



Albania

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Best Places to Eat

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Best Places to Stay

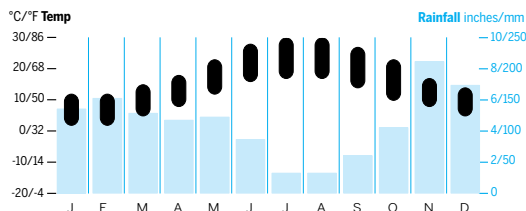
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Why Go?

Albania has natural beauty in such abundance that you might wonder why it took 20 years for the country to take off as a tourist destination since the end of a particularly brutal strain of communism in 1991. So backward was Albania when it emerged blinking into the bright light of freedom that it needed two decades just to catch up with the rest of Eastern Europe. Now that it has arguably done so, Albania offers a remarkable array of unique attractions, not least due to this very isolation: ancient mountain codes of behaviour, forgotten archaeological sites and villages where time seems to have stood still are all on the menu. With its stunning mountain scenery, a thriving capital in Tirana and beaches to rival any elsewhere in the Mediterranean, Albania has become the sleeper hit of the Balkans. But hurry here, as word is well and truly out.

When to Go

Tirana



Jun Enjoy the perfect Mediterranean climate and deserted beaches.

Jul–Aug Albania's beaches may be packed, but this is a great time to explore the mountains.

Dec See features and shorts at the Tirana Film Festival, while the intrepid can snowshoe to Theth.

Albania Highlights

- 1 Lake Koman Ferry (p50)** Join the hardy locals on this magical boat ride through stunning mountain scenery across an immense man-made lake.
- 2 Accursed Mountains (p50)** Do the wonderful day trek between the isolated mountain villages of Valbona and Theth and experience some of Albania's best scenery.
- 3 Berat (p52)** Explore this Unesco World Heritage-listed museum town, known as the 'city of a thousand windows'.
- 4 Albania Riviera (p54)** Catch some sun at one of the many gorgeous beaches and coves on Albania's Ionian coast.
- 5 Tirana (p44)** Feast your eyes on the wild colour schemes and experience Blloku cafe culture in the plucky Albanian capital.
- 6 Gjirokastra (p54)** Take a trip to this traditional Albanian mountain town, with its spectacular Ottoman-era mansions and impressive hilltop fortress.

