



This tour is going around the natural wonder of "Valley of Vjosa River". Rivers have always brought civilizations around them; therefore the Vjosa valley is rich in archeological sites, architectural specificity and history. During this tour we will be able to touch and experience a rich culture also in cult objects, fortifications, castles, old villages, agriculture, livestock, tradition, cuisine, and lifestyle

A short briefing about the river:

Vjosa Valley, the last river still left wild in Europe is an undisturbed river floodplain ecosystems, a natural heritage of European significance. The area is also highly interesting from a biogeographical point of view. With its high degree of endemic biota, it provides excellent conditions for ecological processes and the specific biodiversity under near-natural conditions. The Vjosa is characterized by a large proportion of fish species that are endemic to the Balkans.

The highly undisturbed river dynamics and the river-floodplain ecosystems along the Vjosa are in an excellent conservation status.

Also geological settings and physical geography, accompanied by spectacular natural phenomena, give a significant scientific, didactic, recreational and geo-touristic importance on a local, regional and international level.

The Vjosa Watershed has a wide variety of ecosystems and landscapes of regional, national and international importance. The landscape of the Vjosa River watershed (especially in the upper and middle parts) is characterized by the presence of a series of geologicalgeomorphological natural monuments such as: geological structures, river terraces, glacial landscapes, spectacular canyons, narrow valley segments with almost vertical slopes (from 300–400 m to 900–1000 m high) and pure water springs. The carbonate formations, deeply affected by the karst phenomenon, lead to the formation of groundwater flows draining along the Vjosa valley in 47 permanent water springs.

The characteristic landscapes are associated to a specific biodiversity and grassy vegetation. The Vjosa/Aoös catchment has a high ecological and aesthetic value due to the presence of rare flora and fauna. Forests and hygrophilic vegetation are also encountered. Habitats expressing all types of vegetation are naturally intertwined. Protected areas, having different status according to the UCN, are identified in the Vjosa Watershed.

The Vjosa Watershed encompasses important natural monuments of high value still unidentified, not evaluated or cataloged.

Geo-diversity is associated with biodiversity. The most important is the giant natural geomonument canyon of the Vjosa River, with a length of about 20 km, with a valley depth of ranging from 900 m to 1600 m and width ranging from 180 m in Kelcyra, up to 130 m in the Dragoti. The most spectacular zone of the Vjosa Canyon is the vertical left side of the valley going from an elevation of 160 m (Vjosa River) up to 1000–1040 m, having a width of about 1.5–6 km.

Program for groups up to 4-5 people

Day One: airport – Ferma Grand Albanik. Transport by comfortable van. Your driver will also be your guide. (French and English speaking). 4 hours drive.

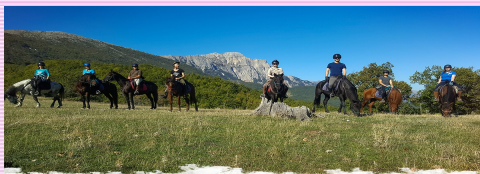
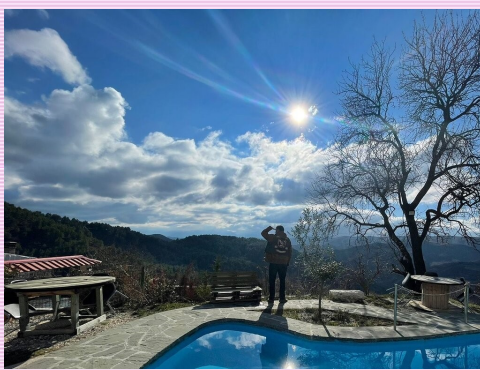
Ferma Grand Albanik is a small sunny farm in the countryside of Kelcyre, run by women. You will discover authentic Albania by meeting its inhabitants and enjoying a landscape that is off the beaten track, natural wonders little known from the usual tourist circuits.

Your host Elona will introduce you to the history of her farm during the welcome drink (freshly squeezed fruit juice, brandy or wine, etc.). This first meeting is based on an exchange in order to better understand this magical place!

Enjoy a vegetarian dinner with organic and local products straight from the Deshnica Valley. (for example: Dandelion soup, nettle pie, wild cabbage salad, wild garlic tartar, red fruit dessert ,etc)

After a great day, spend a free evening while enjoying tea, wine, raki and good music.

Overnight at the farm.



Day Two: Ferma Grand Albanik - Villa Sofia. mountain bike ride

(electrical or simple according to your demand, high quality bikes.)

The ride will be followed by a specialized van with all equipment. The group will also have a guide for the mountain bike tour. This first tour will be of 26km.

After breakfast (only farm products) leave at 9 a.m. The ride is estimated to take 3-4 hours. The trail to Villa Sofia passes through an old commercial road which is rebuilt during the Second World War by Italian military. The scenario is breath taking. We will visit a Bektashi Tekke, will swim in a lake and picnic or barbecue in nature. At villa Sofia a swimming pool is waiting for us. Rooms are very comfortable and food is typical Albanian with local ingredients. If we are not very tired we can also visit a natural monument which is called "the white rock" and spend the night to this friendly family.

Day Three: Villa sofia - Memaliaj - Lord Byron Guesthouse. Transport by bicycle.

The ride will take 33km and will last 4-5 hours. During this ride we will pass through beautiful nature and old villages. We will also visit an old coal mine and the town of Memaliaj which was established in 1946 as an industrial center for the production and exploitation of coal ore. Lunch in Memaliaj to a horse farm. There we will meet one of the oldest employees of the mine who will explain to us about the history, economic importance, the rise and fall of this "empire". After that we will go to meet Anila and her family that run a gastronomic restaurant, guesthouse and farm. Guesthouse Lord Byron features also a seasonal outdoor swimming pool, a bar and garden in Tepelenë. This property also provides guests with a children's playground. We will have dinner at their place, sleep to their comfortable rooms and profit of the Benca River just beside the property.

Day Four: Lord Byron Guesthouse - Gjirokastrer. Transport by van. Horse riding and city visits.

After having a big colorful breakfast prepared by Anila's hands with her garden products, we will drive to Gjirokastra (33km) to meet Kristina and her team of "cowboys" to Caravan Horseriding Albania. They are 3 childhood friends that were passionate about horses and made their dream come true. Now they have created a great life environment for their 30 horses and a harmonious and eco-friendly environment for their guests, as well. We will have a 3 hour horseback ride in green valleys, surrounded by high mountains and rural life, few kilometers away from Gjirokastra's UNESCO protected city in South of Albania. After that, a good lunch well deserved with local products at E DUA in the heart of the old town, followed by a guided visit to the town. Overnight at a Hotel Argjiro, a back in time sensation.

Day Five: Gjirokastrer - Kelcyre. (43km drive)

When in Kelcyre we will walk to climb the palaces of Ali Bej Kelcyra. The ruins of Ali Bej Kelcyra Castle are situated on the rocky side of Trebeshina Mountain in the entrance of Kelcyra Gorge.

The founder of the Këlcyra family was Theodore from the Muzakaj family. The Sarajs were built in the middle of the 19th century and are one of the largest complex buildings in Albania. It is a magnificent building with eight large four-story towers each and a ground floor. Only the building has an area of 3000 m². Burned by Greeks in April 1914, for more than a century these ruins have remained still magnificent on the slope of Mount Trebeshina.



From there we have the most amazing view to the valley of Vjosa river. It's strategic position and it's construction all on carved stone over a rock formation are unbelievable.

On our way down we will have lunch at Sarajet restaurant that has a fine traditional food. After lunch we will drive to "Bujtina tek xhako" diner and overnight to this lovely family guesthouse with the same amazing view to the river valley but from a different angle. Transport by van

Sixth Day: Guesthouse at Xhako - Hotova fir - Gostivisht (at Flora) By van and by bicycle. After early breakfast we will go by van to "Bredhi I Hotoves" The Fir of Hotovë-Dangëlli National Park (Parku Kombëtar "Bredhi i Hotovës-Dangëlli") is the largest national park in Albania located in Gjirokastrë County with a surface area of 34,361 ha (343.61 km²). The park takes its name from the Hotova Fir, which is considered one of the most important Mediterranean plant relics of the country. There we will change into bicycle and ride to Flora's guesthouse to the village of Gostivisht 25km. We will enjoy lunch, afternoon and dinner to this simple family that also makes delicious artisanal traditional culinary products. They also are beekeepers. We will integrate to their daily life, visit the village and sleep to their simple traditional guest rooms.

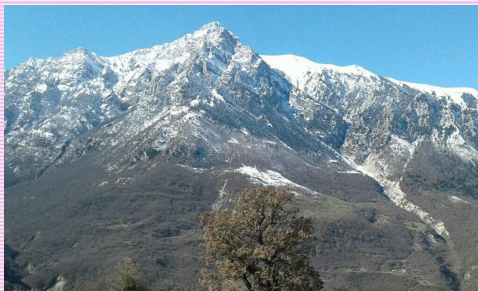
Seventh Day: Gostivisht - Ogdunan - Benje - Permet. With a bicycle (15 km + 5 km)

After breakfast with jams and honey from the house we will cycle to Ogdunan, a small but very interesting village to meet Entela. She will be our host and will cook for us a big tasty lunch. She will also show us the village and guide us to the old church. The Church of St. Mary in Ogdunan of Përmet, is a cultural monument since 1963. The church has small space and few decorations. The only part that has remained intact is the dome where there is a fresco with the figure of Christ. Also, inside this church yard there are 365 giant cypresses, one for each day of the year. We will also visit the bee park of Kastriot and have a lesson on beekeeping and buy some healthy products.

After lunch we will bike down to the hot springs, relax to the warm waters and walk into the canyon with Beni. He is the oldest and the coolest guide of Permet. After canyoning we will drive to meet Dona (Beni's wife that takes good care of her hosts to their camping area. We will have a dinner based on grilled river fresh fish from Vjosa and drink good rakia from Dona's father production. After dinner we will accommodate to a nice hotel in the city of Permet (Hotel Alvero). Free evening to visit Permet at night.

Day Eight: rafting, visit to Leuse - Maleshove village. Hiking and transport by van.

After breakfast we will hike to Leussa, an old village, 5km far from Permet. Saint Mary's Church is a cultural heritage monument in Leussa. The current church was built in the 18th century over the remains of an older structure dating to the reign of Byzantine Emperor Justinian I. We will hike back to the town and have lunch to the best culinary restaurant in the town (Antigonea).



At the early afternoon we will do rafting in the river (Vjosa Explorer) that will last 2-3 hours. After that we will drive and have a traditional dinner to Sofra Zagorite and drive to sleep the night at the Village of Maleshove. We will be hosted by a friendly family.

Day nine: Walk from Maleshova - Limar - Kala Village - Peshtan.

When we will wake up in th morning we will be surprised by the view to the other valley. Now we have passed behind Dhembeli mountain and we have an open view to the valley of Zagoria river. In front we see mountain Cajupi raising in full power and wildness. This deep mysterious valley will appeal us in adventure. We will hike for around 6 hours and will visit Leskaj, Limar, Kala Village and will go to Peshtan Village to meet Mira who runs a guesthouse together with her husband Shpetim. They also gathered old personal objects and guns and military objects from the Second World War and have build a museum inside their property. We will enjoy dinner and their alive company as our last step of our vacation in Albania.

Day Ten: Peshtan - Airport

This tour is exclusive for small groups up to 5 persons.

During the whole trip you will be guided by a professional English and French speaking guide that will be also your driver. A comfortable 4x4 van will be your helper and your logistic for biking tours, picnics, off road trails.

This tour will cost 1200 euros/person all inclusive. You will only need to buy your air ticket to Tirana and back home.

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