

Also 2024:

Transbalkan MTB –
10 days from Sarajevo to Tirana
(Bosnia, Montenegro & Albania)



Across the Western Balkans on a mountain bike. That part of the continent where Europe is still unique and therefore unmistakable. Off roads, away from the traffic, over remote highlands to small cities full of intense history. Timberline to Adriatic sea. Bosnian coffee to Albanian Espresso and of course (lots of) dirt roads and (some) singletracks & mule paths. That's our brand new "Trans Balkan" adventure, developed and made possible by a Dutch-Swiss-Austrian team living in the Balkans. Welcome to Europe's most adventurous corner.

Highlights

- 3x fascinating Western Balkan countries in one big bike-journey
- From gravel to singletrack to an old railway tunnel, from 6000ft to sea level – we take all of it under our wheels
- Great biking and much more: the famous bridge of Mostar, the bay of Kotor, wine tasting at the farmers, the vibrant young Tirana
- As always with us only small groups & high quality: max 9x guests and two guides



BOSNIA (Days 1-5):

Day 1 Travel to & arrival in Sarajevo Bosnia

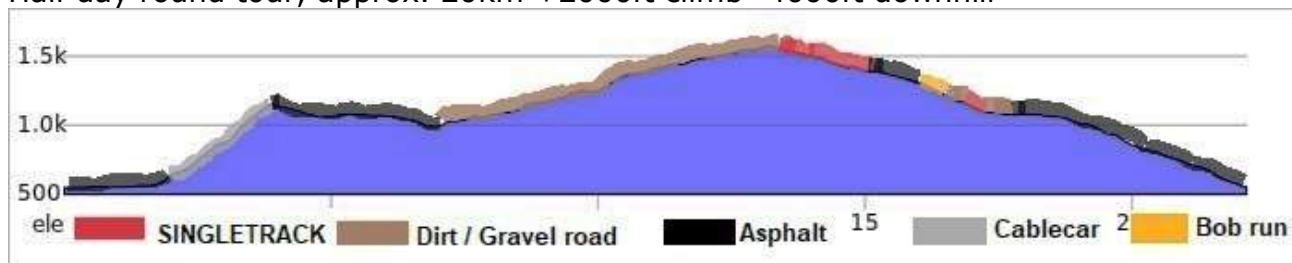
Welcome to Sarajevo, the fascinating entrance door to the Balkans. Pickup from the airport. We get to know our local guides, build together our bikes, and after a first "Sarajevsko"-beer or Bosnian coffee we cycle from the outskirts to the city center, over some modern cycling lanes as well as along some bullet-ridden houses from the painful past.

Dinner will be served by a former Hilton chef who made her dream come true and opened her own restaurant - very lucky for us.

Day 2 With our bikes on the bob run of Olympia 84`

We roll our bikes through the old town, before a modern cable car brings us to "Trebevic", the nearest mountain to Sarajevo. This was one of the venues for the winter Olympics 1984, and nearly 40 years later we ride our bikes through the original bob run of that time (approx. 1500ft long, easy and suitable for everyone). Fully sprayed with Graffiti, little grass growing over it - but in safe condition and ready for a very cool experience! Further elements of this day are green forests with sweet singletracks, various ruins and maybe even a group of wild horses. "Outdoor-city Sarajevo". Afternoon time for yourself or for a visit to the Ottoman-era historic city center. Dinner & second night in Sarajevo (Hotel "Kandilj" or similar).

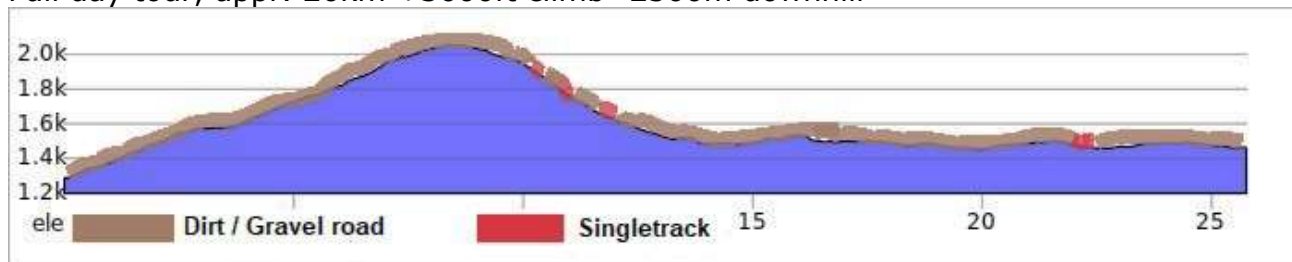
Half day round tour, approx. 20km +2000ft climb -4000ft downhill



Day 3 Over high plains to Bosnia's most beautiful mountain village

The morning starts with a short visit to the war-tunnel-museum under Sarajevo's airport and a 45min. transfer into the mountains. In a sleepy ski resort we prepare our bikes, maybe drink another coffee, and now let's get out of here! Because it just gets better, as we ascend with our bikes through beech forests and into a high plain with stunning views and panoramas. If good weather & for those who have the energy we also climb the optional, 6500ft high Bjelasnica mountain where the view pays off. Picnic-lunch on the high plain, and after a longer ride through these plains we reach the arguably most beautiful and for sure highest elevated village of Bosnia: "Lukomir", with its' typical sheet metal roofs, manual workers in the potato fields and charming old grandmas in their traditional costume. Accommodation in a simple, authentic guesthouse.

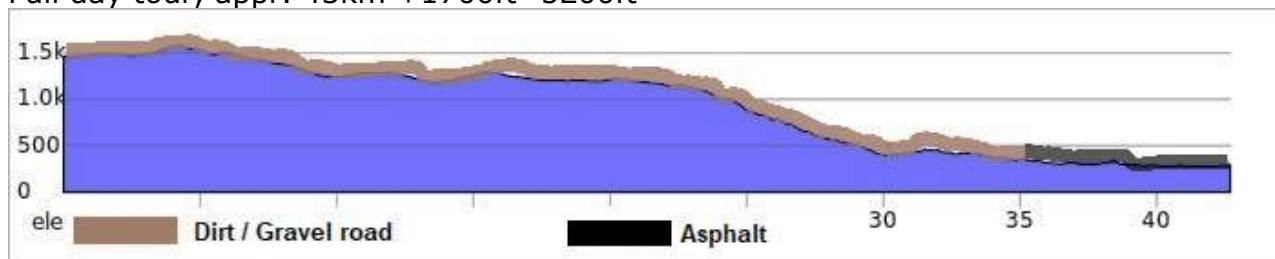
Full day tour, appr. 26km +3000ft climb -2500m downhill



Day 4 The no mans land of the „Bogomils“ - and a long downhill

It's a chilly morning in our mountain village, but with some sun or some physical movement we are soon back in action. Today it's once again these wide, nearly moon-like high plains through which we bike. Practically no villages or people, but instead a feeling of solitude and from time to time also a „Stecci“, these monumental medieval tombstones of the Bogomils (more explanation about them on site). Picnic in the green grass, then a long downhill ride over many kilometers, high altitude and winding roads down to the valley of the river Neretva. At the end of this day in pure nature we lean back and let ourselves be driven – one hour, to the famous town of Mostar. Dinner & night in Mostar.

Full day tour, appr. 43km +1700ft -5200ft



Day 5 This bridge you shall pass

Today we take it easy in terms of biking – but then of course, it always needs to be a little bit ;-). During the morning we take some time for Mostar with its' famous bridge and old town, a worthwhile visit with a good local guide. A van transfer then takes us to Bosnian hinterland, where after lunch we follow the “Ciro trail”, an old railway line specifically converted into a (simple) cycling route. Relaxed we bike through wine yards as today is all about pleasure. Dinner & accommodation („Hotel Apis“ or similar) in the attractive small town of Trebinje, not far from the border to Montenegro, the next destination of our Trans-Balkan adventure.

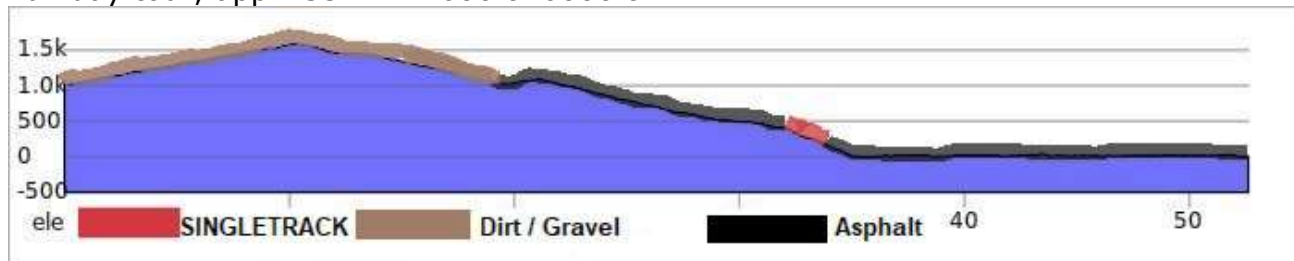
Half day tour, appr. 60km +1000ft -1000ft

MONTENEGRO (Days 6-8):

Day 6 Imperial-Royal and the bay of Kotor

In the morning a short transfer over the border to Montenegro, the "black mountains". Once in the country we get on our bikes and climb the first "imperial-royal" (meaning Austro-Hungarian) of our tour: Impressive cobble-stone mountain roads full of curves and retaining walls, built a 150 years ago with tremendous physical effort. For canons, troops – and Emperor. Many years later we are all alone out here, with maybe just some birds circling above us. Arriving at the highest point we are rewarded by a long downhill, complete with optional Singletrack-switchbacks (Level S2) into the bay of Kotor. A Fjord like Norway, but we are at the Adriatic sea. Delicious & late fish lunch directly at the waterfront, followed by a gentle roll-out along the bay to Kotor.

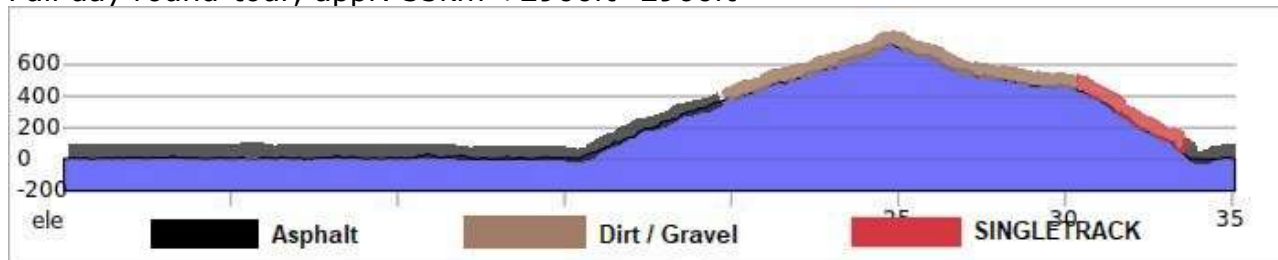
Full day tour, appr. 53km +2600ft -6000ft



Day 7 The fortress trail above Kotor

We wake up in the old town of Kotor, this famous medieval city with it's massive walls. Until some years ago this place was overrun by cruise ships, but today it's just perfect for our visit. After breakfast we hit the trail for a cool circuit-tour before sleeping another night in Kotor (this allows to make this day also a rest- or walking-day for those who choose so). We bike up a hill above the bay with spectacular views (and some juicy climbs...). After a picnic visit to an underground fortress from Austro-Hungarian times we slam our bikes over 40+ switchbacks (most of them singletracks!) back down to the bay of Kotor. With happy faces we drink a cold beer in the deckchair. Dinner & second night in Kotor ("Hotel Marija" or similar).

Full day round-tour, appr. 35km +2900ft -2900ft

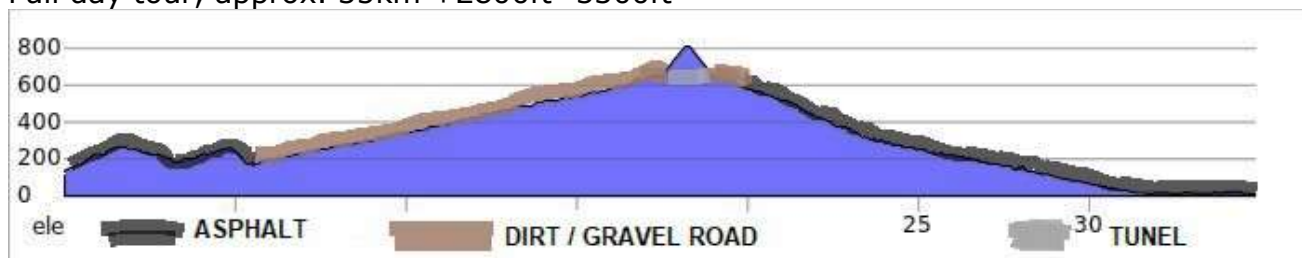


Day 8 The old railway line and the black hole

In the morning 1.5h van transfer along the coastline of Montenegro – an attractive journey to Bar. In “Stari Bar, so the “old Bar” starts today's tour which brings us over the coastal mountains and into the hinterland of Montenegro. We are following an old narrow-gauge railway line, today partly asphalt without traffic and another part gravel. Always with a very pleasant incline, so no, we won't be gasping like old steam engines. On the highest point of the track we ride through a 2000ft long summit tunnel, using our headlamps or at least mobile phones, and play with the echo of a tunnel entirely to ourselves.

Late lunch including some wine & “Raki” tasting at a small local farm. Fortunately after that there are only a few easy kilometres left to our final destination. Overnight at the pleasant village of Virpazar on lake Shkodra, and that lake will also follow us tomorrow into Albania.

Full day tour, approx. 35km +2800ft -3300ft



ALBANIA (Days 9-11):

Day 9 Time travelling through Albania

For entering into the last country of our Trans-Balkan – Albania - we use our bikes as fully-loaded “luggage mules” and walk them over the (official) border crossing. Left and right of us large lorries, in front of us another adventure. Once inside Albania we leave our luggage to the transport van, get off the road, and bike into this previously totally isolated and therefore even today very unique country. Soon we find ourselves in end-of-the-world mountain hamlets, where life seems to be untouched since a hundred years. We ride some great singletracks in a fairy-tale like chestnut forest, enjoy a traditional lunch, and in the afternoon bike over open fields to the regional town of Shkodra. There we have dinner & spend the night in a remarkable hotel (“Tradita”).

Full day tour, approx. 60km +2400ft -2400ft



Mail tobi@ride-albania.com

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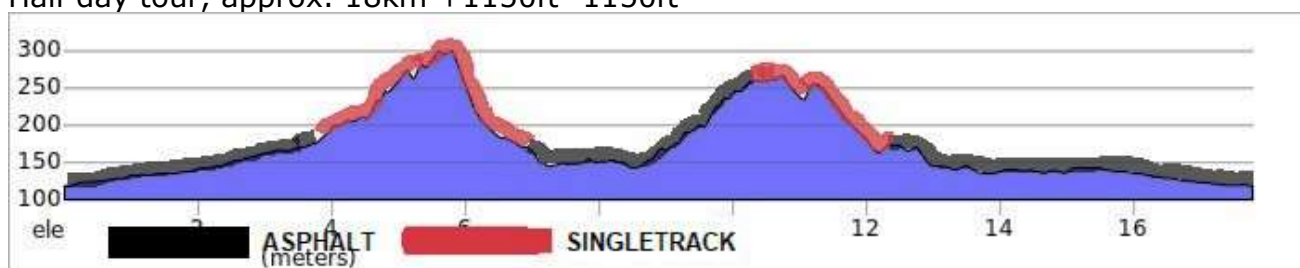
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Day 10 With the trail-builders of Tirana

We`re coming back again to modern life, but not without a last adventure in our pockets. Morning transfer to the capital Tirana. At the hotel we grab our bikes and are safely guided through a fascinating traffic chaos to the city outskirts. Here it`s immediately nature and the great mountains surrounding Tirana, a huge outdoor playground. Since short there`s a local trail-building scene in town, and the boys show us their best singletracks directly looming above the city. "Hot stuff"!

Evening farewell dinner with our group & big cheers to a bunch of lasting memories all across the Western Balkans.

Half day tour, approx. 18km +1150ft -1150ft



Last day (Sunday) Transfer to the airport & travel home from Tirana

DATES 2024 of our open small groups (min 5x and max 9x guests / date)

Indicated are arrival & return (travel) day:

Thu 16. May - Sun 26. May 2024 - Sold out/full

Thu 19. Sept - Sun 29. Sept 2024

If it should be another date and you can bring at least 5x people – let`s talk.

Secure now your space / your date in this adventure with an email to tobi@ride-albania.com – because 8x spaces, that fills rather fast...

Ride Albania Mountain Biking is a legally registered Albanian business, based in Tirana Albania. It has the identification number L81613021L and the official registration certificate with the serial number SN-528836-04-18. Sole legal owner and representative of the business is the Swiss national and Albanian resident Tobias Gessler.

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PRICE

2190 Euro per person

Single room-surcharge: 280 Euro for 8x nights (other 2x nights no single rooms available).

Bikes: Please bring your own bikes, which works out well. Your bike bag/case/box then will be transported by us from Sarajevo to Tirana, ready for re-packing at the end of the tour. Rental bikes hardly available/upon request.

Included:

- 9x guided bike day tours with a local, national guide in the front and additional a guide from us at the rear of the group - for maximum safety and your very personal choice of speed. The guide provided by us is also the overall travel-guide and your reference person / with the group for the whole journey / all countries.
- All accommodations (8x in comfortable double or single hotel rooms (Sarajevo 2x/ Mostar/ Trebinje/ Kotor 2x/ Shkodra/ Tirana), 2x in traditional accommodations (only dormitory rooms, Lukomir & Virpazar), all meals (hearty breakfast in accommodations, lunch in simple inns along the route or picnic, traditional dinners in the guesthouses & hotels, farewell dinner Tirana fish)
- Wine tasting in Montenegro, Tunnel museum in Bosnia, cable car in Sarajevo, guided tour of Mostar, etc.
- All transfers (including also from/to airport, and also the transport of your bike bag/box from Sarajevo to Tirana)
- Every day 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 Sarajevo Bosnia and back home from Tirana Albania
- Personal bikes & equipment
- Personal beverages, expenses for tips and possible souvenirs
- International valid accident insurance (mandatory)

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

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Difficulty level of described tour:

Fitness – 2 (on a scale with 4 as maximum): mountain bike-tour with daily stretches of average 40km and cumulative climbs of 800m/2600ft, equaling approx. 4-5h pure daily saddle time. Some days also more, for details see program. An “average” sporty constitution should be sufficient for this tour. To be considered is that also spring & autumn here can bring temperatures up to 30 degrees, and that will require some additional energy.

Technical difficulty level - 2 (on a scale with 4 as maximum): With mainly dirt roads / gravel this tour is technically not very difficult, however some of these natural roads are rough and therefore demand at least good concentration and reaction. Besides that the tour contains also approx. 10% (pretty cool ☺) singletracks from S1 to S2 on the single track-scale <https://translate.google.ch/translate?sl=de&tl=en&js=y&prev=t&hl=en&ie=UTF-8&u=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.singletrail-skala.de%2F&edit-text=>

If necessary these singletracks can mostly also be left out / bypassed. Tour not suitable for first time mountain bikers / no previous off-road experience.

Type of tour / surface: Very diverse journey with all kinds of surfaces, but broken down its approx. 43% natural roads (from relatively easy gravel to bigger-stones roman paths), 44% asphalt (practically always small roads with no or very little traffic) and approx. 11% singletracks (Old mule trails with zigzags, hiking trails in forests, shepherd trails). Experienced riders could also enjoy this tour on a hardtail, but a full suspension makes it more comfortable & easier. NOT suited for a gravel bike, the terrain is too rough for that.

Safety: We see CrossCountry / tour mountain biking as relatively safe, also in these Balkan countries where emergency services and medical care are not fully up to Western European standards (actually in the capital cities its quite good). Just as important is prevention, and together with our tour partners in each country we are ready: Careful planning of the routes and of downhills, and guides which always carry extensive first aid kits and have the according training. 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.

Entry: With valid (and that at least for some further months more) passport

About us / Ride Albania Mountain Biking: We are the British/Swiss experts in Albania & Western Balkans for mountain biking. Living since 2013 in Albania, we develop trails and destinations, deliver guide trainings and expertise, and every year we take a limited number of guests on our exclusive bike journeys. 2015 we started with an Albania-week, 2018 came the cross-border tour Kosovo & Albania, and since 2021 its now the “Trans-Balkan” over 3x countries. Until today we have received a total of approx. 350 guests, and many of them have become our friends.



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Ready for takeoff in the bob run of Sarajevo



Zigzags over the
bay of Kotor





Downhill leaving the highlands of Bosnia



Tombstones in the Bosnian highland

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We love adventure – and bring equipment & experience to master it



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2000ft long summit tunnel of the old narrow gauge railway / Montenegro

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RIDE ALBANIA
MOUNTAIN **BIKING**





Lukomir / Bosnia

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Bay of Kotor

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The bridge of Mostar



Fortress over the bay of Kotor / Montenegro



Down through the alleys of Sarajevo



Singletracks of Tirana

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