

ALBANIA



Fulbright & English Language Fellows Orientation Handbook

2012—2013



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION
US EMBASSY TIRANA, ALBANIA



Embassy of the United States of America

Public Affairs Office
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Dear Fulbright Scholars and English Language Fellows:

Congratulations on your grant award and your upcoming journey as a Fulbrighter or English Language Fellow in Albania! Fellows have served in Albania since the country's emergence as a new democracy in 1991. Since then, the U.S. State Department has sponsored over 75 fellows in Albania. We welcome you as you join their prestigious ranks and we look forward to witnessing your contributions to Albanian society.

The U.S. Embassy in Tirana views these programs as key tools of exchange and capacity building between Albanians and Americans. They promote important cross-cultural exchange of values and ideas, which in turn encourages greater understanding and friendship between our two countries. They also play a vital role in supporting the educational development of Albanian university students and working professionals.

This Welcome Handbook is intended as a tool to help you begin planning for your time in Albania. Within this handbook you will find information, websites, and book recommendations that will aid you in your preparations. The Public Affairs Office staff looks forward to supporting you in your journey. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions you may have!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth A. Lewis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elizabeth A. Lewis
Public Affairs Officer
U.S. Embassy of Tirana



CONTENTS

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN ALBANIA	3
COUNTRY OVERVIEW: ALBANIA AT A GLANCE	4
PREPARING TO COME TO ALBANIA	17
<i>IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS TO BRING</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>SHIPPING</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>SUGGESTED ITEMS TO PACK.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>PLANNING YOUR ARRIVAL IN ALBANIA</i>	<i>20</i>
LIVING AND WORKING AS A FELLOW IN ALBANIA	22
<i>HOUSING</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>FOOD</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>MEDICAL CARE</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>TRANSPORTATION</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>MAIL</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>TELEPHONE.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>CARS</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>FAMILIES.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>TRAVEL</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>PERSONAL SAFETY.....</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>WORK SETTINGS AND ROUTINES</i>	<i>27</i>
LETTERS FROM CURRENT FULBRIGHT AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE FELLOWS	29
RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION	36
<i>GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ALBANIA</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>CURRENT NEWS SITES/ONLINE ARTICLES ABOUT ALBANIA</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SITES WITH COVERAGE OF ALBANIA</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>INFORMATION AND TRAVEL</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>ALBANIAN LANGUAGE.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>RECOMMENDED BOOKS.....</i>	<i>37</i>
USEFUL CONTACTS	39
PHOTOS OF ALBANIA	40
APPENDICES	41
Appendix A: Packing List.....	41
Appendix B: Information on Applying for Residency Permit	43
Appendix C: Local Resources	54

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN ALBANIA

Since 1991, when the first Fulbright Scholars from Albania were selected, more than 250 Albanian scholars and students have been to the United States under the auspices of the Fulbright Academic Exchange Program. While Albanian Scholars teach and study in a wide variety of colleges and universities in the United States, most American Fulbrighters/English Language Fellows (ELFs) who come to Albania are affiliated with the University of Tirana, which was founded in 1957 and is now the oldest and the largest of Albania's ten universities. Others choose the smaller, regional Universities of Elbasan, Shkoder, Vlora or other institutions like Ministry of Foreign Affairs, NGOs etc. depending on their field of study or research project.

Fulbrighters and ELFs occupy a unique position in Albania, somewhere between that of an official visitor and a private citizen. While you will be subject to the same customs procedures, visa formalities, and Albanian laws that apply to all private visitors to Albania, Albanians will still see you as representatives of the United States; in many situations you will not be able to avoid having that role thrust upon you at official functions. Fortunately, experience shows that Albanians are well disposed towards Americans.

Serving as an American Fellow in Albania is a unique experience – you will be working within a society and system that is in transition, and with people who have eyes turned to western culture and feet rooted in Albanian tradition. This presents both particular challenges and rewards. If you approach your placement with the perspective that it is an exchange of capacity and education as well as of culture, you will find it to be a very satisfying and meaningful experience.

COUNTRY OVERVIEW: ALBANIA AT A GLANCE

OFFICIAL NAME: [Republic of Albania](#)

GEOGRAPHY

Area: 28,748 sq. km. (slightly larger than Maryland).

Major cities: *Capital*--Tirana (763,634, 2011 est.). *Others*--Durrës (265,330, 2011 est.), Shkoder (217,375, 2011 est.), Vlorë (184,279, 2011 est.).

Terrain: Situated in the southwestern region of the Balkan Peninsula, Albania is predominantly mountainous but flat along its coastline with the Adriatic Sea.

Climate: Mild, temperate; cool, wet winters; dry, hot summers.

Albania shares a border with Greece to the south/southeast, Macedonia to the east, Kosovo to the northeast, and Montenegro to the northwest. Western Albania lies along the Adriatic and Ionian Sea coastlines. Albania's primary seaport is Durrës, which handles 90% of its maritime cargo.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Population (2012 est.): 3,002,859

Growth rate (2012 est.): 0.28%.

Ethnic groups (2004 est., Government of Albania): Albanian 98.6%, Greeks 1.17%, others 0.23% (Vlachs, Roma, Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Balkan Egyptians, and Bulgarians).

Religions: Muslim (Sunni and Bektashi) 70%, Albanian Orthodox 20%, and Roman Catholic 10%.

Official language: Albanian.

Health (2012 est.): *Life expectancy*--males 74.99 years; females 80.49 years. *Infant mortality rate*--14.12 deaths per 1,000 live births.

Scholars believe the Albanian people are descended from a non-Slavic, non-Turkic group of tribes known as Illyrians, who arrived in the Balkans around 2000 BC. After falling under Roman authority in 165 BC, Albania was controlled nearly continuously by a succession of foreign powers until the mid-20th century, with only brief periods of self-rule.

Following the split of the Roman Empire in 395, the Byzantine Empire established control over present-day Albania. In the 11th century, Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus made the first recorded reference to a distinct area of land known as Albania and to its people.

The Ottoman Empire ruled Albania from 1385-1912. During this time, much of the population converted to the Islamic faith, and Albanians emigrated to Italy, Greece, Egypt and Turkey. Although its control was briefly disrupted during the 1443-78 revolt, led by Albania's national hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Skenderbeu, the Ottomans eventually reasserted their dominance.

The League of Prizren (1878) promoted the idea of an Albanian nation-state and established the modern Albanian alphabet, updating a language that survived the hundreds of years of Ottoman rule despite being outlawed. By the early 20th century, the weakened Ottoman Empire was no longer able to suppress Albanian nationalism. Following the conclusion of the First Balkan War, Albanians issued the Vlorë Proclamation of November 28, 1912, declaring independence and the Great Powers established Albania's borders in 1913. Albania's territorial integrity was confirmed

at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, after U.S. President Woodrow Wilson dismissed a plan by the European powers to divide Albania among its neighbors.

During the Second World War, Albania was occupied first by Italy (1939-43) and then by Germany (1943-44). After the war, Communist Party leader Enver Hoxha, through a combination of ruthlessness and strategic alliances, managed to preserve Albania's territorial integrity during the next 40 years, but exacted a terrible price from the population, which was subjected to purges, shortages, repression of civil and political rights, a total ban on religious observance, and increased isolation. Albania adhered to a strict Stalinist philosophy, eventually withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact in 1968 and alienating its final remaining ally, China, in 1978.

Following Hoxha's death in 1985 and the subsequent fall of Communism in 1991, Albanian society struggled to overcome its historical isolation and underdevelopment. During the initial transition period, the Albanian Government sought closer ties with the West in order to improve economic conditions and introduced basic democratic reforms, including a multi-party system.

In 1992, after the sweeping electoral victory of the Democratic Party, Sali Berisha became the first democratically elected President of Albania. Berisha began a more deliberate program of economic and democratic reform but progress on these issues stalled in the mid-1990s, due to political gridlock. At the same time, unscrupulous investment companies defrauded investors all over Albania using pyramid schemes. In early 1997, several of these pyramid schemes collapsed, leaving thousands of people bankrupt, disillusioned, and angry. Armed revolts broke out across the country, leading to the near-total collapse of government authority. During this time, Albania's already inadequate and antiquated infrastructure suffered tremendous damage, as people looted public works for building materials. Weapons depots all over the country were raided. The anarchy of early 1997 alarmed the world and prompted intensive international mediation.

A UN Multinational Protection Force restored order, and an interim national reconciliation government oversaw the general elections of June 1997, which returned the Socialists and their allies to power at the national level. President Berisha resigned, and the Socialists elected Rexhep Meidani as President of the Republic.

During the transitional period of 1997-2002, a series of short-lived Socialist-led governments succeeded one another as Albania's fragile democratic structures were strengthened. Additional political parties formed, media outlets expanded, non-governmental organizations and business associations developed. In 1998, Albanians ratified a new constitution via popular referendum, guaranteeing the rule of law and the protection of fundamental human rights and religious freedom. Fatos Nano, Chairman of the Socialist Party, emerged as Prime Minister in July 2002.

On July 24, 2002, Alfred Moisiu was sworn in as President of the Republic. A nonpartisan figure, he was elected as a consensus candidate of the ruling and opposition parties. The peaceful transfer of power from President Meidani to President Moisiu was the result of an agreement between the parties to engage each other within established parliamentary structures. This "truce" ushered in a new period of political stability in Albania, making possible significant progress in democratic and economic reforms, rule of law initiatives, and the development of Albania's relations with its neighbors and the U.S.

The "truce" between party leaders began to fray in summer 2003 and progress on economic and political reforms suffered noticeably due to political infighting. The municipal elections of 2003

and national elections of 2005 were an improvement over past years, adding to the consolidation of democracy despite the continued presence of administrative errors and inaccuracies in voter lists.

In 2005, the Democratic Party and its allies returned to power, pledging to fight crime and corruption, decrease the size and scope of government, and promote economic growth. Their leader, Sali Berisha, was sworn in as Prime Minister on September 11, 2005.

Since the election, Prime Minister Berisha's government has made the fight against corruption and organized crime its first priority and has begun administrative and legal reforms toward that end. This has brought repeated clashes with the opposition, which condemned the government's approach as unconstitutional and an attempt to undermine independent institutions. Both sides remain combative over a range of political and substantive issues.

Another politically contentious process was the pre-electoral period prior to the 2007 local elections. Although the February 18, 2007 local elections were generally peaceful and democratic, over-politicized debate during the preceding months resulted in procedural and administrative problems during the conduct of the elections. A major positive step forward was the performance of the police force.

The fragility of the Albanian electoral system was tested again during the parliamentary by-election in zone 26 (Shijak) on March 11, 2007. The left-wing opposition parties withdrew their commissioners from the polling stations and the counting center, in spite of prior concessions from the Central Elections Commission (CEC) to the opposition's demands. Opposition commissioners left and took with them one of the seals that mark the ballots. By midday, the opposition candidate also announced his withdrawal from the parliamentary race. However, the right of citizens to vote prevailed and the process continued thanks to the technical arrangements of the CEC. The only visible sign of violence was the wounding of a Democratic Party commissioner, who was fired upon by a militant.

Both elections were an indication of lack of political will to cooperate and of the imminent need for a comprehensive electoral reform of the present Albanian electoral system.

On July 20, 2007 President Bamir Topi was elected within Parliament after six members of the opposition coalition broke ranks to vote for his candidacy. Out of 90 deputies present at the session, 85 voted for Topi, while Neritan Ceka, head of the opposition Democratic Alliance party, won five votes. Topi, 50, a former agriculture minister, now succeeds President Alfred Moisiu for a five-year mandate.

In April 2008, Albania was invited to join NATO, launching a new phase in its goals to join the European and Atlantic communities.

On June 28, 2009, Albania held parliamentary elections. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) described these elections as progress over past elections and found that the elections met most OSCE standards. However, ODIHR noted that they did not fully meet OSCE standards and observers noted problems, including misuse of national and municipal government resources by both sides for campaign purposes, shortcomings in electoral preparations for vote counting, and evidence of proxy voting, media bias, and pressure on public sector employees to participate in

campaign events. The elections resulted in no single party gaining a majority of the 140 seats in Parliament, and the Movement for Socialist Integration (LSI) and the Democratic Party (DP) combined to form a coalition government, the first such in Albania's history.

The opposition Socialist Party (SP) boycotted Parliament from September 2009 to February 2010, alleging electoral fraud. A series of international efforts aimed at resolving the stalemate have been unsuccessful. The Socialist Party continued a partial boycott of Parliament, voting on only a handful of laws in which the party had a specific interest, such as a December 2010 proposal to set up an investigative committee on the 2009 elections. (The measure was defeated.) This political deadlock has seriously hampered Albania's European Union (EU) aspirations. In November 2010, Albania was granted entry into the visa liberalization regime for the Schengen zone. However, at the same time the European Commission issued a negative opinion on Albania's application for EU candidate-country status and laid out a list of conditions still to be fulfilled.

Domestic political tensions came to head in January 2011, leading to concerns within the international community of broader government instability. In mid-January, the revelation of a video purportedly showing LSI Chairman Ilir Meta orchestrating corrupt deals with then-Minister of Economy and Finance Dritan Prifti further fueled SP complaints about government corruption and calls for anti-government protest. The SP vowed protest action to "bring down" the government and employed rhetoric suggesting a willingness to use violence, drawing parallels with pro-democracy movements gripping northern Africa and the Middle East at that time. An SP-organized rally of party supporters on January 21 quickly turned violent, with protesters attacking police and setting fire to cars in the vicinity, and eventually storming the Presidential Palace compound. Police responded with water cannon and Republican Guard forces opened fire, killing two protestors at the time and fatally wounding two more. The Prosecutor General immediately opened an investigation into the incident and issued a subpoena for Republican Guard officers. The U.S. Government, its European partners, and the OSCE urgently called for a return to calm and for the Prosecutor General to conduct a thorough and evenhanded investigation into the events. As of August 2011 the investigation had made little headway.

The May 2011 local elections drew intense international focus, as SP reluctance to fulfill pre-election preparations gave rise to fears it would boycott the election in favor of unspecified protest action. The elections took place as scheduled; the campaign was spirited and vigorously contested, with voter participation high for local elections. In a majority of the districts, voting and counting occurred technically well. However, the Central Election Commission's (CEC) decision in the Tirana mayoral race to count contested ballots reversed preliminary results showing three-time mayor and Socialist Party leader Edi Rama ahead by 10 votes in favor of ruling Democrat Party candidate Luzim Basha. The process undermined public confidence in the independence and impartiality of the CEC as an institution.

GOVERNMENT

Type: Parliamentary democracy.

Constitution: Adopted by popular referendum November 28, 1998.

Independence: November 28, 1912 (from the Ottoman Empire).

Branches: *Executive*--President (chief of state), Prime Minister (head of government), Council of Ministers (cabinet). *Legislative*--Unicameral People's Assembly or Kuvendi Popullor--140 seats.

Judicial--Constitutional Court, High Court, multiple district and appeals courts.

Suffrage: Universal at age 18.

Main political parties: Democratic Party of Albania (PD); Albanian Socialist Party (PS); Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI); Albanian Republican Party (PR); Demo-Christian Party (PDK); Union for Human Rights Party (PBDNJ); New Democracy Party (PDR); Social Democratic Party (PSD); Social Democracy Party (PDS).

The unicameral People's Assembly (Kuvendi Popullor) consists of 140 seats, 100 of which are determined by direct popular vote. The remaining seats are distributed by proportional representation. All members serve 4-year terms. The Speaker of Parliament (Jozefina Topalli) has two deputies, who along with eight permanent parliamentary commissions assist in the process of legislating Albanian affairs.

The President is the head of state and elected by a three-fifths majority vote of all Assembly members. The President serves a term of 5 years with the right to one re-election. Although the position is largely ceremonial, the Constitution gives the President authority to appoint and dismiss some high-ranking civil servants in the executive and judicial branches, and this authority can have political implications. The President is also commander in chief of the armed forces, and chairs the National Security Commission. The current President's term expires on July 23, 2012.

The Prime Minister is appointed by the President and approved by a simple majority of all members of the Assembly. The Prime Minister serves as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers (cabinet), which consists of the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and other ministers. Members of the Council of Ministers are nominated by the Prime Minister, decreed by the President, and approved by a parliamentary vote.

Albania's civil law system is similar to that of other European countries. The court structure consists of a Constitutional Court, a Supreme Court, and multiple appeal and district courts. The Constitutional Court is comprised of nine members appointed by the Assembly for one 9-year term. The Constitutional Court interprets the Constitution, determines the constitutionality of laws, and resolves disagreements between local and federal authorities. The Supreme Court is the highest court of appeal and consists of 11 members appointed by the President with the consent of the Assembly for 9-year terms. The President chairs the High Council of Justice, which is responsible for appointing and dismissing other judges. The High Court of Justice is comprised of 15 members--the President of the Republic, the Chairman of the High Court, the Minister of Justice, three members elected by the Assembly, and nine judges of all levels elected by the National Judicial Conference.

The remaining courts are divided into three jurisdictions: criminal, civil, and military. There are no jury trials under the Albanian system of justice. A college of three judges, who are sometimes referred to as a "jury" by the Albanian press, renders court verdicts.

Principal Government Officials

President--Bamir Topi

Prime Minister--Sali Berisha

Deputy Prime Minister--Edmond Haxhinasto

Minister of Defense--Arben Imami

Minister of Foreign Affairs--Edmond Haxhinasto

ECONOMY

Real GDP growth (2011): 2.5%.

Inflation rate (2011): 3.9%.

Unemployment rate (2011): 13.4%.

Natural resources: Oil, gas, coal, iron, copper and chrome ores.

Overview

Albania's economy has improved substantially over recent years and has outperformed many other countries in the region. However, it is still considered one of the poorest countries in Europe. According to the CIA World Fact Book, gross domestic product per capita was \$7,800 USD in 2011. The official unemployment rate is 13.4%, although the CIA World Fact Book notes that the actual percentage may exceed 30% due to preponderance of near-subsistence farming. According to the World Bank's 2008 Poverty Assessment, 12.5% of the population lives below the poverty line. Almost 60% of all workers are employed in the agricultural sector, although the construction and service industries have been expanding recently, the latter boosted significantly by ethnic Albanian tourists from throughout the Balkans. The GDP is comprised of agriculture (approximately 47.8%), industry (approximately 23%), and service sector (approximately 29.2%).

The Albanian economy has been partially sheltered from the global financial crisis and the economic downturn. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects growth at 3.4% and 3.6% for 2011 and 2012 respectively. A reduction in remittances from Albanian workers abroad has constrained economic activity, although exports grew in 2010.

During the global financial crisis, bank deposits shrank considerably and lower liquidity pushed commercial banks to tighten lending. While current bank deposits have reportedly surpassed pre-crisis levels and bank liquidity has improved, the demand for credit is still low. In December 2009, the growth rate of loans dropped to 10% from 35% in 2008. The low demand for credit continued into 2010, with the growth rate of loans slowing to 9.1% for the first 6 months of 2010. In general, the banking sector remains viable, well capitalized, and able to further finance the economy, as the ratio of loans to deposits, approximately 65%, is still low compared to Western standards.

Albania is trying to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and promote domestic investment. Increasing FDI is a top priority for the Albanian Government, especially in light of the steady decrease of remittances. In 2010, Albania was the only country in the region to see a net increase in FDI, with total foreign investment surpassing \$1 billion. The Government of Albania has embarked on an ambitious program to improve the business climate by undertaking fiscal and legislative reforms and by improving infrastructure.

The recent investment in energy generation through new transmission lines and the privatization of the electrical distribution arm will partially address the lack of reliable energy supply, which was a major concern for businesses following power shortages during 2005-2007. However, Albania remains predominantly dependent on hydroelectric generation and can only meet its national demand for energy in times of plentiful rainfall.

Heavy investments in the country's main road corridors have contributed to improved transportation conditions. The recent completion of the 106 miles (170 km) of highway linking

Durres with Kosovo has provided a major transportation corridor connecting markets in the central Balkans through Kosovo to the port of Durres. Similar large-scale infrastructure investments are needed to further improve Albania's road transportation corridors and limited railway system and to expand the capacity of its sea ports and airports.

Background

Albania was the last of the central and eastern European countries to embark on democratic and free market reforms, and it started from a disadvantaged position due to Hoxha's catastrophic economic policies. The democratically elected government that assumed office in April 1992 launched an ambitious economic reform program meant to halt economic deterioration and put the country on the path toward a market economy. However, the collapse of the infamous pyramid schemes in 1997 and the instability that followed were a tremendous setback. The country subsequently recovered and is aggressively pursuing its Euro-Atlantic integration agenda. In June 2006, the Albanian Government signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union, the first step in the EU accession process. In April 2009, Albania became a NATO member country and at the same time submitted its application for EU membership, both considered major milestones in the country's history.

Albania's economy has improved markedly over the last decade; reforms in infrastructure development, tax collection, property law, and business administration are progressing. Despite the effects of the recent global financial crisis and economic downturn, the country has outperformed many other countries in the region. During 2006-2009 the average growth rate was 5.5%; while for 2010 the Government of Albania anticipated growth reaching 4.1% (the IMF predicted 2.7%).

Albania still ranks as one of the poorest countries in Europe according to major income indicators, although per capita GDP figures do not fully capture remittance income from the extensive network of Albanians abroad and income from the informal market, which the IMF estimates at 30%-40% of GDP. Remittances, a significant catalyst for economic growth in the past, have experienced a decline over the last few years after peaking in 2007. The Bank of Albania estimates that remittances fell by 6% in 2009 compared to 2008, and their share of GDP declined to 9% in 2009. The reduction continued during the first three quarters of 2010, though on a smaller scale.

The Albanian banking sector survived the global financial crisis with sufficient liquidity, and the system has recovered from the sharp decline in deposits at the start of the crisis. Fiscal and monetary discipline has kept inflation relatively low, averaging roughly 2.6% per year during 2006-2009. The average inflation rate was expected to reach 3.6% for 2010, still within the Central Bank target of 3 plus or minus 1%. According to official estimates, the unemployment rate as of September 2010 was 13.52%.

Albania has put in place a liberal foreign investment regime, and the government is working to better the business climate through fiscal and legislative reforms and infrastructure improvements. FDI has increased significantly over the last few years and in 2009 reached almost \$1 billion, up from \$262 million in 2005. The Government of Albania has invested almost U.S. \$2 billion in the country's main road corridors, and it has pledged to invest at least another billion until 2013. Electricity supply has also improved, while the distribution system has been privatized.

Trade

Albania continues to be an import-oriented economy and, despite reforms, its export base remains small, narrow, and undiversified. In 2010 imports averaged 39% of GDP and exports 13%, while export volume was approximately one-third the size of imports. Trade volume in 2010 increased by 20%, with imports increasing by 11.4% and exports by 56%. Exports and imports have continued to pick up 2011. As of June 2011, exports rose by 20.3% year-on-year while imports rose by 15.5%.

The Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) signed with the EU in June 2006 was the first step in Albania's EU accession process, and a related Interim Trade Agreement entered into force the following December. On December 19, 2006, Albania joined other countries in the region and signed the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA.) Albania also has free trade agreements with Turkey (signed in 2006 and entered into force on May 2008) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA member states are Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland).

The EU remains Albania's main trading partner, providing 64.1% of Albania's imports and receiving 70.2% of exports as of September 2010. Trade with Italy and Greece, although steadily declining since 2008, continues to represent the largest share of EU trade, with a combined 40.8% of imports and 56.4% of exports as of September 2010. Other major trading partners include Turkey, China, and Germany. The impact of CEFTA in Albania's trade with member countries has been small.

Trade with the United States continues to account for an insignificant part of Albania's trade volume, focusing on a narrow range of goods and products. As of September 2010, total trade volume with the U.S. accounted for 3% of Albania's total trade volume, up from 2.4% in September 2009. Agricultural products, footwear, and textiles are the main exports to the United States, while imports from the U.S. are generally from food (mainly meat), transportation equipment (vehicles), machinery, and computer and electronic equipment.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

Since the fall of communism in Albania in 1991, the country has played a constructive role in resolving several of the inter-ethnic conflicts in south central Europe, promoting peaceful dispute resolution and discouraging ethnic Albanian extremists. Albania sheltered many thousands of Kosovar refugees during the 1999 conflict, and has provided logistical assistance for Kosovo Force (KFOR) troops ever since. Albania is part of the international Stabilization Force (SFOR) serving in Bosnia, and Albanian peacekeepers are part of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and the international stabilization force in Iraq. Albania has been a steadfast supporter of U.S. policy in Iraq, and was one of only four nations to contribute troops to the combat phase of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Throughout the mid-2000s, Albania continued to work with the international community to restructure its armed forces and strengthen democratic structures pursuant to its NATO Membership Action Plan, for which it was rewarded with an invitation to join NATO in April 2008. Since 1999, Albania has spent approximately \$108 million annually on military expenditures, roughly 1.35% of its GDP. According to Government of Albania projections, military expenditure will reach 2% of GDP in 2008. With bilateral and multilateral assistance, the Ministry of Defense is transitioning to a smaller, voluntary, professional military, and reducing

the vast amounts of excess weaponry and ammunition that litter the country and pose a significant public hazard and proliferation risk. The Albanian Government and the international community are working together on a project that will make Albania a mine-free country by 2010. Most high- and medium-priority mine clearance has been completed in the mined areas of northeast Albania, a legacy of the 1999 Kosovo crisis.

Albania and the U.S. enjoy a military partnership and are signatories to treaties including the 2003 Prevention of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Promotion of Defense and Military Relations and the 2004 Supplementary Agreement to the Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement, which defines the status of American military troops in Albania and further enables military cooperation. In May 2003, Albania, Croatia, Macedonia, and the U.S. created the [Adriatic Charter](#), modeled on the Baltic Charter, as a mechanism for promoting regional cooperation to advance each country's NATO candidacy. In spite of strong EU objections, Albania also signed in May 2003 a bilateral agreement with the United States on non-surrender of persons, based on Article 98 of the statute of International Criminal Court.

In 2004 President Bush authorized the use of the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program funds for projects in Albania, marking the first time such funds are used outside the former Soviet Union. With this funding the United States is assisting the Government of Albania with the destruction of a stockpile of chemical agents left over from the communist regime. Under this program, Albania became the first nation in the world to complete destruction of declared chemical weapons holdings under the Chemical Weapons Convention in July 2007.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

Albania is currently pursuing a path of greater Euro-Atlantic integration. Its primary long-term goals are to gain NATO and EU membership and to promote closer bilateral ties with its neighbors and with the U.S. Albania is a member of a number of international organizations, as well as multiple regional organizations and initiatives, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the UN, the Stability Pact, the Adriatic Charter, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), and most recently, NATO. In June 2006, Albania and the EU signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement, the first step to EU membership, which will focus on implementing essential rule of law reforms and curbing corruption and organized crime.

Albania maintains generally good relations with its neighbors. It re-established diplomatic relations with the then-Federal Republic of Yugoslavia following the ousting of Slobodan Milosevic in 2000, and maintains excellent relations with the Republic of Montenegro, which gained its independence after the dissolution of the Serbia and Montenegro union in 2006. Albania was a forthright supporter of Kosovo independence, which was achieved in February of 2008. Albanian, Macedonian, and Italian law enforcement agencies are cooperating with increasing efficiency to crack down on the trafficking of arms, drugs, contraband, and human beings across their borders. Albania has also arrested and prosecuted several ethnic-Albanian extremists on charges of inciting interethnic hatred in Macedonia and Kosovo. Tensions occasionally arise with Greece over the treatment of the Greek minority in Albania or the Albanian community in Greece, but overall relations are good, and Greece maintains the public image of being a strong proponent of Albania's invitation to NATO and eventual integration into the EU.

U.S.-ALBANIAN RELATIONS

Albania enjoys friendly and cooperative bilateral relations with the U.S. Pro-U.S. sentiment is widespread among the population. Even while the U.S., which had closed its mission to Albania in 1946, was being vilified by communist propaganda during the Hoxha regime, ordinary Albanians remembered that Woodrow Wilson had protected Albanian independence in 1919. Albanians credit the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 with saving thousands of Kosovar-Albanian lives, and they greatly appreciated the U.S. Government's commitment to resolving the status of Kosovo.

In 2003, Albania and the U.S. signed and ratified a number of agreements, including a treaty on the Prevention of Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Promotion of Defense and Military Relations; the Adriatic Charter; and an Agreement regarding the non-surrender of persons to the International Criminal Court. The U.S. strongly supported Albania's NATO membership goal and continues to support Albanian integration into the EU. Working towards NATO membership, the U.S. and Albania signed a Supplementary Agreement to the Partnership for Peace Status of Forces Agreement, an important step in strengthening bilateral cooperation and enhancing security, peace, and stability in the region.

Since FY 1991, the U.S. has provided Albania with more than \$550 million in assistance, not counting U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food aid. The aid has served to facilitate Albania's transition from the most isolated and repressive communist state in Europe to a modern democracy with a market-oriented economy, and to support long-term development. In 2006, the U.S. gave over \$24 million to Albania under the Support for East European Democracy (SEED) Act program. Albania was among the first countries selected to participate in the Threshold Program under the Millennium Challenge Account, winning a grant of \$13.8 million. In September 2006, Albania began implementation of the program, which targets two critical stumbling blocks to development--corruption and rule of law.

Despite daunting problems at home, Albania has wholeheartedly supported the U.S. in the global war on terrorism by freezing terrorist assets, shutting down non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with possible links to terrorist financing, expelling extremists, and providing military and diplomatic support for the U.S.-led actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Albania plays a moderating role in the Balkan region and fully supported UN mediation efforts in Kosovo.

Principal U.S. Embassy Officials (Names subject to change)

Ambassador:	Alexander A. Arvizu
Deputy Chief of Mission	Deborah Jones
Political/Economic Section Chief	Jennifer Moore
Political Officers	Landry Carr Barry Jeffries Jay Porter
Economic/Commercial Officer	Nikhil Sudame
Consular Officer	Lyra Carr
USAID Director	Joseph Williams

Public Affairs Officer	Elizabeth "Betsy" Lewis
Defense Attaché	CDR Glenn Brown
Regional Security Officer	Barry Hale
Management Officer	Frances Nelson, TDY

THE AMBASSADOR



Alexander A. Arvizu is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, rank of Minister Counselor. He was sworn in as U.S. Ambassador to Albania on November 10, 2010. He joined the Foreign Service in 1981 and has served in numerous assignments abroad and domestically related to U.S. foreign policy in East Asia and the Pacific. He was Deputy Assistant Secretary responsible for Japan, Korea and Regional Security from 2007 to 2009. Most recently, he was Director of Entry-Level Assignments in the Bureau of Human Resources.

Overseas, Ambassador Arvizu served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Bangkok, Thailand (2004-07) and in Phnom Penh, Cambodia (2000-03). He also served two tours in Seoul, Korea and one in Osaka-Kobe, Japan. In Washington, he was Director for Asian Affairs at the National Security Council in the Second Clinton Administration, prior to which he was Deputy Director of the Department of State's Office of Japanese Affairs. From 2003 to 2004, Ambassador Arvizu was a member of the 46th Senior Seminar, an Executive Leadership Program for senior U.S. Government officers. He also worked as a staff officer in the Department of State's Executive Secretariat earlier in his career.

Ambassador Arvizu was born on a U.S. Army base in Japan and is a first-generation American. His mother was from Kyoto, Japan and his father is a native of Dolores Hidalgo, Mexico. The family settled in Colorado Springs, where he grew up. He earned a bachelor's degree from Georgetown University in 1980.

Ambassador Arvizu has studied several Asian languages, including Japanese, Korean, Thai and Khmer. He is married and has a young daughter. His pastime is tracking the fortunes of his beloved Detroit Tigers and the Washington Nationals.

TRAVEL AND BUSINESS INFORMATION

Travel Alerts, Travel Warnings, Trip Registration

The U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Program advises Americans traveling and residing abroad through Country Specific Information, Travel Alerts, and Travel Warnings. Country Specific Information exists for all countries and includes information on entry and exit requirements, currency regulations, health conditions, safety and security, crime, political disturbances, and the addresses of the U.S. embassies and consulates abroad. Travel Alerts are issued to disseminate information quickly about terrorist threats and other relatively short-term conditions overseas that pose significant risks to the security of American travelers. Travel Warnings are issued when the State Department recommends that Americans avoid travel to a certain country because the situation is dangerous or unstable.

For the latest security information, Americans living and traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department's Bureau of Consular Affairs Internet web site at <http://travel.state.gov>, where current **Worldwide Caution**, **Travel Alerts**, and **Travel Warnings** can be found. The travel.state.gov website also includes information about **passports**, tips for planning a safe trip abroad and more. More travel-related information also is available at <http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Travel/International.shtml>.



The Department's **Smart Traveler** app for U.S. travelers going abroad provides easy access to the frequently updated official country information, travel alerts, travel warnings, maps, U.S. embassy locations, and more that appear on the travel.state.gov site. Travelers can also set up e-itineraries to keep track of arrival and departure dates and make notes about upcoming trips. The app is compatible with iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad (requires iOS 4.0 or later).

The Department of State encourages all U.S. citizens traveling or residing abroad to enroll in the State Department's **Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)**. A link to the registration page is also available through the Department's **Smart Traveler app**. U.S. citizens without internet access can enroll directly at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. By enrolling, you make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency and so you can receive up-to-date information on security conditions.

Emergency information concerning Americans traveling abroad may be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the U.S. and Canada or the regular toll line 1-202-501-4444 for callers outside the U.S. and Canada.

Further Electronic Information

Department of State Web Site. Available on the Internet at <http://www.state.gov>, the Department of State web site provides timely, global access to official U.S. foreign policy information, including more **Background Notes**, the Department's **daily press briefings** along with the directory of **key officers** of Foreign Service posts and more. The Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) provides security information and regional news that impact U.S. companies working abroad through its website <http://www.osac.gov>

Export.gov provides a portal to all export-related assistance and market information offered by the federal government and provides trade leads, free export counseling, help with the export process, and more.

Mobile Sources. Background Notes are available on mobile devices at <http://m.state.gov/mc36882.htm>, or use the QR code below.



In addition, a mobile version of the Department's <http://www.state.gov> website is available at <http://m.state.gov>, or use the QR code below. Included on this site are Top Stories, remarks



and speeches by Secretary Clinton, Daily Press Briefings, Country Information, and more.

PREPARING TO COME TO ALBANIA

IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS TO BRING

- 1. TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE AWARD:** Your "Terms and Conditions of the Award" letter functions as your contract, indicating specific benefits that you will receive under the U.S. Government grant.
- 2. PASSPORT:** You and your accompanying dependents must have valid passports. We recommend that you keep a copy of the information and picture page of your passport(s) in a separate, safe place (but with you). This will facilitate replacement by the American Citizens Services Section of the Embassy if your passport is lost or stolen.
- 3. PASSPORT PHOTOGRAPHS:** Although they are easy to get here, it's handy to have several passport size photos of you and your dependents. You will need them to obtain your visa.
- 4. DRIVER'S LICENSE:** It is a good idea to obtain an International Driver's License. The American Automobile Association (AAA) issues these, but they are valid only when accompanied by a current U.S. license. You may drive with your American driver's license in Albania only for six months, after which you must get an Albanian driver's license. It can be obtained at the local police station where you will register for an extended stay. If you do this, don't forget to request the return of your American driver's license before you leave Albania. The U.S. Embassy cannot issue or renew U.S. Driver's Licenses.
- 5. MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE AND BIRTH CERTIFICATES:** These documents can facilitate the issuance of a new passport in the event of theft. They can also assist if you need other legal documents.
- 6. TAX INFORMATION AND FORMS:** Although federal tax forms and instructions are available after the first of the year in the American Citizens Services office of the Embassy in Tirana, it is advisable that you obtain all necessary information before you leave the U.S., since the Embassy cannot offer any tax assistance or counseling. While several IRS forms are available in Tirana, the whole range of forms and publications is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week at www.irs.gov.
- 7. INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTIFICATION CARD:** Many students have found it useful to obtain an international student card for travel in Europe and around the region. There are a number of vendors of such cards, and you will find that most businesses in Albania are *not* familiar with these cards. U.S. Embassy gives no endorsement of either vendor. Check the following websites for further information:

<http://www.isecard.com/>

<http://www.isic.org/sisp/index.htm>.

SHIPPING

Instructions for Shipment of Books and Educational Materials by Fulbright and English Language Fellows:

American Fulbright/EL Fellow grantees may send books and educational materials to their countries of assignment via the diplomatic pouch on a one-time (outbound ONLY) basis. Use of the diplomatic pouch is a privilege which, if abused, can be withdrawn by the U.S. Department of State. It is important that grantees and Public Affairs Sections overseas adhere to the rules governing use of the pouch. Again, the pouch is a one-time, one-way privilege. The pouch may not be used for return shipments.

Please adhere closely to the instructions below. Boxes rejected by the Department of State because of improper size, contents, or packaging will be returned to the return address on the box. There is no way to insure boxes sent through the pouch system or to trace items lost in the pouch mail system. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, which administers the Fulbright program, cannot retrieve and repack overweight/oversized boxes.

Contents:

Packages must contain only books, magazines, notes or other similar educational materials required for the grantee's teaching or research program overseas. Computers and electronic equipment may not be sent by pouch. Packages may not contain personal effects of any kind. The Department of State may open packages suspected of containing prohibited items. If prohibited items are discovered, the box will be returned to the sender. Grantees should not enclose items that are irreplaceable. The Department of State assumes no responsibility for lost or damaged packages. Grantees should not ship anything that will be damaged by x-rays or irradiation.

Number, Weight and Size Limitations for Boxes:

No more than four boxes per grantee may be sent through the pouch system, using the official 20521 zip code address. Each box must not exceed 67" in total length and girth (17 x 18 x 32). Each box cannot exceed 50 pounds.

Boxes sent to the official zip code are not irradiated (x-rayed) by the USPS. Envelopes and flat mail are. Items sent via FedEx, DHL, etc. also are not irradiated.

Wrapping:

Materials must be packed securely in strong cardboard boxes, sealed with heavy-duty packing tape (strapping tape is best), and clearly labeled. It is best to use new boxes with no advertising or confusing labels. Boxes are frequently handled roughly in shipment. Boxes should be packed carefully since torn or broken packages cannot be repacked.

Addressing Boxes For The 20521 Zip Code:

Upper left-hand corner: Return address:

Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Sample Mailing Address:

Official Pouch Address
Officer*
C/o Mirela Çupi

9510 Tirana Place
STATE DEPARTMENT
Washington, D.C. 20521-9510

*Address package to either Public Affairs Officer Elizabeth Lewis or Assistant Public Affairs Officer Niles Cole

In lower left-hand corner of the box write:

UNCLASSIFIED VIA AIR POUCH
Your Name
FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

NOTE: Please choose a return address where the recipient will know how to contact you and what to do if a box is returned. The return address must be different than the State Department address, or the item will not be sent.

Grantees sending only one package should write "1 of 1" in the lower right-hand corner. Grantees sending more than one package should number each package in a series and circle the markings, e.g., "1 of 3", "2 of 3", and "3 of 3".

Time Requirement for Shipment:

Grantees should anticipate that once packages are received at U.S. Department of State mail center, shipping will take at least three to four weeks, sometimes longer, to arrive in the country of assignment. The frequency of pouch shipment is outside the control of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the receiving U.S. Embassy.

Whatever else you ship is at your own expense.

SUGGESTED ITEMS TO PACK

Appendix A, on page 41 contains an extensive list of suggested items to bring. Generally, you will be able to find most clothing, toiletry, and food items locally, but many products are imported, and will likely cost more than you would pay in the United States. You will want to bring a broad selection of clothing and important toiletries (like contact lens solutions and other products) with you.

In addition, you will find that books for your course and academic work may be difficult to find locally and you should plan on bringing these items as well. Finally, electronic items are also expensive and difficult to find locally. If you want to have a computer with you, a laptop, along with appropriate electric conversion accessories, an extra laptop battery, etc. should be brought from the U.S. USB flash drives are available in Albania, but may cost more than those that can be purchased in the U.S.

PLANNING YOUR ARRIVAL IN ALBANIA

- 1. BEST TIME TO ARRIVE:** Because the academic year at the Albanian universities starts October 1, and the final arrangements of classes, timetable, who is teaching what during the next academic year are finalized shortly before the start date, we advise you to arrive on or about September 20th. Fall semester at Albanian universities normally starts around October 1. Grantees coming for the spring semester only should plan to arrive in mid-February. Spring semester starts on March 1. The academic year normally ends around June 15, with exam period running through July 15.
- 2. MEANS OF ARRIVAL:** You can arrive in Albania by plane, car or ferry (the last two valid if you are traveling in the area prior your grant start date). Whatever the means of transport, make sure that your contact in the Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy is notified in advance so that arrangements can be made to meet you upon arrival. The Embassy may either pick you up with an Embassy vehicle if available, or will arrange pickup by a taxi (cost approximately \$25.00). Costs for taxi transportation upon arrival can be covered by your settling allowance. When possible, a staff member of the Public Affairs Section will meet you upon arrival to facilitate your entry.
- 3. VISA: Albanian Entry and Residence Requirements:**

You may enter Albania without a visa but will pay a 10 Euro entry fee at your entry point. As you will remain in Albania longer than 30 days, you are required to obtain a First Residence Permit.

First Residence Permit: The Albanian government passed a new law on foreign entry to and residence in Albania country similar to residency and entry laws of European Union member states. The law stipulates that foreign citizens planning to stay in Albania longer than 30 days must apply upon arrival in Albania for the First Residence Permit (for a period covering their entire stay in Albania).

To apply for a residence permit, you will need many of the documents that you should already have in hand:

- Your U.S. passport
- Two passport photos
- Evidence of adequate funding (your letter of award serves as this)
- A birth certificate (not older than 6 months with an official seal of the competent authority of the U.S. state which issued it)
- Marriage certificate if you will be accompanied by a spouse during your Fulbright grant.

In addition, you will need to bring a criminal history report. You can find more information on this report at the Department of State website at:

http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/emergencies/emergencies_1201.html)

In order to facilitate the procedure and explain the purpose of the visit, the Public Affairs Office U.S. Embassy will issue a letter to each grantee. Please note that the purpose of the visit is lecturing/scientific research and not work.

More detailed information on applying for the First Residence Permit is available in **Appendix C** on **page 43**.

You may obtain general information about Albanian visas from the Albanian Embassy in Washington, DC or an Albanian consulate, but you ***should not apply for the First Residence Permit in the United States.***

Contact information for Albanian embassy and consulates in the U.S.:

Embassy of the Republic of Albania
2100 S Street, NW, Washington DC 20008
Telephone: (202) 223-4942
Fax: (202) 628-7342
E-mail: info@albanianembassy.org
URL: <http://www.albanianembassy.org/>

4. **CUSTOMS:** At the port of entry you may need to declare computers, electronic equipment, and cameras. You will then be given a temporary import permit for them, and this must be stamped in your passport. Even if you do not have anything to declare, please keep in mind that a Customs Officer has the right to inspect your luggage.

5. **THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN TIRANA:** The American Embassy is able to provide consular services for you as a U.S. citizen resident abroad and as a participant in an exchange program. It is important to register with the Consular Section at the Embassy as soon as possible, especially if you are going to reside outside of Tirana. Register online at: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>

The Embassy is located at Rruga Elbasanit, No.103 in Tirana. The telephone number is (04) 2-247285 and after hours 0682051084. For more information see the Embassy homepage: www.tirana.usembassy.gov.

LIVING AND WORKING AS A FELLOW IN ALBANIA

As with any new culture, there will be things about working and living in Albania that will both mystify and delight you. Don't be surprised if you experience frustration and even irritation during your first days of interaction with Albanian culture, customs, and workstyles. Being able to move beyond the stress of being in a foreign culture and maintaining the attitude of a willing learner when in a significantly different environment is essential for getting the most out of your stay here.

HOUSING

If you have not arranged for an apartment prior to arrival the U.S. Embassy will arrange for one- or two-day stay at a Hotel at the Embassy rate, but at your expense, when you first arrive. It will also assist with locating appropriate apartments for you if you so request and will provide local currency stipend to assist with housing expenses. When you are considering housing options, you should seek out apartments that are furnished with appliances, cookware, and even dishware and linens. Many such arrangements are available.

It is to your benefit to inform the Public Affairs Office of the American Embassy about your housing preferences as soon as your grant is confirmed. If you are planning to stay with family or friends and will not need housing, please let us know as soon as possible as well. In addition to the rent, you will also pay your own utility bills (electricity, gas, water, phone, etc) but the landlord should pay for maintenance and repair costs. Make sure that you feel comfortable with the contract you sign.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Albanian Ministry of Education and Science is not a co-sponsor of the Fulbright or English Language Fellows Programs in Albania and will not provide you with a monthly stipend. However, the host university department will help with an office space and other in-kind support as available. Your living allowance and other financial means are transferred to your account from IIE/CIES according to the Terms of Conditions and Awards signed by you before departing for Albania.

You may deposit personal checks drawn on your U.S. checking account, but these may take six weeks to clear. If, however, you open an account at a branch of the American Bank of Albania (ABA), which you can do with your valid passport, you can cash personal checks up to \$2,000 immediately.

If you choose to draw your money from a debit card, please note that most debit cards have a daily limit on total amount withdrawn (50,000lek), and total number of transactions per day. For day to day expenditures it will be more than enough but if you need to pay a few months rent in advance (in cash) this may be a problem. We suggest that you bring some money in travelers' checks which you can deposit in a bank once you arrive.

Credit cards are widely accepted and ATM machines are available countrywide.

FOOD

Although generally speaking your Fulbright/ELF stipend is more than adequate, you will find that by American standards food in Albania can be rather expensive, especially if you decide to eat in restaurants all the time. Many Albanians and most foreigners, in fact, do their shopping at the newer chain markets such as Euromax, Conad, or Big Market; beware the price of seafood in Tirana. (A list of some of the main grocery stores and their locations is included in **Appendix C on page 44.**)

Shopping can be trying unless you look at it as an adventure while you are learning where to shop. In Tirana and in most cities, there are open-air markets where you will find a good choice of vegetables and fruits. Near these markets you will also find places to buy meat and poultry – pork and chicken are particularly good – as well as dairy products; cheeses are good and reasonably-priced, but the fat content of all dairy products is high. Bread, however, is inexpensive and tasty.

MEDICAL CARE

You are responsible for your own medical care while in Albania. There are some good and fairly inexpensive health facilities in Tirana, and several new private hospitals under construction. A current list of English-speaking physicians and dentists available in Tirana is also provided in Appendix .

You may also want to consider purchasing emergency medical evacuation insurance from a provider such as International SOS, or another similar company.

TRANSPORTATION

Public transportation has improved and is often used by most Albanians. In Tirana there are buses that connect the center of town to all surrounding neighborhoods. The cost of a ticket is 20 lek, which you pay on the bus. One ticket covers the travel within one line only. Daily passes are not available, but monthly passes are. These can be purchased at booths near designated bus stations.

Regional transportation is also available via bus or mini-bus (called *furgon*) to all district towns and points en route and is the most cost-effective way to get to areas outside of Tirana. Finding the right place to catch the bus/mini-bus traveling to the site you want is a bigger challenge as there is no central bus park. Expect your *furgon* ride to be an adventure.

Car rental is available through larger hotels, and drivers for hire are also available.

MAIL

Postal service for domestic and international mail is reliable. The Albanian Post Office offers regular and express mail. There are also DHL, UPS and Federal Express offices, for express mail. However, we recommend that you ask family and friends to mail you to the Embassy address c/o APAO or ECA.

As a Fulbright Fellow, you are authorized to receive personal mail (**flat mail and small packages up to 2 lbs. only**) through the diplomatic pouch using the following address:

YOUR NAME, Fulbright/English Language Fellow
Embassy TIRANA
Department of State
Washington, DC 20521- 9510

TELEPHONE

The telephone system is adequate but expensive. Furthermore, Albanian telephone bills do not come with an itemized listing of your phone calls unless you request it. If you wish to save money on overseas calls, purchase prepaid phone cards. Public telephones accept only phone cards, which can be purchased at the Post Office and at newspaper kiosks.

Cell phones are widely used in Albania and you may want to have one to facilitate communication. You can easily purchase a cell phone in Albania, but if you prefer to bring one from the US, it must be an unlocked, tri-band phone able to be used in Europe. Whether you bring a phone or purchase one here, you should go to either an AMC or VODAPHONE shop to obtain a SIM card. You will most likely purchase a SIM card that enables you to enter pre-paid minutes on your phone. Pre-paid cards are widely available at small shops, grocery stores, and through vending machines in some of the larger hotels.

If you are able to get fast-enough internet connection in your apartment, Skype, and other VOIP services will work.

CARS

As a foreigner, you are entitled to import a personal automobile to Albania but you will have to pay duties. This is expensive and is not recommended. Driving in Albania is challenging. It requires a high level of vigilance as road rules are often ignored by drivers, with pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorcyclists all vying for their piece of the road added to the chaotic mix.

FAMILIES

Job opportunities for dependents are very limited as are educational alternatives for children. There are several private English-medium schools in Tirana, including an international school that uses an American curriculum, covering ages pre-school to grade 12. Private English-speaking schools tend to be quite expensive.

Clothing and shoes for children are available locally, but prices vary according to the quality and origin of the items. Many Albanians prefer to shop for clothing outside the country as opportunities avail. Stores also sell baby cereals, juices, and food in jars. The selection includes Italian brands, but baby food is expensive. Disposable diapers, mostly imported, are also relatively expensive.

TRAVEL

Tirana has air links to some major cities in Europe such as Vienna, Athens, Budapest, London, Munich, Belgrade, Pristine, and Istanbul. Train transportation to European cities does not exist and the in-country rail system is in a very poor condition and not recommended. Shipping lines connect Durres and Vlora to a few cities in Italy and Saranda to Corfu.

PERSONAL SAFETY

In general, Albania is quite safe and the incidence of street crime is very low. Foreigners may experience varying degrees of unwanted attention and harassment in Albania – although this is less common in Tirana where the population is quite well-exposed to foreigners. Petty thefts can occur – particularly on public transportation and you will need to keep your wallet and cell phone well guarded when on city buses.

Maintaining awareness of your surroundings and the situations you are in, locking doors to your apartment, and other such actions, just as you would in any capital city, is of course, appropriate.

CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

No matter how much culture shock you may experience at first, one thing you will be sure to appreciate will be the Albanian people. Albanians are warm, friendly, and fun loving. They may stare at you but merely out of curiosity. The people tend to be very forward and will not hesitate to ask you almost immediately where you are from, how many children you have or how old you are.

Unlike some cultures where everyone seems to be in a rush, Albanians usually don't mind taking time to interact with a customer in their store, or exchange pleasantries with a diner at a restaurant. Albanians greatly appreciate any attempt foreigners make to learn even the most basic of Albanian phrases, so make sure you familiarize yourself with common greetings and phrases. A little knowledge and a good attitude will take you far in Albania.

A Culture of Relationships

The Albanian mindset is quite different than that of Western cultures. The points below underline some main principles of Albanian culture:

- Greater emphasis is put on building relationships as opposed to accomplishing tasks or goals. The operative principle is: "There is always time for a friend."
- Make friends before doing business.
- Everything is done through "networking"; that is, through people you know.
- Be ready for your schedule to be thrown out the window!
- Hospitality is highly valued so be a good guest. Try to eat and/or drink what is offered to you, but don't feel that you must. Foreigners can usually get away with refusing.

Interpersonal Communication

- Greetings
 - Always greet the father/oldest man first

- Handshakes occur between women and men and between men who are not very well acquainted.
- Rise to greet a new arrival in the room.
- Cheek to cheek “air” kisses occur:
 - Between women
 - Between men who are close
 - Between men and women: only family and very close friends.
- “When all else fails, say “mirë” (good)”
 - Albanians are positive and say “good” a lot!
- Head nodding has a reverse meaning to its use in the U.S. Back and forth means “yes” and up and down means “no”.
- Raised voices are common in conversations. It sounds like arguing, but it’s merely “the Balkan way”.
- Balkan people appreciate straightforward speech. They are very direct.
- Promises should be kept – so be careful what you promise!!!
- Albanian culture is people-oriented. Offer personal information even if you are not asked; people really do want to know about you.
- “S’ka Problem” or “Pa Problem” may turn out to BE a Problem. Stress to your Albanian friends the importance of having things done according to the agreed schedule. Time has a different value in this culture.

Spending Time with Albanians

Albanians are friendly and fun loving. Going out with them will guarantee you a good time. Albanians love long meals, music and dancing.

If you are invited to an Albanian house for a meal:

- Unless instructed differently, remove your shoes upon entering the home. Slippers are sometimes provided.
- It is customary to take a bottle of wine, scotch or raki for a host and flowers for a hostess. If your host has smaller children, it is customary to buy candy for them. Do not open presents that you receive from your Albanian friends in front of them.
- If invited for a birthday party, it is the “birthday person” who pays the bill. You should take a birthday present with you. You are expected to throw a birthday party for yourself and invite friends to your party. It is considered your treat and you will be showered by presents from your Albanian friends.
- If a family member of your Albanian friend passes away, besides attending the funeral, it is customary to pay a visit to the family that suffered the loss. Albanians leave money to the grieving family, which is meant to help with the funeral cost. As this can be a culturally sensitive issue (you are not expected to put down too little nor too much money) it is acceptable for foreigners to offer a “food basket” containing Turkish coffee, sugar, juice and cigarettes, as this will be offered to all who come to express their condolences.
- Do not invite Albanians to potluck dinners. In Albania, if one invites friends over, s/he is expected to provide all the food. It is the basic rule of hospitality in Albania.
- If you invite a friend for coffee or dinner, you should pick up the bill. Equally, if an Albanian invites you out for coffee or a meal, it is probable that s/he will insist on paying the bill. Nevertheless, you should offer to help out with paying your portion of the bill,

even though the offer will be most probably refused. The, “Who extends an invitation pays” rule applies in Albania.

- Be careful in expressing admiration for something, particularly small items, in front of Albanians. It is not uncommon for Albanians to give you an object of admiration as a present, provided they can afford to do so. In other words, rather than admiring someone’s tie, admire how the tie suits a person.
- Once you befriend Albanians, do not be surprised if they “pop by” your house without calling you in advance. Paying a visit to a friend without invitation is acceptable for the Balkans and is in line with Albanian hospitality. However, there is an unwritten rule in that one as well. Albanians will “drop by” only in the morning between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when they know that their visit will not be intrusive, e.g. during mealtime or an afternoon siesta. If, however, your Albanian friends find you while eating one of your meals (as Albanians eat their lunch and dinner about 2 hours later than Americans), it is in accordance with Albanian custom to offer to share your meal with them. Remember, it is not about what is offered but that it is offered.

WORK SETTINGS AND ROUTINES

Depending on your specific program, you may be working in a university, a government institution, or another professional or institutional setting. Occasionally, a Fulbright fellow may have a more free-lance program that will involve self-directed interface with a variety of institutions and organizations. No matter the setting, you will likely find that workplace routines, practices, and resources are very different than those in the United States.

Albania’s society and economy have been in a high state of transition since the early 1990s. You should expect to find that institutional systems and structures, and the availability of resources within them remain significantly challenged. It is important to give yourself time to understand and adapt to the environment and to feel fully effective in your work.

Universities and government institutions in Albania have very hierarchical structures. Few decisions are made without the expressed approval or directive of the department chief, university rector, or other highest recognized authority. Depending on your position in the hierarchy, you may have more or less access and communication with supervisors, or higher-level authorities within the institution. You may be both expected to work within the hierarchy, and at the same time, because you are an American Fellow, you may find that many doors will open to you at levels higher than your local professional peers are able to access. This can complicate your relationships with professional peers and needs to be managed carefully. A good approach is to work hard at building open relationships with both peers and superiors, and being careful about local sensitivities.

You may also find that working hours may be stated with a fixed timeframe, but not be adhered to in a fixed way. Salaries in governmental institutions are quite low, and many university and government workers may also have private enterprises that they pursue. This means that people may be on the go and balancing numerous priorities in a given day.

If your program involves teaching, you will find many differences in the educational system as compared to the United States. Classes may have overfull enrollment, yet you may find that many students do not attend class at all, except when there are exams. You may find that your

students have very different levels of experience or capability with the subject you are teaching; and have varied English language abilities. You should consider negotiating with your Department Chair to focus your efforts on working with select students who are at a common level with the subject matter, and are the most prepared to conduct courses in English. You should request the assistance of the Public Affairs Office to conduct this negotiation. Otherwise, you may need to find creative ways to reach those with lower skill levels to support them in gaining access to the material you are covering.

You will find a spectrum of styles and types of clothing worn in professional settings. In government institutions or international organizations, business attire is quite common and expected. The university setting is likely to be more casual, although professors tend to dress in business attire as well. A rule of thumb is that the more professionally you are dressed, the more seriously you will be taken.

Depending on the institution, the actual facilities in which you will teach, and the resources that will be available to you may be limited. Classrooms and many government offices are poorly heated, if at all, which means that both you and your students may not take off your coats through the winter. If your classroom has a chalkboard and chalk, it may be of lower quality. You will likely share office space and equipment with several other faculty members, and the space may be tight, the computer equipment obsolete, and the internet connection slow.

Despite these challenges, you will find many rewards in your work. In any classroom, you will find a group of highly dedicated students who will be very eager to learn from you, be enthusiastic members of your class, and be your informal cultural guides outside the classroom. Albanians are famously fond of Americans. You will be treated well, and people will be interested in interacting and working with you.

The more you reach out and engage with Albanians – in your work setting, your neighborhood, and through other outlets, the more you will understand how to be most effective in the workplace, and at the same time, you will learn about this country's interesting culture and history, and about the future goals and dreams of its people.

LETTERS FROM CURRENT FULBRIGHT AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE FELLOWS

The letters included here should give you a sense of both the challenges and the rewards of being a Fulbright or English Language Fellow in Albania. While each individual's experience is unique, we hope that these letters can give you a more personal, inside view to what your experience may include. Current fellows were asked to include information and perspectives on worklife, work settings, cultural exchange, diversity issues, or anything else they thought might be helpful to a fellow preparing to come to Albania.

Dear Fulbright Grantee,

Congratulations on this new adventure you are about to embark upon. Albania is a really wonderful country to live in as the people are very welcoming to anyone, especially Americans. Prior to departing to Albania a past Fulbright had mentioned to me that things might not go as one would have originally envisioned. That what we stated as our objectives in our project proposal might take a lot more time than what we are allotted through the grant. It wasn't until I began living and working here that I could understand such a concept.

My affiliation has been at the Ministry of Education and fortunately for me my boss is a wonderful lady who has experience working in the US. However when I arrived things really started slowly and I eventually was told that the Ministry didn't have funding for my project which I had originally been under the impression that they did. This was the first of many obstacles to overcome. Eventually though, close to halfway through my grant period my project has taken off. It might be discouraging at times or difficult to work through certain systems that are in place and ruled by politics. However if you are passionate and persistent you will eventually make some strides with your work. Don't lose hope or get too aggravated, keep on working. Remember that you are not in America, as a Fulbright grantee it is important to respect the culture and environment of the country which you are working within. While we work 40+ hours a week at home the typical work week here is much shorter. Everyone usually leaves early on Friday and there is a lot of time left for socializing (coffee, lunches etc.)

Albanian culture is fascinating to me and fortunately I have learned much about it during my time here. The best way to learn is to just ask – and then listen intently. By working in the Ministry of Education I have had the chance to speak and work with Albanians on a daily basis. My affiliation has been the greatest asset thus far in expanding my understanding of this country. The people are without a doubt the warmest, most kindhearted population that I have ever known. They take pride in being hospitable and I am continually amazed by the way they go out of their way to help me adjust and to teach me about the Albanian way of living.

If you are going to be living in Tirana you will find that it has really been a pretty comfortable place to live. Certain things such as only being able to drink bottled

water have been a change from life in America; however it is nothing difficult to adjust to. The currency is pretty simple to figure out and everything has really been quite easy to adjust to.

In terms of crime I feel safer in Albania than I probably ever will in an American city. The traffic here in Tirana is pretty dangerous and something to be attentive to. Pedestrians don't have the right of way and there have been many times that I was nervous that I was going to be hit by a car. Just something to be cautious of and you should always be alert when crossing traffic.

The Embassy staff has been very helpful in providing me with the support needed in terms of my project and adjusting to life in Albania. I am sure that they will be just as supportive and helpful to you during your time here.

Overall a Fulbright to Albania provides for a great experience. Having just been out of college this was my first time living abroad. I have loved my time here and do potentially see myself returning again someday, as many other Fulbright grantees tend to do.

*Please feel free to contact me at anytime if you have any questions.
Best,*

Kelly Leather
Kelly.leather@fulbrightmail.org

The Fulbright experience has been great so far. The first month or so was challenging. It was a bit hectic working out a new routine and understanding the Albanian way of doing things. People are very welcoming and kind, something that changes when they're behind the wheel. Traffic in Tirana is one of the worst I've seen. The pedestrian white lines are ignored as if they were unwanted graffiti and not the law. With time, I've build up the confidence to cross streets by giving drivers stern looks or signaling them to stop. I have to say it works, well most of the time.

I have met lots of people by attending cultural events such as: art exhibits, film festivals, performances and plays. The cultural scene is not well advertised, so it's best to keep an eye out for this sort of activity. It has been great so far and it has helped me understand the project much better. This year marks the 100th year of Albanian independence and they have raised the bar on cultural and civic awareness. Hopefully they will keep it up and act on it.

My initial project is still in play and I am still working on public spaces but with different expectations. Getting to know and hanging out with local artists, young professionals, and other enthusiasts trying to raise awareness about their cultural identity, has made my work more flexible in process and outcome. The discussions we're having are productive in

targeting the missing pieces and problem areas. The next step is to bring them to realization, not merely as design projects, but more importantly as educational material for the residents.

Other than that, it has been a blast living in a city (compared to Detroit suburbs). Now that spring is on its way, I can't wait to discover Albania beyond the capital's overbuilt urban space, and onto the heritage sites, the famous Mediterranean seaside, the fierce mountainous regions and all it has to offer. Somehow, the terrain seems to be part of their national identity, still raw and undervalued with so much potential for growth and resilience.

*Irsida Bejo
Fulbright Student
Architecture
irsidab@gmail.com*

I was awarded a Fulbright Grant to teach 2 political science courses at the University of Tirana. They are American Politics and American Foreign Policy. The classes were not confirmed until about 1 month before I arrived, and I didn't learn about the starting date of classes until the night before I got on the airplane to come to Albania. This is indicative of the system here, where decisions are made at a very late date and where things are often unclear until the last minute.

Even though I was here 1 month before classes started (I had had to guess at the starting date when it was time to buy tickets), I did not meet with my university contact (the Vice Dean) until the first week of classes. We met, she informed me how things would work, and I met my classes 2 days later. Other than that, I have had very little contact with her. Most of my contact has been with the faculty member tasked with helping me. He has been very helpful, answered questions, helped me with arrangements, provided advice etc. I was also provided with another contact, and I have used her to translate my notes into Albanian for the students. This help has been invaluable, since a large number of the students are not able to understand enough English to follow the lecture.

It has been a struggle to make my classes "work" for the students. The students are all required to take my classes, yet only a small percentage (20-30%) speak and understand English well enough to follow and participate in my lectures. So, they are in a bind of being required to take a class they cannot comprehend. Simultaneous translation is out of the question, due to cost, the difficulty to find a qualified person, and time. So I resort to sending out my notes, translated in Albanian, via email to a small group of students, who in turn send them to everyone else. I was worried that this would be a disincentive for students to attend class, but skipping class seems to be the norm for students anyway, and if they can't understand it, they'd probably be more likely to chat during lecture anyway.

I have a small cohort of students who are sharp, speak good English, are interested in the material, appreciate getting the perspective of an American professor, and who are a joy to have in class. They attend all classes, do the readings, engage in thoughtful and informed discussion, and are what Fulbright is all about. However, this number is probably 20-30% of the total group.

My teaching schedule has been tiring, mostly due to the number of students I have been given and the way class schedules are structured in this system. Had I known the exact

numbers, I would have made a very strong request to have fewer students, or fewer classes to teach. I have the entire 3rd year class (148 students) and the entire 4th year class (92 students) in the American Foreign Policy class. This total of 250 students is too large to manage properly. I have half of the 3rd year class (79 students) in my American Politics class. For each class I give a 2 hour lecture each week, and then I give a 1 hour seminar, broken down by groups. That means I lecture for a total of 4 hours each week, and spend 7 hours a week giving seminars. I was originally scheduled to spend 9 hours a week doing seminars, but I combined seminars in order to keep my sanity. I teach Thursdays from 9-2, Fridays from 9-12, and every other Tuesday from 9-12.

The work setting is to be expected for a post-Communist country struggling with economic development. The classrooms are essentially unheated, which means I taught the first 2 months wearing my parka. The rooms are large and have a loud echo. In addition, it is commonplace for students to talk, make cell phone calls, and visit during lecture. Therefore, it can be hard for the students who are trying to listen to hear. I spent a great deal of time at first shushing them, which wore me out and didn't accomplish very much. As the semester wore on, the people who came to class seemed to understand that this strange American really did expect them to be quiet, and background noise diminished (although it never completely went away). Now that the weather is nicer, the windows are open, and construction noise competes with my teaching. There are blackboards in most rooms, some with chalk, which is generally of a low quality. I took the advice of a former Fulbrighter and brought "write on cling on" sheets (I found them at Samsclub.com) which stick to the wall using static electricity, and are written on with dry erase markers. They are great. I just wish I had remembered to bring a dry erase eraser! There is a political science office with some computers, one of which is connected to the Internet and is almost always being used by other faculty. They also have a printer, which worked most of the time, and a copier. I was given a key to this office, but no one has an assigned desk. We all share the space, and it seems to be used primarily for computer, internet, and copier use.

I brought my own laptop, which has been essential, and I do all of my prep work at home. We got our apartment set up with internet right when we moved in, and that has been invaluable. I did not bring a printer, and when I need to print something I save it to a flash drive and either take it to the department office or to a nearby internet café and print there.

There is a faculty bathroom (I was given a key), but the sink does not work at all and the toilets are often broken. I am very glad that I live 3 minutes away, since bathroom breaks during my long day are much more pleasant at home.

I must make a note about the issue of cheating, which has been a big problem for me. I was aware that the issue existed, and took several steps to stop it during my first exam. I had the students sit in a large auditorium, with empty seats between them, I scrambled the order of the questions and made 3 versions of the exam, and I warned them about my expectations that there would be no cheating. Despite this, the cheating was blatant, widespread, and appalling. Students would whisper to each other, look openly at one another's exams, ask questions of each other etc. Even after being directly confronted by me, they continued the moment my back was turned. Having such a large class makes the problem that much more difficult to deal with. For the final I am going to get the help of 3 or 4 other faculty members, and will break the class into groups of

40, each taking the exam in a different room. I was not prepared for how difficult an issue this would be to deal with.

In some respects, Albania is an easy place to live. Albanians are very nice to Americans, it is safe to live here, there are goods available etc. I have learned a great deal about the people and the country from spending time talking to my students. I have set up an optional time to meet each week, when I tell the students that I will be at a particular café at a certain time, and whoever wishes to join me to chat is welcome. The groups have been small (6 or so each week), but the time has been very pleasant. However, I have not developed relationships with the other faculty outside of work. I have been trying to set up a time to have coffee with my original university contact, but have made no progress despite multiple attempts on my part. The friendships we have developed have been through our church and through the hiking group the Hash House Harriers, which meets every Saturday to hike. So, in many respects our social circle includes more fellow expats than Albanians, which is surprising to us.

In terms of gender, the students seem to relate to me first as an American, and secondly as a woman. I have only felt that some of them were trying to intimidate me due to my gender a few times. In general they are respectful of the fact that I am an American professor.

Gretchen Knudson Gee
Fulbright Lecturing Grantee
University of Tirana, Albania
Spring 2008
Gretchen.Gee@nau.edu

Fulbright is a wonderful experience. I have never for a moment regretted my decision to quit my job, move away from my family/friends and plunge myself into a different culture for 9 months. So I hope that you won't let what I'm about to say affect your outlook on the process too much but I think this is very important to know; Unless Fulbright increases the amount of funds it gives to each individual or the economy of Albania changes you should expect to spend a good portion of your own money on your life in Albania. Even living very frugally with the U.S. dollar consistently losing value in the world market and the prices of food, power and just about everything in Albania increasing the allotted sum is not enough to live on alone. I rarely go out at night and I cook my own meals almost exclusively and still it is not quite enough to really work on my project and to do the things needed to see it through. This is also unfortunate because the most rewarding experiences in Albania, for me have to do with the people and the culture, and part meeting people and getting involved in the culture, learning about Albanian food etc, often involves going out for coffee or dinner etc. If you do not need equipment, books, internet or such things for your project the money situation will be easier for you. I unfortunately am a photographer and need to purchase large amounts of film for my project and later have this film processed etc. Again, I wouldn't change my time here but this is something that you should consider.

Other hiccups to consider; as with any differing country administrative policies are often quite different. Bureaucracy can move even slower. Administratively, particularly if you

are involved in the academic world you need to be patient. As a an artist I do not really rely on anyone to be able to do my work, I however have run into issues when trying to gain access to places to photograph in them that were never resolved (or quickly resolved with a flat out "no").

If your project demands that you be highly mobile and travel to other cities or areas again be ready for things to move a bit slower and buses to lack any schedule. Other than that transportation is cheap, easy and friendly. If you are in Tirana, this city is nice and small and very walkable if you are physically capable.

The most important bit of practical advice I can give is to learn the language as much as you can. I think this applies to any country. Of course as an English speaker this is hardly a requirement anywhere in the world anymore and you don't really need to know the language to get by but the more you are able to interact with people the greater understanding you'll have of the place and many of the things that seemed sort of bewildering to you at first will become clearer. Not only does it make things easier in general but just a bit of conversation with even your grocer can lead you to be invited to dinner or someone's home or any number of interesting cultural experience.

When I first arrived I felt out of place and despite lots of travel experience the prospect of living in a place so foreign for so long was daunting and I felt a sensation of alienation that I've never felt before. The thing was to keep in mind that every day I learned something new, every day I learned how something worked (even as simple as where to buy certain vegetables or where the best ATM was), everyday your understanding of the place grows and everything becomes easier.

If you're open to the adventure of the whole thing and don't get caught up in things you think you need and can't get and don't judge the way another culture's system of government or values are different from yours, your experience will be amazing.

Ryan Kellman

Fulbright Fellow

ryankellman@gmail.com

As an English Language Fellow, I teach English to the diplomats and staff at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana. (While my work setting is a government ministry, as an English teacher who speaks no Shqip, I'm not really integrated into the Albanian workday per se and my experience is limited to the classroom.) The Ministry maintains a regular schedule (Mon-Thurs 8:00-4:30, Friday 8:00-2:00), and I teach Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 8:00-2:00. However, there are not usually many people at the Ministry at 8:00, and I'm told that the first thing many people do upon arrival is to head to the café in the basement for a coffee break. Additionally, many of my students come very late to all the classes, and the ideas of timeliness and planning ahead are not as prominent as they are for Americans. In class, I find that the participants who have remained committed to learning English are quite motivated and enthusiastic, but there also seems to be a lack of "follow-through" for many people. I've had many people quit

the course, and the beginning French class the Ministry arranged lost 50-60% of its students in the first week or two. Regarding learning/working style, it took a couple of months to get the participants to work in pairs or groups (rather than only wanting to talk to me). It seems the work and educational systems are very hierarchical, but with practice, collaborative work has become much easier and more interesting for them.

With respect to dress, Albanians tend to dress more formally than Americans in most situations, and (at least at the Ministry) professional dress is the norm. The younger people do wear jeans occasionally, especially on Fridays. I haven't really lacked for equipment, resources, etc. (other than toilet paper – I believe each bathroom gets 1 roll per week). I have access to the internet and a copy machine (although I think I'm quite lucky because there are only a handful of copy machines in the building).

Albanians are very friendly and helpful people, and I haven't experienced too much "culture shock". Adjustment and flexibility are necessary more for dealing with infrastructure issues, pollution, etc. than cultural issues. I walk everywhere, and even alone at night, I've never felt concerned for my safety (I'm female).

Lisa A. Warner

English Language Fellow

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Albania

leewa10@yahoo.com

The style of dress at Luarasi University, a law faculty, is business wear. All men wear business suits and the women faculty wear suitable business attire without exception.

All I know is what I am told. I am told that there are some pronounced jealousies when one is invited to the Dean or Rector's home while some others might not be invited. I would advise people to be cautious and not tell other Albanian colleagues about these invitations just to help maintain good relations. This probably isn't peculiarly Albanian but very common in many countries.

For anyone coming to Tirana DEFINITELY stay tuned to programming at the Opera House, the Academy of Arts and the Marubi Film Academy. One can have usually free first class entertainment almost 7 nights a week by staying posted. It is shameful that there are so many empty seats for such a great symphony, piano duets, visiting musical ensembles, film screenings along with the producers of the films, etc. The German and Swiss embassies sponsor many interesting events.

The weekly "hash" events attract many friendly Albanians of all ages along with people from many other countries. These events are very family friendly.

I have visited an Albanian doctor and dentist and found their standard of care to be excellent. I relied on the referrals of Mirela Cupi (Cupim@state.gov).

Bob Jones

Fulbright Fellow

Luarasi University (law faculty)

bobjone87@yahoo.com

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT ALBANIA

<http://www.answers.com/Albania>: This site has a map and general information about Albania and its history.

www.countrywatch.com/: On this site, you can learn anything from what time it is in Tirana to how to convert from the dollar to the lek. Requires a log-in to access most information.

www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations: Visit this site for general travel advice about almost any country in the world.

www.state.gov: The U.S. State Department's website issues background notes periodically about countries around the world. Find Albania and learn more about its social and political history.

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>: Provides general and statistical information on Albania.

www.psr.keele.ac.uk/official.htm: This site includes links to all the official sites for governments worldwide.

www.geography.about.com/library/maps/blindex.htm: This online world atlas includes maps and geographical information. Each country page contains links to other sites, such as the Library of Congress, that contain comprehensive historical, social, and political background.

www.cyberschoolbus.un.org/infonation/info.asp: This United Nations site allows you to search for statistical information for member states of the U.N. and compare countries to each other.

www.worldinformation.com: This site provides an additional source of current and historical information for 228 countries.

CURRENT NEWS SITES/ONLINE ARTICLES ABOUT ALBANIA

<http://www.president.al>: Albanian government site about the President of Albania in both English and Albanian.

<http://www.balkanweb.com>: News about Albania and Kosovo, including Albania. In Albanian.

www.onlinenewspapers.com/albania.htm: Provides links to online newspapers covering Albania

www.einnews.com/albania: Geopolitical news service covering over 263 countries; includes online news feed about Albania.

www.shqiperia.com: Contains information on Albanian culture, art, current events, news, history, trading, and food. Includes an extensive photo album with pictures from all over Albania. Site is in Albanian.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SITES WITH COVERAGE OF ALBANIA

[USAID](#): Information about the work of the U.S. Agency for International Development in Albania.

[UNDP](#): The United Nations Development Programme in Albania.

[EBRD](#): European Bank for Reconstruction and Development program in Albania.

[REC](#): Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe program in Albania.

[UNESCO](#): United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization program in Albania.

[IOM](#): International Organization for Migration program in Albania.

[World Bank \(IBRD\)](#): World Bank program in Albania.

[Albanian Donor Technical Secretariat](#): Overview of donor activities in Albania.

INFORMATION AND TRAVEL

<http://www.albanian.com/information/countries/albania/index.html>: Contains information about Albania and useful links.

<http://www.escapeartist.com/albania/albania.html>: Contains useful travel information and links to other sites, both in and out of Albania.

<http://www.tripadvisor.com/Tourism-g294445-Alba>: Primarily for travelers, but some interesting information in the “Albanian Forums” section.

ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albanian_language : Contains information about the language, including its history and alphabet. The proverbs section is particularly interesting.

<http://travlang.com/languages/>: Site has words you can listen to and practice pronunciation.

www.shqiperia.com/fjalori.php : Online Dictionary (Albanian-English and English–Albanian)

<http://www.pimsleurapproach.com/learn-albanian.asp> : Pimsleur language tapes for sale (may be cheaper at other venues (e.g. eBay, Amazon)

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Biberaj, Elez. *Albania in Transition: the Rocky Road to Democracy (Nations of the World Series)*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1998 (hardback), 1999(paperback).

Biberaj, Elez. *Albania: A Socialist Maverick*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1990.

Carver, Robert. *The Accursed Mountains: Journeys in Albania*. London: HarperCollins Publishers Ltd., 2000 (paperback).

Durham, Edith. *High Albania: A Victorian Traveller's Balkan Odyssey*. London: Phoenix Press, 2000 (paperback).

Drakulic, Svenka, *Cafe Europa: Life After Communism*, Penguin, (Non-Classics), 1999. (paperback)

Drakulic, Svenka, *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed*, Harper Perrenial, 1993. (paperback)

Fonseca, Isabel. *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996 (paperback).

Glenny, Misha. *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999*. New York: Penguin, 2000 (paperback).

Gloyer, Gillian. *Albania: The Bradt Travel Guide*, Bradt Travel Guides; Third edition, 2008 (paperback)

Jones, Lloyd. *Biografi: An Albanian Quest*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994.

Kadare, Ismail. *Albanian Spring*. London: Saqi Books, 2001 (paperback).

Kaplan, Robert. *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History*. New York: Picador Press, 2005 (paperback).

Karklins, Rasma. *The System Made Me Do It: Corruption in Post-Communist Societies*, Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2005.

Olsen, Neil and Rhodri Jones. *Albania (Oxfam Country Profile Series)*. London: Oxfam Publishing, 2000 (paperback).

Pettifer, James. *Blue Guide: Albania and Kosovo*. New York: A. & C. Black, Ltd., 2001 (paperback).

Schwandner-Sievers, Stephanie and Bernd Jurgen Fischer. *Albanian Identities: Myth and History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002 (paperback).

Vickers, Miranda. *The Albanians: A Modern History* (revised edition). London: I. B. Tauris, 2001 (paperback).

Vickers, Miranda, and James Pettifer. *Albania: From Anarchy to Balkan Identity*. New York: New York University Press, 2000 (paperback).

West, Rebecca. *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey through Yugoslavia*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995 (paperback).

Wilkes, John. *The Illyrians (Peoples of Europe Series)*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995 (paperback)

USEFUL CONTACTS

EMBASSY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rruga Elbasanit, No 103

Tirana, Albania

Telephone (working hours 8-5:00): [355] (4) 224-7285
(after hours): 355-68-205-1084

Public Affairs Office Fax: [355] (4) 223-2222

Home page address: www.tirana.usembassy.gov

Embassy Facebook page: www.facebook.com/usembassytirana

Public Affairs Officer: Ms. Elizabeth Lewis
Tel: (4) 224-7285 ext. 3159
Email: lewisea@state.gov

Assistant Public Affairs Officer: Mr. Niles Cole
Tel: (4) 224-7285 ext. 3261
Email: colene@state.gov

Education Programs Coordinator: Ms. Mirela Cupi
Tel: (4) 224-7285 ext. 3164
Email: cupim@state.gov

Consular Officer: Ms. Lyra Carr
Email: carrls@state.gov

OTHER USEFUL NUMBERS

Emergency Police Number	129	Electrical Emergency	(04) 2-222616
Emergency Medical Unit	(04) 2-222235	Fire Department	(04) 2-351891; 128
Water Emergency	(04) 2-240972	Night Drugstore	(04) 2-222241
Traffic Police	126; (04) 2-226801	Sewage Emergency	(04) 2-258067
Telephone problems	1232/1233	Airport information, Lost Luggage	(04)2-363369
General information	(04) 2-226801; 122	Radio taxi	(04) 2-244444; (04) 2-355555

PHOTOS OF ALBANIA

Appendix b includes an overview of some of Albania's most prominent sites and cities. Below is a quick photo review of some important sites in the country.



Albania.



[Butrint](#), [UNESCO](#) World Heritage Site.



Twin Towers, [Tirana](#), Albania.



Apollonia site in [Fier](#), Albania.



Albanian tradition dance.



[Skanderbeg](#)'s castle in [Krujë](#), Albania.



A cliff overshadowing the coastal sea.



Best view of [Tirana](#), Albania.



Remains of a chapel in [Butrint](#), Albania.



Fishing in Albania.



Ali Pasha's Castle, Albania.



Blue Eye, Albania.



[Petrela](#) Castle, [Tirana](#), Albania.



Beach scene.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Packing List

Use the list as an informal guide in making your own list, bearing in mind that what you may want may be different from others. You most certainly cannot bring everything mentioned, so consider those items that make the most sense to you personally and professionally. You can always have things sent to you later. Do not bring anything that is so valuable or precious that you would be traumatized if you lost it.

Note that European laundry detergent tends to be harsher than American brands, so clothes may wear more quickly. Also, dry cleaners are available in Tirana for cleaning professional clothing (not as easily found outside of Tirana).

Keep in mind luggage quantity and weight restrictions (these have recently changed both in the U.S. and internationally, so be sure to check with the airline you are using.) Though clothing and shoes can be expensive, you can get most things you need in Albania if you look hard enough.

General Clothing and Personal Items

- Clothing for all seasons (even if you are arriving in late September, include something for hot days)
- Dressy outfits or suits for reception or meetings (Albanians dress up)
- Slacks and jeans
- Shirts for summer and fall
- Warm shirts, turtlenecks, and sweaters for winter
- Shorts and T-shirts for relaxing in hot weather
- Regular and long underwear
- Light socks for summer and heavy socks for winter
- Warm hats and gloves
- Sweats or heavy pajamas
- Heavy winter coat
- All-weather coat
- Bathing suit
- umbrella
- 220v, 50-cycle appliances, or transformer and adapter plug
- hair dryer (220 v or dual voltage)
- camera

For Women

- Several pairs of pantyhose and tights
- At least one spring jacket and one fall jacket that coordinates with other clothes

For Men

- Collared shirts for work (it is better to dress up than to dress down)

- A few ties
- At least one jacket or suit for special occasions

Shoes

- At least one pair of good-quality sandals that are good for walking
- Dress shoes for work that are good for walking (women should also bring a pair of pumps)
- Comfortable shoes with waterproof soles (in Albania you will probably be doing a lot of walking)
- Warm, insulated, and sturdy winter boots (For women – look for the brands of boots that are both stylish and waterproof. These are perfect for Albanian weather and road conditions.)
- Sturdy, thick-soled walking shoes

Personal Hygiene and Toiletry Items

- Medicines: decongestants, antihistamines, cough syrup and cough drops, prescription drugs, contraceptives. Please note that prescription drugs cannot be ordered and imported from the U.S. into Albania – make sure to bring a supply with you.
- First-aid kit
- Extra pair of glasses or contact lenses and contact lens solution, along with your current prescriptions (contact lens solutions are not readily available in Albania)
- Small supply of cosmetics if you have a favorite brand (various brands are available in pharmacies and grocery stores)

Kitchen

- kitchen items: measuring spoons and cups (Albania operates on the metric system), oven thermometer, favorite cookbook(s), and spices indispensable for your favorite recipes (Mexican, Chinese, Indian, and Italian ones can be hard to find)
- Baking powder if you really like to bake
- Sturdy travel water bottle (e.g., Nalgene)
- Packaged mixes for your favorite sauces, salad dressings, and soups

Materials for Work and Personal Entertainment:

- Books for your coursework and academic work (may be difficult to find locally.)
- Books for pleasure (English-language books are available but rather expensive)
- Magazine subscriptions
- A personal computer; they are not available for rent and are very expensive to buy.
- Favorite music (an MP3 player is especially helpful for storing both music files and other large document files).

Miscellaneous

- Tough but flexible luggage (the roller/backpack combos work especially well)
- Backpack
- Money pouch
- Camera
- Sunglasses
- A pocketknife (e.g., Swiss Army or Leatherman type) or tool kit
- Alarm clock
- Watch
- Sewing kit

Appendix B: Local Resources

GENERAL INFORMATION

Time Difference: The time difference between New York and Tirana is 6 hours. (When it is 12:00 noon in New York City, the time in Tirana is 6:00 p.m.)

Electrical Power: Tirana uses 220 volt, 50-cycle electricity. You may want to purchase a couple of transformers if you bring products designed for use in the U.S. Remember that a transformer changes the voltage but not the cycles and cycles may control clock speeds for alarm clocks, microwave ovens, answering machines, etc.

Water: Drinking tap water in Tirana is not recommended.

Religious Activities: There are several English-language Protestant and inter-denominational church services in Tirana. Mass at the Catholic Church in the Rruga e Kavajes is held in English, Albanian and Italian. Mass at the Albanian Orthodox Church (also in the Rruga e Kavajes) is held in the Albanian language and on a few occasions, in Greek. The call-to-worship at the mosques is in Arabic, but the services are in Albanian. Addresses of some places of worship in Tirana are:

- **Orthodox Cathedral of Evangelism:** Kavaja Street
- **Catholic Church:** “Ali Pasha Gucia” Street
- **Heart of Christ Church:** Kavaja Street
- **Cathedral of St. Paul (Catholic):** “Zhan D’ark blvd.”
- **Shrine of the Rufai Religion:** Barrikadave” Street
- **Tekke of Helveti Religion:** Barrikadave” Street
- **Evangelical Church:** , no. 3, (next to Stela Restaurant) tel: 234967.

HOTELS

(Insert country code 355 area code 4 when dialing from outside the country; insert area code 04 when dialing from outside Tirana or cellphone)

Diplomat	223-0457, 223-3151
Grand	222-4386, 225-3220; Fax: 225-3219, 224-7996
Ilyria	237-1700
Kalifornia	223-2228
Linza	226-2906
Miniri	223-0930
Mondial	223-2372
Palma	223-4569
President	225-9574 Fax: 224-6852
Rogner Europark	223-5035 Fax: 223-5050
Sheraton	227-4707 Fax: 227-4711
Tirana International	223-4185 Fax: 223-4188
Vila Goldi	223-3733

OTHER INFORMATION

Intesa Sanpaolo Bank Albania	4 227 60 00	www.intesasanpaolobank.al
Tirana International School	4 236 52 39	tirana.qsischool.org
DHL	4 222 76 67	

CLINICS

Orthodox Clinic	Rruga e Dibres 4 236 09 25
Clinic At Luigji Monti	Rruga e Kavajes 4 222 39 06, 4 223 20 21
ABC Clinic	Rruga Qemal Stafa 4 223 41 05
Clinic GLOBE	Laprake
Diplomat Dental Clinic	Rr. Sotir Kolea, Nr 32, Tirane, "Diplomat" Clinic (near the Student City entry arch); 4 237 66 72; 4 203 85 45
UFO Dental Clinic	Rr. Kavajes; 4 224 00 28
Hygeia Hospital (American Hospital)	Rruga Industriale, Tirane, 4 239 00 00 www.hygeia.al emergency 4 232 30 00

GROCERY SHOPPING

Euromax shops are located at:

- Universal Trade Center – Mall (QTU) on the highway
- Rruga Abdyl Frasherit (in the block)
- Rruga Komuna e Parisit (near the University of New York Tirana)
- Rruga e Dibres

CONAD shops are located at:

- European Trade Center (ETC), Bulevardi Bajram Curri
- Near the Dinamo Stadium
- Casa Italia – Mall on the highway

BIG MARKET shops are located at:

- Rruga Myslym Shyri
- Near the Embassy
- Rruga e Barrikadave

Popular open markets include

- Çami market
- Sheshi Avni Rustemi (fruit and vegetable market near the Stephen Center)

SOUVENIR SHOPPING IN TIRANA

Albsouvenirs

Rr. "Barrikadave", in front of Italian Albanian Bank, tel. 04- 262- 742, cel. 068 204-1961

Amar Souvenirs

Rr. "Liugj Gurakuqi", tel. 04-264-379

Areger Cristal & Souvenirs

Presents and Household

Rr. "Abdyl Frasheri" close to Wilson Square

Cleopatra

Souvenirs and perfumes

Rr. "Sami Frasheri" Wilson square

Corona

Souvenirs and different articles

Tirana International Hotel, tel. 04-250-132, cel. 069-217-7305

Dano Antiquary

Albanian National Outfits and antiquary

Rr. " Bardhok Biba" next to Arber hotel, cel. 068-293-1800

Kruja

Souvenirs

Rr. "Hoxha Tahsin", cel. 069-209-1007

Lleshi

Folk Outfits & Souvenirs

Rr. "Durrësit", tel. 04-363-030

Pirro Souvenirs

Presents and Souvenirs

1)Rr. "Abdyl Frasheri" , 2) Rr. "Durrësit" tel. 04-225-587, 04-259-434

Souvenirs

Boulevard "Bajram Curri", cel. 068-242-3910

Reli Kazazi

Folk outfits and embroideries

Rr. "Ded Gjo Luli" in front of National Museum, tel. 04-221-282

WHERE TO EAT

Carlsberg

Rr. Deshmoret e 4 Shkurtit, below the Hotel President (also called the Xheko Hotel)

Tel: 4 224 68 52. Open 12:00 – 22:30; Saturdays open for breakfast

Carlsberg is deservedly popular with the international crowd. Consistent food and service quality.

Taiwan

Located in the centre of the city, in the public park

The restaurant serves Italian cuisine

Era (Wind)Rr. Ismail Qemali, intersection with Rr. Sami Frasheri

Tel. 4 225 78 05. Open 10:00 – 23:00

This is a foreigner-friendly spot with English speaking waiters. Good Albanian food and pizzas. Does delivery service as well.

Gloria

Rr. Qemal Stafa across from Fan S Noli School; Tel.: 4 224 77 31

Offers great Italian and traditional Albanian cuisine.

Green House

Rr. Jul Variboba nr. 6, behind the Pyramid

Tel.: 4 225 10 15

Good Italian cuisine and wonderful *al fresco* ambience.

Lion Park

Rr. e Elbasanit, across from the Faculty of Engineering

Great Italian food. Wonderful *minestrone* and other soups, pasta and meat dishes.

London

Blv. Zog I, Nr. 51 across from VEVE Center

Tel. 4 223 88 51

Often chosen as a dining option after opera performances due to its vicinity to the Opera House. Offers Albanian, Italian and some international dishes.

Lulishte 1 Maji (Chinese Restaurant)

Rr. Punetoret e Rilindjes, in front of the Parliament building, tel. 038 20 38 815

Chinese restaurant is popular among international crowd as it offers alternative from pizza and pasta dishes. This is the best representative of Chinese cuisine – but then, there's not much competition.

Recently, Mexican and Turkish food is offered in the restaurant below the Chinese restaurant. The whole restaurant complex is owned by one owner.

Piazza

Rr. Ded Gjo Luli, tel. 23 07 06. Open 12:00 – 16:00, 19:00 – 23:00

Opened by an Albanian-American family in 1993, Piazza is still one of Tirana's most elegant restaurants. It is chic and the place of choice for business dinners. (Fish recommended). Reservations recommended.

Rozafa Restaurant

Rr. e Barrikadave, Kulla 4

Tel.: 24 86 70

Great pizzas and fresh sea food – trucked in from Durres every day. Delicious and affordable. Great lunch spot after shopping at Stephen Center. There is a more upscale restaurant further back off the main road.

Sofra

Rr. Kavajes", next to "Gulistan" International Turkish School.

Best Turkish cuisine in town.

Stephen Center

Rr. Hoxha Tasim 1, tel. 23 47 48. Open 08:00 – 22:00. Closed Sun.

Stephen Center offers international food and is a popular Saturday breakfast place for Americans and other internationals in Albania. Besides Saturday American-style breakfast, this place offers Chinese stir-fry and some Mexican dishes. Takeout available.

Villa Ambassador “Chocolat”

Rr. Themistokli Germenji nr. 5 behind TVSH building

Tel.: 038 202 4293/ 038 205 0540

Albanian and Continental cuisine.

Vinum

Rr. Qemal Stafa, Nr. 60; Tel. (4) 230 822, 068 26 84 900

One of the best restaurants in Albania. True continental cuisine, innovative, with fresh flavorful ingredients.

Sky Club

Restaurant and Bar (roving) offering a fantastic overview of Tirana

Rr. “Deshmoret e 4 Shkurtit” Bllok Area

Tel. 4 2216 66 ext. 143

La Taverneta

Comfortable restaurant offering traditional and Italian cuisine and appetizers.

Rr. “4 Shkurti” Blloku area.

Cel: 069 20 68 528

ENTERTAINMENT AND NIGHT LIFE IN TIRANA**Blur**

Entertainment complex for kids and adults, bowling tracks, billiard and internet corner. Various electronic games, with fast food service, restaurant, pizzeria.

It is located in Lundra , tel : 048- 810- 135

Dajti Express

The first cablecar line to Dajti Mountain, with fully digital vehicles.

Open : Every day from 10:00 -18:00. Ticket 700 leke / per person

King Park Resort

Situated at the National Dajti Park. Situated in the middle of park and fresh air, it offers traditional Albanian cuisine, terrace bar, children’s playground, and sports complex. Tel . 04- 272- 385, cel. 068- 208- 42 82

Patinazhi Braka (Ice Skating)

Sauk, near Braka Fuel Station, tel 048-811 -0219, cel 068-205-4521

Poligoni I Qitjes me Piatel “ Gjuetari i Erzenit”

The only skeet shooting platform with plate discs. Situated by the Erzeni River , Berxhite. Tirane, tel. 04- 224-233 cel. 069-208- 7695

Akuadrom Tirana

Swimming pool complex near the lake and Great Park. Tel. 04-256-257

PUBS**Rock and Roll**

Located across the Embassy Street

Jazz Club Take 5

Rr.: Themistokli Gërmenji” cel. 068-206-7250

Offers a live jazz band Fridays and Saturdays

Lollypop

Across the road facing Vodaphone Office in the Blloku Area

Buda

Club and Bar, next to American Bank in the Blloku Area, cel. 068-205-8825

Living Room

Rr. Elbasanit , in front of Infosoft Building

SIGHTSEEING**National Historical Museum**

Located in the Skanderbeg Square Open: Monday to Saturday 09:00-13:00 and 17:00-19:00; Sunday 9-12 and 17:-19:00. Ticket price 50 leke and 300 leke

English speaking guides are available. Please call to reserve

Tel: 04 – 223- 446

National Gallery of Arts

Located on the main boulevard leading to Skanderbeg Square

Open: 09:00-13:00, 17:00 -20:00

Thursdays: 17:00-20:00 lek, closed on Mondays

Tickets price: 100 leke, students 50 leke, free on Sundays

Tel: 04-233-976

Archaeological Museum

Located in “Mother Teresa” Square

Open Monday to Friday 10:30-14:30

Available for bookings on Saturday and Sundays

Ticket Price: 100 Leke, 1 Euro for foreigners

Tel : 04-240-713

E'them Bey Mosque

Located in “Skanderbeg” Square

Together with the Clock tower, these two monuments constitute a historic complex in the heart of Tirana. The mosque is a cultural monument. It is open to public except for the prayer hours: 5:26- 5:46, 12:42-12:46, 16:37-16:57, 19:53-20:13, and 21:35-21:55) Foreigners are welcome, they can walk in. They have to take off the shoes and women should cover their head with a scarf.

Clock Tower

Located in “Skanderbeg” Square

The Great Park

Next to the artificial lake on the south end of Tirana. A relaxing place away from noise and traffic. Good for walks, bike riding, and exercise.

Block

Block has become a big center for shopping, restaurants, coffee bars, and pubs – especially frequented by youth. (Prior to 1990, this area was the residence of the high ex-members of Communist Party Bureau.)

The Science Academy

“Fan S. Noli” Square

Palace of Culture

“Skanderbeg” Square. Houses the Theatre of Opera and Ballet, and the National Library.

Peace Bell

“Skanderbeg” Square

Mother Teresa Monument

Located next to the Polytechnic University Building

DAY-TRIPS FROM TIRANA

Apollonia

2 hrs southwest of Tirana, just outside Fier

Apollonia offers one of the country’s most famous archeological sites from the Roman time. Admission fee is 500 lek/person. Also visit the Orthodox monastery just outside of the Apollonia archeological site.

Berat

130 km south of Tirana or about 2.5 – 3 hrs drive

Berat is known as “the city of one thousand windows” and along with Gjirokaster, it has been designated a “museum city” for its remarkable architecture. Visit the fortress dating from 3rd century AD. Within the castle, there are several churches, out of which the most interesting is church of Saint Mary Vllaherna dating from the 13th century and the church of the Sainted Trinity. Occupied by the Ottomans in 1417, Berat has several mosques situated just below the castle: King’s Mosque and Lead Mosque. In the city center, Hotel Tomorri offers traditional dishes from Berat.

Durres

30 km west of Tirana

Durres is the second largest city in Albania, one of the country's oldest cities, the main sea port, and the second largest industrial center after Tirana. It lies on a small peninsula on the coast of the Adriatic Sea and is a primary beach destination for Albanians and Kosovars. Dating back to the 5th century B.C., the city continues to yield ancient ruins and artifacts. Favorite sites to visit include the Archeological Museum and the ancient Amphitheater.

Kruja

47 km north of Tirana

Kruja is the place for souvenir hunting. A stretch of cobble paved street with numerous shops selling souvenirs, qilima (traditional woven rugs), silver filigree, jewelry, authentic folk costumes, traditional felt hats and antique Albanian chests leads to the most important sight – the citadel. This fort dates back to the fifth century AD. Kruja is considered a symbol of national pride as it is the location where Skanderbeg and his troops fought back the Ottoman army, even though the Ottomans did ultimately succeed in capturing the citadel.

To the left of the citadel's main entrance is the Gjergj Kastrioti Museum (Skanderbeg's name before being taken hostage by the Ottomans). The museum was built in 1982 and inside one can see copies of Skanderbeg's sword and spiky helmet (the original helmet is in Vienna).

Across from the Gjergj Kastrioti Museum is the Ethnographic Museum (Open 08:00 – 13:00; 15:00 – 20:00; Admission 200 lek). It displays the reconstructed interior of an Albanian house circa 1800. Exhibits included 19th century folk dresses, traditional copper goods and clay utensils. There are reminiscent of Turkish baths, a church and a row of medieval houses, within walking distance of the citadel. On a clear day you can see the Adriatic Sea from the citadel.

Mt. Dajti

25 km east of Tirana. Admission to national park: 50 lek/person, plus 150 lek per car. A half-hour drive takes you up a serpentine road through beautiful forest to Mt. Dajti (1612 m). It is a great place for jogging, hiking or picnicking. You can check Chateau Linza (p.10) for an elegant meal or go native and check out one of the local restaurants that serve fresh grilled lamb or fresh farmed trout. **You can also ride the cable car (Dajti Express), costing 700 Leke per person**

Petrela Castle

15 km southeast of Tirana, on the road to Elbasan

Petrela castle is one of Albania's castles. It sits on a steep slope overlooking a river. (On a clear day you can see all the way to Kruja). The tower in the center dates back to AD 500 surrounded by the walls from the Byzantine period. The castle was built by Emperor Justinian to protect the settlement of Dyrrachium (today's Durres). The castle was used by Skanderbeg in the war against Ottomans.

Shkodra

80 km north of Tirana, about 2 hours drive

Shkodra is the major city of northern Albania. Shkodra is one of the most ancient cities in the country and has a very rich history which includes original settlement by the Illyrians, and inclusion in the state of Venice in the 14th century. Today the city and the surrounding region includes a number of both natural and cultural objects, including characteristic appearance with narrow streets and tall walls around residential compounds, location between two important rivers in the country – the Drini and Buna rivers, and the most important cultural object – the castle of Rozafa, which sits on the west side of

the city. Other important tourist attractions include a Venetian mask factory, and the difficult to find, but worthwhile Marubi photo archives.

MULTI-DAY EXCURSIONS

Butrint

The ancient town of Butrint is situated about 20 km southwest of the city of Saranda, in the far southwest of Albania. Archaeological excavations show that Butrint was an important center of the Illyrian tribes with known settlement since 1000 BC. It belonged to the Greek and Roman Empires during its long history and both have left a rich legacy. Several excavations dating from the 1st and 4th centuries AD can now be visited, among them a theatre, the Temple of Aesculapius and the Baptistery, which is full of colorful mosaics.

Gjirokastra

220 km south of Tirana, about 4-5 hours' drive depending on construction and road conditions.

The city of Gjirokastra is located in southern Albania. A national road connects Gjirokastra with other regions of the country, the Ionian coast and Greece. Attractive sites include:

- The Castle of Gjirokastra
- 55 characteristic buildings and monuments
- The Ethnographic Museum located in the house of the former Communist dictator Enver Hoxha
- The house of the distinguished writer Ismail Kadare
- The house of the distinguished Albanologist and Albanian Language Researcher Eqërem Cabej.
- The natural Vinoi Lake
- The Hill of Kerculla. the highest point of the city
- The Church of Labova Cross, a Byzantine construction.
- The ancient City of Antigonea built 200 year BC, 4 km east of Gjirokastra
- The ancient city of Hadrianopolis, situated in Sofratike 12 km south of Gjirokastra, on the left of Gjirokastra – Kakavije Highway.
- The 300-year-old Orthodox Monastery of Dhuvjan
- The 300 Years old Teqe of Melani
- Natural sites of significant value include: Uji I Ftohte of Tepelena, Kurveleshi Canyons, Vjosa River, the Thermal Springs of Benja, the natural National Parks of Hotova in Permet and Sotir in Gjirokastra.

Korçë

113 km southeast of Tirana, about 4 hours' drive depending on construction and road conditions. Korçë is the regional capital of southeastern Albania, located close to the Greek border. It is a center of agricultural production, as well as of Greek Orthodoxy. Korçë has a large 15th-century mosque and several modern government buildings, as well as a newly constructed Orthodox cathedral. It is a good place for exploring the surrounding hilly region that includes both Lake Ohrid (to the north) and the Prespa Lakes (to the east on the borders with Macedonia and Greece). Important sites include the Medieval Museum that boasts a wonderful collection of icons, and the new Museum of the Tumulus of Kamenice archeological site.

Saranda

284 km south of Tirana, about 6-7 hours' drive (inland route) depending on construction and road conditions. Saranda is situated in an open sea gulf, opposite the island of Corfu (Greece) between the

mountains and the Ionian Sea. Saranda is rapidly developing into the southern gateway for tourism into Albania and is a popular summer destination for many Albanians. The Ionian coastline north of Saranda is spectacular. It is fairly undeveloped and though difficult to get to, is definitely worth the effort.

Vlora

147 km southwest of Tirana, about 2.5 – 3 hours' drive depending on construction and road conditions. Vlora is located in southwestern Albania, on the coast of the Adriatic, the second major sea port after Durres. In ancient times, Vlora was known as Aulon. The oldest traces of civilization in the area of Vlora date back to the 6th century B.C. The city was the first capital of Albania after the fall of Ottoman rule. Vlora is now a major tourist center, serving as a gateway to the Ionian coastal towns and beaches.

Appendix C: Information on Applying for Residency Permit

Application for a Residency Permit Application List of documents required

1. **Application Form Nr. 8**
 2. Letter of Request - the document should include personal information (Full name, DOB, POB), purpose of the stay in Albania, temporary home address and contact information in Albania. (produced in Albania)
 - ❖ Mirela Cupi will help with the temporary home address and contact info in Albania and prepare the Albanian version for fellows as well.
 - ❖ **There is a special form now available, called Request for Residence Permit. (see attached)**
 3. Notarized photocopy of the passport - first page, entry visa page and page with the date stamp indicating entry to the Republic of Albania. (The original copy should also be presented and is returned to the applicant on the spot.) (produced in Albania)
 - ❖ This can be done when in Albania.
 - ❖ Entry visa is a stamp on the passport received at the airport at a cost of 10€ **(the airport entry fee is no longer applicable)**
 4. Police report from the State of Permanent Residence indicating that there is no legal action pending against the applicant (to bring from the States)- translated into Albanian, notarized at the Albanian Embassy in Washington DC or at the Consular Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana, Albania
 - ❖ This document may also be received at the Consular Section in Tirana at a cost of \$ 30USD (produced in Albania)
 - ❖ Translation of the documents and notarization can be taken care of in Albania
 - ❖ **There is no need for the Fellows to receive a Police report from the State of Permanent Residence. The Border Police will recognize only the Affidavit of Residency Permit issued by the Consular Section at the US Embassy.**
- Any interested US Citizen should send all personal information via e-mail to the Consular Section and schedule an appointment. The current cost is \$50USD. (More information is provided in the document Information for Travelers.)**
5. Translated and notarized contract of house lease in Albania (produced in Albania)
 - ❖ This document will be produced in Albania after one signs the agreement with the house owner.
 6. Marriage certificate and birth certificates (of the children) with the Apostle stamp or translated into Albanian, notarized at the Albanian Embassy in Washington DC or at the Consular Directorate at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana, Albania.
 - ❖ Translation of the documents and notarization can be taken care of in Albania
 7. Document from the City Court (city residing in Albania) that there is no record of another marriage of the applicant (require when the spouse is applying). (produced in Albania)
 - i. **This year Border Police accepted a support letter from the Embassy for the spouse and child of Fulbright Scholar Gregory Byrd.**
 8. Photo 3.5cm x 4.5cm - two for each family member/dependent
 9. Support letter from the host institution/employer - Public Affairs Office - indicating purpose of visit, activity plan, kind of involvement in this activity and the justification why it is important. The Public Affairs Office produces this document in both languages, signed by the PAO. (produced in Albania)
 - i. **Host institutions are also issuing a letter of support.**

Dependents: are now applying at the same time with the principal candidate and paying the same fee

- ❖ Can apply for a permit after the principal candidate has received the permit. They need to present a certificate/proof that no divorce case is filed for them.
- ❖ Are eligible for a visa extension
 - i. Letter of Request for visa extension (in Albanian)
 - ii. Notarized copy of the passport
 - iii. Cost - 3.600 lek
 - iv. Received in two days

Cost:

- ❖ Three month period - 3.600 lek
- ❖ Six month period - 7.200 lek
- ❖ One year period - 24.000 lek

Duration of procedure: four to six weeks

Permit valid start date: date of issue

Requirements:

- ❖ The applicant must submit the documents in person
- ❖ The applicant must pick up the document in person
- ❖ The Letter of Request must be in Albanian
- ❖ All documents must be translated in Albanian and notarized **(this does not seem to be a requirements any more)**

Tirane _____ . _____ 2012

REQUEST

For Residence Permit

**Requested to: REGIONAL DIRECTORATE OF BORDER AND IMMIGRATION
IMMIGRATION SECTOR
TIRANA**

NAME

SURNAME

DATE OF BIRTH

PLACE OF BIRTH

NATIONALITY

CITIZENSHIP

NR. OF PASSPORT

CIVIL STATUS

PURPOSE OF STAY

PLACE OF WORK

ADDRESS OF THE

PLACE OF WORK

RESIDENCE ADDRESS

IN ALBANIA

NR. CEL. PERSONAL

HEIGHT

EYE COLOR

SPECIAL MARKS

With the information stated above I submit my request in your office for the residence permit.....
.....
.....
.....

I hope that my request will be taken into consideration.

Respectfully

**FORMAT APLIKIMI PER LEJE QENDRIMI
APPLICATION FORM FOR A RESIDENCY PERMIT**

1	Mbiemri/ Family Name Mbiemri i vajzërisë/Maiden name	.....
2	Emri/ Given Name	.....
3	Datëlindja/ Date of Birth	.....
4	Vendlindja/ Place of birth	.....
5	Shtetësia/ Citizenship Në rast të më shumë se një, deklarojini të gjitha/If more than one, each should be stated Aktuale/ Present Mëparshme/ Former	..... ..... ..... .....
6	Kombësia/ Nationality	.....
7	Gjendja Civile/ Personal Status	.....
8	Bashkëshortja*-Emri/ Spouse-Name Mbiemri i vajzërisë (për gra të martuara) /Maiden name Datëlindja/ Date of birth Vendlindja/ Place of birth Shtetësia / Citizenship Vendbanimi/ Residence	..... ..... ..... ..... .....
9	Fëmijët * Emri Children Name	Data/Vendi lindjes Vendbanimi Date/Place of Birth	Shtetësia Citizenship

10	Atësia* e aplikantit- Mbiemri Father* (of the applicant) -Family name Emri / Given name	...............
11	Amësia* e aplikantit- Mbiemri / Mother (of the applicant)-Family name Emri / Given name	..........
12	Pasaportë ose document tjetër udhëtimi/ Passport or other travel document Numri/ Number E Vlefshme deri/Valid until Autoriteti lëshues/ Issued by Data e lëshimit/ Issued on	.........................
13	Data e Hyrjes në Shqipëri/ Entry date to Albania	.....
14	Keni qëndruar më parë në Shqipëri/Have you ever stayed in Albania before? Nëse po. Datat e hyrjes dhe vendbanimi/ If so. Enter dates and places	..... nga/from.....deri/to.....në/in..... nga/from.....deri/to.....në/in..... nga/from.....deri/to.....në/in.....
15	Vendi I parashikuar për banim në Shqipëri (adresa)/ Proposed place of residence in Albania (Address)	..... .....
16	Data e hyrjes/Entered on Nga/From	..........

17	<p>A keni qëllim ta mbani venbanimin tuaj të përhershëm jashtë Shqipërisë? Nëse po, ku?/ Do u intend to maintain your permanent residence outside Albania? If so, where?</p>	<p>.....</p>
18	<p>A jeni të shoqëruar nga familjarë? / Will u be accompanied by members of your family? Nëse po, cilët? / If so, which?</p>	<p>.....</p>
19	<p>Në çfarë ambiente banoni?/How are you accommodated?</p>	<p>Garsoniere..... -ambient kolektiv, pensione/hotel..... -Apartament me....dhoma / Single room.....-Collective accommodation.....-Dwelling with.....rooms</p>

20	<p>Qëllimi i qëndrimit në Shqipëri /Purpose of stay in Albania</p> <p>Për shembull: ekonomike, profesionale, punesimi, studimi, bashkim familjar, humanitare/fetare, etj./ E.g. economic, professional, employment, studies, family reunification, humanitarian/religious etc.</p> <p>Punëdhënësi/Employer</p> <p>Emrat e familjarëve, institucioneve arsimore, pritësit, etj. / Names of the relatives, educational establishment, references, etc.</p> <p>Adresa e tyre/ Their address.</p> <p>Profesioni që do të kryeni (specifikoni)/ Intended employment (occupation to be exercised)</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
21	<p>Profesioni që jeni trajnuar/ Trade of profession for which trained</p>	<p>.....</p>
22	<p>A jeni pajisur me leje pune shqiptare/ Are you already in possession of Albanian work permit?</p>	<p>.....</p>
23	<p>Periodha e parashikuar për qëndrim në Republikën e Shqipërisë/ Intended duration of stay in Albania</p>	<p>nga/ from.....deri/ to.....</p>
24	<p>Cilat janë mjetet financiare dhe ekonomike që do të mbështesin qëndrimin tuaj në Shqipëri? / What are your means of subsistence?</p>	<p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

