Albanian Alps (5 days)
Trek the Highlights of the Accursed Mountains

Travel on the fjord-like Komani Lake into the spectacular Albanian Alps. Hike for five scenic days in dramatic Valbona Valley and through secluded villages of Thethi. Stay at family run guesthouses and learn about highland culture. Start/Finish in Shkodra.

Want to go self-guided? See the Alps Explorer.
Day 1: Departure from Shkodra at 6:15 am
Day 5: Return to Shkodra after 5 pm

4x overnights with hiking up to ▲ 1,000 ▼ 1,125 m
A Discover Albania Classic
Introduction

Our classic 5-day circuit of the Albanian Alps starts with a boat trip on the fjord-like Komani Lake, visits the Valbona and Thethi national parks and ends with a scenic drive across the Terthoria Pass. On five amazing hikes you walk through fairy tale forest, swim in cristal waters and set foot into Montenegro. Look in awe at the sheer walls of Valbona, enjoy panoramic views from the top of Valbona Pass, visit a traditional lock in tower and be inspired by the culture of the Albanian highlanders. You will return with a different perspective!

The trip starts and finishes in Northern Albania's Shkodra. The lively city on the shore of the Balkans' biggest lake and the foothills of the Accursed Mountains is within two hours reach from Tirana and Podgorica. In the mountains we stay at family-run guesthouses in shared rooms and enjoy home cooked meals, full-board is included, only bring some snacks. Note that the main luggage is carried once in caravan-style by horses, please bring rucksacks/duffelbags, avoid suitcases.

Highlights of the Albanian Alps

☆ Hike the best routes of the Valbona and Thethi National Parks
☆ Set a foot across the Montenegrin and reach above 2.000 meters
☆ Surround yourself with the peaks of the Albanian Alps on Valbona Pass
☆ Experience family-run guesthouses and taste yummy home-cooked meals
☆ Swim in the crystal clear Valbona River and icy "Blue Eye" spring

English-speaking tour leader
5 days (4 nights) early morning start / late afternoon return
late May to early October (best period)
1 to 12 persons
starts and ends in Shkodra - nearby airports are Tirana and Podgorica (~2h)
5 hikes with up to 6 h walking time (Ø 5:30 h) and 1,125 m ▼▲
for those in good health and with reasonable fitness (see next page)
hotels with private ensuite rooms & guesthouse with shared rooms
luggage transport: one piece up to 15 kg in soft bags only*
Is this trip for me?

5 hikes up to 6h walking time (Ø 5:30h) and 1,125 m altitude difference.

Difficulty 2/4 Moderate
A moderate tour includes either easier, medium-duration walks or harder, shorter walks. While experience is not necessary, it is desirable. Good health and reasonable fitness are more important. Some walking on loose underfoot, steep sections and occasional longer/harder days may be involved, still general conditions will be fair. A walking day is normally three to five hours and daily ascents will likely be around 300m to 700m, perhaps with an odd day ascending around 800m to 900m.

Comfort 2/4 Welcoming
That means: hotels with private ensuite rooms & guesthouse with shared rooms
- participants share a room with 2-5 other travelers from the group
Breakdown: 4 night(s) in shared room(s)

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Overview</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Dist</th>
<th>Ø 5:30 h</th>
<th>Asc VS Desc</th>
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<th>Desc</th>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>750</td>
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<td>4. Theth - Theth</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Theth - Shkodra</td>
<td>5:30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td>225</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

"Take only pictures, leave only footprints"
Visitors are expected to respect nature, dispose of their waste properly and be considerate of local culture and people.
Overview
Click to open an interactive map

Included
- English-speaking guide
- accommodation: 4x guesthouse(s)
- meals: all breakfasts, 5 lunches and 4 dinners
- transfers as foreseen by the itinerary including airport pick-up
- luggage transport: one piece up to 15 kg in soft bags only*
- entrance fees, trekking and border crossing permits (on guided tours only)
*limited by luggage transport on horse, take a duffel or rucksack, hardcases are not suitable

Excluded
- meals not listed above as well as drinks other than table water
- personal expenses such as gratuities and souvenirs
- flights: all Zbulo tours are ground-service only
- overseas health insurance* is compulsory to offer best possible care
*99% of European travel insurances cover this already

Outline
1. Shkodra - Koman - Bajram Curri - Valbona: guesthouse (-/L/D)
2. Valbona - Kukaj - Valbona: guesthouse/hotel (B/LP/D)
3. Valbona - Valbona Pass - Theth: guesthouse (B/LP/D)
4. Theth - Denelli - Theth: guesthouse (B/LP/D)
5. Theth - Nderlysa - Blue Eye - Shkodra: - (B/L/-)

Have questions?
Click to visit our knowledge base
or write us at welcome@zbulo.org
1. **Journey into the Accursed Mountains**

A Boat Ride on Koman Lake and Warm Up Walk in the Valbona National Park

![Image of the Accursed Mountains]

- 7 km
- 250 m
- 0 m
- 3:30 h

Please be ready for pickup from Hotel Tradita and Rose Garden at 6:15 am sharp! We kick off with a scenic drive through the Drin Gorges to the Komani Lake (55 km/1:30h). The picturesque reservoir loops similar to a Norwegian fjord through sheer rock walls, it's the most attractive route into the Albanian Alps. You’re in for a surprise by the custom-made "boat", which stops several times to pick up locals from remote villages before arriving at Fierze (46 km/3h). After lunch, you’re taken further into the Valbona National Park into a traditional village composed of imposing tower houses. The afternoon warm-up walk follows a crystal clear stream through ancient beach forests speckled with the sweetest strawberries. Along the way, you may enjoy a swimming break at the river or a secluded pond. The walk ends at a cozy accommodation in upper Valbona and there’s opportunity to explore the vicinity. The jagged peaks towering high above leave you with itchy feet, tomorrow will be the day! Tonight we enjoy a hearty home-cooked meal and well earned rest after this impression packed introduction to the Accursed Mountains.
2. **Heights of Valbona – Queen of the Mountains**

Hike to Hamlet Kukaj, Colorful Meadows & Meet Hospitable Shepherds

Refreshed you start the hike to Kukaj, an isolated hamlet where only two families reside. Below bunkers that once protected the border are now scattered in the riverbed. The windy path takes you over lush meadows ablaze with the colors of a wide variety of spring flowers to a shepherd hut on 1,650m. In the communist period, when this was a no-go area, the building used to be a military barrack. Admire the wild and romantic jagged mountain scenery, sample fresh milk products with shepherd’s present or opt to climb higher to an ancient crossing at the Montenegrin border. At 2,045m a weathered border pyramid is the only reminder of the isolation Albania once endured, from here views reach to the most dramatic parts of Montenegrin Prokletije. Catching a last glimpse at the Alps highest peak Jezercë (2,694m) you descent on a different path to the accommodation. When daylight fades you admire the alpine glow over dinner in the idyllic garden. No surprise many local women are named after the beautiful valley.
3. **The Grand Crossing: Hike from Valbona to Theth**

Stand on par with Mighty Mountain Tops on Valbona Pass (1.811m)

Another highlight and with with the highest point of the journey await today. After a short ride over a rough road, you meet the mule porter who carries the main luggage and set out for the hike across Valbona Pass (1.811m). Above the village Rragam few steep segments need to be tackled. Pause regularly near springs and on colorful meadows to take a breath of herb filled aromatic mountain air and enjoy the splendid views. Reaching the pass, the surrounding peaks appear on par and sweeping views of both national parks fascinate even the seasoned traveler. Enjoy the picturesque landscape during a lunch break ahead of the descent to Theth, where the fairy-tale beech forest provides cover from the sun in the afternoon. Close to the village the woods thin out, Mt. Arapi (2.217m) becomes more dominant and soon the upmost houses of the village are reached. Spread below are the valleys many hamlets and a broad path takes you through the village to another inviting guesthouse in the center.

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4. Meadows above the Clouds
Hike to the Field of Denelli (1650m) & Enjoy Panoramic Views of Theth

The walk to the football-field sized Meadows of Denelli offers panoramic views of the lower valley and hamlets of Thethi. Starting right from the guesthouse you walk through the green Ulaj neighborhood and cross the gushing river to ascend in light forest on shepherd’s paths hidden in the cliffs above the Thethi waterfall. The route affords some of the best views of the village, half-moon shaped Mt. Radohima and tomorrow’s route downriver to Nderlysa. After traversing a last ridge the views suddenly open up and hidden in the mountains appears the pasture. Shepherds reside here in July and August, in June and September we can find them on a lower pasture during the return. The families spend often more than four months in the highlands’ simple condition to look after their flocks of sheep and goat that can grow up to 300 in number. The return to Theth follows only a little different roue back to the guesthouse of the previous night. The afternoon is free at your disposal.
In Theth we visit the iconic church and lock-in tower (kulla) that offered protection to men threatened by blood feud. It’s the perfect place to dive into the history of the “kanun” and elaborate on the highland law code. Following water channels, we climb to the famed waterfall and descent along a well-worn bridle path to the quieter hamlet Nderlysa for a hearty lunch. Continue the hike to the colorful karst spring called the “Blue Eye” or alternatively stay put and spend an easy going afternoon with swimming at the glacier-shaped rock formations. In the late afternoon we ride across the scenic Terthorja Pass (1.630m) back to Shkodra (75km/3h).

Expect to reach Shkoder after 5 pm and prepare for an overnight, it’s unlikely there will be public transport. You may contact us to add private transfers to Tirana, airports or another destination as well as hotel overnights before/after the trip where luggage can be stored.