

# Albania Flag Day

## A small country with abundant hospitality

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Albania is a small country in the heart of Europe across the Adriatic Sea from Italy and bordered by Greece, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia. Albania has a significant presence in these neighboring countries as Kosovo is almost entirely inhabited by Albanians, while hundreds of thousands of Albanians live in Macedonia, Montenegro, Italy and Greece.

Albania has deep historic roots with Palasgians, Illyrians and Arbereshe as the ancestors of our country. The biggest proof that the Illyrians are today's Albanians are the toponyms that remain exactly the same as they were 2,000 years ago. The names of cities, rivers and people, as well as the setting of graves are solid proof of



our Illyrian roots.

Albanians and their land have seen a long history of historic events.

The epic history of Albania culminates with the legendary hero Gjergj Kastriot (Skanderbeg), who led the Albanians for 25 years against Turkish invasion and prevented the entry of the Ottoman troops to Europe.

During World War II, Albanians joined the anti-fascism front, being a direct contributor as a country that was liberated from Nazis.

Albanian hospitality is unique and has been transmitted from generation to generation. Albanians offered real protection for the Jewish population that fled to Albania in World War II. This hospitality was once again shown when hundreds of thousands of Kosovars were forced to flee their homeland during the Kosovo War.

Despite the fact that history has often been brutal to Albanians — with invasions, illegal occupations, massacres, mass expulsions and more occurring

over the centuries — the important fact is that the Albanians survived. Today, they are proud of their history, tradition, culture and customs, and also proud of their religious harmony and tolerance.

Albania is a democratic country with an established public order and a free market economy with sustainable economic growth and public finances aimed toward improvement and positive developments. Albania is a member of NATO and the European Commission has recommend-



Bovilla Lake EMBASSY OF ALBANIA

ed the opening of negotiations for membership in the EU.

Being a small country, Albania places its priorities on tourism, agriculture, industry and minerals, as they are the main resources of the country.

Today tourism is undoubtedly a key priority and Albania offers much in terms of historical and cultural attractions, as well as pleasant beaches and lush nature to attract visitors.

In Albania, visitors can find a great deal of history and tradition. Albania has a number of early settlements starting

with Butrint's famous ancient Illyria and continuing with the Illyrian Kingdom of Apollonia's hilltop olive trees, the Durres Amphitheatre, the second-largest in the world after the Colosseum of Rome and the Museum of Medieval Art, Korce. There are also ancient castles in Shkoder Berat, Gjirokastra the castle of Kruja and museum dedicated to the lionheart, Albania's National Hero Gjergj Kastriot Skanderbeg. Tourists visiting these places will have the feeling of traveling back in time.

The most important buildings are located in Tirana, the capital of Albania, including the National Historic Museum, Archaeological Museum, National Art Gallery and many others such as castles in its neighborhoods.

In these historic and cultural objects the most important and significant values of the Albanian history and culture are exhibited. There are many other elements to be discovered and to be presented, as the development of fine arts during the second half of the 20th century saw activity from many talented artists. These artists, after ending their stud-

ies at Europe's most famous academies, returned home and have left evidence of their efforts, much of which has not yet been fully discovered.

We must not forget the Albanian food, which apart from being pure Albanian, also take flavors from a variety of influences, including Italian and Greek, as well as everything Mediterranean.

Before I conclude, I want people to know that Albania has the most beautiful sand and rock beaches in the region, cliffs that plunge almost vertically into the Ionian Sea, pine forests, parks, mountains, valleys, plateaus, powerful winter rivers and beautiful lakes to be enjoyed with friends and relatives. There remain places where nature has not been changed by human hands; places that heal the spirit of mankind and long summer days without end. Visitors will never feel lonely thanks to Albania's own omonenashi culture.

I am confident that when people visit Albania, they will not regret it, so we are waiting to welcome tourists to the "Country of the Eagles," Albania (in English) and Shqipëri (in Albanian).



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### Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Albania on the Occasion of The Flag Day

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