



**WELCOME
HANDBOOK**



**FOR FULBRIGHT
and
ENGLISH
LANGUAGE
FELLOWS**

IN ALBANIA

2013-2014

**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS
PUBLIC AFFAIRS SECTION
US EMBASSY
TIRANA, ALBANIA**

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MAP OF ALBANIA



WELCOME!

Congratulations on your acceptance of the invitation to be a Fulbright or English Language Fellow in Albania! Fellows have served in Albania since the first moments of the country's emergence as a new democracy in 1991. Since then, over fifty Fulbright, and about twenty five English Language Fellows have served the country, conducting such activities as teaching American Literature and Civilization, English as a Second Language, Finance and Accounting, Journalism, or researching on topics such as Albanian archeology, police reform, Albanian language and linguistics, the Muslim community in Albania and more.

The U.S. Embassy in Tirana views these programs as key tools of exchange and capacity building between Albanians and Americans. Not only do they play a vital role in supporting the development of skills of Albanian students in universities and Albanian professionals working in government and other institutions; they also promote important cross-cultural exchange and a sharing of values and ideas that encourages greater understanding and friendship between our two countries.

The Public Affairs Office staff looks forward to working with you as you prepare for your arrival and to supporting you once you are here and begin your position.

Elizabeth Lewis
Public Affairs Officer

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 (600,000, 2005 est.). *Others*--Dures (200,000, 2005 est.), Shkoder (81,000, 2005 est.), Vlore (72,000, 2005 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 Dures, which handles 90% of its maritime cargo.

PEOPLE AND HISTORY

Population (2007 est.): 3,600,523.

Growth rate (2007 est.): 0.529%.

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 (2007 est.): *Life expectancy*--males 74.95 years; females 80.53 years. *Infant mortality rate*--20.02 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 also 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 Vlore 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, despite 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 2012 President Bujar Nishani was elected within Parliament succeeding President Bamir Topi 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.

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 (SP); Socialist Movement for Integration (LSI); Albanian Republican Party (PR); Demo-Christian Party (PDK); Union for Human Rights Party (PBDNJ); Red and Black Alliance (RBA); New Democratic Spirit

(NDS); Party for Justice, Integration, and Unity (PDIU); Republican Party (RP).

Other Small Parties include: Democratic Alliance (AD); Alliance of Macedonians for European Integration (AMIE); Liberal Democrat Union (BLD); Christian Democratic League (LDK); Movement for National Development (LZhK); Agrarian Environmentalist Party (PAA); Democratic National Front Party (PBKD); National Front Party (PBK); Christian Democratic Party (PDK); Legality Movement Party (PLL); Social Democracy Party (PDS); Social Democratic Party (PSD).

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, 2017.

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, render court verdicts.

- **Principal Government Officials**

President--Bujar Nishani

- Prime Minister--Sali Berisha

- Deputy Prime Minister--Myqerem Tafaj

- Minister of Defense--Arben Imami
- Minister of Foreign Affairs—Aldo Bumci

ECONOMY

Real GDP growth (2006): 5%.

Inflation rate (2005): 2.4%.

Unemployment rate (2006): 13.8%.

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

Albania remains one of the poorest countries in Europe. According to the Bank of Albania, per capita income was U.S. \$2,883 in 2006. The official unemployment rate is 13.8%, and 18.5% of the population lives below the poverty line according to the World Bank's 2005 Poverty Assessment. 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 24%), industry (approximately 13%), service sector (approximately 39%), transport and communication (12%), construction (11%), and remittances from Albanian workers abroad--mostly in Greece and Italy (approximately 12.8%).

Albania was the last of the central and eastern European countries to embark upon democratic and free market reforms. Further, Albania started from a comparatively disadvantaged position, due to Hoxha's catastrophic economic policies. Transition from a centrally planned economy to a market-orientated system has been almost as difficult for Albania as the country's communist period.

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. Key elements included price and exchange system liberalization, fiscal consolidation, monetary restraint, and a firm income policy. These were complemented by a comprehensive package of structural reforms, including privatization, enterprise and financial sector reform, and creation of the legal framework for a market economy and private sector activity.

Results of Albania's efforts were initially encouraging. Led by the agricultural sector, real GDP grew, and Albania's currency, the lek, stabilized. The speed and vigor of private entrepreneurial response to Albania's opening and liberalizing was better than expected. Beginning in 1995, however, progress stalled. The collapse of the infamous pyramid schemes of the 1990s and the instability that followed were a tremendous setback, from which Albania's economy continues to recover.

In recent years the Albanian economy has improved, although infrastructure development and major reforms in areas such as tax collection, property laws, and for improving the business climate in general are proceeding slowly. Between 2003-2006, Albania experienced an average 5.5% annual growth in GDP. Fiscal and monetary discipline has kept inflation relatively low, averaging roughly 2.5% per year between 2004-2006. Albania's public debt reached 57.5% of GDP in 2006, and the growing trade deficit was estimated at 25% of GDP in 2006. Economic

reform has also been hampered by Albania's very large informal economy, which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates equals 50% of GDP.

Albania's trade imbalance is severe. In 2006, Albanian trade had U.S. \$3.1 billion in imports, and U.S. \$790 million in exports. Albania has concluded Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Macedonia, Croatia, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia, and Moldova. In April 2006, these bilateral agreements were replaced by a multiregional agreement that entered into force in May 2007 and that is based on the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) model. However, combined trade with all these countries constitutes a small percentage of Albania's trade, while trade with EU member states (mainly Greece and Italy) accounts for nearly 68%. U.S. two-way trade with Albania is very low. In 2006, U.S. exports to Albania totaled \$46.6 million. U.S. imports, during the same time period, totaled \$3.44 million, making the U.S. the 17th overall trade partner of Albania. However, there are some discrepancies between U.S. and Albanian trade figures. Major U.S. investment to date has been limited to large-scale infrastructure contracts with the government; Lockheed Martin and Bechtel are principal U.S. participants. The Albanian Government signed a FTA with the EU as part of its Stabilization and Association Agreement negotiations. The interim agreement entered into force in December 2006, and it foresees a duty-free regime for almost 90% of agricultural and industrial products. On the fiscal side it will also significantly reduce revenue collection.

Albania is trying to attract foreign investment and promote domestic investment, but significant impediments exist. The Albanian Government faces the daunting task of rationalizing and uniformly applying business laws, improving transparency in business procedures, restructuring the tax systems (including tax collection), reducing corruption in the bureaucracy, and resolving property ownership disputes.

Business growth is further hampered by Albania's inadequate energy and transportation infrastructure. The capital, Tirana, and the main port of Durres, generally receive electricity most of the day, but constant power outages plague every other major city, small town, and rural village. Although recent steps have been taken to improve the transportation infrastructure, Albania has a limited railway system and just one international airport. Because of the mountainous terrain and poor road conditions, overland goods transport is arduous and costly.

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 in June- July 2013)

Ambassador:	Alexander A. Arvizu
Deputy Chief of Mission	Henry Jardine
Political/Economic Section Chief	Jenifer Moore
Political Officers	Jay Porter Landry Carr
Economic/Commercial Officer	Nikhil Sudame
Consular Officer	Lyra Carr
USAID Director	Jim Barnhard
Public Affairs Officer	Elizabeth A. Lewis
Defense Attaché	Cmdr. U.S. Navy A. Glenn

	Brown Jr.
Regional Security Officer	(TBD)
Management Officer	

The [U.S. Embassy](#) is located at 103 Tirana Rruga Elbasanit, Tirana; telephone: [355] (4) 2247-285; facsimile: [355] (4) 2232-222.

TRAVEL AND BUSINESS INFORMATION

The U.S. Department of State's Consular Information Program advises Americans traveling and residing abroad through Consular Information Sheets, Public Announcements, and Travel Warnings. Consular Information Sheets exist for all countries and include 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. Public Announcements 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://www.travel.state.gov>, where the current [Worldwide Caution](#), [Public Announcements](#), and [Travel Warnings](#) can be found. [Consular Affairs Publications](#), which contain information on obtaining passports and planning a safe trip abroad, are also available at <http://www.travel.state.gov>. For additional information on international travel, see <http://www.usa.gov/Citizen/Topics/Travel/International.shtml>.

The Department of State encourages all U.S. citizens traveling or residing abroad to register via the State Department's travel registration website or at the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate abroad. Registration will make your presence and whereabouts known in case it is necessary to contact you in an emergency and will enable you to receive up-to-date information on security conditions.

You will be required to register with the State Department upon your arrival. You may do so online prior to your travel by visiting: <https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/>.

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.

The National Passport Information Center (NPIC) is the U.S. Department of State's single, centralized public contact center for U.S. passport information. Telephone: 1-877-4USA-PPT (1-877-487-2778). Customer service representatives and operators for TDD/TTY are available Monday-Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 midnight, Eastern Time, excluding federal holidays.

Travelers can check the latest health information with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia. A hotline at 877-FYI-TRIP (877-394-8747) and a web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm> give the most recent health advisories, immunization recommendations or requirements, and advice on food and drinking water safety for regions and countries. A booklet entitled "Health Information for International Travel" (HHS publication

number CDC-95-8280) is available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402, tel. (202) 512-1800.

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 [Background Notes](#) and [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.

[STAT-USA/Internet](#), a service of the U.S. Department of Commerce, provides authoritative economic, business, and international trade information from the Federal government. The site includes current and historical trade-related releases, international market research, trade opportunities, and country analysis and provides access to the [National Trade Data Bank](#).

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

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 REQUIRED 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 45 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 and do not need to any entry fee at your entry point (unless the rule changes in the future). 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 Fullbright grant.

The Border Police Department recognizes a specific document issued by the U.S. Consular Office in Tirana only. Instead of bringing a criminal history report, you need to apply and have an appointment with the Consular Section after you are in the country. They will produce the document at a cost of \$30USD. 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 B** on page 49.

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 53.**)

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 C.**

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
Amembassy 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, 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.

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 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 everyday I learned something new, everyday 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
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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)
bojone87@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 Kosova, 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): (04) 2-247285
(after hours): 355-68-205-1084

Public Affairs Office Fax: (04) 2-232222

Home page address: www.tirana.usembassy.gov

Public Affairs Officer: *Elizabeth A. Lewis*
Assistant Public Affairs Officer: Mr. Brian J. Street
Education Programs Coordinator: Ms. Mirela Cupi
Tel: (04) 2- 247285 ext. 3164
E-mail: cupim@state.gov

Consular Officer: Ms. Lyra Carr

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 C 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.



[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 summer
- Warm hats and gloves
- Sweats or heavy pajamas
- Heavy winter coat
- All-weather/rain coat
- Rain boots
- 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: Information on Applying for Residency Permit

List of documents required:

1. 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)*
 - Below is a sample from last year. Mirela Cupi will help with the temporary home address and contact info in Albania and prepare the Albanian version for fellows as well.
2. Notarized photocopy of your 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
3. Police report
 - received at the US Embassy Consular Section in Tirana at a cost of \$ 30USD *(produced in Albania)*
 -
4. Albanian version of the house lease contract *(produced in Albania)*
 - This document will be produced in Albania after you sign the agreement with the house owner.
5. Marriage certificate and birth certificates (of accompanying children) with the official seal of the issuing authority 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
6. Document from the City Court (city residing in Albania) that there is no record of another marriage of the applicant (required when the spouse is applying). *(produced in Albania)*
7. Photo 3.5cm x 4.5cm - two for each family member/dependent
8. Support letter from the host institution/employer – (in this case, the US Embassy 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)*

Dependents:

- 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
 - Letter of Request for visa extension (in Albanian)
 - Notarized copy of the passport

Cost:

- Three month period: 3600 lek
- Six month period: 7200 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 in Albanian (except for the document issued by the Consular Section)

Tirane _____, _____ 2010

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

Appendix C: 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:** Rr. Zenel Baboçi, 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 San Paolo Bank	237-5680 Ext. 3375
Tirana International School	236-5239
DHL	222-7667

CLINICS

Orthodox Clinic	Rruga e Dibres 236-0925
Clinic At Luigji Monti	Rruga e Kavajes 222-3906, 223-2021
ABC Clinic	Rruga Qemal Stafa
Clinic GLOBE	Laprake
Diplomat Dental Clinic	Rr. Sotir Koleka, Nr 32, Tirane, "Diplomat" Clinic (near the Student City entry arch); 04-2-376 672; 0682038545
UFO Dental Clinic	Rr. Kavajes; 04-2-240 028
Hygiea Hospital	Beginning of Tirana Durres Highway Tel: (04) 2390000
American Hospital 1	Rruga "Lord Byron" Laprake Tirane Tel: (04) 2357535
American Hospital 2	Rruga e Dibres (near Qendra Spitalore Universitare "Nene Tereza", Tirana) Tel: (04) 2357535

GROCERY SHOPPING

Euromax shops are located at:

- Universal Trade Center – Mall (QTU) on the highway
- Rruga Abdyl Frasherri (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

CARREFOUR – Tirana East Gate (TEG) Mall

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. "Duresit", tel. 04-363-030

Pirro Souvenirs

Presents and Souvenirs

1)Rr. "Abdyl Frasheri" , 2) Rr. "Duresit" 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

Tel: 24 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. 25 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.: 24 77 31
Offers great Italian and traditional Albanian cuisine.

Green House

Rr. Jul Variboba nr. 6, behind the Pyramid
Tel.: 25 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. 23 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 Durrës 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. 04 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 500 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 Ghermenji” 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 Infrosoft Building

SIGHTSEEING**National Historical Museum**

Located in the Skenderbeg 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 leke 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 Skenderbeg 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 (Skenderbeg's name before being taken hostage by the Ottomans). The museum was built in 1982 and inside one can see copies of Skenderbeg'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 500 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 Skenderbeg 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 south-west 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 Bapistry, 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 Eqerem 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 Durrës. 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.