

Here are places you should
not leave without visit



DURRËSI

The Amphitheatre

The amphitheatre was built in some places with both tones and bricks, in others with bricks alone. The long axis is 120 metres, the short axis is 101 metres and the axes of the arena are 61 by 42 metres. It is believed the amphitheatre could seat 15,000 spectators.



The Baths

The baths of Roman city were built in the first years of the 2nd Century A.D. In what has been preserved, we can see the caldarium (13 by 8 meters room), hot-water and the swimming-pool (piscine) paved tiles in the form of a chess board, apodyterium, (the room where bathers changed clothes), the tepidarium (the room with lukewarm water) and the frigidarium, the room with cold water.

Venetian Tower

The round tower, which has a diameter of 16 metres and is 9.10 metres high, was built in the XV Century. The tower is built with quadrangular stone blocks. It has one storey, five slits for artillery, a round hall to position the cannons and three small rooms. A flight of stairs leading to the terrace battlements is on the right of the gate.



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Mosaic of the Durrës Belle

The mosaic has an elliptical form and was made with multi-colored pieces of river stones. The portrait of a lady, probably Aura, the female escort of Artemis, stands at the centre of the composition and she is surrounded by a rich decoration of various flowers. The work belongs to the IV Century B.C. (For the moment it is placed in National museum).



Tellus figure sculpture

Goddess of Earth (end of I –beginning II A.D.), discovered in the hall of a roman building (District no.11).



Market Square (Macellum-Forum)

Scholars believe the monument was built at the end of the V Century B.C. and served as a market until the end of the VII. The monument was shaped in the form of a circular portico at the centre of which there stood a podium. A group of shops expands to the rear of the portico. This monument functioned as a public square.



General view of an antique edifice

(end of III B.C. – beginning II A.D.) where lighthouse and antique port warehouses were situated (District no.11).



The Castle

The city was protected by powerful defensive walls in Antiquity. Only a tract of wall on the coast has survived from the Hellenic and Roman fortifications. The surrounding walls of the city and a few small castles in the hinterland are the only remains of that system of fortifications.

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TIRANA

National History Museum



The largest museum in Albania holds most of the country's archaeological treasures and a replica of Skanderbeg's massive sword (how he held it, rode his horse and fought at the same time is a mystery). The mosaic mural entitled Albania adorning the museum's facade shows Albanians victorious and proud from Illyrian times through to WWII. The collection is almost entirely signed in English and takes you chronologically from ancient Illyria to the post communist era. The highlight of the museum is a terrific exhibition of icons by Onufri, a renowned 16th-century Albanian master of colour. A disturbing and very important gallery devoted to those who suffered persecution under the communist regime is the most recent addition to the collection, though frustratingly almost none of this display is in English.

Pyramid



Designed by Enver Hoxha's daughter and son-in-law and completed in 1988, this monstrously unattractive building was formerly the Enver Hoxha Museum, and more recently a convention centre and nightclub. Today, covered in graffiti and surrounded by the encampments of Tirana's homeless, its once white marble walls are now crumbling but no decision on whether to demolish or restore it appears to have yet been reached.

Sheshi Skënderbej



Skanderbeg Sq is the best place to start witnessing Tirana's daily goings-on. Until it was pulled down by an angry mob in 1991, a 10m-high bronze statue of Enver Hoxha stood here, watching over a mainly car-free square. Now only the equestrian statue of Skanderbeg remains, deaf to the cacophony of screeching horns as cars four lanes deep try to shove their way through the battlefield below.

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TIRANA



Tirana Express

This fantastic nonprofit arts project has converted a warehouse behind Tirana's semiderelict train station into an arts space that hosts revolving temporary exhibits, concerts, installations and other events that appeal to Tirana's arty, alternative crowd. Go along and see what's on during your visit. Opening hours vary depending on what's on.



Former Residence of Enver Hoxha

Nestled between Parku Kombëtar (a public park), the Bulevardi Dëshmorët e Kombit and the river is the once totally forbidden but now totally trendy Blloku, the former exclusive Communist Party neighbourhood. When the area was opened to the general public in 1991, Albanians flocked to see the style in which their proletarian leaders lived. Judging by this three-storey pastel-coloured house the Albanian proletarian leaders lived a much simpler life than their comrades in Romania, for example.



Et'hem Bey Mosque

To one side of Skanderbeg Sq, the 1789–1823 Et'hem Bey Mosque was spared destruction during the atheism campaign of the late 1960s because of its status as a cultural monument. Small and elegant, it's one of the oldest buildings left in the city. Take your shoes off to look inside at the beautifully painted dome

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Palace of Culture

To the east of Sheshi Skënderbej is the white stone Palace of Culture, which has a theatre, shops and art galleries. Construction of the palace began as a gift from the Soviet people in 1960 and was completed in 1966, years after the 1961 Soviet–Albanian split.



National Art Gallery

Tracing the relatively brief history of Albanian painting from the early 19th century to the present day, this beautiful space also has temporary exhibits that are worth a look. Downstairs there's a small but interesting collection of 19th-century paintings depicting scenes from daily Albanian life, while upstairs the art takes on a political dimension with some truly fabulous examples of Albanian socialist realism.



Congress Building

Another creation of the former dictator's daughter and son-in-law is the square Congress Building, just a little down the boulevard from the Pyramid. Follow Rr Ismail Qemali two streets north of the Congress Building and enter the once totally forbidden but now totally trendy Blloku area. This former Communist Party elite hang-out was opened to the general public for the first time in 1991. Security still guards the former residence of Enver Hoxha .

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PREZA



Preza Castle overlooks the village with the the same name and is located on a hilltop. It is a small castle, the construction of which was started in the 14th century CE and was completed in the early 15th century CE. It belonged to the Topias, a local feudal family. It has four towers, one in each corner. The clock tower was erected between 1800-1850 CE. People appreciate it for its location, with a view overlooking the plain of Tirana. The castle is quite close to the “Mother Theresa” International Airport. A restaurant and other service facilities are located inside the castle.

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KRUJA



Castle

Inside Kruja's sprawling castle grounds are Albania flag sellers, pizza restaurants and an array of mildly interesting sights, though few actually castle-related.

Skanderbeg Museum

Designed by Enver Hoxha's daughter and son-in-law, this museum opened in 1982, and its spacious seven-level interior displays replicas of armour and paintings depicting Skanderbeg's struggle against the Ottomans. The museum is something of a secular shrine, and takes itself very seriously indeed, with giant statues and dramatic battle murals.



National Ethnographic Museum

This traditional home in the castle complex below the Skanderbeg Museum is one of the best in the country. Set in an original 19th-century Ottoman house that belonged to the affluent Toptani family, this museum shows the level of luxury and self-sufficiency the household maintained by producing its own food, drink, leather and weapons. They even had their very own mini hammam (Turkish bath) and watermill. The walls are lined with original frescos from 1764. The English-speaking guide's detailed explanations are excellent; offer a tip if you can.



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KRUJA



Bazaar

This Ottoman-style bazaar is the country's best place for souvenir shopping and has WWII medical kits, antique gems and quality traditional ware, including beautifully embroidered tablecloths, copper coffee pots and plates. You can watch women using looms to make kilims (rugs) and purchase the results.

Teqe

A short scramble down the cobblestone lane are the remains of a small hammam as well as a functioning teqe – a small place of worship for those practising the Bektashi branch of Islam. This beautifully decorated teqe has been maintained by successive generations of the Dollma family since 1789. Skanderbeg himself reputedly planted the knotted olive tree at the front.



Ethnographic Museum

The museum is located in a traditional house built in the middle of the 18th century A.D (1764), by Ismail Pashe Toptani. The architecture of the building includes a closed corridor, a tower type, and is two stories high, with 60-80 cm thick walls. There are frescoes of the Baroque and Islamic style, which decorate most of its main rooms. Starting from the entrance it is possible to see the door lintels made of sculpted stone and the stone-paved roads. In this building there are many traditional elements of the area, dealing with traditional life. At the entrance, there are several models of natural springs, which testify that Kruja had in the past several such springs.