A Private, Historical and Cultural Tour of Albania & Macedonia
Itinerary at a glance:

Day 1 | Arrival in Tirana
Day 2 | Tirana – Berat – Ohrid
Day 3 | Ohrid
Day 4 | Ohrid – Struga – Tirana
Day 5 | Tirana – Kruja – Tirana – onwards
**Why Exeter International?**

At Exeter International we have been creating memories and crafting our trademark extraordinary journeys to Central Europe, Russia, and Central Asia for 23 years. Our specialty is to distill the best of the best in iconic places that are on so many people's travel must-do list.

We are not a call center of nameless, faceless people. We do not try to be everything to everyone. We are a small team of specialists. We are all committed to providing the best travel experiences to our destinations. Each member of our team has travelled extensively throughout our destinations, giving them insider knowledge lacking in many other tour operators.

Our Extraordinary Experiences are different, unusual, and often closed to the general public. We can offer special insider access that takes you beyond the typical tourist sites. We know how important it is to remain authentic and increasingly going beyond the well-known sites is what is important to our guests—discovering the little known museum or street market that adds to their experience. We do this through our local knowledge, cultivating our extensive contacts and regularly visiting each destination to enable us to share the most up-to-date insider information with you, our valued partner.

The most important part of your trip will be your guides. Guides come in many quality levels, especially in this region. We have worked with a core group of the best of the best for over 20 years. We know them like family and if they weren't the best, they wouldn't work for us. Simply stated, a guide can make or break your experience. You should have 100% confidence in who is introducing you to your guide and the level of guiding that you are going to get throughout the countries you will be visiting. The best does indeed cost more and we pay our guides at the very top of the market, with pride.

You'll also want to know what kind of vehicle your tour will include. We use luxury late-model vehicles, often Mercedes, Audi, BMW, or Volkswagen, depending on the size of the vehicle you need. You'll want to see things that may or may not be open to the public and go in early or after hours before the crowds whenever possible. We also make every effort to skip lines whenever possible. Avoiding long museum lines is one of our top priorities and we work hard to minimize the wait time to get into the most popular sights in each city, maximizing your time in each destination.

You'll want impeccable planning and someone to bounce ideas off of before your trip and speak English as well as you do while planning your trip so there are no cultural misunderstandings when you arrive. You'll also want someone to talk to if your trip is not perfect when you get home. These are all ways that we distinguish ourselves from all other companies.

A lot goes into our travel program design. We arrange the program so that it is flawless and effortless for our travelers from the time they set foot in the first city until they leave us. The expertise to set up an itinerary like this comes after years of investing in staff on both sides of the Atlantic, and this too is a value that is incorporated into our traveler's trips with us.
Arrival in Tirana

Arrival in Tirana – Albania’s capital and largest city. At Tirana’s Mother Theresa Airport, you will be met by your private driver and guide, who will be waiting for you just outside of Customs, after you pick up your luggage. The cost of the flight is not included in your trip.

You will transfer to the center of the city and your deluxe hotel. Depending on the local traffic, the transfer generally takes up to an hour.

Albania is a small country which, until the 20th century, was dominated by a series of empires like the Roman, the Byzantine, and the Ottoman. The history of the country stretches back to Antiquity when Illyrian tribes settled the territory of what is today Albania. Later, the Illyrians were conquered by Philip II of Macedon – the father of Alexander the Great, before the Romans took control of the area and established the province of Illyricum. After the division of the Roman Empire, Illyria became part of Byzantium until the 14th century when the entire Balkan Peninsula was gradually invaded and occupied by the Ottomans. After 500 years of Ottoman domination, an independent Albania was proclaimed in 1912.

Depending on your arrival time you will start with a walking tour of Tirana city cente. This will include a visit to the main boulevard, Scanderbeg square, main administrative buildings, presidency, pyramid, Et’hem Bey mosque among other sites.

Exeter Services
Arrival Transfer, Guide (5 hours)

Hotel
Rogner Hotel
This morning you will leave the capital heading first to Berat via the Durres motorway. Berat is one of the oldest and most attractive cities in Albania boasting an UNESCO-protected Old Town. Even during the Communist period, Berat was designated a ‘museum city’ which ultimately saved its castle and the unique mixture of Christian and Ottoman architecture. You will visit the Berat castle and its Old Town, the Mangalemi Quarter, the Gorica Bridge and the Museum of Icons, Onufri.

Your driver and guide will then take you to St. Naum monastery, through the Besh region known for its famous 84 small lakes and nice hilly landscape. Once you reach Sveti Naum (St. Naum) you will visit the famous monastery of Saint Naum Monastery which is located in a very picturesque setting at the south-eastern shores of the lake. The panorama truly magnificent as it offers views of the lake and its beaches and the surrounding mountains.

This afternoon, you will continue your trip east, across the border to the Republic of Macedonia, and along the northern coast of the Lake Ohrid, which is of tectonic origin and is one of the oldest and deepest lakes in Europe. The lake’s shoreline is shared between Albania and Macedonia.

Evening at leisure and first overnight in Ohrid.

Note: Some of the touring today is on foot and includes walking on cobblestone and uneven surfaces. Please wear comfortable footwear.

Exeter Services
Car, Driver and Guide (10 hours)

Hotel
Villa Dea
Ohrid

This morning, you will tour the most remarkable sights of the charming historic town of Ohrid for a tour with your local guide. Protected as a UNESCO World Heritage site, Ohrid is a jewel box of medieval architecture and historical monuments and a highlight of any trip to Macedonia.

Your guide will begin with the visit to St. Sofia, a grand 11th-century building which was once the main bishopric cathedral before being converted into a mosque by the Ottomans. The church’s interior walls were whitewashed during the Ottoman period to cover the magnificent Byzantine-style frescoes from the 11th – 14th centuries, thus ironically preserving them in remarkably good condition.

Strolling along the narrow winding streets of the Old Town, you will reach the St. John (Sveti Jovan) at Kaneo Church which is perched on a hill overlooking the Lake Ohrid. This majestic medieval church was built in the 13th century in the Byzantine style and has a cruciform shape with an octagonal dome where recent restorations have revealed well-preserved frescoes with images of Orthodox saints including St. Clement – the patron saint of Ohrid. All around Ohrid there are more than 365 small churches. You can take a lunch at your leisure at any time.

After the tour you will have a small boat trip in Lake Ohrid, one of the deepest lakes of the Europe where you will spend up to 20 minutes. Lake Ohrid is protected as a UNESCO site because of its unique aquatic ecosystem of some 200 endemic species including two types of trout which cannot be seen elsewhere. Lastly you will arrive at St. Clement square.

Note: All of the touring today is on foot and includes walking on cobblestone and uneven surfaces. Please wear comfortable footwear.

Exeter Services
Guide (5 hours)

Hotel
Villa Dea
In the morning you will leave Ohrid and drive along the lake shore. You will first stop for a brief tour of the town of Struga, which is picturesquely located on the very tip of the Ohrid Lake and along the banks of the Black Drim River, which flows right out of the lake dividing the city in two. You may enjoy a leisurely walk along the river banks, take in Struga’s charm and architecture from the 18th – 19th centuries.

After Struga, your next and last destination is back to Tirana. Upon arrival you will have some free time for lunch.

Then you will visit the country’s largest museum – the National Museum of History, which is impossible to miss due to its large mural on its façade, depicting Albania’s long and eventful history from the Illyrians through the Ottoman occupation to the Communist period of the last century.

Later, you may also visit the Ethnographic Museum, located in the house where Albania’s former Communist leader Enver Hoxha was born. It has beautifully preserved interiors and some of the rooms have the original furniture.

Other optional activities could be the a visit to the Leaf House (History of Secret Albanian Service "Sigurimi"), taking the Cable Car to national Park Dajti, visiting the Bunkart: The Atomic bunker that was serving to Enver Hoxha and comunist leaders, the Museum of Archaeology or of Fine arts, as well as the house of Sali Shijaku: a famous Albanian Artist and his painted works.

**Exeter Services**
Car, Driver and Guide (10 hours)

**Hotel**
Rogner Hotel
TIRANA — KRUGE — TIRANA — O NSWARDS

This morning, after meeting your guide and driver, you will transfer about 45 minutes north of the capital city and to Kruje — the historic hometown picturesquely situated on a hill and stronghold of Albania’s national hero George Kastrioti — Skanderbeg, who successfully fought the Ottoman invasion for more than two decades. Albanian original buildings and the old bazaar will allow you to move into the past.

Kruje was the center of the Albanian resistance against the Ottomans led by Skanderbeg. Driving along the winding mountain road, you will reach the town’s main square marked by the equestrian statue of Skanderbeg wielding his sword. Continuing uphill and above the town, you will reach the historic fortress and citadel which successfully withstood three Ottoman sieges led by Sultan Murat and later by his son Sultan Mehmed II — the conqueror of Constantinople (now Istanbul). It was only after Skanderbeg’s death that the fortress finally fell and the Albanian resistance was suppressed.

As you enter the restored fortress, you will visit the Historical Museum, which focuses on Skanderbeg’s life and follows the Albanian struggle against the Ottoman invaders and the historical development of the citadel. With time permitting, just down the hill, you will visit the small Ethnographic Museum, which is housed in the former home of an affluent Ottoman family from the mid-18th century and offers an insight into the life in Kruje centuries ago.

If time permits you will have lunch in one of the best restaurants of Albania with wine tasting in also in one of the best wineries of Albania.

After lunch you will be transferred to the airport in time for your flight onward.

Exeter Services
Car, Driver and Guide; Departure Transfer
Prices:

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<td><strong>For Two (2) guests traveling</strong></td>
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<td><strong>For Four (4) guests traveling</strong></td>
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This tour is available from March to November. All pricing is per person and based on double occupancy. Airfare is not included.

Accommodations

**Tirana**

Two (2) nights at the Rogner Hotel; Tax and Buffet Breakfast included daily.

It is the most famous and sophisticated address in town and the first hotel in Albania to be built according to international standards, located directly on Dëshmorët e Kombit Boulevard, in the heart of Tirana. Our hospitality and service, the comfort and security make the hotel the meeting place of the economical, diplomatic and cultural elite of Albania. The seat of the Parliament, the President’s Office, the Prime Minister's Office and many diplomatic embassies are within walking distance. Our famous Mediterranean garden with 30,000 square meters unrivalled within Albania is an oasis of tranquility and recreation in the centre of bustling Tirana.

**Ohrid**

Two (2) nights at the Hotel Villa Dea; Tax and Buffet Breakfast included daily.

Located right next to the lake, only 650 feet from the city Centre, Villa Dea offers first class accommodation with a modern, homely interior and stunning lake views.

Warm colors, quality furniture, parquet floors and lots of space are the features characterize Villa Dea. Guests can start their day with a continental breakfast served in the lobby bar of Villa Dea. After a long day of exploring, you can treat yourself to a meal out in any of the numerous restaurants nearby.
Meals
No meals included, other than breakfast as described above. Your final documents will include our top recommendations. *Your guides will recommend restaurants that fit your exact needs daily.*

Services
Private vehicle, driver and guide at your service as described. A full day is generally eight hours in duration. A half-day is generally three hours in duration. The timing for each day is noted in your program.

Exeter International’s local offices are available for your assistance 24 hours per day while you are traveling. Our local staff may also assist you with restaurant reservations and purchasing of additional theater and museum tickets at your request.

Transportation
All transfers to and from airports are included in the program. Unless otherwise noted, all transfer service is with a driver only, not a guide. In general, drivers have limited English-speaking skills. Evening transportation is not included unless specifically noted in your itinerary. Timing for each day is noted in your program.

Guides
Hand chosen for their knowledge on local history, art & architecture. Guides are at your disposal as noted in your itinerary.

Tickets
All entrance tickets as described in the program.

Exeter International Travel Information

BAGGAGE
The vehicles reserved for your itinerary can accommodate up to two medium-sized suitcases per person. If you intend to travel with additional luggage, please advise your travel consultant so appropriate arrangements may be made. In general, we schedule a sedan for parties of two, a minivan for parties of three to four and a minibus for parties of five or more.

SIGHTSEEING
Sightseeing arrangements have been made with your special interests in mind. Your drivers and guides are at your disposal for full or half-day sightseeing programs as indicated in the itinerary. Within those time and mileage guidelines, your driver and guide are at your disposal, so you are free to modify your program as you please. Should you require additional time or mileage, the costs will be quoted on request and may be paid for locally in the local currency or U.S. Dollars.

Every effort has been made to confirm that scheduled sightseeing venues will be open at the time you plan to visit them. However, individual estates, museums, gardens and other points of interest can change their hours of operation at short notice. In the event that a particular attraction is closed on the day or time of your visit, your guide will offer alternative arrangements or rearrange your sightseeing to accommodate these unexpected events.

OPTIONAL EXPENSES
Charges for extra meals, transport, sightseeing services or other optional additions to your established itinerary are your responsibility and must be paid locally in the local currency.
GRATUITIES
Gratuities are not included in your tour price. Gratuities are at your own discretion. We recommend $15-$20 per person, per day for your guide and $5 - $10 per person, per day for your driver. For your airport or station transfer, a gratuity of $5 - $10 is customary, based on service. Dollars, Euros and any local currency are all accepted.

DINING WITH YOUR GUIDE
On days when dinner and lunch costs have not been included in your itinerary (or in your tour cost), you may, at your discretion, choose to invite your guide to dine with your party. You are under no obligation to do so but, if you do extend such an invitation, the guide is your guest and you will be responsible for the cost of his/her meal.

Booking Conditions

PAYMENTS
Exeter International must receive a deposit of 25% of the total program cost before reservations for your independent travel program can be initiated. The balance of payment is due 60 days prior to departure. No reservations are made on your behalf until this deposit has been received. Availability and pricing is subject to change until this deposit is received. All deposits are nonrefundable.

CANCELLATION
Written cancellations received less than 60 days prior to departure are subject to the following forfeit of tour cost
- 59-14 days prior to departure, 50% of total tour cost
- 14 or less days prior to departure, 100% of tour cost

REFUNDS
We regret that refunds cannot be issued for arrangements confirmed on your itinerary but unused once your tour has begun.

INSURANCE
Exeter International strongly recommends the purchase of travel insurance to protect your investment. You will find insurance costs noted on your invoice and insurance coverage information in your original booking packet.

PRICES AND ARRANGEMENTS
Once an itinerary is finalized and final payment has been made, a $100 revision fee will be charged if the itinerary is changed.

The tour price includes planning, handling and operational charges. Rates are quoted in US Dollars on the current rate of exchange and tariff as of 2016. Exeter International reserves the right to increase tour prices to cover increased costs, tariffs and taxes, and to reflect fluctuations in foreign exchange markets. Devaluation of a foreign currency will be weighed against any tariff increases imposed. Exeter International does not breakdown costs involved in any Small Group or Individual Travel Program.

All arrangements are subject to availability and modification if necessary.
Prices are subject to change if necessary until paid in full.

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