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GRAND BALKAN TOUR

19 days / 18 nights

*Discovering Slovenia, the Dalmatian coast of Croatia,
Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia and
Albania*

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Enjoy the charming capital, Ljubljana and head to Slovenia's gem, lake Bled, located in the heart of the Julian Alps
- Experience Croatian Split with its remarkable Diocletian palace
- Explore the winding alleys of walled Old town of Dubrovnik, the pearl of the Adriatic
- Discover the picturesque city of Montenegrin Kotor
- Visit Bosnian Mostar and Sarajevo, beautiful cities that were both victims of recent ethnical clashes
- Feel the rhythm of Belgrade, the beating heart of Serbia
- Refresh yourself in the Ohrid lake of Macedonia
- Conclude the tour in Tirana, the capital of Albania



GENERAL INFORMATION

SLOVENIA

The country of Slovenia lies in the heart of the enlarged Europe. It has a border with Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. The capital Ljubljana is a modern, fresh, young, creative and surprising city.

Slovenia, a green and diverse country between the Alps and the Mediterranean, boasts all the beauties of the Old World. When you want to experience Europe in one stroke, come to Slovenia. In just 20,273 square kilometres there are snow-covered mountains, a sea coast bathing in the Mediterranean sun, beautiful karst caves and thermal springs, narrow white-water canyons and wide slow moving rivers, high mountain lakes and lakes that disappear mysteriously underground at the start of summer, ancient villages and medieval cities, the antique castles and modern entertainment, countless vineyards with top quality wines, and the only primeval forest in Europe. Here in this small and easily covered area, where hundreds of birds migrating south make a briefly stop and where dozens of unique indigenous plants find their home, more diverse experiences await you all year round than can be found anywhere else.

CROATIA

Travelling through Croatia, Dalmatia or Dubrovnik Region offers immense and rich experiences to every visitor. From the coastal to the continental parts, Croatia's rich cultural heritage, combined with its magnificent natural beauties, make it the perfect place to spend your vacation at. The capital of Croatia is Zagreb, a charming medieval city of exceptional beauty known for its spirit and architecture, with a population of approximately 1 million.

The uniqueness of Croatia lies in its diversity. Situated between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea, Croatia provides visitors with the opportunity to ski in the winter and swim during the summer months, all within driving distance. With its 1.185 islands, islets and reefs, it is the most diverse coast on the Mediterranean.

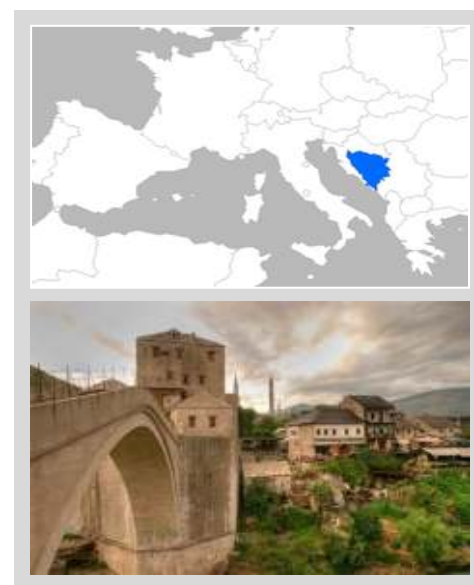
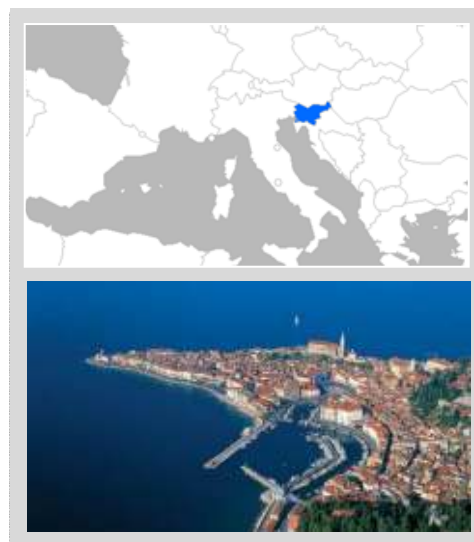
There are seven national parks in Croatia, three being in the mountainous regions (Risnjak, Paklenica and Plitvicka Jezera), and four in the coastal regions (Kornati, Brijuni, Krka and Mljet). To mention a few, Croatia is home to the Old City of Dubrovnik, Diocletian's Palace in Split, Euphrasies Basilica in Porec, and many others. Croatia boasts the largest number of developed settlements in southeast Europe, in addition, many of which date back to Roman and medieval times. Rarely can you find so many examples of cultural and historical significance from different periods in such a small region.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina is one of the last undiscovered regions of the southern area of the Alps, with vast tracks of wild and untouched nature attracting adventurers and nature lovers. According to an estimation of the World Tourism Organization, Bosnia and Herzegovina will have the third highest tourism growth rate in the world between 1995 and 2020.

Most notable among its charms is its lush, mountainous landscape, best seen from the vantage point of one of the national parks. The central Dinaric Alps are favoured by hikers & walkers, containing both Mediterranean & Alpine climates. White-water rafting with 3 rivers (including the deepest river canyon in Europe, Tara River) is something akin to a national pastime. Bosnia has also become an increasingly popular skiing and Ecotourism destination. For some, the country remains synonymous with the Yugoslav wars that ravaged the Balkan region in the 1990s; it still bears the legacy of this, having a fractured infrastructure and a countryside that remains littered with mines in some regions.

However, there are plenty of positives to take from Bosnia and Herzegovina's urban centres, especially the cosmopolitan capital of Sarajevo with its Turkish heritage and lively cafe scene. Lonely Planet, in ranking the best cities in the



world, ranked Sarajevo ahead of Croatian Dubrovnik. Tourism there is chiefly focused on historical, religious, and cultural aspects. Elsewhere there are historic fortresses, splendid old mosques, monasteries and Catholic shrines to enjoy. But perhaps above all else, it is the reconstructed Ottoman bridge at Mostar that symbolizes both the past and a positive new beginning for the country.

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro is the smallest of ex - Yugoslav republics. It offers wide range of investment possibilities and great geographic diversities which make this country worth visiting and exploring. 293 km of coast with its beautiful beaches and amazing beauty of its unique bay are a total opposite to the lakes, canyons, rivers and high mountains of Inner Montenegro.

It is unique in many ways. It is extremely wild and beautiful. It has it all, small medieval cities on the coast, wild mountains, the biggest lake on the Balkan, the longest and the deepest canyon in Europe, Mediterranean climate and most beautiful fjord in Mediterranean. It has wide range of hotels on the coast and in land and venues that can host up to 1000 participants.

Different cultures have left their traces here. Today in Montenegro one can feel the influence of Venetian, Roman, Byzantine, French and Turkish culture. Moreover, all of that could be experienced in a relatively small distance.

SERBIA

A great variety of beautiful scenery and cultural and historical monuments, curative spas, hunting grounds and fishing areas give the basis for Serbia's tourism. Serbia has connected West with East for centuries – a land in which civilizations, cultures, faiths, climates and landscapes meet and mingle.

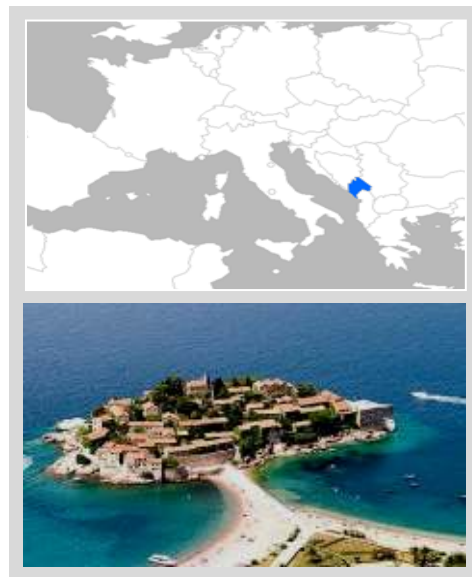
It is located in the centre of the Balkan Peninsula, in south-eastern Europe. The northern portion belongs to central Europe, but in terms of geography and climate it is also partly a Mediterranean country. Serbia is landlocked but as a Danube country (its longest river) it is connected to distant seas and oceans. Serbia is a crossroad of Europe and a geopolitically important territory. The international roads and railway lines, which run through the country's river valleys, form the shortest link between Western Europe and the Middle East.

The cultural and historical heritage of Serbia begins with prehistoric archaeological sites and its legacy from classical antiquity. Perhaps its greatest riches, though, are in the many mediaeval Serbian churches and monasteries, some of which are included on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

MACEDONIA

Landlocked in the heart of the Balkans, The Republic of Macedonia is one of Europe's youngest, smallest countries, but is simultaneously one of its oldest nations. Mountainous Macedonia still has an air of mystery to it. Simultaneously ancient and brand new, it's struggling to find its place in the post-communist world. Black-clad Orthodox monks are just as much a part of this renewal as the hordes of teenagers, bedecked in the latest Italian fashions, sipping coffee in the stylish bars of the capital.

For outdoors types Macedonia is a paradise. Its extensive wilderness allows ample opportunities for hikers, mountain climbers and skiers. Meanwhile, ancient ruins and monasteries will fascinate anyone with even a smidgen of interest in history. In short, for a little place it's crammed with something for just about everyone. Quite apart from Macedonia's spectacular peaks, lakes and rivers, it's the hospitality of the people of this most southern of Slavic nations that will make your visit truly memorable.



ALBANIA

In the heart of the Mediterranean, on the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, Albania is fast becoming one of the world's most interesting getaways. Still relatively unspoiled by globalization, tourists will notice an inspiring mixture of civilizations and cultures - making this European country truly unique.

Home of both Mother Theresa, Albania today offers not only beach and mountain holidays, a vibrant city life and a relaxing outdoor cafe culture, but also something increasingly rare in Europe these days, a glance into a culture that is all its own. Raised on a diet of separation and hardship, Albania is distinctly Albanian.

Not just the preserve of the adventurous, Albania is a warm and sincerely hospitable country – with enough rough edges to keep it interesting.



SUGGESTED ITINERARY

DAY 1

Arrival to Ljubljana airport
Meet and greet at the airport and drive to Bled (25km)
Visit Bled Castle and ride by pletna boat
Drive to Ljubljana (60km) and check-in to a hotel
Free for dinner
Overnight in Ljubljana

BLED – Alpine pearl of Slovenia

The picture-postcard of the Alpine town of Bled was once the preferred choice of the Austro Hungarian Empire's elite. Its many charms include a medieval castle, perched high on a rocky cliff, a scenic lake studded by a tiny wooded island, and the alpine splendour of the nearby Triglav National Park, a natural wonderland of glacial valleys, glittering peaks, Limestone canyons, ice-cold tarns, flowered meadows, Alpine forests, Pretty hamlets and cascading waterfalls. It is a tourist place, surrounded by the wreaths of the Julian Alps and Karavanke Mountains, placed in a dish shaped basin of a glacial lake, the warmest in Europe.

LJUBLJANA - a charming mixture of styles of Central Europe

One of Europe's best-kept secrets, the ancient walled city of Ljubljana lies at the very heart of Slovenia and boasts a vibrant history that traces 3,000 years of Roman, Medieval, Baroque and Italian influences. A friendly and cosmopolitan city Ljubljana offers a broad selection of diversions that range from strolling the shimmering reaches of the Ljubljana River to exploring the formal gardens and fortified battlements of the city. There is also wandering the cobbled streets of the Old town and a bright café society to be enjoyed plus plenty of atmospheric bars, a broad range of regional restaurants and a host of cultural events.



DAY 2

Breakfast in the hotel
Ljubljana sightseeing tour
Drive to Postojna (60km) and visit the Caves
Continue to Piran (50km) for sightseeing and free for lunch
In the afternoon a short stop in Portoroz and return to Ljubljana
Free for dinner
Overnight in Ljubljana

MARVELLOUS POSTOJNA CAVES – the most visited caves in Europe

The Postojna cave system is the largest known cave system in Slovenia. A visit to a cave such as Postojna deserves full attention due to the diversity of shapes, expansive cave areas, stalactite and stalagmite formations and water characteristics. Admire its unique Karst underground world of beautiful formations of stalactites and stalagmites. You can also see an unusual and rare underground animal Proteus Anguinus - the so-called "human fish". A visit to Postojna cave is a special experience, as an electric train takes visitors to their hour and a half circle tour visit to the cave. From train station inside the cave guides accompany visitors as they walk amongst magnificent creations of nature.



PIRAN- historical gem on Slovenian coast

Piran, a typical Mediterranean town designated by a lovely St. Georges Church and square, named after Piran's most famous citizen - musician Giuseppe Tartini. It is situated at the cape of the Piran peninsula on the Northern side of Istria. The town is actually one large museum with the medieval architecture and rich culture heritage. Narrow streets and tight houses form a special charm of the town. Piran is also an administrative centre of the local area and important Slovenian tourist centre.

PORTOROZ – the Slovenian Monte Carlo

Sea, wind, salt, Mediterranean odours, palms, roses and evergreen plants, relaxation, entertainment and companionship are the words, with which we can easily introduce Portoroz, a seaside resort in the heart of Europe. The intermingling of various cultures and music expressions, nature, culinary delights and turbulent historical events, create an atmosphere, in which the everyday life stress and tensions disappear in a relaxed state of mind. The relaxing stroll on the shoreline, recuperating run on the beach, swimming in the sea and pools, beauty and health programmes in spas or sports and recreational activities, will fill you with new energy. Portoroz is a great departure point for the sailing in the Adriatic.



DAY 3

Breakfast in the hotel and check-out
Drive to Pleterje (80km) and continue to Kostanjevica on Krka (11km)
Continue to Zagreb (55km) for lunch (not included) and a sightseeing tour
Check-in to a hotel
Free for dinner
Overnight in Zagreb

PLETERJE – open air museum

The Pleterje Open-Air Museum is an important monument of traditional Slovene architecture and the way of life in the 19th century. Here, craft skills, old customs, and folk singing are presented periodically, and especially children will enjoy the farm animals. Pleterje is also known for a Charterhouse which is today the only Carthusian monastery in Slovenia.



KOSTANJEVICA ON KRKA – the oldest city of Dolenjska region

The smallest Slovenian town, situated on the island of the Krka River is a real treasure. The castle – kloster at the bottom of the Opatovac hill boasts with one of the most beautiful courtyards with arcades. Spacious rooms of the castle are home to the Gallery of Slovenian famous painter Bozidar Jakac, while more than 100 wooden sculptures of Forma viva, an international exhibition once held in several places in Slovenia from 1961 to 1988 whereby sculptors worked with materials associated with the area, decorate the former gardens of the monastery.



ZAGREB – the capital and the largest city of Croatia

Zagreb is the capital city of the Republic of Croatia. For centuries it has been a focal point of culture and science, and now became a centre of commerce and industry as well. Zagreb is also the hub of the business, academic, cultural, artistic and sporting worlds in Croatia. Many famous scientists, artists and athletes come from the city, or work in it. The city boasts a charming medieval 'old city' with architecture and cobbled streets reminiscent of Vienna, Budapest, Prague and other Central-European capitals, though mixed with a strong Italian influence. It can offer its visitors the Baroque atmosphere of the Upper Town,



picturesque open-air markets, diverse shopping facilities, an abundant selection of crafts and a choice vernacular cuisine.

Zagreb is a city of green parks and walks, with many places to visit in the beautiful surroundings. In spite of the rapid development of the economy and transportation, it has retained its charm, and a relaxed feeling that makes it a genuinely human city.

DAY 4

Breakfast in the hotel and check-out
Drive to Plitvice waterfalls (135km) for a visit and free for lunch
Continue to Split (255km)
Check-in to a hotel
Free for dinner
Overnight in Split

PLITVICE – a misty natural wonderland

Located in a deep mysterious ancient forest known as the “Devil’s Garden” between Zagreb and Zadar lies Plitvice Lakes National Park, composed of 19.5 hectares of woods, lakes and waterfalls. Imagine Niagara Falls diced and sprinkled over a heavily forested Grand Canyon. This lush valley of terraced lakes is laced together by waterfalls and miles of pleasant wooden-plank walks.

It is one of Croatia’s top sights and the oldest national park in Europe, deservedly listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1979. Countless cascades and strangely clear and colourful water make the Plitvice Lakes National Park a misty natural wonderland.

SPLIT – the cultural and economic center of Dalmatia

Split is the largest and most important town in Dalmatia. The town was developed around the palace, which was erected in the 4th century by the Roman Emperor, Diocletian. You can also visit the ancient cellars, Cathedral, Temple of Jupiter and the Golden Gate.

The town of Split is situated in the central part of the eastern Adriatic coast and is bordered by the mouths of the small river Ćrnovnica in the Southeast, and the river Zrno in the North. Split offers you its many charms; the pines of the Marjan forest in the Western part of the peninsula, the murmur of the sea and the sound of the Dalmatian song in the stone streets of the city. Split has a very favourable climate characterized by an extremely bright sky with about 2,700 sunny hours per year.



DAY 5

Breakfast in the hotel and check-out
Split sightseeing tour
Drive to Ston (190km) for a visit and free for lunch
Continue to Dubrovnik (55km)
Check-in to a hotel
Free for dinner
Overnight in Dubrovnik



STON - the second largest defensive walls in the world

In an area known for its rugged natural beauty, few man-made sights are more magnificent than the grizzled fourteenth-century walls of Ston which with the backdrop of the mountainous countryside look scarily like the Great Wall of China. The walls date back to 1334, when the Republic of Dubrovnik gained Ston and the neighbouring Peljesac peninsula, and immediately set about securing it against potential Venetian or Ottoman attack. The area was well worth the investment: the salt pans of Ston went on to become a key source of Dubrovnik's revenue, and helped to keep the republic's fleet on the seas. Spanning the isthmus that connects the Peljesac peninsula to the mainland, and consisting of 40 towers and 5 fortresses, the walls comprise one of the longest stretches of surviving fortifications in the whole of Europe.

DUBROVNIK – the pearl of the Adriatic

The city of Dubrovnik is situated in the very South of the Republic of Croatia. The particularity and uniqueness of Dubrovnik is in its permanent live connection to its rich past and its cultural heritage, while it keeps vibrantly in pace with contemporary life, echoing its spiritual identity and its presence in the European cultural environment. Dubrovnik, listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, is rich in cultural and historical monuments.

The most recognizable feature which defines the History of Dubrovnik and gives it its characteristic are its intact city walls which run uninterrupted for 1940 meters encircling the city. This complex structure, one of the most beautiful and strongest fort systems in the Europe is the main attraction for the city's visitors. This is a tour which will show you the finest sites of the Old Walled City and will reveal why Dubrovnik is often referred to as the "Pearl of the Adriatic". We will lead you through the streets of the Old Town introducing you to the history and culture of this magnificent city. Other splendid buildings such as Onofrio's Fountain, St. Blaise's Church, Sponza Palace will be viewed along the way. You will be able to visit the Franciscan Monastery with Europe's oldest pharmacy, the Cathedral with its famous Treasury and the Rector's Palace which once used to be the seat of the government in the Dubrovnik Republic.



DAY 6

Breakfast in the hotel
A sightseeing tour around Dubrovnik
In the afternoon an optional tour to Elaphiti islands or free at leisure
Free for dinner
Overnight in Dubrovnik

ELAPHITI ISLANDS – one of the high points of your visit to Dubrovnik

The Elaphiti Island is a small archipelago consisting of several islands stretching northwest of Dubrovnik. Blessed with lush woodland and white, rocky outcrops that enhance the deep blues and greens of the Adriatic, you will not want to leave! This is one of the most interesting, full-day trips that can be done whilst staying in or around Dubrovnik.



DAY 7

Breakfast in the hotel and check-out
Drive to Kotor (80km) via Perast with a stop for lunch (not included)
Check-in to a hotel
Free for dinner
Overnight in Kotor

PERAST – a sleepy baroque place close to Kotor

One of the principal attractions on the Bay of Kotor is the ancient village of Perast, rich in Venice-like architecture which includes sixteen Baroque palaces, seventeen Catholic churches, several important Orthodox structures and a series of nine defensive towers, all set in stone and seemingly untouched by the scourge of modern-day tourism.

KOTOR – rich medieval monument

Surrounded by mountains ranging from 1,000m to 1,700m high, situated at the eastern tip of Kotor Bay, lies the picturesque city of Kotor. Its city-core is the best preserved of the cities along the Montenegrin coast and it is rich in medieval monuments. The walled medieval city centre with its winding, narrow little streets, squares and small churches, appears on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Of its religious monuments, the most notable is the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, dating from the 12th century.



DAY 8

Breakfast in the hotel
Full day tour to Budva (25km) and St. Stefan
Free for lunch
Free for dinner
Overnight in Kotor

BUDVA – the metropolis of Montenegrin tourism

Budva is Montenegro's main tourist centre. The secret of the city's popularity rests mainly on its beautiful, mostly sandy coastline, diverse nightlife and examples of Mediterranean architecture. In addition to the splendid beaches of the "Budva Riviera", the city also possesses a tiny, but beautiful, historic centre. Surrounded by a wall, the historic centre is located on a small peninsula which extends as a harbour-side promenade.

SVETI STEFAN – a town-hotel

At the foot of the Lovcen Mountain ridge, in one of the most exotic encounters of land and sea, stands the unique island of Sveti Stefan. It is the former fishing village situated on a peninsula that became a hotel-town 50 years ago. As legend has it, a fort was built on the island in 1442 when it was first settled. A wall was built around the fortification in order to provide protection for families from surrounding places before the Turkish and pirate's invasion.



DAY 9

Breakfast in the hotel and check-out
Drive to Sarajevo (305km) via Mostar for a short visit
Free for lunch in Mostar
Check-in to a hotel in Sarajevo
Free for dinner
Overnight in Sarajevo

MOSTAR – the city with the largest population of Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina

Mostar is the biggest and the most important city in the Herzegovina region in the republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is situated on the Neretva River and is the fifth-largest city in the country. Mostar was named after "the bridge keepers" (natively: mostari) who guarded the Stari Most (Old Bridge) over the river. The bridge was ruined during the war and then rebuilt in 2004. Today it is one of the city's most recognizable landmarks. Together with the Old town became a listed UNESCO World Cultural Heritage site. The Old Town with its towers, oriental shops, and restaurants, which are specialized in aromatic cooking, take you back for many centuries. Traces of 'old' times are imprinted in the market, the mosques, Herzegovina's museum and in the typical Turkish houses, a few of which have been kept in original style. The city excels in the spheres of art, cuisine, music, theatre, museums, and literature. It is also widely celebrated in popular lore, featured frequently as the setting for books, movies, and television programs.



DAY 10

Breakfast in the hotel
A full day discovering of Sarajevo
Free for lunch
Free for dinner
Overnight in Sarajevo

SARAJEVO – the capital and largest city of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sarajevo is one of the most historically interesting cities in Europe. It is the place where the Western & Eastern Roman Empire split; where the people of the Eastern Orthodox, the Southern Ottoman and the Western Roman Catholic met, lived and warred. It has been an example of historical turbulence and the clash of civilizations, as well as a beacon of hope for peace and tolerance through multi-cultural integration. Today the city has physically recovered from most of the war damage caused by the Yugoslav Wars of the early nineties. It is a cosmopolitan European capital with a unique Eastern twist that is a delight to visit. The people are very friendly, be they Bosnian, Serb, or Croat.



DAY 11

Breakfast in the hotel and check-out
Drive to Belgrade (305km)
Free for lunch on the way
Check-in to a hotel
Free for dinner
Overnight in Belgrade

DAY 12

Breakfast in the hotel
A full-day discovering of Belgrade
Free for lunch
Free for dinner
Overnight in Belgrade

BELGRADE – a 7,000 years old town

Belgrade is the capital and the "soul" of modern Serbia. Because of its strategic position by the confluence of the Sava and the Danube rivers, where the Panonian Plain meets the Balkans, the city has battled over in 115 wars and was all together destroyed 44 times. Consequently, during its lively history it was inhabited by Celts, Romans, Slavs and then has been a possession of Byzantine, Frankish, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Ottoman and Serbian rulers. It was a principal city of Ottoman Europe, the capital of Yugoslavia and then a metropolitan capital of Serbian Republic. Today, it is a modern city of about 2 million inhabitants. In Belgrade a visitor can find not only important museums, cultural and historic monuments, but also a rich program of cultural, artistic and sports events



DAY 13

Breakfast in the hotel and check-out
Drive to Skopje (429km)
Free for lunch on the way
A short visit of Skopje
Continue to Ohrid (178km)
Check-in to a hotel
Free for dinner
Overnight in Ohrid

SKOPJE– the capital and largest city of the Republic of Macedonia

In its 2,500 years of existence, Macedonia's welcoming capital city has had many different embodiments. All of them – from Roman to Byzantine, from Ottoman to Yugoslav – have left permanent traces on the city as is evidenced by Skopje's varied architecture and its mix of cultures. Yet in addition to its strong historical associations, Skopje is a forward-looking city offering an abundance of modern amenities and attractions. Here one can find sleek modern hotels above the cobblestoned Ottoman streets, outstanding neoclassical homes right around the corner from grand old Yugoslav-era buildings, red-bricked Byzantine churches and rounded Turkish mosques, chic cafés, shopping malls and brightly-coloured new offices.

OHRID – the jewel in the crown of Macedonia

The city of the immortal Ohrid is the sublime lakeside point that for many represents the culmination of the Macedonian experience, a kingdom of light and water, a repository of ancient ruins from Macedonia's earlier kingdoms. Ohrid's major attractions are all located within a remarkably concentrated and eminently walkable area, among and above the narrow streets of the Old Town lined with restaurants and cafés perfectly suited for relaxing in the cool summer evenings. Ohrid's many café bars and nightclubs also make for a vibrant nightlife. As for the lake itself, it is so large and so deep that one might mistake it for a small sea. Full range of water sports, fishing and boating is available, and numerous churches alongside Ohrid's lake shores make for fascinating side trips and walks. The wooded ridge above the lake's eastern shore is largely taken up by the National Park of Galichica, an unspoiled wilderness ideally suitable for nature enthusiasts. The uniqueness of Lake Ohrid and the city's historical architecture has been attested by UNESCO, honouring it with an official



designation as one of the few places on the cultural institution's list "World Inheritance".

DAY 14

Breakfast in the hotel
A full-day discovering of Ohrid with a visit of St. Naum monastery
Free for lunch
Free for dinner
Overnight in Ohrid

ST. NAUM MONASTERY – the baroque-styled icons and frescoes holder

The Monastery of Saint Naum is an Eastern Orthodox monastery, named after the medieval Saint Naum who founded it. Saint Naum, also known as Naum of Ohrid was a medieval Bulgarian scholar and missionary among the Slavs. He is venerated as a saint in the Orthodox Church and was buried in the Church at the Monastery. The monastery is located only 1km from the Albanian border and sits on the Southern shores of Lake Ohrid.



DAY 15

Breakfast in the hotel and check-out
Drive to Berat (190km)
Check-in to a hotel
A visit of the city with some free time for lunch
Free for dinner
Overnight in Berat

BERAT – the city of 1,000 windows

The stunning museum town of Berat is a well-preserved Ottoman city (perhaps the best in the Balkans) with a lively lower town and a beautiful medieval citadel district on top of the hill. The town is also renowned for its scenic beauty and as the "Town of a Thousand Windows", due to the many large windows of the old decorated houses overlooking the town. It is unclear whether it really means "Thousand" or "One over Another" windows. Indeed, the quarter is built in a very steep place and windows seem to be one over another.



DAY 16

Breakfast at the hotel and check-out
Drive to Apollonia (55km) for a visit
Stop for lunch (not included) at Vlora
Continue to Saranda (120km)
Check-in to a hotel
Overnight in Saranda

APOLLONIA - the archaeological heritage of Albania

Apollonia was an ancient Greek city in Illyria, located on the right bank of the Aous river. Its ruins are situated in the Fier region, near the village of Pojani, in modern-day Albania. Apollonia was founded in 588 BCE by Greek colonists from Corfu and Corinth, on a site initially occupied by Illyrian tribes and was perhaps the most important of the several classical towns known as Apollonia. Apollonia flourished in the Roman period and was home to a renowned school of philosophy, but began to decline in the 3rd century AD when its harbour started silting up as a result of an earthquake. It was abandoned by the end of Late Antiquity.

VLORA - city of independence

Vlora is one of the largest and oldest cities and the second most important port of Albania, after Durrës. Long time ago the city was briefly the capital of Albania. Founded as an ancient Greek colony of Aulon in the sixth century BC it has been continuously inhabited since. Its name is still used in Greece today and it means "valley". In Vlora there is the Port of Vlora and the University of Vlora. It is the most economically and culturally important city in the south west of Albania. It is located in the bay of Vlora, an entrance to the Adriatic Sea, almost surrounded by mountains.

SARANDA – one of the most important tourist attractions of the Albanian riviera

Saranda is the ancient, charming fishing village and a popular tourist resort. With its excellent climate and stunning location overlooking the Ionian Sea it is definitely one of the loveliest settings in Albania. The town of Saranda is built in amphitheatre style rising up a hill, with stone steps linking the top of the hill, right down to the sea promenade.

Saranda is also an ideal base for exploring many attractions of the southwest of the country, especially the amazing archaeological site of Butrint. No trip to Albania would be complete without a visit to the ancient town of Butrint, one of Albania's and the Balkans' major archaeological centres, protected under UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.



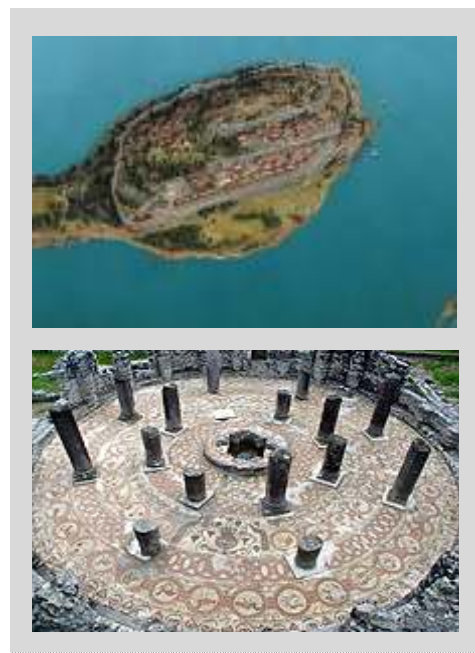
DAY 17

Breakfast at the hotel
Day at leisure in Saranda or optional excursion to Butrint
Free for lunch
Free for dinner
Overnight in Saranda

BUTRINT – the changing settlement

Ancient Buthrotum, a port from Hellenistic to Ottoman times, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in south-west Albania. Situated on the Straits of Corfu, and surrounded by a picturesque lagoon, it is one of the most remarkable archaeological sites in the Adriatic Sea region. Following twelve years of archaeological excavations and major investment in site management, the site and its museum make it an exceptionally attractive place to visit. Walking through the ruins of Butrint, it is hard to imagine the different forms the town has taken, and the differing fortunes of its inhabitants through the generations.

According to one legend, the city was founded by fleeing Trojans after the burning of Troy by the victorious Greeks, in the 12th Century B.C. 'Butrint' provides a glimpse of Mediterranean civilization from the Bronze Age through the Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian and Ottoman periods - all a top a cliff overlooking Corfu.



DAY 18

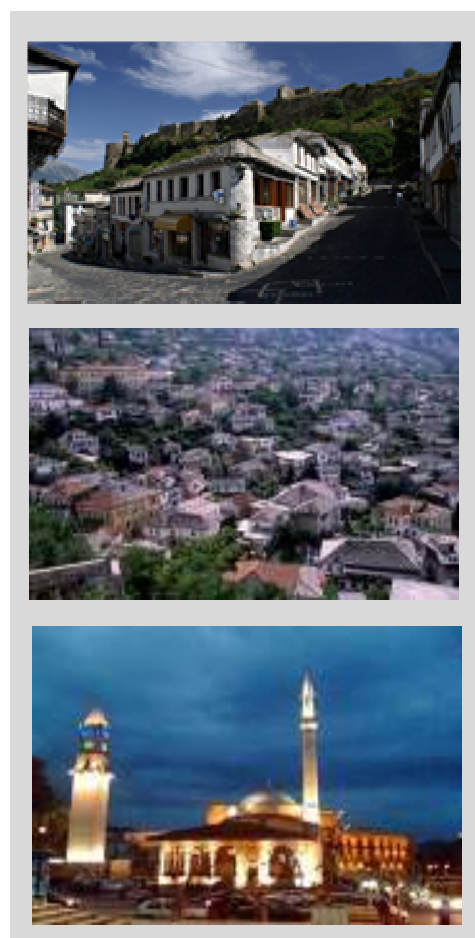
Breakfast at the hotel and check-out
Drive to Gjirokaster (55km) for visit
Free for lunch on the way
Continue to Tirana (235km)
Check-in to a hotel
Free for dinner
Overnight in Tirana

GJIROKASTER - an outstanding example of an Ottoman merchant town

Situated in southern Albania, Gjirokaster perches on the steep side of the Drino valley overlooking an historic landscape framed by snow-capped mountains. This 'city of a thousand steps' comprises hundreds of Ottoman-style tower houses with distinctive stone roofs, wooden balconies and whitewashed stone walls. Dominated by the sheer flanks of its vast castle, Gjirokaster is a magical city with a tumultuous past. From feudal stronghold to Ottoman jewel to Italian colony, the city has known many rulers and has inspired poets, authors and artists. Known by many as the *City of Stone*, Gjirokaster is a developing centre for cultural heritage tourism. A walk around the network of cobbled streets that climb steeply out of the bazaar will transport you back in time. A visit to the vast 13th-century castle brings the adventurous tales of medieval rulers and communist atrocities alive. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Gjirokaster is one of the few Ottoman merchant towns still surviving in the Balkans.

TIRANA - the capital and the largest city of Albania

Tirana is the capital and the largest city of Albania. It is also country's administrative, cultural, economic, and industrial center. The founding and later development of the city of Tirana were made possible by its geographic position on a fertile plain, rich in forest lands and water. The year 1614 is considered the date that Tirana was founded, when Sulejman Pasha Bargjini built a mosque, a hamam (Turkish bath), a bakery, and several shops. Tirana began to develop in the beginning of the sixteenth century, when a bazaar was established, and its craftsmen made silk, cotton, and leather fabrics, ceramics, iron, silver, and gold artefacts. On February 8th, 1920, the provisional government formed at the



Congress of Lushje moved to Tirana, and at this point Tirana became the capital of the country. This played an important role for the development of the town.

DAY 19

Breakfast at the hotel and check-out
Visit of Tirana
Transfer to the airport for your departure flight

SERVICES

SERVICES INCLUDED:

TRANSFERS:

Air conditioned vehicle through the whole tour

ACCOMMODATION (in DBL or SGL room, breakfast included):

2 nights in 4*/5* hotel in Ljubljana, 1 night in 4*/5* hotel in Zagreb, 1 night in 4*/5* hotel in Split, 2 nights in 4*/5* hotel in Dubrovnik, 2 nights in 4* hotel in Kotor, 2 nights in 4*/5* hotel in Sarajevo, 2 nights in 4*/5* hotel in Belgrade, 2 nights in 4* hotel in Ohrid, 1 night in 3* hotel in Berat, 2 nights in 4* hotel in Saranda. 1 night in 4*/5* hotel in Tirana.

GUIDES:

English speaking guide through the whole tour, local guides for visits in Zagreb, Split, Dubrovnik, Kotor, Mostar, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Ohrid, Berat and Tirana.

ENTRANCE FEES:

Bled Castle, Pletna boat ride & visit of St. Mary church, Postojna caves, Pleterje open air museum, Plitvice lakes, Diocletian cellars and palace in Split, Ston walls, Cathedral, Rector's palace and Franciscan Monastery in Dubrovnik, Kotor, Mosque and the Cathedral in Sarajevo, Museum of 25th May in Belgrade, St. Naum, National Historical Museum of Tirana, Apollonia archeological site, Butrint archeological site.

OTHER:

Organization of the tour and VAT.

SERVICES EXCLUDED:

- Services not mentioned in the program
- Meals unless where specified
- Porterage
- Tips

OPTIONAL SERVICES:

- Tour to Elaphiti islands