



MONTENEGRO AND NORTH ALBANIA CROSS BORDER HIKING

27.08.2017 – 03.09.2017

USEFUL INFORMATION & ADVICE

Transport: A minibus and driver are available to us during all days included in the itinerary, from when you arrive at Podgorica airport until your departure from the same airport if you take the recommended flights. Exception to this are the four days when we cross the border and hike in north Albania during which we will need to carry a 60 litre bag because the area is remote and there are no roads. Local transfers will be arranged, but our main luggage will stay in the hotel in Montenegro until we reunite with it and continue our journey.

Please make sure that you take all your belongings when you leave the bus or any other vehicle.

Food and restaurants: Trying the local food is a part of the experience! To save time, dinners in restaurants will be booked and occasionally food will be pre-ordered. Our groups number between 8 and 16 people so expect to sit in the restaurant for a couple of hours if you are coming for a meal. You are not by any means obliged to join us but please let the organiser know if you are not coming so we can plan accordingly.

Alternatively you can buy food from the supermarkets (which are pretty well stocked), the food markets in Plav and Virpazar or local producers in villages. In north Albania we will be having dinner in the local guesthouses where we stay overnight as there are very few restaurants around.

If you choose to spend a day away from the group you can meet us in the evening. Again please let the organiser know your plans. During certain sections of the this trip the group will have to stay together at all times, so you have to be fit enough to hike longer distances for more than 8 hours of active walking per day plus breaks.

During full-day hikes, when there is no alternative place for lunch in the mountains, a simple packed lunch will be provided at the starting point of the hike.

If you are vegetarian or have any food intolerances, please let us know in advance. It is better to bring special foods such as gluten-free bread with you as such products are not very common in Albania. If you don't eat bread please bring a container to carry your food on hikes.

In a restaurant beer (lager only) costs around £1.50 and a main dish can be between £3 and £7. A coffee is about 50p. A glass of wine costs from £2 upwards while a bottle tends to cost from £8 upwards. Paying as a group can be a nightmare, please keep an eye on the menu and calculate how much you need to pay, not forgetting to put about 12% service charge. **We will not be responsible for group payments in restaurants.**

Health: We don't provide health of travel insurance. Please arrange your health and travel insurance before taking this trip and send us the policy details in advance. If you don't you will not be allowed to undertake hikes.



To take part in the hikes you'll need hiking boots that support your ankles and waterproof jacket. Please do not assume that other kinds of shoes will do - bring proper boots.

Items such as pain killers, plasters and anti-histamines are sold by chemists and you are expected to buy your own. Medicines may have different names from in the UK or your home country or might not be available without a prescription (even if you can buy them over the counter at home), so if you are taking medication please bring it with you. Please inform the organiser or guide of any health issues such as allergies.

Toilets: During the hikes toilets are far and few between so you may need to use bushes. It is better to come prepared than be surprised, so bring wet wipes and hand disinfectants. Normally you would be expected to buy at least a coffee if you go to a restaurant to use their facilities.

Weather: The weather in the region is almost guaranteed sunshine in early September. The temperature in the cities will be around 20-35 degrees centigrade, but it will be much cooler in the mountains, so do bring a fleece and a waterproof jacket. The temperature of the Skadar Lake will be around 25 °C (77 °F), at Plavsko Lake a bit less, while the mountain lakes and waterfalls are as cool as 10°C (50 °F). Aside from hiking boots, please bring comfortable shoes for when we are not hiking as we'll also be walking around, doing site seeing and visiting restaurants.

Crime: The region is normally very safe, but it is advisable not to carry your passport with you when you go around town. We suggest that you scan a copy of your passport and email it to yourself in case you lose it. Do not display a large amount of bank notes especially when going to the local markets, as there may be pickpockets.

Money: The official currency in Montenegro is euro, so this is your opportunity to spend any left-over euro from previous trips.

Our accommodation and most of our food is prepaid during our stay in Albania, but you will still need some money.

The official currency in Albania is the Albanian Lek and £1 is about 150 ALL. You may want to inform your bank that you are travelling to the region, so they don't stop your card thinking that fraudsters have got hold of it.

Hiking: We'll have our first hike on Day 2 – after a 4 wheel drive to the village of Mramorje at 1850m and hike to Visitor summit at 2211m and then go back to Visitorsko lake at 1753m. From Day 3 to Day 7 we will have to carry bare necessities in our backpacks, so please consider taking a 60l backpack. We'll stay in guesthouses, there is no need to carry tents or sleeping bags. From Day 3 we also start our longer hikes: We will start from the village of Feratovicha, go via Bor summit and Qafa e Perslopit to Valbona valley in Albania. Although the distance is only 19km the ascent is 850 m and the total descent is 1650m which means over 8 hours of effective walking. We will walk just under the highest summit of Montenegro which is 2534 m. On the next day we will be hiking from Valbona valley to the village Theth for about 6 hours, the total ascent is 650m and descent is 1050m. Near the village there is a waterfall a part of the Grunas canyon, which will be a part of the trail the next day. We will continue to see the Blue Eye spring and Zi river, so there will be plenty opportunities for swimming. Please bring your swimming suits.



On day 6 we will have another long day of hiking, crossing the border to go back to Montenegro via Ropojana valley where we will see Grlja waterfalls and Oko Skakavice spring. Our destination is Vusanje village and on this day we will hike for 16km with 850 m ascent and 800m descent. As we are heading to Plav we will be able to swim in the lake before we go back to our hotel for dinner, and on our last full day in Montenegro we are going to Skadar Lake.

Visas: UK and other EU citizens do not need visas for Montenegro or Albania. If you hold a different passport, please check with the Montenegrin and Albanian embassies in London.

We will arrange cross border passes for when we cross the border via the mountains. In order to do that we need a copy of your passport details that will be submitted to the Albanian and Montenegrin police prior to your arrival.