, mosque of Ethem Bey, and other places of interest. Afternoon transfer to Kruja to check into the hotel. We will have a drink and meeting with the guide at 18.00hrs and discuss the program for the coming week. Depending on the time of arrival you can visit the Kruja Bazaar and Kruja Castle, epicenter of the legendary Albanian resistance to the Ottomans led by Scanderbeg in the 14th century.

Accommodation: Hotel in Kruja.

Day 3 The holy mountain of Sarisalltik - Today we will hike up the holy mountain of Sarisalltik and visit the Bectasci Teqe (Sufi Dervishes Sanctuary) located at 1,900m. After the descent, we will start driving north (100km), and have lunch on the way to Shkodra. At the entrance of the largest city of the north, we will visit Rozafa Castle and admire the superb view of Shkodra Lake surrounded by mountains. In the evening, we will relax at Shkodra Lake and walkabout in town, until dinner.

Accommodation: Basic Hotel in Shkodra.

Day 4 The lake of Koman - and the canyon of DRIN. In the early morning, we will drive to the ferry, which goes through the spectacular canyon of the river Drin. The lake was created after the construction of the dam in

Koman in the Eighties. We then continue along the beautiful valley of the river Valbona, until we reach the picturesque location of Dunishe where we will stay overnight. Dinner and accommodation: Village house hosting in Dunishe - the best location to start all kinds of hikes in the surrounding mountains. The lovely little lake at the back of the house is the perfect spot to relax after a tiresome day.

Day 5 Qafa E Rosit - The trekking will start from the house in the direction of the village of Kukaj (900m). From there, a shepherd's path will bring us to remote landscapes of the eastern Alps of Albania until reaching Qafa e Rosit (2,000m - approx. 7-8hrs of walking). The path climbs smoothly in the middle of green meadows, with gorgeous views of Jezerca Mountain and Rrethi I Bardhe - The White Circle. At the end of the day, we will rest at the same place as the night before in Dunishe and enjoy the tasty home made food.

Day 6 The Pass Of Valbona - After breakfast, we will drive for 10km to the village of Rragam, where our next trek begins. It points to the Pass of Valbona (1,966m) and is the classic pass of the Albanian Alps that for centuries linked the two most known valleys of the area, Valbona and Thethi. We will use mules to carry our luggage to the next house. Highlanders use the path commonly from late spring, until the first snow of winter. Several springs of water will make the stops pleasant and refreshing, while admiring the steep and jagged surrounding peaks of Jezerca, Radohima, etc. From there we will start the descent towards the village of Thethi (800m), where we will stay overnight after up to 8hrs of walking. Thethi is the best-preserved alpine village in Albania. It has typical houses still roofed with wooden tiles and its location is spectacular. We will stay overnight in one of these houses and experience the unforgettable hospitality of the place



Day 7 Thethi's attractions - Today we will have a pleasant day in the surroundings of Thethi, one of the best known charming villages of northern Albania, because of its stunning nature and traditional wooden-tiled houses. We will start walking downhill from the house, and visit the attractions near by the village: the Church, the Kulla e Ngujimit (a tower house used in the past by men as a shelter against ongoing vendettas), the Thethi Waterfall, Grunasi Canyon, and the 2007 revelation: cyclopean stone walled terraces dating from the late bronze era! We will overnight at the same house as the night before.

Day 8 Tirana - We leave Thethi (800m) to start another day of spectacular trekking in the direction of the village of Boga. During this day we will walk along Shtegu I Dhenëve - the Path of the Sheep, which is another classic way of the Albanian Alps that connects the villages of Thethi and Boga. After Pass (1,830m) and the stunning views it offers of Bjeshket e Namuna - The Accursed Mountains, the walk will continue downhill along the side of Radohima mountain range until we reach the village of Boga (900m). We will have lunch in the picturesque village surrounded by vertical slopes with peaks above 2,000m high, and then leave through the Boga valley towards Shkodra and then Tirana (120km - 3hrs). Accommodation: hotel

Day 9 Tirana - If you leave in the afternoon you will have some time to spend in Tirana where you can just relax or visit the National Museum of History or one of the many markets.

**Trip Comments:**

Level: moderate to challenging Although altitudes are relatively low by Himalayan or Andean standards (max elevation approx 2,000 metres), a few of the days on the trek are demanding and good fitness and walking experience is required. The paths are not always in the best condition and the marking can be scarce. There are day treks with big ascents and descents. Changing weather conditions, even in mid-summer, play an important role when trekking in remote areas and may cause changes of the scheduled route. Normally the treks are 6/8 hrs per day carrying a daypack. The hospitality of the people and food are real highlights of this journey.

Food:

Mainly local fayre and home-made dishes, with plenty of options for vegetarians as much produce is grown locally. However, please do advise us of any special meal request at the time of booking, which we shall do our best to meet.

Joining Details:

Your final instructions and any relevant tickets will be sent to you approximately 4 weeks before date of travel, after full payment has been received.

International Flights:

We can help organise and book your flights if departing from the UK, if you have not already done so. Please contact us for information and a quote.

Maximum Elevation:

Maximum altitude of around 2,000 metres.

Kit List:

A kit list relevant to the trip will be sent to you upon payment of your deposit at your request, otherwise a copy will be sent with your final documents approximately 4 weeks before date of travel.

Insurance:

Travel and medical insurance is compulsory, and we recommend to include emergency air evacuation as standard. Travelling without insurance can result in extremely high medical or repatriation charges in the event of an accident; check your policy inclusions and exclusions carefully.

High Adventures & Wild Expeditions will require proof of insurance before you travel. It is also very useful to keep this information on our files in the unlikely case of an emergency during your trip, where we may be required to provide administrative assistance.

Passport and Visa information:

It is your responsibility to ensure that your passport has a minimum of 6 months validity at the date of your return from travel and that your visa requirements are met. If you would like some advice on where to find up to date information for each country's entry requirements and how to organise your visas, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Immunisation:

Required vaccinations and health risks can vary greatly from country to country and region to region. It is strongly recommended that you arrange a visit to your GP, or ideally a specialist travel clinic, prior to your trip. Although staff at High & Wild may point you in the right direction for your inoculations, we are unfortunately not qualified to advise you on specific medical requirements. Taking along a copy of your itinerary can be helpful for doctors to identify the areas you may visit.

