

Tirana / Zurich, winter 2023

2024:

Cross Country Albania

6-days guided mountain bike journeys in central Albania (Stay in Albania 8 days / 7 nights)



Tour description

A bike-tour through Albanian mountains is a journey back in time – and probably the last adventure in today's Europe. Touching is the hospitality, impressive are the traditional villages, and of stunning beauty the mountainous landscape. A real discovery on a mountain bike, driven by your own power. On wild dirt roads we cycle through remote valleys, over passes of solitude and past mysterious hamlets. Latest at dinner in the guesthouse of a family, the table full of home-made food, you realize: Sometimes it's worth to leave the beaten path and take a new one. Here in Albania, this last adventure of Europe. As everything subject to change, so grab it as long as it still exists...

Highlights

- Swiss quality in adventurous Albania
- Lonely bike trails in remote mountains
- Accommodation in a mix of traditional guesthouses and comfortable hotels
- The delightful Albanian kitchen full of natural flavor
- Nearly everything included in tour price

When I told a good friend who went to Albania before about my travel plans, he went pale and said: “You can impossibly cycle there.” To make it short: It is possible, and I experienced one of my best bike journeys ever.

Peter from Germany, guest with us on a
Cross Country Albania tour autumn 2021

Tour itinerary

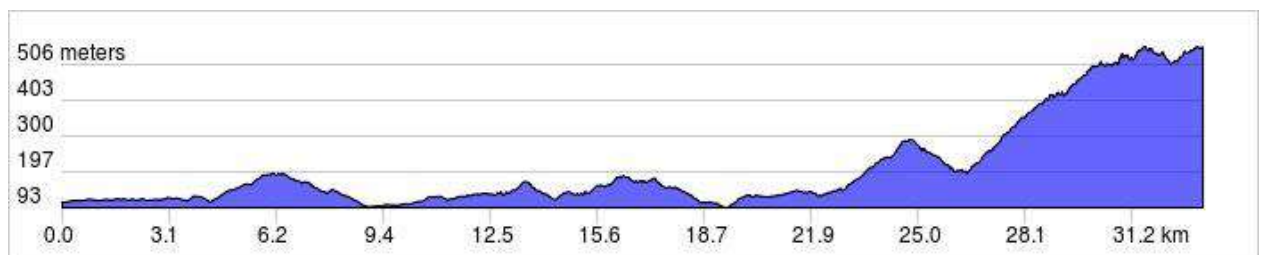
Day 1: Individual travel to Tirana Albania

If needed pickup transfer from airport to hotel, welcome-dinner

Day 2: Off-road to the birthplace of Albania's national hero Skanderbeg
(Tirana-Kruja, approx. 35km, 950m+ / 500m-)

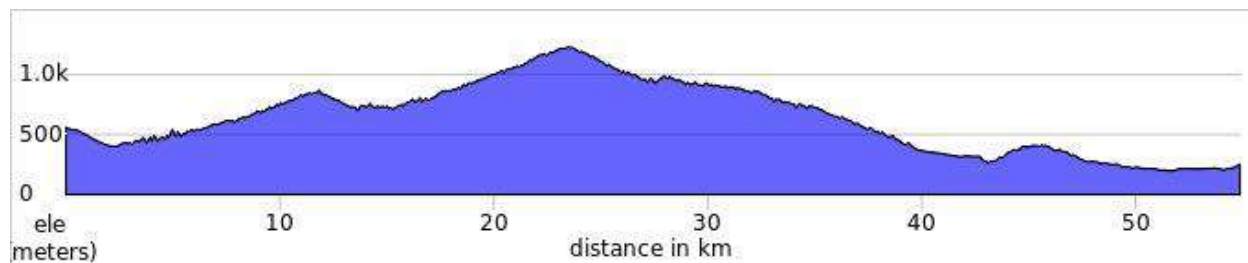
We get on our bikes and start directly from the edge of the capital city Tirana. Suddenly a very different, rural world appears. Welcome to Albania, land of contradictions! Along gentle hills, green meadows, small lakes and sleepy villages, we bike on this first day to the historical important city of Kruja, birth place of Albania's national hero and located spectacularly in the mountains.

We sleep and eat in the best hotel of the area, with good food, comfort and a great view.



Day 3: Over old military roads to Tirana's hinterland
 (Kruja –Burrel, approx. 50km, 1100m + / 1400m)

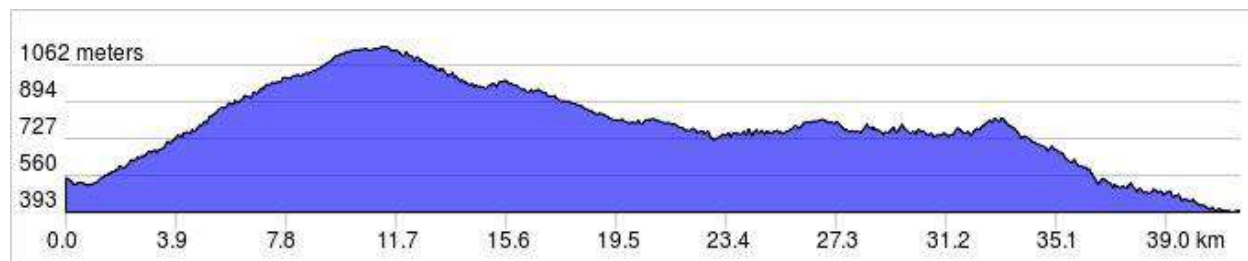
Today we climb from Kruja on a spectacular and nearly traffic-free asphalt road into the mountains. The highest point of the day is the "Shtame"-pass, in the middle of pine trees and part of a national park. Here begins the natural world of central Albania, far from the beaten path, with even more tradition and the literal hospitality. A 20km long downhill over wild natural roads, built a hundred years ago by the Italians and today what nature has left, brings us down to the small city of Burrel and the river Mat. For the last section of the day you have the choice between a gentle roll-out or an extra 15km with some sweet dirt trails – even some single! We sleep & eat in a small family-run hotel in the regional town of Burrel.

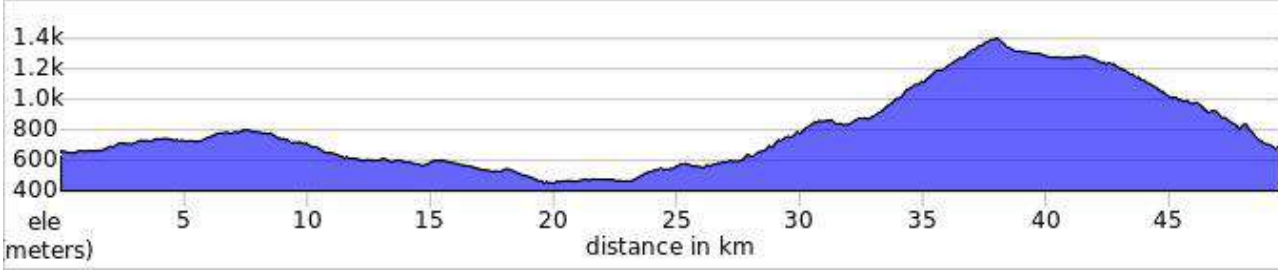


Day 4: Solitude in the remote passes of central Albania
 (Burrel – Muhurr/Peshkopi, approx. 43km, 1100m + / 1300m –)

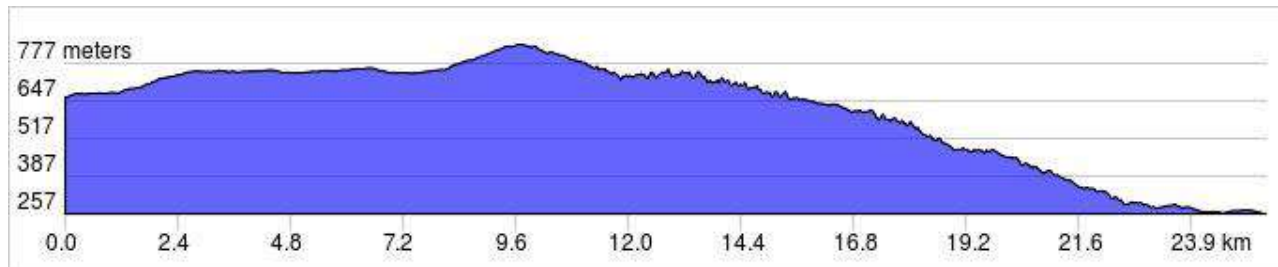
We start the day with a short transfer, which takes us half way up the mountain area between the regions of Mat and Diber. Soon after we are biking over earthy natural roads into a high plateau, seemingly from another time: Old houses built of stone, horses pulling ploughs, as good as never a car – and everywhere friendly greeting people. Another great and long downhill brings us to the river Drin, from where we receive a last short transfer to the city of Peshkopi, regional city and our final destination for today.

We sleep again in the best hotel of the town, newly renovated and with modern comfort.



Day 5:	<p>Relaxing in rural Albania (Peshkopi – Rabdisht, 6km 400m+)</p> <p>After three bike days behind and another two ahead of us, today allows us some relaxation. We're in the rural town of Peshkopi not far from the border with Macedonia, and we explore this lively place with a stroll in the morning. After lunch in a working-class restaurant with "mother's kitchen" – not the usual tourist spot - a small ride relocates us into the village of Rabdisht, where we stay in a beautiful traditional guesthouse for dinner and the night. Now we are in one of Albanias most traditional villages, with houses built mainly from stone – another walk for the interested explores the place.</p>
Day 6:	<p>Over hidden tracks to the mining town of Bulqize (Rabdisht – Bulqize, approx. 57km, 1350m + / 1750m -, or optional transfer followed by approx. 28km, 1100m + / 1000m-)</p> <p>Cherry trees welcome us on the first stretch of this day, which takes us over asphalt away from Peshkopi and down to the river Drin. Here a dirt road starts and we bike into a remote mountain valley. The trail takes us along one of the most authentic villages of Albania, with fences woven from branches, cattle in the alleys, and local youngsters rather perplexed by us bikers. The highest point and the following downhill past alpine huts we earn by a walking section – for once the other muscles in action.</p> <p>The accommodation on this day is a memorable one. We are guests at the Hupi-family in their centuries old defense-tower, which over the past few years was renovated into a stunning guesthouse full of details and history. What hasn't been changed: the authentic Albanian hospitality and the delicious homemade food. Enjoy!</p> 
Day 7:	<p>"Downhill with a view" and transfer back (Bulqize – Klos, approx. 27km, 400m + / 750m -, after that transfer to Tirana)</p> <p>Today's last day of the tour is a relaxed ride – mainly downhill – over a great asphalt road with scenic views from Bulqize down to Klos. Pleasure pure, and some pride for your achievements of the last few days!</p> <p>From here a bus transfer brings us back in approx. 2h to the capital Tirana, where we celebrate</p>

our common tour week with a farewell-dinner in a delicious fish restaurant. A week full of lasting impressions – from this so positively surprising country, full of adventure, wild nature and friendly people.



Day 8: Transfer from hotel to airport, individual travel to your home country.

Alternative we are happy to organize you an additional week of after-tour relaxing on one of Albanias un-spoilt Mediterranean beaches – or just a Tirana-weekend to finish the adventure.

Small group (4-9 pax) dates for 2024:

May 4-11
June 8-15
Sept 21-28

Prices: 1170 Euro per person, when joining one of our small groups of 4-9 guests (min. / max.) on this described tour / above dates

Single room-surcharge: 200 Euro (For 5x nights, other nights no single rooms available).

Rental bikes: We have a small supply of Hardtails for 190 Euro / week or full suspensions for 270 Euro / week. Or you bring your own.

Included:

- 6x guided bike day tours with our experienced & English speaking Guide Andi Cenolli. And with 7x guests or more we have two bike guides accompanying the group – for maximum safety and your very own choice of speed!

- All accommodations (5x in comfortable hotel double rooms (Tirana/Kruja/Burrel/Peshkopi/Tirana), 2x in traditional family guesthouses (only dormitory rooms, Rabdisht/Fush-Bulqize), all meals & non-alcoholic beverages (hearty breakfast in accommodations, lunch in simple inns along the route or picnic, traditional Albanian dinners in the guesthouses, in Tirana grill / fish)
- All transfers (including from/to airport, and optional mountain transfers as described)
- Luggage transport to the accommodations
- Assistance-vehicle for technical support / support in case of emergencies (but not “follow-car” permanently available to hop in)

Not included:

- Travel to and from Tirana Albania
- Alcoholic beverages, souvenirs tips etc.
- Bikes (upon request we have some quality rentals available – or bring your own bike)
- International valid accident insurance (mandatory)

Upon request we are happy to organize you an additional week of after-tour relaxing on one of Albania's un-spoilt Mediterranean beaches – just ask.

Tour and prices valid for the year 2024. Tour changes reserved. This tour and all the text including related images are intellectual property of Ride Albania Mountain Biking.

Difficulty level of described tour:

Fitness – 3 (on a scale with 4 as maximum): mountain bike-tour with daily stretches around 40km and cumulative climbs up to 1200m, equaling approx. 4-6h pure daily saddle time. You should bring a good constitution, for example from occasional tours on weekends etc. Some endurance is more important than strength/speed. This is a journey, not a race.

Technical difficulty level – 2 (on a scale with 4 as maximum): We mostly bike on (attractive and wild) natural (4x4) roads. These can contain some rougher rocky sections, on descends as well as climbs. A full suspension bike makes the journey clearly more comfortable, but basically also a hard tail bike is ok. Short pushing/walking sections are possible, as well as some climbs on asphalt. You should bring basic skills and some previous experience for mountain biking on unpaved surfaces. Not suitable for first time off-road mountain bikers.

Safety:

Albania does not have the emergency services speed and also not the following medical care of Western Europe. Nevertheless we see cross-country / tour-mountain biking still as relatively safe, also in Albania. Additional we are careful in our route planning and in descents, and of course we have first aid equipment and emergency numbers always with us. The local inhabitants are very helpful and concerned about the well-being of foreign guests. On the side of our guests a valid accident insurance with international coverage and the signature of a liability-disclaimer before the tour is mandatory.

Also important to know:

Albania is still one of the poorest and least „developed“ countries of Europe. Usual Western European standards are not always there, be it in service or infrastructure. We work for our tours with western European planning, but it's nearly certain that not everything will go 100% according to the plan. Our environment & reality is Albania. For whom the adventure and the friendliness of the locals are more important than everything according to the plan – he or she will nearly guaranteed be happy with us. And of course us as the locals always take good care of your well-being.

About us / Ride Albania Mountain Biking:

We are the Swiss experts in Albania for mountain biking. Living since 2013 in the country, we develop trails and destinations, deliver guide trainings and expertise, and every year we take a limited number of guests on exclusive bike journeys into the Albanian mountains.

⇒ Not flying at least one way? We think that's great ♥ – and support it with a 50 Euro discount

⇒ Is this for me, my level and interests, will it make me smile? Any other question about the tour? We`re happy to make a call or chat with you over whatsapp +355 69 870 57 93 – anytime



Sole legal owner and representative of the business is the Swiss national and Albanian resident Tobias Gessler.

Mail tobi@ride-albania.com
Web www.ride-albania.com



RIDE ALBANIA
MOUNTAIN BIKING



Ride Albania Mountain Biking is a legally registered Albanian business, based in Tirana Albania. It has the identification number L52104162P and the official registration certificate with the serial number SN-332467-09-15. Sole legal owner and representative of the business is the Swiss national and Albanian resident Tobias Gessler.

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For even more impressions go to <http://www.ride-albania.com/gallery/>