



Albania & Montenegro

Via Northern Greece

21 September – 6 October 2023

Albania is a small, mountainous country in the Balkan peninsula with a long Adriatic and Ionian coastline. Formerly a closed, centrally-planned state Albania threw off the shackles of communism quarter of a century ago. The isolation from those closed off years has left the country wild and truly spectacular. Albania has stunning mountain scenery, crumbling castles, the boisterous capital of Tirana, and beaches rivalling any in the Mediterranean.

Montenegro is one of the world's newest countries – but packed with history. The tiny country crams in rich remnants of its past occupiers and invaders. Montenegro has a diverse culture – the northern coast is enriched with Venetian history and influence, whereas the southern coast takes more of an Eastern touch influenced by the Ottomans.

When thinking of Greece, most people think of the sunny islands crowded with sunbathers or of Athens with its incredible history and millions of inhabitants. Northern Greece is equally beautiful and often overlooked. Filled with variety, the landscape includes wonders like the canyons of Vikos Gorge, fantastic rock formations, and the unique monasteries at Meteora.



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21 September Day 1. (Thursday) Arrival into Athens – GREECE

Touchdown in Athens – Greece. Catch a taxi, or your pre-booked transport, from the airport to the hotel. Time is allowed for you to settle in, maybe catch up on sleep. If you want get out and explore the city. Our hotel is located in the ancient and historic Acropolis and Plaka neighbourhoods. Hungry? There are plenty of restaurants, both Greek cuisine and international nearby. Check In time at the hotel is 2.00PM. If you arrive earlier the hotel will be happy to store your luggage for you while you go for a wander or have a snack.

Overnight Athens at hotel in Acropolis/Plaka neighbourhood.

22 September Day 2. (Friday) 24 Hours in Athens

With an abundance of sights in the historic area you can take the opportunity to check out the Acropolis and surrounding ancient monuments. The Acropolis Museum is minutes from our hotel or take a tram ride to the Greek Riviera nearby.

In the afternoon it's time to fill out the rental motorbike paperwork and pay motorcycle security deposits. Once completed we will celebrate (but not too much) the start of our fun in the sun adventure with a fabulous traditional 'welcome dinner'.

Overnight Athens at hotel in Acropolis/Plaka neighbourhood (Breakfast and Dinner)

23 September Day 3. (Saturday) Athens to Kastraki/Meteora. 365KM

An early breakfast and it's time to mount our motorcycles and head for the highway out of Athens. Our destination today is Meteora.

Kastraki and nearby Kalabaka are the main towns in the region known as Meteora. The word Meteora means literally 'hovering in the air'. Amazing rock structures as big as mountains with monasteries perched atop them is what the region is famous for. Monks lived in caves here as far back as the 11th Century. Kastraki is a small peaceful picturesque village nestled beneath the towering cliffs of Meteora with loads of authentic local character.

Overnight in Kastraki village. Staying in hotel. (Breakfast and Lunch)



24 September Day 4. (Sunday) Kastraki to Gjirokaster – ALBANIA. 240KM

Today we ride north to the Greece/Albania border. After completing the border formalities we will cross into the Republic of Albania. It's a short 50KM to our destination of Gjirokaster (aka the Stone City) a UNESCO World Heritage site and a well preserved Ottoman-style town. Hopefully there is sufficient time for you to check out the castle and old town after we arrive (dependent on border crossing time) – if not we have allowed for time in the morning

Overnight Gjirokaster old town. Staying in hotel. (Breakfast and Lunch)

25 September Day 5. (Monday) Gjirokaster to Berat. 175KM

Staying on the inland route we are riding into central Albania and our destination is the ancient city of Berat. Berat is an enchanting town situated on the Osum River. Known as the 'City of a Thousand Windows' due to the collection of white Ottoman houses that climb up the hill to Berati Castle. The towering castle presiding over the town and the winding cobblestone streets ensure Berat is on the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Overnight in Berat town. Staying in hotel within Berati Castle (Breakfast and Lunch)

26 September Day 6. (Tuesday) Berat to Durres. 105KM

Durres is the primary port city of Albania which lies 35KM west of the capital Tirana on the Adriatic Sea. Durres is rich in history with the standout being the Amphitheatre of Durres which was built on the hillside inside the city walls in the early 2nd century AD. The amphitheatre could house 20,000 spectators for the gladiator fights. Remains of Roman baths have also been discovered in Durres. Our delightful hostess Lilianna will make us feel welcome at their small charming family owned hotel

Overnight Durres town. Staying in small family run hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)



27 September Day 7. (Wednesday) Dures to Podgorica – MONTENEGRO. 180KM

We cross from Albania into Montenegro, there are border formalities to complete before we're underway towards Podgorica.

Podgorica is the capital city of Montenegro, with a population of 200,000 people.

Montenegro can be translated to mean 'Black Mountains.' After World War 1 Montenegro became part of Yugoslavia until the breakup of Yugoslavia when Montenegro declared its independence in 2006. A short side trip provides an opportunity to view the "road to nowhere" – the US\$1Billion China funded unfinished highway that almost bankrupted Montenegro.

Overnight in Podgorica. Staying in hotel (Breakfast and Lunch)

28 September Day 8. (Thursday) Podgorica to Perast. 100KM

Leaving the current capital of Montenegro we ride through the former royal capital of Cetinje. Onward to Lovcen National Park, and if the weather is right we should have 360 views of Montenegro and our destination of Kotor Bay far below. The National Park contains Mt Lovcen the highest point in Montenegro at 1750 meters. It is the inspiration behind the name Montenegro "Black Mountain" which refer to the dark colour due to the dense forest cover.

Riding the famous Kotor Serpentine road, considered to be among the most spectacular European mountain roads, we will encounter 25 numbered switchbacks. At the bottom we pass through the coastal walled-town of Kotor on our way further around the secluded Kotor Bay, one of four bays of the Gulf of Kotor on the Adriatic coastline, to our destination of Perast. Perast is regarded as one of the best-preserved towns on the entire Adriatic Coast.

Overnight in Perast. Staying in hotel (Breakfast and Lunch)



29 September Day 9. (Friday) Perast, Kotor Old Town, and Castle. 55KM

The Bay of Kotor is the southernmost part of the historical region of Dalmatia. The bay has been inhabited since antiquity and has several well-preserved medieval towns. The oldest town in Montenegro, Kotor is now a state protected historical monument. The Kotor old town is a medieval maze of museums, churches, cafés, busy squares and Venetian palaces. We'll spend the morning visiting Kotor Castle, and the walled old town. We return to our hotel to enjoy a free afternoon.

Overnight in Perast (same hotel) Staying in hotel (Breakfast)

30 September Day 10. (Saturday) Perast to Ulcinj. 105KM

Ulcinj is on the southern coast of Montenegro, an area often referred to as "the Riviera," and is close to the Albanian border. 70% of the population are Albanian and Ulcinj has a different vibe compared to other Montenegrin seaside towns. Ulcinj is very compact and easy to walk around. The beach is a 10 minute stroll from the 'Old Town' and there are plenty of restaurants and bars to choose from along the waterfront. Our hotel is located within a 2000 year old castle.

Overnight in Ulcinj. Staying in hotel within castle. (Breakfast, Lunch)



01 October Day 11. (Sunday) Ulcinj to Tirana – ALBANIA. 150KM

Crossing the border into Albania and heading to Tirana, the capital of Albania. Tirana is the largest Albanian city and is known for its colorful Ottoman, Fascist, and Soviet-era architecture. Tirana has brightly painted facades, street art graffiti, murals and Brutalist sculptures which all add interest to an already lively city. Pastel buildings surround the city's focal point, Skanderbeg Square, which is named for its equestrian statue of a national hero. Skanderbeg Square houses most of the important buildings and cultural landmarks in Albania. Our hotel is located close to the square.

Overnight in Tirana. Staying in hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)

02 October Day 12. (Monday) Tirana to Sarande. 275KM

Sarande once a sleepy fishing village is now a thriving city and a coastal resort. Considered to be one of the most attractive tourist towns on the Albanian Riviera, it is a popular holiday destination. Sarande is located in the most southern part of Albania between the hills of olives and deep blue Ionian Sea. Places of interest include The Blue Eye water phenomenon and Kalaja e Lekuresit castle on the hill above Sarande. Our stay tonight is at a small family run hotel just across the road from the seafront.

Overnight in Sarande. Staying in hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)



03 October Day 13. (Tuesday) Sarande to Ioannina - GREECE. 125KM

After our final border crossing we are back in Greece and riding south to the city of Ioannina in north-western Greece. The city of Ioannina contains some of the oldest Byzantine fortresses in Greece and Ioannina Castle is the heart of the historic centre and houses many other attractions within its walls. The city sits on the side of Lake Pamvotida, one of the oldest lakes in the world.

Overnight in Ioannina. Guesthouse within Ioannina Castle. (Breakfast, Lunch)

04 October Day 14. (Wednesday) Ioannina to Patras. 285KM

The lively city of Patras is Greece's third-largest city and the regional capital of Western Greece, located in the north of the Peloponnese. Patras is the capital of Achaia and is Greece's most important sea link with the rest of Europe. Patras has a number of important historical sites, great restaurants, beautiful beaches and a very large student population which adds to the lively atmosphere. Our hotel is waterfront located with fantastic sunset viewing from the rooftop bar.

Overnight in Patras. Staying in hotel (Breakfast, Lunch)



05 October Day 15. (Thursday) Patras to Athens. 220KM

We will skirt the southern shores of the Gulf of Corinth as we make our way towards Athens. Our first stop is the historic Acrocorinth hilltop fortress with views of the Gulf's of Corinth and Saronic. A short ride brings us to the engineering marvel of the Corinth Canal. 6km long and 90 meters deep the man-made canal through the isthmus of Corinth effectively turning the Peloponnese peninsula into an island. It's a final highway blast back into Athens and our comfy hotel. We'll meet later in the evening for our farewell dinner and to reminisce about the adventure just completed.

Overnight in Athens. Staying in hotel. (Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner)

06 October Day 16. (Friday) Athens

Breakfast is waiting for you on your last day in Greece – unless you're venturing off to the Greek Islands or other faraway places.

The End (Breakfast)

Included with this tour

- 15 nights' accommodation based on sharing Twin/Double occupancy.
- 15 x delicious breakfasts
- 12 x fabulous lunches
- Welcome and Farewell dinners as per the tour itinerary
- Motorbike rental cost (standard motorcycle cost – see next page under Motorbikes)
- Motorcycle Permits to enter Albania and Montenegro
- Accompanying comfy support vehicle for our non-riders and our luggage
- Personally guided by Angela and Mike

Excluded Services:

International flights, Petrol for your motorbike, Airport transfers, Highway Tolls, Insurance fees

Tips and personal expenses

MOTORCYCLES:

Our standard touring motorcycles are late model Honda CB500X or Suzuki 650 V-Strom
There are limited numbers of motorcycles available which are allocated on a first-come-first-choice basis. We will do our best to supply your first choice model.

If you wish you can upgrade to a BMW750GS

COST for the tour on a twin share basis

- NZ10450 RIDER on Honda CB500X or Suzuki 650 V-Strom
- NZ11300 RIDER on BMW750GS
- NZ 8595 PILLION RIDER
- NZ 8595 PASSENGER in our support vehicle

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT (OWN PRIVATE ROOM) + NZ\$1350

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