

## Macedonia, Albania & Montenegro

7 nights – 8 days

### Day 1: Airport - Skopje

Skopje is the capital of Macedonia, situated in the Skopje valley. It is a very attractive tourist destination with its fortress, cultural and historical monuments, archeological cities, caves in the canyon of the river Treska and Lake Matka. Skopje also is a modern, political, economic and cultural center. We will take a familiarization walking tour seeing the Old Bazaar, Mustapha pasha Mosque, Stone Bridge and Macedonia Square. We will see the Memorial House of St. Teresa of Calcutta born in Skopje to Albanian catholic parents as Gonxhe Bojaxhiu. This house was erected on the spot where the Catholic Church she was baptized in used to be. Dinner in an old restaurant in a building from 15<sup>th</sup> century that offers traditional dishes from region. Overnight in Skopje.



### Day 2: Skopje – Tetovo - St. Jovan Bigorski Monastery - Ohrid (220km, 4 hours driving time)

After breakfast drive to Tetovo the second largest city, to visit one of its most important monuments known as the Painted or Decorated Mosque. The colorful mosque was originally built in 1438 and later rebuilt in 1833 by Abdurrahman Pasha. Most mosques of the time had sultans, beys or pashas financing their constructions, but the Painted Mosque was financed by two sisters from Tetovo. More than 30,000 eggs were used to prepare the paint and glaze that went into the elaborate decorations. Continue through Mavrovo National Park founded in 1949 and located in the west of the country between Lake Mavrovo and the Albanian border to reach the Monastery of St. Jovan Bigorski nestled in exceptionally picturesque environment, in the valley of the River Radika. The most well-known feature of the complex is the iconostasis in deep oak carving made by the group of Petre Filiposki Garkata, his brother Marko and Makarij Frckoski from 1829. On the way to Ohrid a quick stop at the one-arched Elen Skok bridge constructed in the mid-eighteenth century using hewed stone. Continue to Ohrid for overnight.



### Day 3: Ohrid (UNESCO) - St. Naum Monastery (60km, 1.5 hours driving time)

Ohrid is a city situated in southwestern Macedonia on the shore of Lake Ohrid. A town rich with history and heritage. Ohrid was made a UNESCO heritage site in 1980. Ohrid once had 365 churches one for each day so it's also known as the Balkan Jerusalem. Ohrid is famous for his churches, the first Slavic university, and the many, many things he has to offer. Visit St Sophia, Plasonik, gallery of Icons and St.Jovan Kaneo church at the edge of the lake which pictures have become a symbol of Macedonian tourism. Embarking on one of the boats on the port of Ohrid and heading towards St. Naum Monastery. Visit the museum on water - Bay of bones an exceptional archaeological complex, which is one of a kind in the region. Afterwards lunch in the village Trpejca or as well-known as the Macedonian Saint Tropez is possible. (optional). Continue on to St. Naum Monastery and visiting the church of St. Naum dedicated to

the Archangels. Church build by St. Naum The miracle worker in 905. Place with a lot of legends and miracles. Free time to explore the St. Naum Complex and to find out more of its beauties. Rowing boat tour for watching the springs of black Drin. Return to Ohrid for overnight.



#### Day 4: Ohrid – Drilon – Korca – Tirana (240km, 4 hours driving time)

After breakfast we depart to Drilon in Albania, just after the boarder, to have a quick look at the fishing villa of the Albanian Dictator. The area was on the border between Illyria and Epirus. Continue on to Korca an important center of south east Albania. Archaeologists have found a gravestone of the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD depicting two Illyrian blacksmiths working iron on an anvil near modern Korca. The modern town dates from the 1480s, when Iljaz Hoxha, during the reign of Ottoman Sultan Bayezid II, developed one of the first mosques in Albania, known as Mirahori mosque in 1484 which we will visit. The city started to flourish around end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, building its own bazaar which became well known in all of the country. For centuries Korca has been an important religious centre for Orthodox Christians initially part of the metropolis of Kastoria (15<sup>th</sup> century), but latter in early 17<sup>th</sup> century became the seat of an Orthodox bishop and in 1670 was elevated to bishopric. Important orthodox art beautifully displayed in the totally re-invented Museum Of Medieval Art. After the visits continue to the capital Tirana for dinner and overnight.



#### Day 5: Tirana – Berat (UNESCO) – Tirana ( 250km, 4 hours driving time)

In the morning we walk through the centre of Tirana we visit the Scanderbeg Square, Ethem Bej Mosque and clock tower symbols of the capital and the opera building of typical communist architecture. Visit the National History Museum which introduces you to the history of Albania. Continue with a drive through the “Martyrs of the Nations” Boulevard and the Ministry buildings, built by Duce’s Italian architects. The Pyramid was a sort of mausoleum of the late communist leader Enver Hoxha, designed by his son in law and daughter. After the visit depart for Berat, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Being more than 2400 year old, the town it is one of the most attractive towns in Albania. Established in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C by the Illyrian tribe of Desaret, with a protective castle, it was known as the fortified city of Antipatrea. In 1417 the town was occupied by the Ottomans. It is famous for its white-washed houses with their many windows which seem to have been built on top of each other, that give it the nickname “town of a thousand windows”. We will visit the Castle, St Marys Church turned Onufri Museum which houses an amazingly diverse collection of Icons and two other churches not open to the public. Onufri whose name has been given to this Icon museum was an Albanian master painter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century who painted many church icons in Albania and Greece and is famous for its red colour named after him. Berat is also famous, as two of the oldest bibles “New Testaments” one from 6<sup>th</sup> century and one from 9<sup>th</sup> century AD have been found here. Overnight in Tirana.



**Day 6: Tirana – Kruja – Shkodra – Budva (210 km, 4.5 hours driving time)**

After breakfast we drive to Kruja - the centre of Albanian resistance against the Turks under our national hero Scanderbeg. He kept them from crossing into Western Europe for 25 years, thus earning the title “Champion of Christ” given by the Pope of the time. We visit the Skanderbeg Museum, a very rich Ethnographic Museum and the Old Bazaar where the best handmade souvenirs can be purchased. After the visits continue to Shkodra the most important town of north Albania and the Illyrian capital, in the 3rd century BC. Visit Rozafa Castle from where spectacular views all around can be admired. Experience the supremacy the Illyrians would have feel over their enemies standing in such an imposing castle. Of particular interest is the Marubi Photographic Museum with a selection of prints of negatives taken from 1860-s until the 1940-s, documenting the life of the population of the area for nearly 1 century. Take a walk in the newly renovated pedestrian area of Italian and Austrian architecture, testimony to this town historic links with both these countries. Proceed to Budva one of the most important seaside bases of Montenegro where we take a walk through the old town. Overnight in Budva.



**Day 7: Budva – Kotor (UNESCO) – Njeguši – Cetinje – Budva (100km, 3 hours driving time)**

This is an intensive day of visits rich in nature culture and heritage of Montenegro. First the Old City of Kotor, a UNESCO site built between the 12th and 14th century in the wonderful bay with the same name. Throughout the centuries, many empires battled for control of the city which leaving their mark through a variety of buildings. The largest and most impressive of these is the St Tryphon Cathedral. Afterwards we take a spectacular mountain drive to Njeguški a village best known as the birthplace of the Petrović dynasty, which ruled Montenegro from 1696 to 1918. The village is also known for its traditional folk architecture as well as its local forms of cheese and prosciutto made solely in this area. Continue onto Cetinje, founded in the 15th century which became the centre of Montenegrin life and culture as well as an important Eastern Orthodox religious centre. It is because of its heritage as a long term Montenegrin capital that it is today the honorary capital of Montenegro. Return to Budva for overnight.



**Day 7: Budva – Podgorica Airport (45 min – 1.5 hours driving time)**

After breakfast free to explore till time of transfer to the airport.