

# Zagoria Valley, Albania

A hidden corner where time holds its breath



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# Zagoria Valley, Albania

## A hidden corner where time holds its breath

Embark on a remarkable adventure through the captivating Zagoria region of Albania, a mountainous paradise brimming with awe-inspiring landscapes, charming villages, and hidden treasures. Along the way, you'll encounter picturesque churches, monasteries, and enchanting waterfalls, adding a sense of wonder to your adventure.

Your experience goes beyond the trails. Stay in welcoming guesthouses hosted by local families in remote villages, where genuine hospitality is a way of life.

The trails are well maintained, offering a balance of comfort and adventure. Expect daily walks of approximately 10-15 km, with elevation changes between 400 and 800 metres. The routes are designed to be rewarding yet accessible, making them ideal for active travellers who appreciate both scenic beauty and cultural discovery.

Whether you're drawn by the call of nature, the charm of historic villages, or the warmth of local traditions, this journey through Zagori promises a deeply enriching and memorable adventure.



# Detailed itinerary

## Day 1: Flight from London

Upon your arrival at the airport, a private transfer will be arranged to pick you up and drive you to the charming village of Peshtan in the South of Albania. Peshtan, nestled on the mountainside, is a village steeped in history, as it witnessed a significant battle during the Greco-Italian war and holds remnants of World War II. We will be staying in a welcoming guesthouse and your local hosts, Mira, and her husband, who are also teachers in the village, and will provide you with a fascinating tour of the first battle and the axes lost in WWII.

## Day 2: Peshtan to Limare

**Distance: 11km**

**Uphill cumulative: 750m**

**Downhill cumulative: 425m**

**Trekking 5-6hrs**

Embarking on a moderate hike, you will start from Peshtan and walk 11km to Limara. We will start the hike on a trail that ascends through open woodland to a pass that offers a panoramic view of the valley, which is flanked on both sides by mountains.

## Day 2 cont:

Along the trail, you will encounter the magnificent stone bridge over the Deshnica River, built by the renowned Albanian leader Ali Pashe Tepelena during the nineteenth century. Continuing you enjoy breathtaking views of the Deshnica River valley, with the majestic Strakavec peak towering above 2000 metres. After approximately 5-6hrs of hiking, including a final ascent, you will reach the welcoming village of Limara, where Nol, the village teacher, will host you in his guest house.

Limara offers a glimpse into the past, with its time-frozen atmosphere and picturesque surroundings. As you explore the village, you will be captivated by the three imposing peaks of Strakavec, Hormova, and Sheshi Malit, creating a stunning backdrop. The village is adorned with stone houses and an Orthodox Church. These buildings bear witness to the struggle for religious freedom during the early 20th century, marked by their transformation from places of worship to cattle farms under communist rule. Limara is also home to hundreds of sheep and goat that pasture these mountains and provide for the eco food in the village and the valley.

## Day 3: Limare to Hoshteve

**Distance: 14.5km**

**Uphill cumulative: 725 m**

**Downhill cumulative: 575 m**

**Trekking 6-7hrs**

The hike from Limara to Hoshteve will be immersed in the beauty of beech and oak forests, vibrant fields, and meadows adorned with colourful flowers. You will leave Strakavec peak behind and witness the Dhembeli massive on your left, resembling a line of tooth-like peaks. Take a refreshing break by dipping your feet in a cool stream while enjoying a picnic. The trail will lead you through the nearly deserted village of Deshnice, often considered one of the most isolated villages in Europe. Your journey culminates in Hoshteve, a village renowned for its larger church and remarkable icons. Overnight local guesthouse.



# Detailed itinerary

## Day 4: Hoshteve to Sheper

Distance: 12.5km

Uphill cumulative: 600 m

Downhill cumulative: 550 m

Trekking 5-6hrs

A shorter, gentler path with views of Mount Cajupi makes for a relaxing but satisfying day of walking. Roads connect the settlements of Vithuq, Koncka, Nivan, and Sheper, and their effect can be seen in modern buildings that serve as weekend and retirement homes. The trail descends to the river, monastery, and the final of Ali Pasha's stone bridges only once more. After taking a detour through the meadows, you'll arrive in Sheper, where many nomadic Aroman sheperds were compelled to reside during communism.

Sheper is the largest village along the trail, situated at an altitude of 800 metres, making it the highest village in the region. The village features its own church and has recently undergone renovation, preserving its ancient exterior.

## Day five: Sheper to Permet

Distance: 10 km

Uphill cumulative: 625 m

Downhill cumulative: 1250 m

Trekking 7-8hrs

The day will start with a transfer along a scenic road from Permet, tracing the vibrant, emerald-hued Vjosa River, a natural park that has garnered the attention of superstars like Leonardo DiCaprio, who advocated for its preservation. Vjosa river is known as one of the last wild rivers of Europe.

This day's hike presents what some consider to be the best trail in the region, connecting two valleys and passing through Dhembel, reaching an altitude of 1468 metres. As you climb at 660 meters altitude, you will encounter vast meadows filled with vegetation that has nourished sheep and goats for centuries. Take a moment to sit and imagine how even before the time of Christ, Illyrian shepherds grazed their lambs here, perhaps playing a tune on their flutes.

## Day 5: cont.

Reaching the pass, you will be treated to a panoramic view of Permet, Vjosa River and the Zagori Valley.

After savoring the view and the tranquil atmosphere, begin your descent towards Permet, which spans a significant altitude drop of 1200 meters. The rocky trail along the descent offers a spectacular panorama. On the way, the village of Leuse presents an ideal stop and boasts another orthodox church adorned with frescoes.



# Detailed itinerary

**Day 6: Transfer Permet - Sopoti Waterfall  
Visit Benjat and Langarica Canyon**

**Distance: 6 km**

**Uphill cumulative: 350 m**

**Downhill cumulative: 350 m**

**Trekking 3-4hrs**

The view alone is worth the 45-minute journey to today's trailhead. The blue waters of the Vjosa have carved deep into the rock beneath us, while the craggy Nemercka Range stands above the river. As you return from your hike, another unique natural wonder awaits you at the neighboring entrance to the Langarica Canyon.

The warm thermal pools of Benja are believed to have curative properties for various ailments. They provide a delightful treat after the past few days of hiking, allowing you to soak and relax in their sulfuric waters or venture through the river canyon.

After soaking in the warm waters of Benja, you'll head to Tirana, the modern capital that tries to be anything but traditionally Albanian for the night and to celebrate your achievements.

**Day 7: Transfer to Tirana Airport**

After breakfast transfer to the airport for the onward flight to London.

**Challenge grade**

**Moderate (with adequate training)**

There are no technical sections on the route. Walks are on average 6 to 8 hours daily - but with no narrow or jagged rocky places.

**Best time of year**

April to mid June, mid September to October.

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*This itinerary is complex and subject to change*

