

- The **network** of Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains consists of **nine** complex living **mountains** located around the **Mediterranean Sea**, in **France, Greece, Italy, Spain and Albania**. The respective territories are working together on common **challenges**:
- Preserving **patrimonial values** from endogenous and exogenous threats
 - Sharing **positive experiences** and good practices
 - Increasing **international recognition**



EMbleMatiC Ecojourneys are nine routes of **experiential slow tourism** across **hinterland areas** of European Mediterranean Mountain regions. By enjoying these journeys, visitors have a chance to **explore** the areas' **singularities** and the **activities** offered by local providers. These are journeys where **nature** and **culture** meet, and the experience with **body** and **soul** is such that it generously conveys the **emblematic character** of the territory.



ÇIKA • FROM ÇIKA HIGHLANDS TO THE BEACH



From Çika highlands to the beach



Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund





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Credits

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- Introduction, Responsible Behaviour and How to get there provided by EMbleMatiC project
- Presentation of the Ecojourney From Çika highlands to the beach, Regional Center for Development and Cooperation
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Introduction

Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains



Dear reader,

What you have in your hands is not only a tourist guide of the territory stretching from Çika highlands to the beach, but also the result of an ambitious project carried out by the Emblematic Mediterranean Mountains network. From Çika belongs to a group of selected Mediterranean mountain areas that work together in order to offer you a more intensive, authentic and sustainable travel experience. You can enjoy these experiences through 9 different Ecojourneys (see map above), which lead you to discover with all senses the hidden gems lying behind some of the most amazing mountains across the Mediterranean basin.

Each *Ecojourney* offers you a route or a group of routes across the hinterland area of these mountains. Whilst enjoying this journey on foot, biking or riding, or using public transports, you have a chance to explore the areas' singularities and to discover activities, creations and festivities offered by locals. All routes are perfectly integrated in landscapes that still preserve the footprints and the spirit of their ancient cultures and gorgeous nature.



But there's more: because we know how important aspects such as sustainability and responsible tourism are for you, we are committed to offer you an experience that...

- Is located in hinterland areas that are outside of the usual (and overcrowded) touristic routes;
- Has been conceived and developed mainly using and placing value on already existing infrastructure;
- Is a result of participatory processes with local stakeholders who are aware of environmental good practices related to water and energy consumption, waste management, fostering local and seasonal products, and obtaining ecolabels;
- Is conceived to favour interaction with local people and producers;
- **Will allow you to live for a while the essence of a Mediterranean mountain area, its nature, its culture and its people and traditions. Go for it, it's waiting for you!**

Your EMbleMatiC Hosts

Nine EMbleMatiC ecojourneys

Once you will have enjoyed the ecojourney of this guide, you will be very welcome to carry on visiting the others 8 slow tourism routes located across the hinterland areas of the territories of the EMbleMatiC Mediterranean Mountains network. More information available on the network website www.emblematic-med.eu and below:

Canigó, France

The foothills of the Canigó

Come to explore, to taste and be amazed whilst enjoying everchanging views over the Sacred mountain of Catalans! The foothills of Canigó, the promise of a slow and curious walk full of natural scents.

www.canigo-grandsite.fr



Çika, Albania

From Çika highlands to the beach

A scenic route running in parallel to Çika crest, enriched with a bouquet of 5 extending paths to balconies and paysages, natural & cultural heritage and welcoming people, is the heart of this journey.

<http://himara.gov.al/>



Pedraforca, Spain

The seven faces of Pedraforca mountain

The seven faces of Pedraforca is a new tourist experience that will take you to discover all the secrets hidden by this magical mountain. From one day up to seven days to impregnate yourself!

www.elbergueda.cat / www.visitbergueda.cat

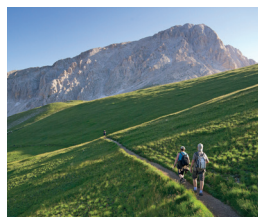


Gran Sasso, Italy

The Gran Sasso, a mountain of Saints and Warriors

Ascend from the Tirino Valley to the Gran Sasso, the highest peak of the Appennini Mountains. Enjoy an emotional journey through nature, ancient traditions, landscapes and tasty local products.

www.galgransassovelino.it / www.yesgransasso.com



Olympus, Greece

"Olympios Zeus", Cultural Route

A mythical route that combines grandiose environment with remarkable historical monuments in a unique harmony. Organized infrastructure and services offer experience that really worth the visit!

www.pieriki-anaptixiaki.gr



Etna, Italy

An ecojourney through pathways of Etna "Ginesta" and "Vineyard" flowered fields

Discover traditions that have not changed for hundred years. Live with the locals, experience their culture and everyday lifestyle whilst falling in love with this very special part of the world.

www.galetnaalcantara.org



Serra de Tramuntana, Spain

The route of Comte Mal

Under the shelter of the majestic Mount Gatzó, that rises above the sea, you will wander on a land of legends, through an outstanding cultural landscape, shaped over centuries by proud local people.

<https://caminsdepedra.conselldemallorca.cat/en/-/la-ruta-del-comte-mal>



Mnt (Psiloritis) Ida, Greece

On the Paths of Myth

Through the ecojourney of Mt Ida (Psiloritis) visitors could discover the Paths of Myths, History, Cultural Heritage and Natural Wealth in order to meet the original side and timeless value of Crete.

www.psiloritisgeopark.gr/Home/2/1.html

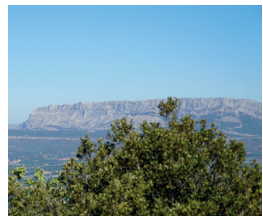


Sainte-Victoire, France

In the mood for Sainte-Victoire

We want you to enjoy the unexpected Sainte-Victoire and share it's authentic mood. Experience our local way of life and meet people who embody the spirit of our living territory.

www.fuveau-tourisme.com







Introduction of the area

Introduction of the area



"Himara Municipality is situated in the south-western Albania else known as the Ionian coast. Like most of the southern Albania the area boasts a mountainous territory, legendary peaks and an appealing coastline. Among these peaks Cika stands out for its location and unique features.

Çika is the highest peak of Çike-Lungare coastal range, known as Ceraunian Mountains, or "thunder-split peaks" in Ancient Greek that rises grandiosely over the Ionian Sea. Ancient writers such as Ptolemy, Strabo and Pausanias often referred to Çika as the house of wilderness. The Ceraunian Mountains are considered to be the southernmost edge of the Dinarics due to common features they share and stretching for 100 km along the Ionian coast of Himara as a natural spine.

Çika massif distinguishes for the steep elevation reaching 2045m (6,706 ft) in less than 5 km distance from the sea. This immediate rise is accompanied by a drastic change in climate and vegetation. Çika is home to one of the most important National Parks in Albania, Llogara National Park, covered with sparse marquis mixed with pine and Shed Cypresses.



The lower mountain landscape is of a large crescent of coastal watershed with many intermittent stream beds having carved a series of gorges and hills with denser vegetation leading further up the slopes providing good opportunities for hiking routes. This crescent ends in a long shore divided into beaches separated by a ridge of limestone jutting into the sea. Ancient olive yards and citrus trees dominate the lower parts of the range. About 1400 species, or 42.4% of the Albanian flora of which 68 threatened & rare species, or 21.25% of the total in Albania, make up the flora of this region. There are 105 birds, 6 rare & endangered species and 2 threatened deer species of the Mediterranean.



Lorem ipsum

The view over the peak of Cika is magnificent covering the northern Ionian Islands in Greece and the Italian coast of Poulia (across the straits of Otranto).

Çika has attracted the interest of hikers, but there was a limited activity going on in the past. Increased interest from hikers has placed Çika today amongst the most demanded itineraries therefore mountaineering is expected to experience a boom.

Himara Municipality counts 24 villages located on both sides of the range an area of 571.94 sq km and 27.168. Çika peak stat Llogara Pass, 40 km south-east of the port city of Vlorë, 80 km north-west of the port city of Saranda, 190 km south of the capital city of Tirana and country's only International Airport.

The area can be accessed by road, through the coastal national axis that starts in Vlora and passes through Llogara Pass all the way to Saranda where it connects with other national and international axis.

The economy of the area is based on tourism which is a very seasonal activity and is built around the sea as main element of attraction. It consists of accommodation services, lodgings, restaurants, incoming agencies, guides, the info center of Llogara Natural Park, etc. Although the area is reach in natural and cultural attractions, little are these assets utilized until now due to mainly lack of infrastructure. The area is also focused in fisheries, agriculture, livestock.



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**Presentation of
the eco-journey**

1 From Çika highlands to the beach



Route:	From Çika highlands to the beach	Duration:	1-5 days
Map Symbol:		Height:	1050 m
		Length:	58.3 km

A scenic route running in parallel to Cika crest, enriched with a bouquet of 5 extending paths to balconies and paysages, natural & cultural heritage and welcoming people is the heart of this journey.

Unlike the rest of the European countries Albania has not yet caught the eye of the tourist and is vaguely in the map of places to go to. As much as it may seem an unvisited destination certain part of its territory are performing a One-Place Show in the regional and international arena of tourism. The Southern Coast of Albania and the Territory of CIKA Mountain is an appealing place to beach goers and the place is gradually compromising the values and the sense of place.

The access to the area is mainly through a national park and the road remains scenic and not invasive however the demand for Sea Sand and Sun holidays has led to a boom in traffic to a place that once boasted unique natural and cultural heritage. Under such a pressure signs of chaotic development are evident and are gradually ripping off the value of the places and the heritage. Beside in increased number of housing to cater such dramatically short needs for beach holidays nothing has been done in terms of enriching tourist experiences of this place.

Starting at Llogara pass, this Eco-itinerary winds through alpine meadows stretching for 58 km from the famous Ceasar's trail dating 48 B.C. to Panormi bay along the Albanian Riviera. The bay is jeweled with an islet hosting a 14th C triangular Venetian Castle last used by the infamous ruler of Epir, Ali Pasha. A submarine base, a relic landmark of the communist ruled Albania, sits in the same bay.



The path is blessed with natural balconies offering stunning unobstructed views of the sparkling Mediterranean Sea, a paragliding platform, mountain passes, canyons, gorges, hills, historic villages and the 2400 year old castle of Himara mentioned by Thucydides. A stop at Himara renewed promenade is the best refreshing reward before hiking to Pilur, the village of nightingales. Best spirits and polyphonic music inspire rapsodes at 700 above-the-sea village.

Known as the house of wilderness sitting in the arms of the mountain, Cika saves a variety of authentic experiences that will create remarkable remembrances of the place. Do not put only sandy beaches in your list. Join us for a unique travel in the past. In the next 5 days you will be treated places, tastes and memories that will remain forever.

The team supporting your dream, a group of passionate local guides lead you to paths and trails from the Cika balconies to the pristine beaches. All along the way you meet people paragliding off the Cika Terrace, see the magnificent traditional villages of Dermi, the historic castle of old Himara, walk the cobble stone alleys and feel like living in the 1800.

You breathe the fresh air and get washed by the Ionian sea breeze atop of Pilur hill while worshipping gods and nature at Gipe Canion. The modest houses and the arched alleys make Vuno look like a big house with a single family in it. An overlap of two époques of hardship at Panormi speak of the strength of the people bearing it. Make you rethink life and respect it.

When the eco-journey is over you will get to know another you. Your inner world will have changed for better after having known an unusual place lived by extremely usual people with beautiful spirits. You will come back for more!



Route:	The Eye	Duration:	2h 48m by foot, 23m by car
Map Symbol:	 	Height:	843m - 234m
		Length:	14.5km

The EYE features:

- The mill's trail
- Llogara Tourist Village
- Botanical Pass
- Cesar's Pass
- Dhrle Beach
- The white routes
- Paragliding and panorama spot

Starting at 1000 m above sea level, in the heart of Llogara National Park, amidst an Alpine environment rich in geo-monuments and bio-monuments, this first part of the Eco-Itinerary is named the EYE. The first 30 minutes walk through the historic path of glorious Cesar leads to the panoramic spot overlooking the bay of Vlora North of Çika. The next panoramic spot, that of Llogara pass, situated near the starting point of the legendary Çika Path gives this name to this section. Standing at EYE one stretches the view along the coastal line of Çika and across the Ionian Sea to the Island of Corfu. Halfway downhill a heart-shaped paragliding platform is the most popular spot for extreme sports lovers.





Route:	Sacred Cika	Duration:	1h 17m by foot, 9m by car
Map Symbol:	 	Height:	350m - 41m
		Length:	9km

Sacred Çika features:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Monastery of Pangji | Jani Apartments |
| Monastery of St. Theodore | Vila Nino Dhermi |
| Monastery of St. Mary | Strakosha Guesthouse |
| Monastery of Stavridh | Villa Milton |
| Church of St. Harallamb | Luciano |
| Petro Marko House | Harmonia |
| Penelope's Rooms | Havana Beach Club |

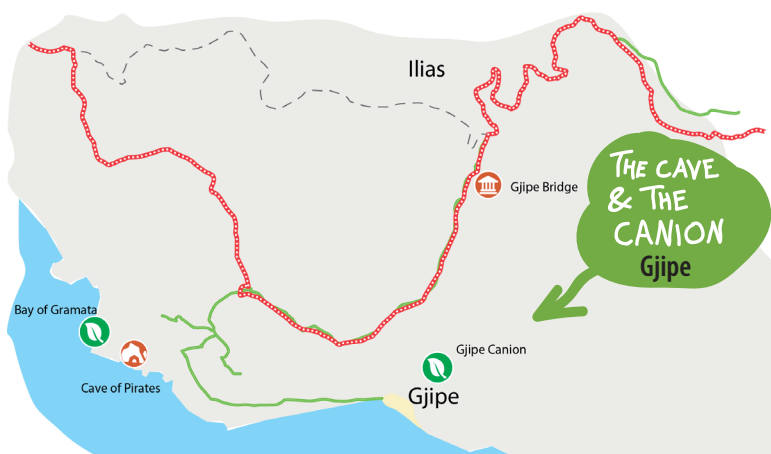
This section of Çika eco-itinerary earned the mountain Its Mediterranean cultural identity & picturesque landscape. Dhërmi best represents the religious heritage of the area with over 5 churches and numerous chapels. The church of St. Spiridon is met in several places along the eco-itinerary as this is the Saint of the area. Churches of Saint Nicolas, St. Demetrius and St. Stefan are of both architectural and iconographic interest as their frescoes are the oldest in Albania dating the twelfth century. St. Mary's celebrations on August 15 or the Small Easter is the most popular. Despite the dictate used by the communist regime to turn the population in the area, as all over the country, into atheists people held on to their belief and openly restored the Christian Orthodox belief after 90's.





The historic Monastery of the St.Theodores is found on hill about 2 km from the village of Dhermi.Because of its strategic position,the monastery was turned into a Soviet military base to monitor the Ionian Sea during the communist regime.As a result,the church suffered extensive damage: the apse of the sanctuary was destroyed, new openings were made for windows, the roof was replaced by a flat concrete roof,and the southern gallery and the floor were destroyed.



1 Çika



Route:	The Cave and the Canion	Duration:	2h 6m by foot, 42m by car
Map Symbol:	 	Height:	350m - 41m
		Length:	9km

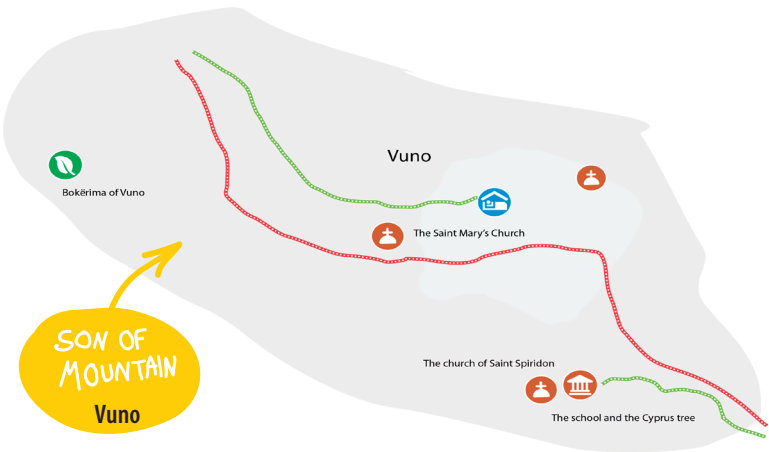
The Cave and the Canion features:

Cave of Pirates
 Bay of Gramata
 Gjipte Canyon
 Gjipte Bay
 Jali Beach
 Gjipte Bridge

Considered as one of the most attractive and interesting geo-monuments throughout the whole Albanian Ionian coast the 800m-long Canyon of Gjipte was created by the stream with the same name. It reaches a height of up to 100m representing natural, educational and geological values. It is rich in Karstic caves most of which unexplored. Follow the trail from Dhermi to Gjipte beach via the famous Monastery of Saint Todhri (Theodore) and the famous Pirates' Cave engraved in the book by the same title written by Petro Marko, a Dhërmiot write; one of the founding fathers of modern Albanian prose.



1 Çika



Route:	Son of mountain	Duration:	59m by foot, 8m by car
Map Symbol:	 	Height:	367m - 260m
		Length:	4.1km

Son of mountain features:

- The Dwelling of Odise Kasneci
- The house with the tower of Shane Koka
- The school and the Cyprus tree
- The church of Saint Spiridon
- The Church of St. Michael
- The Saint Mary's Church
- Bokërima of Vuno
- Vasili Guesthouse

This section took the name after the village of Vuno, (Mountain in Greek) which itself took the name not just because of the situation on the hills. The life in this village likely dates Bronze Age and despite it turbulent historic record life in this village continued. Vuniotes distinguish for pride and loyalty. As Himariots they were always part of the resistance against occupation. In particular, during World War II, Vuniotes greatly contributed to liberation. The obelisk raised in honor of those that died during this war is a landmark that one finds in almost every village of Himara.



The Church of St.Spiridon rises in an open courtyard, in the lower portion of the village. It was built in the year 1778 and was painted in the year 1784 by the iconographer John from the Eparchy of Drinopojë and Gjirokastër. The church is a three-aisled basilica covered with a flat ceiling and having a gallery on its western side. On the east side an iconostasis, built of stone masonry, separates the area of the sanctuary. The ceilings of the aisles are decorated richly and have particular artistic value.



1 Çika



Route:	Following the voices of the nightingales	Duration:	5h 55m by foot, 56m by car
Map Symbol:		Height:	624m - 1m
		Length:	26.5km

Following the voices of the nightingales features:

Oak tree and St. Nicholas Church	Himara's Castle
Fort remnant	Spile Cave
Jelime necropolis	Vila Kosteli
St. Mary's Church	GuestHouse 1932
St. Sergius Church	Taverna Lefteri - Since 1998
St. Bacchu Church	Cibo Mare e Terra
All Saints Church	Veranda Bar Restaurant

Pilur section strongly represents the Mediterranean cultural identity of Çika. Situated 750 m above the sea level, it is one of the 13 settlements existing since 1432. Fresh air and amazing views of the Mediterranean earned Pilur the status of a balcony. The holly Church oaks, the best homemade grape Raki, the iso-polyphonic singing, the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO and the Pilur born famous folk rhapsodists of folk songs make Pilur a very outstanding highlight of the eco journey.



1 Çika



Route:	Historic overlap	Duration:	40m by foot, 7m by car
Map Symbol:	 	Height:	81m - 6m
		Length:	3.1km

Historic overlap features:

- Cold War Tunnel
- Ali Pasha Castle
- Orthodox Church in Ali Pasha's Castle

A submarine bunker built under the rule of the Dictator Hoxha in the 20 Century and a triangular medieval Venetian Fort rebuilt in the 18th century by the ruler of Epirus, Ali Pasha of Tepelena, a rugged, sly, and controversial figure, sit opposite each other in the tectonic Bay of Panormi.







Where to eat

The local cuisine of Himara offers a wide variety of traditional foods, sweets and drinks made of local ingredients rich in flavor and nutritious values.

The local gastronomy is based on a combination of traditional protein based dishes with strong influences of Turkish and Mediterranean cuisine, mainly Greek. Recently trends of international cuisine are observed in a handful of restaurants. Fish and seafood is widely used while herbs and olive oil are always present.

Locally produced spirits, wines and sweets including a wide variety of marmalades, jams and chutneys are met in every local shop, the majority of which are homemade.

The area is mentioned for the production of honey and the higher one climbs the more evident becomes the scent of the forest flowers in the honey. White and red wine is also produced in every village but the best are those produced at high altitudes.

The area is rich in fruits including melon, fig, citrus, apricot, water-melon, apple, pear, orange, strawberry, cherry, quince, mandarin and orange. Kiwi and kumquat are two very new species introduced by early '80s.

Local dishes and local products can be enjoyed in all settlements on the Eco itinerary in a wide variety of restaurants, traditional taverns, fish restaurants, fast foods and other dining options.



Restaurant Alberti

Llogora Pass, Llogara National Park, Albania
Mob: +355 67 269 1635



Taverna Lefteri - Since 1998

SH8 Spile , Central Road 50 Meters From the Hospital,
Himare 9425,Albania
Mob: +355 69 223 8499



Cibo Mare E Terra

Himare Potam Ruga Nazionale, Himare 9425,
Albania
Mob: +355 69 976 3736



Villa Milton

Dhermi, Albania
Mob: +355 68 223 5962





Luciano

Dhemi Dhermi 5555, Albania

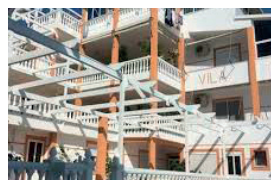
Mob: +355 69 659 9229



Veranda Bar Restaurant

Qeparo qender Himare Vlore, Qeparo 9416, Albania

Mob: +355 69 671 8488



Llogora Tourist Village

Llogara National Park

Mob: +355696580444

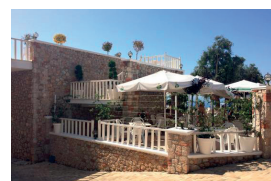


Harmonia

Rruga E Kampit, 200metra Nga Deti, Dhermi,

Dhermi 1001, Albania

Mob: +355 68 606 0214







Where to sleep

Himara has an overall capacity of 10000 beds or roughly 600 accommodation facilities. The majority of these facilities are located on the western slope of Cika facing the sea. Over 75% are rooms, apartments or guest houses run by locals and only 25% are investment from non-locals in the form of small hotels and resort type infrastructure. There is no rating system in Albania therefore most of the accommodation's rate may be referred to the one offered by online travel agencies and websites.



Penelope's Rooms

Rruga e Plazhit Dhermi, 9422 Dhërmi, Albania

Mob: +355 67 490 5515



Apartamente Jani

Rr: Perivolos Dhërmi 9422 Dhërmi, Albania

igiann@hotmail.com

Mob: +355 69 69 73961



Vila Kosteli

National Road Vlore-Sarande, Himare 9422 Albania

Mob: +355 0393 22634

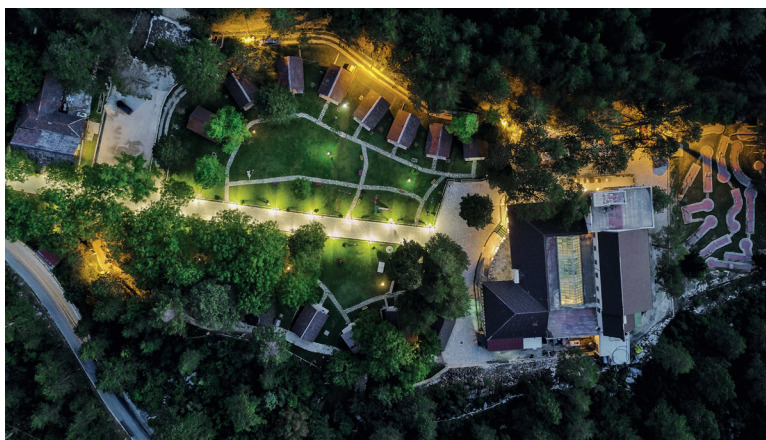


Vila Nino Dhermi

Rruga e Kampit Sh8, Dhermi 9422 Albania

Mob: 068 213 6127

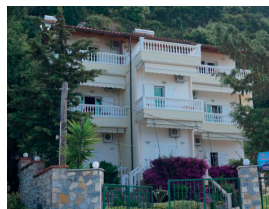




Strakosha Guesthouse

Rruga e Kampit, SH8, Dhermi 9400 Albania

Mob: +30 2352 021100



GuestHouse 1932

Himare 9425 Albania

Mob: +1 917-709-6752



Vasili Guesthouse

Main Route, Vuno 1000 Albania

Mob: +30 2352 021100



Llogora Tourist Village

Llogora National Park

Info@llogora.com

Mob: +355696580444







**Where to meet
local producers**



No.1	Location (village, municipality)	Producer's name	Product*	Service**
1	Himara, Albania	Te Bollanot	Homemade Products	Product tasting and selling
2	Qeparo, Albania	ANI	Oil production, typical local product	Prouction and selling, tasting
3	Qeparo, Albania	Skuraj	Oil production	Oil production and selling, tasting
4	Himara, Albania	Lindita Idrizi	Honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis, royal jelly.	Production, tasting and selling
5	Himara, Albania	Grigor Mehilli	Honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis, royal jelly.	Production, tasting and selling
6	Himara, Albania	Astrit Balilaj	Honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis, royal jelly.	Production, tasting and selling
7	Himara, Albania	Cerciz Ziaj	Honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis, royal jelly.	Production, tasting and selling
8	Himara, Albania	Flora Tocaj	Honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis, royal jelly.	Production, tasting and selling
9	Himara, Albania	Razip Denaj	Honey, beeswax, pollen, propolis, royal jelly.	Production, tasting and selling



The economy of the area of çika is based on tourism which is a very seasonal activity and is built around the sea as main element of attraction. It consists of accommodation services, lodgings, restaurants, incoming agencies, guides, the info center of Llogara Natural Park, etc. Fisheries, agriculture, agri-food craft industries and livestock are the second pillar of the economy .





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What to do

Outdoor activities



Cika Eco itinerary is a one-way route of 58,30 km. A good part of it or around 15 km is on foot (green color on the map enclosed) and it consists of extensions to destinations located en route. These destinations are situated above or below the main automobile axis that joins the main villages.

These extensions are narrow routes or trails used by hikers. Almost all the main route may be traveled by bicycle, beside vehicles (red color on the map) while in some parts of the green routes there is a possibility for mountain biking. Cika area is an ideal place for various outdoor activities such as:

- hiking,
- paragliding,
- mountain biking,
- horseback riding,
- plant hunting,
- bird watching.

Numbers of visitors that climb Cika have grown. Most of them cross the National Park and climb individually or through mountaineering clubs to the peaks of Qorre nad Cika, through established and marked hiking trails leading to these peaks.



EVENTS

Himara has a rich cultural identity highlighted by cultural and religious events that the visitor can experience throughout the year.

Mainly Orthodox religious celebrations dominate the core of the annual activities in Himara followed by cultural events organized by different Cultural Associations across the region and country.

There are a few culture clubs that are supported by the municipality and they perform mainly polyphonic songs, Polyphony of Albania is a protected heritage of Albania and the world. Some of the local fests celebrated mainly outdoors include:

- Christmas is traditionally celebrated in Himara.
- The Carnival is usually held in March, this year it will be held on March 8th 2019
- For the last couple of years Himara organizes annually the Summer Outdoor Festival. This year the festival will be held in April and will be combined with the Paragliding Fest
- Orthodox Easter is a very important celebration for Himara
- The Olive Oil Fest and Competition held annually in June.
- The Day of Polyphony, organized in July

The Botanical Path

Situated at the very heart of the National Park of Llogara, at 1000 m height, the path displays a variety of typical alpine vegetation, dominated by *Pinus nigra* and *Abies borisii-regis*. The shrub Floor includes a larger number of species with higher values of dominance: *Rhamnus alpinus* subsp. *fallax*, *Juniperus communis*, *Daphne oleoides*.

Euphorbia cyparissias, *Senecio squalidus*, *Sideritis raeseri*, etc. are found at a high presence on the herbaceous floor.

About 1400 species or 42.4% of the Albanian flora make up the flora of Cika. Some plant species of particular interest in this area are: *Leucojum valentinum* subsp. *vlorens*; *Hypericum haplopylloides*, as endemic species, *Petteria ramentacea*; *Crataegus heldreichii*; *Limonium anfractum*; *Pedicularis graeca*; *Crocus boryi*; *Scutellaria rubicunda* subsp. *rubicund.*; *Valantia aprica* etc, subendemic

Cacar Pass (Ceasar's Pass)

The Eco-itinerary field visit start and ends in places packed with myths and legends.

Traditionally a place for hiking Llogara National Park is the starting point of this field visit. Starting with a 30 min walk through an Alpine environment is a very healthy exercise for all. Destination of this short walk is Caesar or Ca'car's Pass, a very glorious and at the same time panoramic spot.

Roman legions came down on the southern coast of Albania, commanded by Julius Caesar, Emperor of Rome during his pursuit of Pompey in 48 b.c. His name has remained in this area to this day in the Gorge or Coast of Caesar nearby Palasë village, where his Legion rested as well as the Caesar's pass, (called Ca'car from the locals) in Llogara.

The spot at Llogara was considered the EYE as the view stretches from the mountain heights to a good part of what is known as the Albanian Riviera (the villages of Palasë, Dhermi, Vuno, etc.)

Paragliding & Panorama

The new heart-shaped paragliding platform has added to the tourist infrastructure of Himara. A competition is held annually at this spot which seems to be quite appealing for both national and international adventure hunters.



Cika's eco itinerary is better walked under the guidance of a specialised local guide. The guides in the following list safely and successfully lead groups of Albanian and international tourists across the country and southern Albania in particular. The guides are specialized in mountain climbing and are well-known for their professionalism. Some of them have also obtained a quality certificate abroad. They are able to provide group instruction and personal guiding at every level of an eco-itinerary along the southern coast of Albania.

GUIDING SERVICES IN THE AREA

Asllan Vedat	00355 (0) 69930220	vedeataslani@gmail.com vedat.aslani@uliksi.com	Tirana	uliksi.com
Dedndreaj Vladimir	00355 (0) 68200515	contact@albania-adventure.com	Tirana	albania-adventure.com
Mati Genti	00355 (0) 694088845	genti@outdooralbania.com	Tirana	outdooralbania.com
Shima Endrit	00355 (0) 692121612	endrit.shima@gmail.com	Tirana	
Jubani Bledar	00355 (0) 672133311	bledarjubani@yahoo.com	Tirana	
Cako Rigert	00355 (0) 693585230	rigertcako@gmail.com	Tirana	
Mitrovasilj Adrian	00355 (0) 672085011	mitrovasilj@gmail.com	Tirana	
Hiking South Albania	00355 (0) 692520506		Tirana	

The white routes and Dhrale beach

Situated at the northernmost part of the coastal line defining Cika's feet, Dhrale beach sits between Karaburun-Sazan Marine National Park and Karaburun peninsula, the later part of the larger National Park of Llogara. It lies at the northwestern end of the Akroceraunians and is a gateway to a rich marine or terrestrial surrounding.

Identified by experts as areas of natural heritage the surroundings are rich in habitats and species of marine flora and fauna in particular. These areas cater as shelter, food and breeding for a large number of species of national, regional and global importance including marine algae, sponges, mollusks, crustaceans, red coral, reptiles, mammals and Mediterranean monk seal.

The Monasteries of Dhermi

The church grounds date all the way to the thirteenth century. There are three other monasteries- the most famous of them being St. Theodore, in addition to the monastery of St. Mary and the Monastery of Stavridh.

The churches of Dhermi

There are two large churches – the church of Saint Harallamb and that of Saint Spiridon – as well as a number of other small churches, built mainly with the financial support of emigrants. Churches of more architectural and iconographic interest include the Church of St. Stephan and the Church of St. Demetrius. St. Demetrius possessed the oldest frescoes in Albania dating to the twelfth century. Latin documents of the sixteenth to the seventeenth centuries talk about efforts made by the Catholic Church, through the order of Basilians, for the conversion of Himare and especially Dhermi. They also established a seminar for priests in the Albanian language. The feast of St. Mary is one of the most popular celebrations in the village.

Petro Marko House

One of the outstanding writers in the literature, Petro Marko, was born in Dhermi and his house has been preserved as a monument of culture.

The caves of Dhermi

In the south of the village on the rocky coast is situated a great deep cave known as the "Cave of Pirates". In the northern part of the coast of Dhermi, in a small rocky bay called the Bay of Gramata. This name comes from a large number of inscriptions carved in the rock. These were made by Roman emperors, sailors, various pirates, and even the famous Italian humanist Kyriakos of Ancona, all who passed there at one time.



Vuno:**The roots – The History**

The village of Vuno likely dates to the late Bronze Age. Numerous findings of pottery and the presence of a number of different pre-urban fortifications near the village prove the continuity of life in this settlement. But more concrete evidence of this settlement are Ottoman documents from 1551, which inform us that Vuno had 84 houses; later documents from 1584 record 100 house. Like the other villages of this region, the residents of Vuno were active in the anti-Ottoman resistance. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the residents of Vuno were friends of the famous Pasha of Ioannina, Ali Pasha. A number of letters and personal correspondence that Pasha had with the Kasneci family and other residents of this village are archived in the village. Like other residents of the villages of this region, in the middle ages, residents of Vuno served as soldiers in the kingdom of Naples and a part of them in "Regiment of Albanians" near Bonaparte. During World War II, Vunjotsit greatly contributed in liberation.

The church of Saint Spiridon

Was built in 1778. It is separated by two arcades on stone pillars in three vertical naves; a brace arcade in the western part separated the two-story endo-narthex. The side naves of the naos are narrow, giving more space to the central nave. Naves and naos feature wooden ceilings. The space of the altar is separated from the naos by an iconostasis. The church has entrances on the west, south and north sides. On the west side, the church is preceded by a square porch in plan, which is open on three sides with arcades on thin stone pillars. On the eastern side, the basilica ends with semicircular apse. The masonry of the church was built with stones and is coated with a thin layer of plaster, leaving out the corners of the walls and shoulders of doors and windows, worked with carved stones. The roof has collapsed and is currently being restored.

The Church of St. Michael (Kisha e Shen Mehilit)

Was built in the bottom quarter of the village of Vuno and its paintings date to 1783. The only entrance and window are located on the northern side. It consists of a naos, which is separated from the altar by an iconostasis. Traces of the apse roof on the east side show that the church had once been covered with stone slabs, the masonry was built with flattened grout and lime mortar. It ends with a simple stone frame. The corners and the shoulders of the door and windows, which were made of hewn stones, and the apse with saw-tooth frames are the only elements made with special care and attention.



The Saint Mary's Church, Mesodhi

The Saint Mary's Church, Mesodhi is situated in the southeast quarter of Vuno. It is a simple church: one nave with a rectangular layout and humble internal dimensions. It is covered with a wooden gabled roof and is without a ceiling. It has an entrance on the west side and is the only space by means of which the church can be enlightened because windows are completely missing. The naos is separated from the altar by an iconostasis. The apse is shifted slightly on the right and is covered with stone slabs, which proves that this was the authentic coverage of the church. It was painted in 1783. The church walls were built with stones and lime mortar.

The Dwelling of Odise Kasneci (Banesa e Odise Kasnecit)

Was built in three construction phases. The first phase included a multilevel building, and one side of the building is composed of a mezzanine level. The second construction was more typical – the ground floor has two side-by-side vaults. At the same time, a cistern was included. The third construction, in line with the second, is scaled in height (varying levels), due to the steep land.

Edward Lear described the interior in 1848: "Paneled walls surrounded by Ottoman couches... The central part of the ceiling tastefully decorated with dried grape bunches, hanging with some regular motifs... the windows were very small and had a string of frengjishe in walls." The construction is distinguished by the corners and the window frames, which are made of hewn stone.

The house with the tower of Shane Koka (Banesa me Kulla e Shane Kokes)

Was constructed in two phases, which date back respectively to 1785 and 1787. The first phase, which is a classic example of the house with tower, lies on the road, in a part of the volume of the road, rising with two vaults above to enable the passage. The crib or katua of the dwelling is also covered with a barrel vault. The exterior stone staircase leads to the two entrances of the premises of the first floor only, which includes one volume and the space. The addition of 1787 is very well connected with the first construction. The entrance from the street leads to a kind of porch, under which is a big cistern. Two residential facilities are stacked above the porch, the arches of vaults and underpasses are featured throughout the dwelling. The stones used for the construction are of average size for vaults and corners, while the walls feature small stones. The windows feature stone lintels above consoles.

The Coast- Gjipe Bay

On the western, sea-facing side of Ilias, the village descends on a gradual slope toward the Ionian Sea, to a small, picturesque beach called the "Beach of Gjipe". This sandy bay is contained on both sides by rock-cliffs, which lead up to the rolling, shrub-covered plateau above. On either side of the Gjipe gorge is a landscape of similar, minor forms, where the deep red soil has eroded in a succession of ridges and valleys that drain toward the edge of the land into the sea. Within this dense scrub, a winding road takes visitors to a clearing that serves as a parking for a monastery, and for a path leading down Gjipe beach. The tiny bay of Gjipe can be reached by a thirty to forty-minute hike down this trail.

The Canyon of Gjipe – A Natural Monument

Gjipe Canyon is a geo-monument created by the stream with the same name and the karstic processes. It is 800-meter-long, with a medium width of 10-12 meters and a height that goes up to 100m. along the rocky hillsides there are various caves, where most of them remain unexplored. This Monument represents natural, educational and geological values. It can be considered as one of the most attractive and interesting geo-monuments throughout the whole Ionian coast. It can be easily reached following the trail Dhermi – Saint Todhry Monastery – Gjipe beach in a few minutes.

"Gjipe Bridge"

or also known as "The Bridge on the River, Vuno" is situated close to Ilias village, along the path that leads to orthodox monastery, nearby the famous Gjipe Canyon of the Ionian coast. This bridge is declared a Culture Monument from the National Restoration Council.



Himara lower is a relatively new development compared to Old or Upper Himara. Up to 1940's Himara population lived in upper Himara. Before 1940 the number of these houses within the castle walls reached 280.

As a result of a bombing during the Italian-Greek war most of the families living within the castle were forced to abandon their homes traveling to Corfu where they stayed for about 6 months. Families that returned were less so part of them rehabilitated their houses and continued to live here while the others moved downwards towards Spile (Himara lower), Livadhi or in a quarter to the valley that lies beyond Potam area, called Michail. After WWII Himara Lower developed into a small inhabited center by the main road axis that connected Saranda with Vlora, two major coastal cities situated south and north of the Ionian Coast. Under communism it served as a small resort town with only one hotel structure run by the state however Himariots opened their houses for guests and friends.

The area is also focused in fisheries, agriculture, livestock. Service sector such as banking and education is underdeveloped. The industry is non-existent in the area except for small agri-food craft industries.

In the early 90's the population of Himara and the villages emigrated massively mainly to Greece, while population from remote areas of the neighboring regions of Albania, even north of the country, known as newcomers, were settled in the periphery of the coastal villages and Himara town.

After 2000 a construction boom wave hit Himara too. This led to a substantial number of beds added. Today Himara receives annually around 50000 visitors which contribute to the economy of the place. Locals are embracing service industries. A visit to a local entrepreneur-traditional sweets and spirits producer will give us the opportunity to taste home-made jam and chutneys.

Himara castle and the old Himara village

Upper Himara is located on top of a hill that rises between two dried streams. The distance between upper and lower Himara is about five minutes by car. From there one enjoys magnificent views over Himara lower, the coast, the beaches and the surrounding mountains.

The village was abandoned several times during its existence but the the evacuation that changed the course of life of it happened during the Italian-Greek war. After a bombing part of the population was settled in three lower areas that would later on make main peripheral quarters of Himara i.e, Livadhi etc. Early Byzantine churches that have been claimed Monuments of Culture by the Albanian Government are located here. They carry unique +historic, cultural, architectonic and aesthetic values and the main challenge for these buildings today is the restauration interventions needed.

A new church and school complex were constructed by the Orthodox church of Albania. The construction has relied strongly on main traditional architectural character of the village.



The uppermost part of the hill hosts the older part of the village which is located within the walls of the castle and is dominated by ruins, some of which date back to medieval times including here tracts of a medieval wall and the church of saint Mary Kasopitra. The foundations of the castle are from Hellenistic times (around 4th century BC). The historic houses of the medieval village in upper Himara are connected between them with narrow alleys made of stone.

Typical of Old Himara is the organizing of houses in groups around small squares. Usually such groupings speak of way life was organized within these societies (kinfolks) and owners of these houses would have blood relationship between them.



Himare/ Church of St. Sergius and St. Bacchu

The church of St. Sergius and St. Bacchu (Kisha e Shen Sergit dhe Bakut) is built in the highest point of the village, in the northwest and near the walls and altar. The church walls retain traces of numerous reconstructions. A document of the year 1577 indicates that the church was burned and rebuilt. It served for a long time as the seat of the bishopric of Himare. The church had two main construction phases: the initial construction belongs to naos with the lower parts of the walls, because the upper parts were built several times. The narthex constitutes a later construction proved by technological advances in construction techniques. The naos is separated from that of the altar by a wall in iconostasis, with decorated frames with floral motifs. The naos is accessed through an entrance on the west side connected with narthex, and one from the south that leads to the courtyard of the church. The fresco of the church is preserved in the large semicircular apse. The bell tower, which stands six-meters high, sits in the corner, and at the northern entrance to the narthex a vault is immured with four carved eagles.

The Church of St. Mary of Athal

The Church of St. Mary of Athal (Kisha e Shen Merise se Athalit) is built on a hill two hours east of Himare. It was built in 1795. The church has a basilica with three naves. The naves are separated by arches on the columns, which create a rectangular core because joining with the sidewalls, and which are covered with cylindrical vaults, with an opening to the central nave. The altar space is divided by a high wall iconostasis with the three entrances. The bell tower stands on the central wall while in the east it ends in a cylindrical apse.

The All Saints Church

All Saint Church (Kisha e Gjithe Shenjtoreve) is located in the eastern part of the castle of Himare. It is a three-aisled basilica (15.8x31m) separated from the central nave altar through a wooden iconostasis. The church has two entrances on the south and north. The church pillars are reinforced with wooden braces, and in addition the church has 16 wooden columns carved with different motifs. The ceiling also is constructed in timber and has a various decorative element such as rosettes and other geometrical motifs. The church bell and the dome (substantially altered during reconstruction) do show objects of interest as well.



The uppermost part of the hill hosts the older part of the village which is located within the walls of the castle and is dominated by ruins, some of which date back to medieval times including here tracts of a medieval wall and the church of saint Mary Kasopitra. The foundations of the castle are from Hellenistic times (around 4th century BC). The historic houses of the medieval village in upper Himara are connected between them with narrow alleys made of stone.

Typical of Old Himara is the organizing of houses in groups around small squares. Usually such groupings speak of way life was organized within these societies (kinfolks) and owners of these houses would have blood relationship between them.



Pilur

Pilur is a small village under the administration of Himara situated 750 m above the sea level. Pilur is one of the 13 settlements existing since 1432 after the Ottoman Cadastral registry. It is the southern end of the coastal ridge traverse, a path that links the peaks of Cika with heights varying from 2045 m to 700 m (Pilur).

Fresh air and amazing views of the Mediterranean earned Pilur the status of a balcony. The Church oaks represent an area of 1.5 ha next to the village church populated by very old oak trees 10 – 15 m high and a diameter of 60 – 70 cm. residents consider them holy and have never touched the trees. They are listed in the national registry of natural monuments for their scientific and aesthetic values.

As elsewhere in Albania, Raki production (by primitive means) is still a well-preserved tradition. Locals produce one of the best home made Raki types due to the unique flavour of grapes growing at 750 m height and the fresh water of the mountain.

Recently Pilur has become a destination for active travellers including hikers and mountain bikers. Locals have started to invest in their houses turning them into guest houses.

An interesting fact about Pilur is that some of the most famous folk rhapsodists of Polyphonic songs of the Southern Coast are Pilur born. Iso-Polyphony was inscribed in 2008 on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO).

Traditionally it is rendered mainly by male singers, members of a family or friends accompanying a wide range of social events, such as weddings, funerals, harvest feasts, religious celebrations and festivals. In the south coast unlike the rest women may also join the group, often as lead soloists.

During the stay at Piluri we shall enjoy the views of the coast and Cika and enjoy local homemade Raki.

Panormy Bay:

The small tectonic bay of Panormi hosts the famous Castle (one of them) of Ali Pasha, the vizier (Turkish title given by the Ottoman Empire) or ruler of Epirus.

The castle is located not far from the town of Himara and has a triangular shape. Its dimensions are 150 m x 400 m. The height of the walls reaches 15 m. The castle is located on an island about 30 m from the shore where the narrow waterline between the coast and the island is filled with sand and stones to create a land connection with it. The castle has a triangular planar shape with three powerful ramparts in the corners. Entrance is located in the middle of the southern wall. On the sea side, between two bastions a trapezoidal surface is surrounded by turret-shaped walls. The inside of the castle consists of a large number of chambers covered with stone tiles which end up in the upper part with a common terrace. The premises served for the garrison housing, while one of chambers served as a prison.



The castle of Panormi is one of the many fortresses of Ali Pasha, which he constructed in strategic points. But this castle stands in the middle of the sea and legend. It was built by the Venetians in the 15th century and was reconstructed by Ali Pasha in 1805 as a gift to one of his wives, Vasiliki, which, according to chroniclers of the time, Ali Pasha was very heartened. The beauty and grandeur of this fortress has occupied many books dedicated to Ali Pasha. But now the beauty of this fortress, built around two centuries ago, with stone construction, is an interesting prey for tourists and Albanian tourism. It has gained the status of "Monument of Culture" and is under the auspices of the Monument of Culture Monuments. The castle has been described by Edward Lear and Lord Byron in their Verses.

The submarine tunnel

Panormy Bay tunnel is claimed to be a submarine bunker built in the Socialist People's Republic of Albania during the rule of Dictator Enver Hoxha. Situated at the northern end of the bay of Panormy Bay, it was used as a key strategic military site, but is no longer in use as such. The tunnel and the attendant base built to support it, now sit dormant, yet remain a military restriction zone.

The favorable geographic and strategic position of Panormy Bay was also used in the Middle Ages and especially in the nineteenth century by Ali Pasha, who built the famous hexagonal fortress of Panormy Bay. Ali Pasha constructed the fortress as an advanced bastion to be used in case of emergency departure westward, if the Ottoman forces were to attack him. The building was designed by two architects from Ioannina: one was an Albanian construction master and the other a French military engineer. On the main gate of the fort was a plaque with a warning from Ali Pasha: "Who would dare to touch those walls the black snake will eat his eyes."

The Church in the Castle

Also, in the entrance to Porto Palermo bay sits a Christian Orthodox church built by Ali Pasha in the early nineteenth century.





Responsible behaviour

Responsible behaviour



Being a responsible traveler and minimizing the impact your visit creates is important for the sustainability of the area. After all, sustainable tourism is a way of traveling and exploring a destination whilst respecting its culture, environment and people.

General Rules



Respect **nature (flora, fauna and land)** and don't introduce alien species of flora and fauna



Stay on the **paths** and trails waymarked and **camp** only in those authorized places



Light **fires** only in the authorized areas



Do not drop any of your **litter**, bring it back.



Keep **pets** always **on a leash** and under the control of the owner



Circulate and park **motorised vehicles** only in authorised **road/areas**



Further Rules

- When entering into a protected area, follow the rules and the instructions from the staff
- Take care of not damaging any signaling and other itinerary facilities
- Respect any kind of private property, incl. buildings, crop fields
- Respect cultural heritage (churches, ruins, walls, and any other constructions)
- Be polite and fair with locals and other users, including hikers, riders and cyclists
- Respect the peace and calmness of the place

Recommendations before you start

- If you walk alone, tell someone of your itinerary.
- Don't overestimate yourself and choose it according to your physical abilities.
- Choose the appropriate clothes and equipment
- Check the weather forecast before leaving and adapt your route according to the weather conditions
- Remember to take enough water.
- Report any breach to the corresponding authority

The following is prohibited:

- The following is prohibited:
- straying from the marked pathways
- entrance of children under 14 without a guide
- cutting down trees,
- removal of soil and rocks
- collecting bushes, plants or seeds
- hunting of any type of animal by any means year round
- lighting of fire
- destruction or collection of nests, eggs or hatchlings
- the disturbance and destruction of types of fauna
- causing damage to geological formations
- removing anything from the Park area. This particularly applies to berries and mushrooms.
- smoking in the Park
- feeding the animals
- driving off-road as it severely damages the habitat.
- keeping a distance of less than 20 meters from wildlife



IF YOU WISH TO TAKE YOUR ÇIKA EXPERIENCE TO A HIGHER LEVEL:

Travel in spring and autumn. These seasons are ideal for Çika eco-itinerary.

Mingle with the locals. Himariots are friendly and welcoming.

When in local celebrations lend your ears to choir singing as you might have a rare and unique experience of listening to polyphony, a UNESCO protected heritage.

Give yourself the opportunity of being shown the place by local guides: you will certainly gain a lot more than if you travel alone. Guides show you the safe paths once walked by Ceasar, through rare plants and sounds, fresh air and amazing views of the Albanian coast





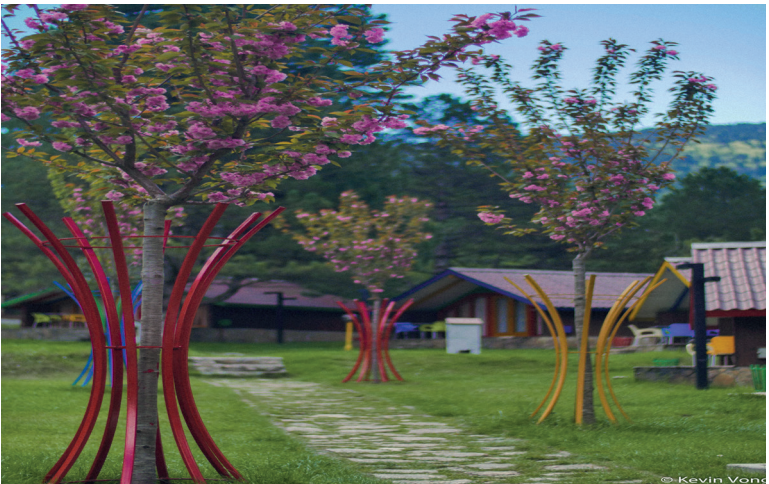
© Kevin Yongli



Sip some local raki, the typical spirit made of aromatic grapes, and taste barbecue in yoghurt sauce and honey made of Çika flowers. Use your feet, cycle or use the public transport to minimize the carbon footprint.

Before starting gather information about the area, the weather forecast and possible risks. Get more info from www.rcdcalbania.org/cika. In case of hiking to the peak, do not forget to take with you sufficient water and food as well as snow gear and clothing even during the summer.

Take maps and devices and follow signposted paths and routes! Remember! The emergency telephone number in Albania is: 129.







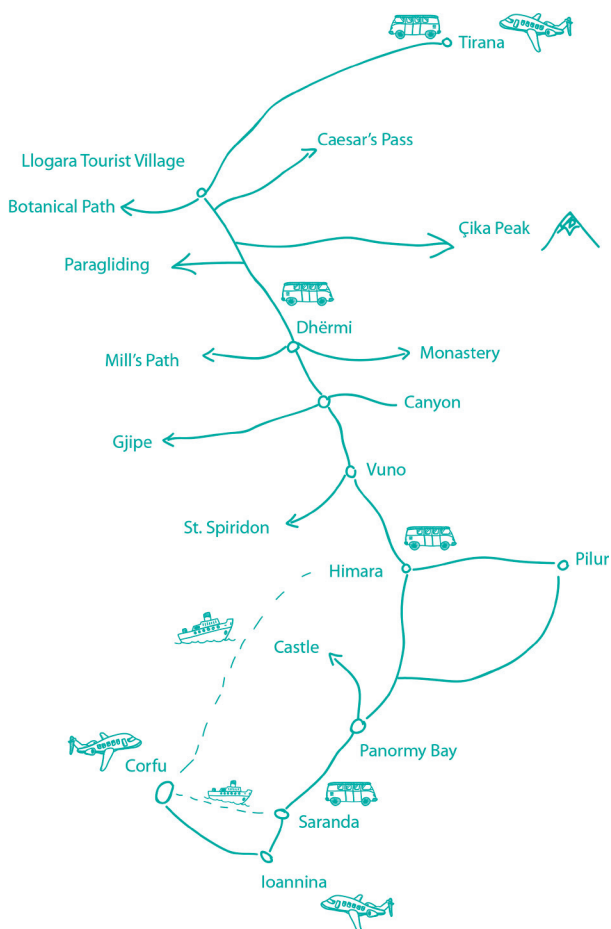
How to come

How to come



Travelling responsibly in times of climate change? Yes, you can! Just offset your CO2 emissions...

- Reaching our mountain areas from other parts of Europe or the world would be not possible without air travel. However, aviation is one of the largest emitter of greenhouse gases and, therefore, contributes to the anthropogenic climate change **in a decisive manner**.
- Fortunately, you can **offset the generated carbon footprint on a voluntary basis** in one of the existing carbon offsetting initiatives. These initiatives usually offer a web tool with a calculator so that everyone can calculate the price of their own carbon offsets. By purchasing the emitted CO₂, you can mitigate your own greenhouse gas emissions from transportation (e.g. your flight), but also from using non-renewable energy sources during your stay.
- The purchased offsets are usually dedicated to **on- or off-site forest management projects, but also to conservation of biodiversity** in collaboration with local managers. You can contribute to these projects with small amounts. For instance, the offsets from a flight from Berlin to Thessaloniki (round trip) cost less than 20 Euro, and from Stockholm to Catania, about 30 Euro.
- You can offset your emissions wherever you like. We suggest using **“Atmosfair”**, being one of the most well-known and reliable platform. Just have a look at www.atmosfair.de!
- **Thank you for making responsible and sustainable travel possible!**







Glossary





main itinerary trail/ *itinerari kryesor*



secondary itinerary trail/ *itinerari dytësor*



biking trail/ *rruga e biçikletave*



intersection trail - main road/ *kryqëzim rrugësh - rruga kryesore*



hiking trail/ *monopate*



Food services/ *Shërbime ushqimore*



Church/ Monastery/ *Kishë/ Manastir*



Panoramic Viewpoint/ *Pikë panoramike*



Speleology/ *Shpellë*



Monument/ *Monument*



Paragliding/ *Hedhje me parashutë*



Bus Station/ *Stacion autobusi*



Tourist Information Point/ *Pikë informacioni për turistët*



Natural Site/ *Sit natyror*



Beach/ *Plazh*



Cycling/ *Çiklizëm*



Scubadiving/ *Zhytje nën ujë*



Monumental Tree/ *Pemë monumentale*



Historical Site/ *Sit historik*



Waterfall/ *Ujëvarë*



Hiking/ *Ecje në mal*



Mountain Peak/ *Maja e malit*