
GEEO ITINERARY

Southern Balkans 11/9/2026

Day 1: Tirana Arrive in Tirana at any time. Meet your group for a welcome meeting around 6:00 or 7:00 p.m.

Arrive at any time. There are no planned activities until the Welcome Meeting in the evening. The tour starts in Tirana, and the nearest airport is **Tirana International Airport (TIA)**. This trip does not include any time in Tirana, so if possible, we recommend arriving a day early so you can see the main sites. This will also give you time to adjust to the time difference, overcome any jet lag, and serve as a buffer should you encounter any travel delays. We can book extra hotel nights for you in Tirana before the trip and even a week-long tour of Albania if you wish. **Hotel Check-in and Welcome Meeting** Hotel check-in is normally between 2-3pm. Check with reception for the exact time and location of the group welcome meeting, typically between 6-7pm. Please make every effort to attend this meeting. If you're running late, send a message in the group WhatsApp or call the emergency number on your trip voucher so your tour leader can let you know where and when to meet the group. After the meeting, you might choose to get dinner at a nearby restaurant with your traveling companions and your tour leader to further get to know one another.

Joining Instructions

When you arrive at the airport, you can either take a taxi or an airport shuttle, which is located outside of the arrivals terminal and goes to Skanderbeg Square, which is the central square of Tirana.

Another option is booking a transfer through [HolidayTaxis](#).

Accommodation: Hotel Idea Tirana (or similar) * For the actual hotel your specific departure will be using, please check your voucher.

Day 2: Tirana/Vlorë Drive east from Tirana to the 3000-year-old Roman ruins of Durrës, including its 20,000-seat amphitheater. Continue south to Vlorë for an old-town walk, visiting the Muradie Mosque and other landmarks. Evening free to relax and watch the Adriatic sunset.

Drive east from Tirana this morning to the coast, and explore Durrës, the most ancient city in Albania with almost 3,000 years of history. Its foundation dates back to 627 B.C. when the Corinthians and settlers from Corcyra invaded the Illyrian territory of the Taulants. The Durrës amphitheater is the largest and most important Roman amphitheater in Albania. Built in the 2nd century AD under Emperor Trajan, it once accommodated up to 20,000 people for various spectating events, including gladiator fights and other ancient games. The amphitheater was discovered in 1966 and is now one of the best ways to experience the city's ancient history. In the afternoon, continue south to the city of Vlorë and set off on an orientation tour of Vlorë's Old Town. The Muradie Mosque (or Lead Mosque) is one of the most important structures in Vlorë. Built in 1537 by Ottoman Turkish architect Mimar Sinan, it is distinctive for its exceptional brickwork. Vlorë looks west over the Adriatic, making it a perfect spot for watching the sunset as well. **Approximate travel time:** 3 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Semajo Vlore (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 3: Vlorë From Tragjas, hike up to a mountain shepherd outpost, meet locals, and learn about traditional life over a traditional lunch. Hike back down and return to Vlorë, with the rest of the day free to explore or relax

Immerse yourself in Albanian culture today on a hike to a shepherd outpost in the mountains. We'll go to the old Tragjas farm of Sofo and Dhurata. Then, hike a short trail of approximately 3km with an elevation gain of around 280m to reach the shepherds' outpost, where you can experience the authentic life of the Albanians, their traditions, and life in the mountains, all just a short distance from the sea. Enjoy a

traditional lunch at the farm before hiking back down to the bus to return to Vlorë. The total hike is 5-6 km. The remainder of the day is free to explore the city or to relax. **Approximate travel time:** 1 hr by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Semajo Vlore (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch

Day 4: Vlorë/Gjirokastrë Drive the Albanian Riviera to Gjirokastrë, stopping in Himarë for lunch, visiting Ali Pasha's castle at Ksamil, and exploring the UNESCO ruins of Butrint before arriving in the evening.

Travel south along the stunning Albanian Riviera, a drive filled with dramatic mountain and coastal views. Stop first in the seaside town of Himarë, whose roots stretch back to Illyrian times. Explore the atmospheric old town and climb to its hilltop castle for sweeping views of the coast. The lower town, with its seaside promenade, offers the perfect setting for a relaxed stroll and lunch in one of the Mediterranean-style taverns. Continue to Ksamil, where you'll visit Ali Pasha's Castle, perched at the tip of a rocky peninsula. Built in the early 19th century by the influential Ottoman ruler Ali Pasha of Tepelena—sometimes called the “Muslim Bonaparte”—the fortress features prominently in European literature and history, celebrated by Alexander Dumas and Lord Byron. Its dramatic location makes it one of Albania's most evocative landmarks. The journey continues to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Butrint, one of the most important archaeological sites in the Balkans. First settled by the Greeks and later expanded by the Romans, Butrint was once a thriving port city on Mediterranean trade routes. Earthquakes and flooding eventually forced its abandonment, leaving behind remarkably preserved ruins hidden beneath centuries of silt. Walk among its temples, theatres, baths, and basilicas, gaining insight into thousands of years of history. In the evening, drive inland to the “stone city” of Gjirokastrë, a UNESCO-listed town known for its Ottoman architecture and hilltop fortress. Upon arrival, check into your hotel and enjoy free time to relax after a day rich with culture, history, and spectacular scenery.

Approximate travel time: 5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Number One (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 5: Gjirokastrë Explore Gjirokastrë's old town with visits to the obelisk and castle, then enjoy free time for lunch. In the afternoon, tour a local winery with tastings and a light dinner before returning to the hotel.

Set off with your tour leader to explore Gjirokastrë and its main attractions. See the old town and the stunning historical landmarks like the Skendulaj House, the Obelisk, and Gjirokastra Castle with its Weapon Museum that used to be the castle's prison. Afterwards, take some free time to continue exploring and to find some lunch. In the afternoon, transfer to a local family-run winery for a memorable culinary and cultural experience. Tour the vineyard with an expert guide, learning about native grape varieties and the careful traditions of Albanian winemaking. Enjoy a tasting of both white and red wines, each paired with regionally sourced accompaniments and fresh farm fruits. The rest of the evening is free after returning to the hotel. **Accommodation:** Number One (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Dinner

Day 6: Gjirokastrë/Berat Drive north to Berat, famed for its white Ottoman houses. In the afternoon, explore the castle, 13th-century fortress, and the historic neighborhoods of Mangalem and Gorica. Enjoy free time before a traditional Albanian farewell dinner.

Drive north today to the riverside city of Berat, known for its white Ottoman houses. Take an afternoon tour of the Castle of Berat with its chapels, typical houses, the ancient walls of Antipatrea, and the Orthodox Cathedral with its art collection from 16th-century iconography artist Onufri. Visit the traditional low neighborhoods of Mangalem and Gorica, which gave Berat the nickname “Town of a 1001 Windows.” The remainder of the day is free to continue exploring before regrouping in the evening for a traditional Albanian meal. **Approximate travel time:** 3 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Mangalemi Berat (*or similar*) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Dinner

Day 7: Berat/Tirana Leave Berat after breakfast and return to Tirana.

Leave Berat after breakfast for the drive back to Tirana, arriving around midday. Enjoy the rest of the afternoon and evening free to explore the city or to relax. **Accommodation:** Hotel Idea Tirana (or similar) **Approximate travel time:** 2 hrs by private vehicle **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 8: Tirana/Ohrid Cross the border into North Macedonia and travel to Ohrid, ("Jerusalem of the Balkans") with its 365 churches. Eat lunch at a bazaar, then enjoy a boat cruise. Later, enjoy free time.

Cross the border into North Macedonia and travel to the beautiful city of Ohrid, referred to as the "Jerusalem of the Balkans" due to its 365 churches with one for each day of the year. Take some free time to find lunch, and then we'll climb aboard for a short boat cruise (30 minutes) of Lake Ohrid, the deepest and oldest lake in Europe, boasting an imposing medieval fortress and mountainous backdrop. This pristine lake straddles the border between North Macedonia and Eastern Albania, and acts as home to more than 200 different species. The rest of the day is free to continue exploring or to relax. *NOTE: Border crossings in the Balkans are typically pretty easy but there can be some delays. Ensure you have any necessary visas to speed up the process.* **Approximate travel time:** 3 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Royal View Ohrid (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 9: Ohrid Morning walking tour of old Ohrid. Enjoy a cooking class for lunch. Visit Roman amphitheater followed by a free afternoon/evening with optional dinner.

Embark on a walking tour of the city where you'll enjoy the stunning exterior of the San Perivlepta and San Sofia churches. Next, head inside the architecturally striking Monastery of Saint Clement Ohrid, believed to have been built when Saint Clement first arrived in the area at the request of Boris I of Bulgaria. Finish off with a short tour at the Roman Amphitheatre, the only Hellenistic-type theatre in the country, built in 200 BC. Make a stop along the walking tour to meet with a local chef. Learn all about the regional culinary delicacies of the area and how to prepare them while enjoying small plates of delicious food as a light lunch before continuing on your way. Your walking tour will conclude with a visit to a Roman amphitheatre. The rest of the afternoon and evening are free to continue exploring or to relax at the hotel before an optional dinner out in the evening. While getting to know Ohrid, keep an eye out for the 900-year-old tree located near Old Town - a true Ohrid landmark. **Accommodation:** Hotel Royal View Ohrid (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch

Day 10: Ohrid/Skopje Travel towards Skopje with a stop in Bitola and wine tasting along the way. Explore Skopje's architecture and Castle of Kale on a walking tour. Free time afterward.

We leave Ohrid this morning and depart for Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia. We will stop in Bitola for a pleasant walk along the pedestrian street called Shirok Sokak. Known as the fashion street, locals tend to dress up to enjoy a walk and a coffee while enjoying beautiful views of the city. We will then continue driving to our next stop. The historically rich Stobi region is located close to the archaeological site, ancient Paenian. It was captured into the Kingdom of Macedon where it became the capital and remains a significant historic site. Archaeologists found early evidence of wine making in the form of in home grape presses, showcasing the lengthy past of this delicious art. Learn the intricacies of wine making on a tour of the winery before sampling some wine and enjoying a light lunch. We will then complete our drive to Skopje and head out for an orientation walk, passing Byzantine era buildings, Turkish baths, caravanserais and hamams, all reminders of the intricate Ottoman history. Witness the quirky electric street art and multiple imposing statutes dotted around the city. View the birthplace of Mother Theresa and stop in the hidden lower level of the iconic Gradski Trgovski Centar to see Skopje's largest collection of street art. The rest of the day is free to continue exploring or to relax. **Approximate travel time:** 3.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Premium Skopje (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast | Lunch

Day 11: Skopje/Prizren Enjoy a free morning before crossing the border into

Kosovo. Have an orientation walk in Prizen followed by a free afternoon. Evening group walk to the town fortress for sunset views.

Enjoy a relaxed morning before driving across the border into Kosovo and to the city of Prizren. Set off with your tour leader on an orientation walk through town along the Bistrica river, crossing the iconic old stone bridge and onto the cobble-stoned Shadervan square. The rest of the afternoon is free before re-grouping in the evening for a walk up to the town fortress for beautiful sunset views of the town, river and valley. Dating back to 1100 BC, the Prizren Fortress was built by the Byzantines and expanded by Serbian kings throughout the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries before Ottoman rulers took over until their expulsion in 1912. **Approximate travel time:** 1-1.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Prizreni Prizren (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 12: Prizren Free day in Prinzen. Explore they city, taste wine, shop for textiles, hike along, or go out for hike.

Enjoy a free day in Prinzen to explore the city, take a wine tasting excursion or to relax. Perhaps join your tour leader for a morning visit to the filigree shops to browse the textiles and shops, or head out on a leisurely hike along the Bistrica River to see the local shepherds. **Accommodation:** Hotel Prizreni Prizren (or similar) **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 13: Prizren/Pristina Morning in Prizren, then travel to Pristina (Kosovo's capital) for a guided walk. Enjoy a free afternoon followed by an optional group dinner.

Enjoy a relaxed morning in Prizren before journeying onward to Pristina, the bustling commerce hub and capital of Kosovo. Get to know Pristina on a walking tour through the highlights. Witness the 1389 battle of Kosovo memorial, the UNESCO World Heritage listed Gračanica Monastery, followed by the Newborn monument and the brass statue of Bill Clinton, commemorating his role in ending the war for independence. The rest of the day is free for individual exploration or to relax at a cafe. Head out in the evening for an optional final dinner out with the group. **Approximate travel time:** 1.5 hrs by private vehicle **Accommodation:** Hotel Begolli Pristina **Meals included:** Breakfast

Day 14: Pristina Depart Pristina at any time.

There are no planned activities today, so you may depart at any time. The tour ends in Pristina, and the nearest airport is **Pristina International Airport (PRN)**. If you wish to extend your stay in Pristina, consider booking post-tour accommodation with us. Please note that check-out time from the hotel is usually mid-morning, but luggage storage services are available at the reception desk. Want more adventure? Book two or more GEE0 programs in the same school year and receive a discount! GEE0 will give you 10% off of the lesser value program(s) (up to 3 programs per year). If you would like to extend your time abroad but don't see another GEE0 program that interests you, let us know. We can work with you to find a trip from our tour operator's much larger catalog. Their tours are open to the general public and not designed specifically for educators, but we can still offer you and your travel companions a discounted educator price on any additional tours that you book. **Meals included:** Breakfast

***Itinerary Disclaimer:** While it is our intention to adhere to the routes described on our website, there is a certain amount of flexibility built into the itinerary and on occasion it may be necessary, or desirable, to make alterations. The itinerary is brief, as we never know exactly where our journey will take us. Due to our style of travel and the regions we visit, travel can be unpredictable. The information on our website is a general guide to the tour and region, and any mention of specific destinations or wildlife is by no means a guarantee that they will be visited or encountered. Additionally, any travel times listed are approximations only and subject to vary due to local circumstances.