








Information about the mountain	
Name of the mountain	Çika
Country	Albania
Region	Vlora
Altitude	2.045 m/6.706 ft
Surface area	146,73 km ²
Surface of protected area	214.1 km ²
Name of local organization in charge of management	Municipality of Himara
Number of municipalities	1
Institutional recognition	The National Park of Llogara Establishment <i>Decision of the Council of Ministers, Nr.96, dated 21.11.1966</i> Managed Nature Reserve of Rrëza e Kanalit-Karaburun <i>Decision of the Council of Ministers, dated 28 April 2010</i> Marine Protected Area of Karaburun-Sazan <i>Decision of the Council of Ministers, dated 28 April 2010</i> IUCN Category II, 2010 CDDA 555513696
	
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Çika

The house of wilderness, feet deep
in the Ionian Sea and snowy
eye in the clouds gazes
the Mediterranean.

Unlike the rest of Albania's coast, the Southern vaunts of a mountainous terrain, representing country's geographical character to its very best. The 100 km long Ceraunian Range, referred to as the Southern Dinarics, dominates Himara's territory and hosts the legendary Mount Çika. The immediate rise from the sea gives Çika the feature of a sea-born mountain. En route to the peak a Mediterranean microcosm unfolds a rich wildlife & vegetation, an impressive landscape, and a historic & cultural heritage. Çika, opened to the world 3 decades ago and it is the country's most appealing tourism attraction yet the most mysterious one. Abundant rewarding experiences of hiking & mountain biking in and out of a national park, paragliding, pristine beaches, geo-monuments, traditional villages, churches, magnificent unobstructed views from the summit 2045m down to the sparkling blue Ionian Sea and 95 km away from Italy, the delicious food, welcoming people that sing the sounds of nature and live harmoniously with it, make Çika a home for all.



Proud Local People

The people living in Çika and the areas around it are called Himariots after the county Çika is located in. Himariots are known for their true free spirits. Over the course of history they have always demonstrated a virtue of a pride and their mountain is right in the center of it. Çika has shaped their character and they are often referred to as 'highlanders of the South'. While the sea has been perceived both as a source of life and danger for the Himariots, Çika was the place they would often turn to for a shelter. The mountain as an element of local identity and pride is featured in the Himara municipality coat of arm.

Reputation

The ancient writers such as Ptolemy, Strabo and Pausanias have described the Ceraunian Mountains. With Albania being promoted as a country of opportunities for adventure & active tourism, Çika's popularity recently has grown both nationally and internationally. Standing next to the Llogara National Park, Çika is well known among the community of climbers and hikers for the alpine features, cliffs, views, the 3.5 km long exhilarating summit ridge and its ultra. Europe has 119 ultras, Albania has 6 and Çika is one of them. Many of the highest mountains peaks of the European Alps are **connected by high passes, not "standing out" as an Ultra would do.**

Legends and Myths

The mountain is part of the Ceraunian range name, "Κεραύνια ὄρη", which means "thunder-split peaks" in Ancient Greek. Locals call Çika the Home of Gods and worship saints in churches. Mythical stories and creatures of the locals, predominantly of Christian belief, share similarities with other Balkan countries. Fairies and dragons are a unique legacy. The EYE, a landmark otherwise known as Caesar's pass or Ca'car by the locals, is named after Julius Caesar, Emperor of Rome. He crossed the Llogara Park during his pursuit of Pompey in 48 B.C. at this pass and rested his legion at Palasë coast.

Power of Inspiration

A rich archive of paintings inspired by Çika dates back to the 19th century. Most of them are not in Albania and some are theme to postcards and gravures. The English painter Edward Lear describes Himara as "more magnificent than any other village I have seen in Acroceraunia". The area has inspired also rhapsodists of the polyphony songs (UNESCO), which pay tribute to the landscape, wealth of land and its people. "Vajza e valeve- the Lady of waves" is of a very old origin, still sang on public events. During the 30's, a version of it was recorded in France by an Albanian band using mandolin in a polyphonic song for the first time. A famous Albanian jazz singer remade this song into a jazz version.

Mediterranean Cultural Identity

Himara boasts a rich heritage that contributes to a unique cultural identity. The highlight of its legacy is the instrument-less group singing, known as ISOPOLYPHONY, a protected human heritage by UNESCO. Rhapsodists continue to create such folkloric songs still sang in events. Himara Coastal villages territory distinct strong architectural features. There are almost 40 protected buildings of unique aesthetic values (houses, churches, and 4 historical centers) which have been given the Culture Monument Status by the Ministry of Culture since 60's. As a result, unlike many other religious institutions, which were destroyed, these buildings and churches survived the 1967 Communist Cultural Revolution, when religion was banned.

Picturesque Landscape

Çika distinguishes itself for the dramatic landscape as it rises grandiosely on the North-eastern Ionian bank. The lower Çika is a crescent of coastal watershed with intermittent stream beds that have carved gorges and hills, ending in a long shore divided into beaches by ridges of limestone jutting into the sea. The relief combines passes, canyons and other landshapes. The alpine scenery of the Llogara Park is uniquely close to the sea. Standing atop of Çika, one enjoys breathtaking views 2045 m up from the sparkling blue water, Greek Islands and South Italy. The drive down to sea level creates the optical illusions of a moving mountain due to the contrasts of the rock with the blue horizon.

Sustainability and Anthropogenic Environment

The challenges of today's Himara stand in the promotion of an adequate development along the coast and mountainous areas that supports the regeneration of the local, regional and national economy without saturating the environment and cultural heritage. Architecturally, Himara has survived the real estate boom, despite development pressure, and has remained attractive. As tourism activity has been the main reason for this pressure on the environment, there is obvious increase of community and stakeholders consciousness regarding: scarcity of water, lack of Treatment of wastewater & waste and erosion for the mountain and the roads in lower heights of Çika due to rainfall.

Particular Ecosystem

Çika's particularity of ecosystem and biodiversity stands in the significant blends of the rich marine and land flora & fauna, and the presence of 3 National Protected Areas; the Managed Nature Reserve of Rrëza e Kanalit-Karaburun, the Marine Protected Area of Karaburun-Sazan and the Llogara National Park. The habitats of this ecosystem are home to 1400 species of plants or 42.4% of the Albanian flora, 68 of which threatened & rare, or 21.25% of Albania; 105 species of birds, 6 of which rare & endangered from the order of Accipitriformes family (day predators). Mania Triandra, one of the two threatened deer species of the Mediterranean can be found in Çika, making it richer than any similar area in Albania.

Historic Places

Excavations undertaken in the Himara Cave (Spile) have discovered the presence of ancient life. Castles, as historical monuments date back to 3500 B.C. The battle field where Julius Caesar fought against Pompeus is located in North of Himara. Sailing towards the dangerous Ceraunian shores, Cesar said his famous phrase to his sailors "Fear not. You are carrying Caesar and his luck". Churches were the scene of a dynamic life in the middle ages. The Church supported Himariots' movement for freedom against the Ottoman invasion. Communist area monuments are landmarks that pay tribute to WWII antifascist resistance "If Albania has anything to take pride in, it should be the history of Himara" Leon Rey- French archaeologist.