



**VLORE** lies in the south-western part of Albania, among the southern end of the Adriatic and the northern Ionian part. It is the point where the two seas meet. It is among the largest long coastline districts, about 30% of the overall coastline length of the country. It is located 135 km from the capital of Tirana, only 72 km away from Italy (Otranto Channel) and 77 miles from Greece (Corfu Island).

It has a typical Mediterranean Sea climate, with a mild and relatively wet winter, and dry summer.

Vlore presents three basic climatic zones:

The coast, with Mediterranean temperatures, like all the Mediterranean islands, untouched by cold winds.

Intermediate, fresh climates, similar to that of mild climate in Europe.

Mountains like Llogaraja, you can enjoy a dry continental climate, cold winter and fresh air during the summer.

Vlore holds the record of sunny hours in a year in Albania, with an average of over 2000 hours.

There is the only peninsula of Albania, Karaburuni, 16 km long, 3-5 km long, with a surface of 62 km<sup>2</sup>. Karaburun Peninsula is known in the ancient times for natural resources (famous marble), forests (valanidhi), historical-archeological riches and rich reserves of wild boars.

Also the only island in Albania, Sazani, 17 km from Skela Port (Vlore) and 9 km from Trepoti (Vlore). Its highest peak is 342 m. Sazani Island has a surface area of 5.7 km<sup>2</sup> and a coastline of 12 km. This is a rugged coastline with monolithic rock formations.

Vlore is also known as the olive land, having recorded about 280,000 olive trees. The "Vlonjak" olive brand is one of the oldest in Europe and is known for high oil production.

In the territory of the district of Vlore since ancient times, cities flourished such as:

Amantia - Ploçe,

Olympia - Mavrove,

Oriko - Orikum,

Himera - Himara,

Kionina - Kanine,

Nymfeum - Selenica

Aulona - Vlore.



**AMANTIA (PLOCE):** is an Illyrian city located in the ancient ruins of Ploce village. It was founded at the end of the fifth century B.C. The city stretched out on the slopes around the hill with a surface of 15 hectare. Amantia participated in the Epirus Joining until 230 B.C. After the Roman occupation, preserved some internal autonomy and was an important knot on the road between Apollonia and Epirus. Among the surrounding city walls can be distinguished the Aphrodite Temple and the Amantias Stadium with about 3,000 places to sit.

Was the historical capital of the Illyrian tribe of Amanties, which was founded around the 5th century B.C. Its present location is near the village of Plloça in the river valley of Vlora. At its peak, Amantia featured an acropolis and a doric style temple dedicated to Aphrodite. The most notable archeological object among the preserved features is the stadium, measuring 60 X 12.5 m. A significant sculptural object is the basorelief of the God of Fertility, which can be seen at the National Historic Museum. Additional relics from Amantia are on display at the Archaeological Museum in Tirana.





**OLYMPIA (MAVROVO):** is the Illyrian city mentioned for the first time in the written documents of Stefan Byzantine. The Olympics had its development in the IV to III century BC, having their bronze coins. One of the most interesting archaeological finds is a clay pot called "Olympia's". The walls of the surrounding wall extend to a length of 1300m.

**ORIKO (ORIKUMI):** It was part of the Amanthe tribe. The city is built on the ruins of an old Illyrian settlement around the IV century BC. In the second century BC the amantets had their coin with the figurine of Apollo. Orik's harbor has served as an important naval center and is mentioned in the war between Philip V of Macedonia and Rome, at 214 B.C. The city served as a war arena between Julio Caesar and Pompey. In the middle Ages we find the name Jeroika and is mentioned as an important center and as a trading harbor.

is located in southwest Albania, about 40km south of the archaeological site of Apollonia. According to Pliny, the city of Orikum was established by colonists from Colchis. Its geographical position made it an important harbor and a trade center of the Adriatic coast. Orikum was important to military strategists, as well. It was used by the Romans as a defensive base in the wars against the Illyrians as well as in the 3rd century B.C. against the Macedonians, who later occupied it in 214 B.C. Julius Caesar used the area as a troop encampment for several months, until Pompeius Magnus took them. Being subject to such varied cultural influences, Orikum became a thriving urban center. This is evidenced by various archaeological ruins, such as part of an orchestra platform and a small theatre with the capacity of 400 spectators. Additionally, ruins of protective walls and streets can be seen lying underwater in a lagoon. The nearby Marmiroi Church, of Byzantine origin, was commissioned by the emperor Theodore in the 13th century C.E. It has a small 6 m x 9 m main hall and a dome approximately 3 m in diameter that is supported by four Roman arches. Its internal walls feature fragments of murals that reflect various aspects of Byzantine culture. The church has three entrances and is renowned for its elaborate construction and architectural significance. Today Orikum is an important city, which has been part of many regional development programs and has seen a distinct increase in the tourism sector. This is a result of its proximity to the Adriatic Sea and its relative position to other nearby cities.



**HIMERA (HIMARA):** It lies south of the city of Vlore. It is an ancient settlement and is known as one of the Illyrian coastal towns of Kaonis. Its name is known in the fifth century B.C.

**KIONINA (KANINA):** Located in the south-east of Vlore city, on the slope of Mount Shashice. It is known as a settlement since the last millennium BC. From archaeological excavations, it is said that in the IV century BC, Kanina was a fortified city, located within the castle of the same name.

**AULONA** is the name of Vlore in the ancient times. It is mentioned by many foreign chronicles as one of the main harbor cities of south Illyria.

Archaeological evidence of antiquity and autochthonism is its own symbol "Aulonas Girl", a "goddess" sculpture, 87 cm, engraved with the limestone of canon, symbolizing the dress of Illyrian women. Archaeological excavations led to the ruins of a fortress with solid walls of 40 m long, 7, 5 m height and 2 m thick. Aulona was an important strategic and trading center for the development of trade with other areas.

Vlore is rich in running water due to the precipitation and rugged mountain character of the relief, therefore it is covered by rivers and underground resources.



**VJOSA RIVER:** 76 km long serves as the natural border between the districts of Fier (north) and Vlore. It is generally the river, and therefore, also floating.

**THE SHUSHICA RIVER:** it has a length of about 80 km. Is known as the Vlora River, as it spans the valley with the same name.

**LLOGARA:** It is one of the most scenic spots of the Albanian Riviera. Covered by a dense pine and fir forest, but it is found with bush wood. With its surface of 1020 ha, it is covered with evergreen. It is considered as a classic place to place biological equilibrium between plant and animal worlds. The famous Llogara neck has a height of 1027 meters. In the place called "Mali i Gjergjinës", 885 meters, is the dolomite minerals quarry.

**VLORE** is part of Albania's coastal lakes such as lagoons. The most popular are the Laguna e Nartes and Pashaliman Lagoon, which communicate with the sea through the channels that make and swap the water in the time of the tide.

**NARTA LAGOON** is located in the north of the city of Vlore. It is internationally known for a number of water birds with more than 48700 individuals. For three types, the area expects 1% of the total number. In winter, more than 23% of Albania's aquatic birds are sheltered in this area.

**PASHALIMAN LAGOON**, despite its small size, is known for the presence of different species of ducks as well as for the winter water birds, which migrate between Albania.

Approximately 20 kinds of minerals are counted in the surroundings of Vlora.

In addition to Selenice's bitumen, from ancient Europe and the world, oil marks have been discovered since the beginning of the 19th century in the Shushice Valley, where the first well was fired. This region is especially rich in building materials such as marble limestone, clay, gypsum, dolomite, and travertine.

**The marble limestone** of the Karaburun Peninsula has been used since ancient times as a decorative stone.

It is also worth mentioning the amount of **thermal-sulfurous water** at 25-30 C<sup>0</sup> in the vicinity of Selenice.

**The natural bitumen** of Selenice is known since 2000 years ago as a weapon of war by the Illyrians, the ancient Greeks and the Romans.



**Written Cave** - Lepenice. It is located on the mountain beam above this village, with a height of 800 meters above sea level. The paintings of this cave are the representatives of post-Paleolithic art, known as the oldest in all of Europe. In the cave there are 19 anthropomorphic figures and 8 geometric paintings.

**Velce Caves.** They belong to the Neolithic culture of the late millennium III B.C. According to the records of Prof. Marjan, this cave must have been flat 1000 years before Christ.

**Cave of Haxhi Alise - Karaburun.** It is located in the cape of this peninsula. It is the largest marine cave of our country, 30 meters long, and the future on the rock, 10 meters wide and 10 to 15 meters high.

**The Castle of Gjon Boçarit.** It is located in the village of Tragjas and is built in the XVI - XVII century. It has a rectangular shape with a wall width of 1.25 meters and a height of up to 5.5 meters.

**Himara Castle.** It was built as a fortress of the Chaon tribe and is often mentioned in Byzantine documents. It was repaired in the 6th century A. D. Justinian was the one who ordered the rebuilding of the castle to crack the attack of barbarians, Goths and Huns.

**The Castle of Kropisht.** It is located in a place called Llutro, built in the Roman period. It consists of stones, 24 x 2 x 5 cm. This type of fortification has a square shape with a surface area of 250 to 180 meters. To a large extent, the width of the wall is 1.2 meters.

**The Castle of Porto Palermo or the Castle of Ali Pashe Tepelena.** It is located in the vicinity of Himara. The walls are 1.6 meters thick. This castle was designed by a French engineer in the form of a quartz.

Ali Pasha Tepelena built Porto Palermo castle, located in the Vlora region, in the late 18th century. It has a rectangular shape with four bastions in its corners. Along the terrace's parapet is a positioned loophole for canons. The inner space is made of halls, stores and other areas. In its central part are positioned stone stairs that lead to the terrace. Walls protect the entire environment with gun loopholes on the front and on the side. On the outside, in the archway entrance, is a stone balcony in a cantilever form.



**The Castle of Kukum.** It is located in the village of Qeparo, near the Gulf of Palermo. It was built in the 2nd century BC.

**The Castle of Vlore.** It was built in 1531 by Sultan Sulejmani to protect the Gulf of Vlore from the Venetian attacks. An accurate drawing of this color has been done by Dr. Aluerbahu in 1847, which is stored in the archives of the library of Insbruhu.

**The castle of Kanine.** It was built on an old residential center in the III century B.C. This fortress has an area of 3625 ha. It was rebuilt by Justinian in the 5th century BC. In the notes of Anna Komnenes is spoken of during the wars of her father, Emperor Alex, against Norman armies.

**Castle of Mavrov.** It is located in the Valley of Shushice, was built in the IV century BC. Its walls are made of limestone blocks.

**Mosaic of Mesaplik.** It is a rare paleochristian object. This mosaic is from the 7th-8th century A.D. has dimensions of 11 x 10 meters.

**Stone with the sky.** It is located on the top of Mount Lipes in the village of Vranisht. It is a prehistoric monument widespread in the late Neolithic and in the Bronze Age 4 - 9 thousand years ago. This work of prehistoric architecture is related to the superstars and the sun. According to the renowned archaeologist M. Zeqo, "is a gigantic stone laid out of human hands on two other rocks, creating a table for the gods".

**Muradian Mosque:** It is a sultan style with a dome built in the second half of the XVI century. The project and the realization of the mosque were carried out by the Albanian architect Sinani, who was one of the most important mosque builders in the first period of the Ottoman Empire. His greatest work remains Istanbul's Great Mosque "Sulejmania" (Blue Mosque).



**Zvernec Monastery:** It is the most important cultural monument of the area of Narta, which has served as a place of prayer. The main reason for a visit to Zvernec Island is precisely this Monastery, built in the XIII century, dedicated to Saint Mary. The church is located in the center of the island. Today, the Orthodox religious ceremony is celebrated and every year, August 15, Saint Augustine's birthday is remembered.

### **TREPORT**

Excavations near the Cape of Treport, located in the lagoon of Narta, have revealed traces of an ancient settlement dating from the 7th century B.C. Over the centuries the settlement extended and a new wall was built around it in the 4th century B.E. Between the 4th and 2nd centuries B.C., the city prospered. The original name of the city is unknown, but finds in the area indicate that it might have been called Daulia. The city was mysteriously abandoned after the 2nd century B.C., but this might have been related to the Illyrian-Roman wars.



**FINIQ (PHOENICE)** was the historical capital of the Illyrian tribe of Amanties, which was founded around the 5th century B.C. Its present location is near the village of Pllloça in the river valley of Vlora. At its peak, Amantia featured an acropolis and a doric style temple dedicated to Aphrodite. The most notable archeological object among the preserved features is the stadium, measuring 60 X 12.5 m. A significant sculptural object is the basorelief of the God of Fertility, which can be seen at the National Historic Museum. Additional relics from Amantia are on display at the Archaeological Museum in Tirana.



**BUTRINT (BOUTHROTOS)** is located in the southwestern coastline of Albania. The city is separated by a narrow stretch from the Greek island of Corfu. The site has been occupied approximately at the 8th century B.C., but legends hint at the city's foundation by Trojan exiles. By the 4th century B.C., a walled settlement had been established and the city began to develop through trade. Augustus founded a colony at Butrint and the town remained a relatively small Roman port until the 6th century C.E. Following the fall of the Roman Empire, the city shrank in population and significance. Butrint then entered a turbulent period and control of the city was bitterly fought by the Byzantine, Norman, Angevin, and Venetian states. The Ottoman Turks and briefly the French disputed later ownership. By the time it became a part of Albania in 1912, it was virtually deserted. Various archeological efforts began in the 1920's, and continue today.

Butrint was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992. The ground of Butrint features an impressive array of historically significant archaeological sites. Foremost among them is the theater, which dates from the 4th century B.C. hosting approximately 1,500 spectators. Performances are still staged there at a summer-festival each year. An impressive baptistery (with extensive mosaics) and a basilica from the 6th century C.E. attest to the various occupations of the city. A canal and vestiges of Roman courtyard houses lie near the theater. Additionally, kilometers of imposing walls surround much of the site. Nearby, the recently renovated Butrint Museum houses many fascinating objects unearthed during the various archeological digs. One must travel to the National Historic Museum to view the famous head of Apollo, unearthed by the Italian archaeologist Luigi Maria Ugolini during his excavations in the 1920's.



## **VLORA**

Behind the Independence Monument Square in Vlora, the remains of a rectangular castle have been excavated. The castle comprised a portion of the ancient city of Aulona and was built in the 4th century C.E. to withstand Gothic invasions. Other finds in the area indicate that it was first settled around the 4th century B.C. The best known find from this period is a sculpture known as “the aulonian girl”, depicting a girl wearing an Illyrian dress. Historical sources mention Aulona in the 2nd century C.E., in relation to Roman efforts to improve roads in this part of the western Balkans. In various itineraries Aulon is mentioned as a principal stopping place on the main road from Dyrrachium to Butrint. Following the Gothic invasions of the 5th century C.E., an archdiocese was established inside the castle. During the reign of Justinian, the castle was further fortified by his direct orders.

Late in the 6th century C.E. Slavs invaded the city, causing widespread damage and an evacuation by many citizens to the island of Sazan, where traces of this settlement have been discovered. The city might have never regained its status, appearing to have



diminished significantly in size and importance. Aulona is mentioned again in Byzantine documents, around 1100 C.E.



#### **ONCHESMOS (SARANDA)**

The name of the ancient town derives from Anchises, the Trojan warrior, whose mythological union with the goddess Aphrodite resulted in a son named Aeneas. Aeneas, along with his father and his son, Ascanius, escaped the sack of Troy, and journeyed throughout the Mediterranean. Dionysos of Halicarnassus calls Onchesmos the Harbor of Anchises, while the Byzantine historian Procopius mentions that Anchises died at Onchesmos. During the 6th century C.E., the town's name changes to Hagia Saranda or "Forty Saints". The circumstances of this name change are unclear, but might have been related to the construction of a great basilica overlooking the modern city of Saranda. Various monuments and archaeological finds from the city have been excavated.

Among the more impressive finds are the ruins of a synagogue, a portion of a Roman Imperial archway, and the ruins of a late antique house. Also noteworthy are an apsidal building, an Odeon, a cemetery, and an elaborate mosaic, widely known as the Dolphin Pavement.



In order to preserve the traditions, culture and history of Vlore, **several museums** have been built in this city.

**Museum of National Independence:** It was created in 1936 and is the first Albanian museum. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the proclamation of National Independence, it was proclaimed National Museum. The building itself and everything that is exposed in it represents one of the most important moments in the history of the Albanian nation. In this building, the foundations of the Albanian state have been laid.

**The Museum of Historical Relics (Historical Museum):** It is located in the city center, in a very special building. It was created in 1962. Here hundreds of original objects are exhibited and preserved, which represent and reflect different historical periods that begin with antiquity and continue with our days. Visitors can see archaeological objects belonging to different antique cities in the district of Vlore as, Orik, Amantias, Ploce, Olimpias and beyond, Kion. In its surroundings are also original objects belonging to the middle Ages.

**Ethnographic Museum:** It is set in one of the oldest buildings of the city, which was built in the mid-nineteenth century. This building has been declared a cultural monument. The museum is very pleasing to visitors and reflects the special features of Vlore's district tradition. Among them, they include the best traditions of material culture, worked by residents of the Vlore district, where they distinguish them from metal, wood, clothing and embroidery, fishing. In the building where the Ethnographic Museum was located, in 1908 was created the patriotic club "Labëria" with honorary president Ismail Qemal Vlore. Also, in 1909, the first Albanian-language school for the city lords, headed by patriot Marigo Posio, was born here.



**The cuisine of Vlore** area is a typical cuisine of the mountainous but also coastal areas. To be used fresh livestock products of dwarf and goat herds that grow in the sea-lying mountains, with fresh grass and sea heron. A very special feature of the kitchen is the cooking of sea products.

Some of the characteristic dishes of Vlore cuisine are:

**Byreku(pie):** first of all Vlore people appreciate it with cabbage, or what is called the dairy. The main ingredients are fresh milk, flour, and cabbage.

**Roasted meat in the hell:** being characteristic of the country, can be found in every restaurant. The affinity with the sea and the quality of the pastures give meat in this area an incomparable taste, especially the lamb of Karaburun.

You can find very tasty Italian cooking.  
Nowadays, Vlora is famous for cooking fresh seafood.