

# Accursed Mountains Trek, Montenegro & Albania

Trek along ancient paths from Montenegro to Albania, through splendid alpine scenery.



## Group departures

See overleaf for departure dates

## Holiday overview

Style	Trek
Accommodation	Hotels, Guesthouses, Mountain Hut
Grade	Moderate/Vigorous
Duration	9 days from London to London
Trekking / Walking days	On trek: 3 days Walks on: 2 days
Min/Max group size	4 / 12. Guaranteed to run for 4
Trip Leader	Local Leader Montenegro And Albania
Land only	Joining in Podgorica, Montenegro
Max altitude	2,480m/8131ft, Mount Komovi, Day 2

**Private Departures & Tailor Made itineraries available**



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# Departures

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## Group departures

### 2021 Dates:

Sat 05 Jun - Sun 13 Jun

Sat 31 Jul - Sun 08 Aug

Sat 04 Sep - Sun 12 Sep

### 2022 Dates:

Sat 04 Jun - Sun 12 Jun

Sat 30 Jul - Sun 07 Aug

Sat 03 Sep - Sun 11 Sep

### Will the trip run?

This trip is guaranteed to run for 4 people and for a maximum of 12. In the rare event that we cancel a holiday, we will refund you in full and give you at least 6 weeks warning. Many trips do fill up quickly - we advise you to book early if you want to secure a place(s) on the dates of your choice.

### Group prices and optional supplements

Please contact us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or visit our website for our land only and flight inclusive prices and single supplement options.

### No Surcharge Guarantee

The flight inclusive or land only price will be confirmed to you at the time you make your booking. There will be no surcharges after your booking has been confirmed.

### Insurance

We offer a travel insurance scheme - please contact us for details.

### Private Departures

We can also offer this trip as a private holiday. A Private Departure follows exactly the same itinerary as the group departure but at dates to suit you (subject to availability) - please contact us with your preferred dates.

### Tailor Made service

We pride ourselves on the level of quality and choice we provide for our clients who want a fully tailor made holiday. A holiday will be created especially for you by one of our well-travelled experts. They will be able to advise on the accommodation best suited to your needs, the sights you should visit (and those to avoid!) and the best walks and activities matched to your ability. In short, we will work together with you to create your perfect holiday. If you would like to explore the idea of a Tailor Made holiday with Mountain Kingdoms then please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 or see the Tailor Made pages of our website for further inspiration.

# Your guide

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Your guides will speak good English, have guiding qualifications and in our experience, will guide you with great patience and charm.

## Your trip highlights

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- Trek into Albania with pack horses, using ancient mountain trails
- Explore the 'Shangri La' Thethi valley
- Climb Mount Komovi in Montenegro
- Sightsee in Shkodra, visiting the famous castle
- Visit the bay of Kotor in Montenegro

## At a glance itinerary

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Day 1	Arrive Podgorica. Group transfer to the Komovi Mountains.
Day 2	Ascend Mount Komovi, 2,480m/8,131ft. Drive to Gusinje.
Day 3	Trek to Thethi over the Peja Pass, 1,751m/5,788ft
Days 4-5	Trek in the Thethi Valley. Cross via the Valbona Pass 1,800m/5,940ft, to reach the Valbona Valley. Drive to Bajram Curri.
Day 6	Boat across Drin Lake. Drive to Shkodra. Sightseeing including Rozafa Castle.
Day 7	Drive to Kotor. Boat trip to Perast.
Day 8	Trek the Ladder of Kotor. Afternoon at leisure and farewell evening meal.
Day 9	Group transfer to Podgorica airport. Fly to London.

## Trip summary

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This trip takes you to some of the most fascinating landscapes of the Western Balkans - the Accursed (or Prokletije) Mountains, the lake of Shkodra and the bay of Kotor.

The ancient trading routes that cross the mountains of Montenegro and Albania are gateways to a hidden corner of Europe. Our route takes you along part of the Peak of the Balkans trail, a new route formed as part of the Balkans Peace Park Project. Taking advantage of paths used for centuries by shepherds, traders and smugglers, you will trek through a landscape of wild natural beauty.

Northern Albania is a fascinating and little visited corner of Europe. Closed to the outside world for many years by both geography and politics, it now welcomes visitors and offers both astonishing beauty and amazing hospitality. For many hundreds of years, life in the remote valleys was governed by the 'Kanun', ancient laws that ruled the fiercely independent tribes who inhabited the seemingly impenetrable mountains. This was followed by harsh years of communism and isolation from the outside world.

The outcome is an unspoilt landscape, and communities living simple lives, farming in the valleys, ready to welcome visitors with open arms. Edith Durham wrote in 1908 in her book High Albania "Life at Thethi was of absorbing interest. I forgot all about the rest of the world, and...there seemed no reason why I should ever return." After returning from a research trip we felt just the same!

You emerge from the mountains via a boat trip on Lake Drin to visit the historical town of Shkodra, before returning to Montenegro to enjoy time in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Kotor

## Your trip itinerary

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### Day 1: Fly London to Podgorica. Group transfer to the Stavna Plateau.

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On arrival at Podgorica Airport in Montenegro, there will be a single group transfer to your hotel. The transfer is timed to fit the group flight, please check with us for further information. The transfer to the Komovi Mountains will take approximately 2½ hours. The drive initially skirts the town of Podgorica before gradually climbing to start following the Moraca river. This is a dramatic drive through the limestone canyon, with the road twisting in and out of tunnels, the river far below and the Bar to Belgrade railway visible on and off high above. Eventually a pass is reached at 1,060m/3498ft, and the landscape changes to verdant highland forest. The road continues climbing to reach the small Stavna Plateau, with Mount Komovi towering above.

**Overnight: Mountain Huts Eco-Katun (Meals: D)**

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### Day 2: Ascend Mount Komovi, 2,480m/8,131ft, 5-6 hours. Drive to Gusinje.

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The Stavna plateau is dotted with picturesque shepherds huts. These are inhabited in the summer months only by families from the valleys who bring their flocks to graze on the lush open pastures. The scenery is spectacular, with masses of deciduous forest below and limestone peaks stretching as far as the eye can see.



The walk starts gently at first as you approach the mountain, and there will be plenty of opportunities to stop to admire the view. After reaching a small col, the path becomes steeper to reach a high pass. From here it is worth making the final effort to climb to the top - as you ascend on the path you can admire the dramatic limestone cliffs that form the peak of Mount Komovi. There is a fantastic panoramic view from the peak towards the Accursed Mountains. In the hopefully unlikely event of bad weather, there will be a scenic circular walk around Mount Komovi. After descending to the mountain huts, it is a 2 hour drive to the border town of Gusinje. This area of Montenegro is little visited by tourists. Once part of Albania, it is a predominantly Muslim area and was once an important trading centre. Now sadly the town is no beauty, but the surrounding Accursed mountains are spectacular. Dinner will be taken at a restored watermill situated outside the town.

800m ascent, 800m descent. 5-6 hours walking.

**Overnight: Hotel Rosi, Gusinje (Meals: BLD)**

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### Day 3: Trek to Thethi via Peja Pass, 1,751m/5,788ft - 8-9 hours.

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An exciting day, as you cross the border into Albania on foot, with your luggage carried on packhorses. It is a 15 minute drive to the village of Vusanje and the end of the road. The soaring peaks of the valley ahead appear impenetrable, but the route ahead is an old smugglers trail used for centuries, most recently by Albanians escaping the communist regime. The walk initially follows the valley floor, passing a waterfall and stunning bright blue pond. After a couple of hours the path climbs to reach a large lake that completely dries up in the summer months. In this idyllic spot, a small stone marks the Albanian border. Your luggage will be swapped onto Albanian packhorses at this spot.

The path now climbs through an ancient beech forest for about an hour before emerging at the high Alpine meadows of Fush e Kunices. You may well see sheep grazing, and rough huts guarded by fierce shepherds' dogs, necessary to guard the flocks from wolves. The path zig zags up through stunning limestone scenery, and soon you will see the first of the 'mushroom' bunkers, built to house individual soldiers during the communist regime to stop Albanians from escaping. There are a couple of small passes to cross before you reach the 'true' Peja pass. From just beyond here you will be able to see the Thethi valley far below. It is a steep descent on an excellently built rocky path, passing soaring cliffs. The path eventually flattens out to follow a river bed before reaching the spread out village of Thethi, where you will stay in a converted house which provides charming, simple accommodation.

850m ascent, 1,260m descent. 8-9 hours walking.

**Overnight: Guest House in Thethi (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 4: Thethi Valley trek - 5-6 hours.**

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The Thethi valley is astonishingly picturesque. Dominated by the soaring limestone peaks high above, the valley is fringed with beautiful forests. Accessible only in the summer and recently linked to the outside world by rough jeep track, most transport is still by horse or on foot. The valley is inhabited about 200 families in summer, but only 20 in winter, when the valley is totally cut off by snow for several months. Any flat land is cultivated, with plums being a popular crop used to produce raki. Corn is grown to make bread, and you will visit a water powered mill. The village church was re-built in 2006, having been used in communist times as a warehouse. You will also visit a blood-feud tower, and have a chance to learn about how life has changed in recent years. A short climb above the village leads to a spectacular waterfall.



Lunch will be eaten in a traditional farmhouse further down the valley in the hamlet of Nderlysa, where just about all the food you eat has been grown on the farm, and is served with the traditional hospitality that is so important in Albania. The family will be happy to show you around the farm and house. Close to the farm house the river has carved out amazing pools in the rocks, and a small swimming pond has been created. After a refreshing dip, those with energy left can walk an hour or so up the river valley to the 'Blue Eye', another swimming spot set in lush vegetation. A jeep will drive you back up the rough track to your guest-house.

265m ascent, 783m descent. 5-6 hours walking.

**Overnight: Guest House in Thethi (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 5: Trek to Valbona Valley via Valbona Pass 1,800m/5,940ft - 7 hours. Drive to Bajram Curri.**

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Today's walk is over a pass that is still used by locals to reach the Valbona valley. The initial climb is steep, and you soon reach the 'last' house of Thethi. After a rocky uphill track you reach the shade of an ancient beech wood. The well-built path zig-zags up to reach a high alp with fabulous views of Thethi far below. Above here a local family camps in the summer months, and provides drinks and snacks in an ingeniously built café. The Valbona pass opens up views of many more peaks, and you can see your route ahead snaking far below. After traversing below cliffs you reach easier ground and meadows. After a lunch stop you descend through a grand forest to reach the valley floor, and a walk along a dried up river bed to reach the road head.

Your vehicle will meet you for the 1½ hour drive to Bajram Curri, and dinner in a local restaurant.

1,125m ascent, 768m descent. 7 hours walking.

**Overnight: Hotel in Bajram Curri (Meals: BLD)**

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**Day 6: Boat across Drin Lake. Drive to Shkodra. Sightseeing including a visit to Rozafa Castle.**

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It will be an early start today to reach the port at Fierza on Drin Lake. The lake is narrow and twisting, with steep cliffs right down to the water. Many of the small farms and lakeside villages can only be reached by boat, and as you travel down the lake, the boat will stop at various tiny paths to drop off and pick up passengers. High above on the hillsides you will be able to spot occasional lonely farmhouses and hamlets. The trip takes 2 hours and ends above the dam at Komani. Your vehicle will meet you at the cramped and seemingly chaotic port before driving through a tunnel to reach the main road.



The drive to Shkodra takes about 2 hours and follows the lakeside for many miles before reaching farmland and the town of Shkodra. An important city for many centuries Shkodra was occupied by the Italians before becoming a centre of power for the Ottomans. Modern Shkodra is a multi-layered mixture of old and new, perhaps symbolised by its remarkable castle.

The Rozafa castle, situated at the confluence of the Drini, Kiri and Buna rivers, was last used for military purposes in 1913 when the Ottomans were besieged by the Montenegrins - this is astonishing when you realise that there are still traces of Illyrian walls in evidence dating from the 3rd C BC! It is well worth spending time exploring the layers of history and climbing to the top to admire the wonderful view. There will also be time to explore the new town of Shkodra on foot.

**Overnight: Tradita Hotel In Shkodra (Meals: BLD)**

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#### **Day 7: Drive to Kotor. Boat trip to Perast.**

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The drive back into Montenegro will give you ample time to admire the beauties of the Lake of Shkodra. After crossing the border the drive takes you through the high plateau of Montenegro to the coast above Budva. The road then descends, with stunning views, to the town of Kotor. There will be time to relax and soak up the atmosphere of this fabulous old walled town. The city was at one time an independent city-republic and has changed hands 14 times (including a brief occupation by Britain). The fascinating architecture and winding streets reflects its diverse history.

In the afternoon you will enjoy a boat cruise of Boka Bay. You will have a chance to visit the magical island which houses a church dating back to 1630 called Our Lady of the Rock. The island is man-made and probably at its base has hulls of ships from the Venetian fleet and those of the defeated Turks from the battle of Perast in 1654. On the edge of the Verige Strait you will visit Perast, an old seafaring town which once housed enormous fleets of the Venetian Republic. The town's legendary maritime skills attracted the attentions of Peter the Great of Russia. In the 18th century many of his noblemen studied at the naval academy. Perast is now a sleepy town with a delightful atmosphere and some beautiful examples of baroque architecture. Its faded mansions give the barest hint of its illustrious past. You then return to Kotor for the evening, and are free to choose where to eat from one of its many restaurants and bars

**Overnight: Hotel Marija 2 or Hotel Marija or Villa Ferri (Meals: B)**

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#### **Day 8: Walk the Ladder of Kotor. Afternoon at leisure and farewell evening meal.**

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This morning will be an early start to climb the Ladder before the sun gets too hot. The path was beautifully constructed by the Austrians at the time of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and for a long time was the only track into Montenegro. The path starts outside the city walls, and zig-zag ups the hillside at an easy gradient. After half an hour you reach a small church and from here can enter the Fortress of St Ivan that dominates the hillside above Kotor. Already the views are magnificent. As the hillside flattens - slightly - the path enters forest before climbing again steeply to reach the road and the hamlet of Krstac.



You will return to Kotor by vehicle, and the afternoon is free for you to relax and shop. In the evening there will be a farewell meal in the old town.

900m ascent. 4-5 hours walking.

**Overnight: Hotel Marija 2 or Hotel Marija or Villa Ferri (Meals: B D)**

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#### **Day 9: Group transfer to Podgorica airport. Fly to London.**

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After breakfast, there is a single, timed group transfer to Podgorica airport (1½ hours) for the flight back to London. **(Meals: B)**

## Our grading system

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Accursed Mountains Trek is graded as a Moderate/Vigorous trekking holiday, as described below.

### **Moderate**

Holidays in this grade typically involve 5 to 10 days of walking or trekking. They will often venture into more remote country and can cross mountain passes. Altitudes though are still relatively low, going no higher than around 4,300m/14,000ft. Accommodation can include simple hotels, tea houses, lodges and camping.

### **Vigorous**

Typically these trips involve 8 to 14 days (occasionally more) trekking in relatively remote landscapes. High passes up to 4,900m/16,000ft may be crossed (sometimes snow-covered) and there may also be glacier travel and peak ascents. Walking days can be between 5 and 8 hours with considerable ascents and descents. This grade also covers some European treks of shorter durations. Overnight stops on trek could be in tea houses, mountain huts or camping.

These holidays would suit enthusiastic hill/mountain walkers.

## Trip altitude

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**Important** - please be aware that this trip involves travel at altitude. Whilst all our itineraries are carefully designed to optimise acclimatisation to high altitudes, participants on this trip are likely to experience some symptoms of being at altitude. The Dossier pack we provide when you book your holiday includes comprehensive advice on safe travel at altitude. If you require further information or advice on travel at altitude prior to booking please contact the office to speak to an experienced member of our team. Alternatively we recommend [www.medex.org.uk](http://www.medex.org.uk) as a good source of information.

## What the price includes

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**Mountain Kingdoms** aims to offer the best value for money. We do not charge extra for meal packages or apply local charges and try to ensure that all the key elements of your holiday are included.

### What's included:

- ✓ A local English-speaking leader
- ✓ Economy class return air fares from the UK (flight inclusive option). If you are travelling land only, check with our office for joining time at the airport
- ✓ A single, timed group transfer to/from Podgorica airport.
- ✓ All other transfers as per the itinerary
- ✓ All road transport by private vehicles
- ✓ Good standard accommodation
- ✓ 8 breakfasts, 5 lunches, and 7 dinners
- ✓ Sightseeing and activities as specified
- ✓ The option of joining one of our pre-trip meets in the Cotswolds
- ✓ Carbon offsetting with the Ecoan Tree Planting Project (for clients taking our flight inclusive option)
- ✓ A free high-quality Mountain Kingdoms kit bag

### Airport transfers

The cost of a transfer to/from the airport is included in the price of your holiday. This is a single group transfer which is arranged to coincide with the timings of the group flights. If you book your own flights which arrive/depart at different times to this, or we book flights at your request that have different timings, we will be happy to provide a quote for a separate transfer. Please contact us should you require any further information.

### What's not included:

- ✗ Travel insurance
- ✗ Meals not included: Lunch on Day 1, 7, 8 and 9. Dinner on Day 7 and 9.
- ✗ Locally paid bar bills and laundry
- ✗ Optional activities
- ✗ Tips

### Water-to-Go Reusable Bottle Campaign

We have joined the campaign to help cut down on the use of plastics and, in particular, single-use water bottles. To do this we have teamed up with the revolutionary company, Water-to-Go who have developed a multi-use drinking bottle with a reusable filter that eliminates over 99.9% of all microbiological contaminants. This makes water from virtually any source safe to drink and significantly reduces the need for travellers to buy bottles of water wherever they are in the world.

Our clients who are not given a free Mountain Kingdoms kit bag for their holiday (these are required for certain treks), will instead receive a free Mountain Kingdoms Water-to-Go bottle. These unique Water-to-Go bottles can also be purchased from us at a discounted rate.

For further information about our campaign visit [For further information about our campaign visit <https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign>](https://www.mountainkingdoms.com/water-to-go-reusable-bottle-campaign).



## Your accommodation

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We will endeavour to secure the hotels named in the itinerary but if our first choice of hotel is not available we will book a suitable alternative of a similar standard.



### Mountain Huts Eco-Katun

The Eko Katun Stavnja Mountain Huts are based on traditional shepherds huts. They are based on 4 people sharing, and each have their own shower rooms. There is a cosy dining room, where they serve Montenegrin mountain specialities.



### Hotel Rosi, Gusijne

Gusijne - Hotel Rosi is a simple, clean 2-star hotel, with colourful bedrooms, all en-suite. Situated at the entrance to the town, it has lovely views of the mountains, and a very frilly dining room.



### Guest House in Thethi

Thethi Guest House - A charming old house that has been extended to provide mainly en-suite rooms. Meals will be taken in the garden (weather permitting) and there is an outdoor fire pit to sit around after dinner.



### Hotel in Bajram Curri

Bajram Curri - the only hotel is a simple 2-star hotel, with en-suite bathrooms.



### Tradita Hotel in Shkodra

Shkodra - Hotel Tradita is a beautiful old house, with en-suite rooms. Run by a family from Thethi and furnished with antiques.



### Hotel Marija 2 or Hotel Marija or Villa Ferri

In Kotor we use either the Marija II a modern 3\* hotel in the pleasant suburb of Dobrota which is situated just a few hundred metres and a good stroll along the sea front to the Old Town of Kotor, or its sister hotel the Hotel Marija - one of the original hotels of Kotor. The Marija II is just over 30 metres from the sea, has 18 spacious rooms, all en suite, and a terrace overlooking the Bay of Kotor. The Hotel Marija is an elegant hotel, right in the heart of the old town, is also 3\* rated, has 17 rooms, all en suite. It also has a pleasant restaurant and coffee bar. Another option is the Villa Ferri which is situated on Kotor Bay and has a private beach area, a restaurant and en suite studio style rooms.

## Meal arrangements

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8 Breakfasts, 5 Lunches, 7 Dinners. The lunches on trekking days will be picnics.

## Flight arrangements

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### Flight inclusive from price

Our 'Flight inclusive from' price is based on the best fare available at the time of printing. As airfares change on a constant basis, this should be used only as a guide price. Rest assured that, at the time of booking, we will endeavour to get the best possible price for the flights you need. Remember, the earlier you book the greater your chances of securing the best fare.

Flight inclusive packages booked through Mountain Kingdoms are protected through our ATOL bonding scheme.

### Flight upgrades and regional Airports

Please call us on +44 (0)1453 844400 for flight options from regional UK airports, Business Class upgrades, alternative airlines and stopovers. Please also check our website for the most up to date flight inclusive 'from' prices.

## Further information

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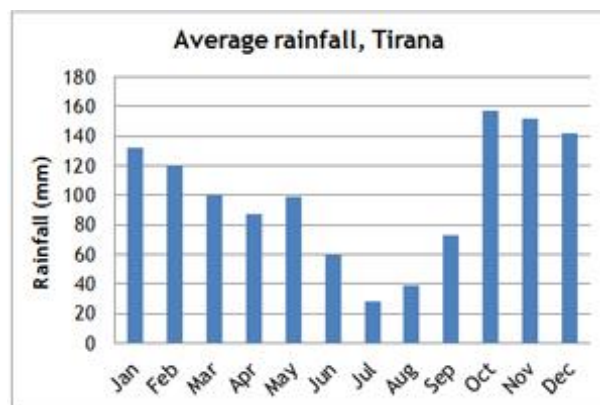
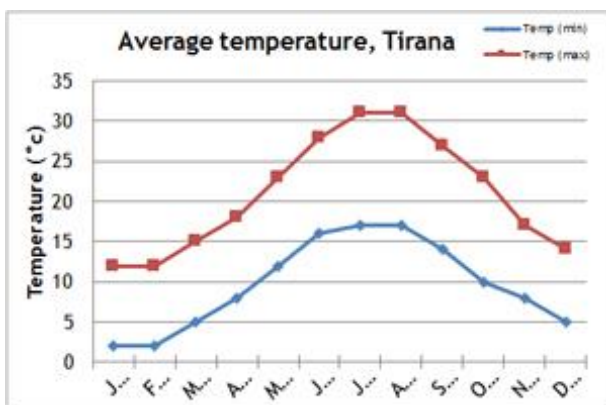
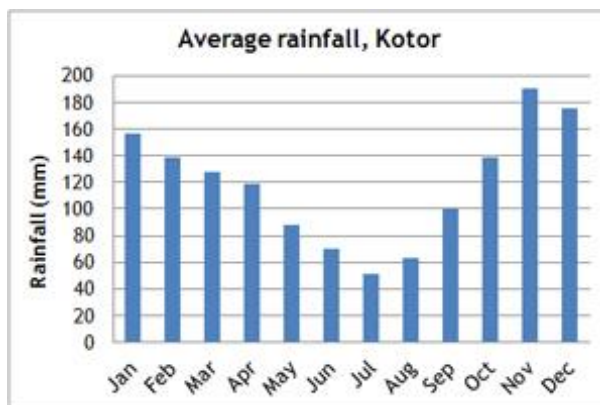
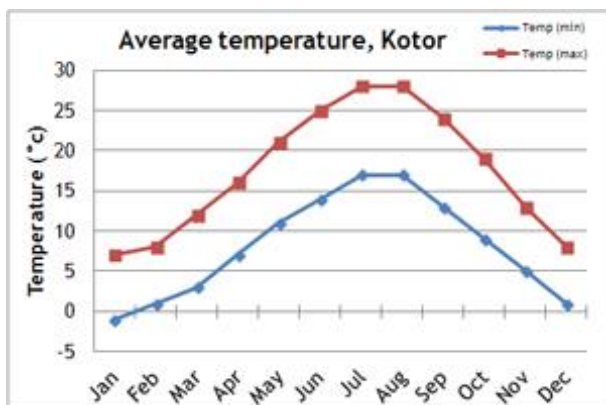
When we receive your booking, we send you a full Trip Dossier which contains details of any visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. If you do have queries at this initial stage do call us on 01453 844400 and we will be pleased to offer advice.

## The nature of adventure travel

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Every effort will be made to keep to this itinerary but we cannot guarantee that things may not change, either before you travel or while you are away. By its very nature, adventure travel involves an element of the unexpected, particularly in more remote areas. A variety of factors such as adverse weather conditions, changes to local schedules and difficulties with transportation can all contribute to the need to make changes to the itinerary, often at the very last minute. Our Operations Manager and your Trip Leader will make every effort to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary and minimise the impact of any changes, but an easy-going and flexible nature is a real asset! Please note that all timings and distances given are approximate.

# Climate information



# Extensions

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## Extending your holiday

If you would like additional inspiration on how or where to extend your holiday please call us on 01453 844400. Alternatively, you can download a range of extension information sheets on our website, at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).



There are many ways you can extend your holiday with Mountain Kingdoms: you could book extra hotel nights at the start or end of your trip, arrange a personal sightseeing tour or enjoy some other exciting activities. In fact, whatever's available we can help make it happen. We're happy to suggest ideas, provide quotes and make all the arrangements. We can also assist with flight and hotel upgrades.

### Walk the length of the Balkans Peace trail

This Accursed Mountains trek covers several sections of the Balkans Peace Trail, and you can complete virtually the whole trail by joining our Three Peaks of the Balkans Trek. This is a more strenuous trek that is mainly based in Kosovo but also ventures along paths in both Albania and Montenegro; the eastern section of the trail. Both treks offer superb walking through pristine mountain scenery, staying in local guesthouses and traditional accommodation en route.

## Why book this holiday with Mountain Kingdoms?

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- Our unique cross border trek into Albania follows part of the Balkans Peace Trail
- Our varied itinerary includes time to thoroughly explore the Thethi Valley and to take a boat ride down Drin Lake to the historical town of Shkodra
- We include a night at Katun Stavna - a real treat that offers true escapism and a tranquil insight into Montenegrin rural life
- You will have time to relax in Kotor at the end of the trip, and climb 'The Ladder of Kotor' footpath
- Your local English-speaking guides have excellent knowledge and experience of the varied treks you will undertake in Montenegro and Albania
- Your luggage is transported for you so you only need to carry a daypack on trek
- As part of our commitment to 'Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency', we will be carbon-offsetting all international flights booked through us by donating funds to the Ecoan Tree Planting Project in Peru.
- We are an IATA accredited agent and work directly with some of the world's major airlines. If you wish to fly with a specific airline, from a regional UK airport or on alternative dates to the main group we would be happy to arrange this for you. Please contact our Flights Manager, April, for flight options, quotes and further information.

If we've tempted you to take your next holiday with us, we advise you to check availability and you can do this via our website: [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com) or by calling the team on +44 (0)1453 844400. Bookings can be made online, by phone or by completing a booking form and returning it to us. We can also provisionally hold places if you need time to consider your options.

## What our clients say

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*I felt that we saw a good representation of both countries - the best of each but also the realities of each. Our guide was outstanding, this trip is a great addition to your portfolio. The trip was really well thought out - excellent range of places visited, the hiking was superb and we were really well taken care of. Despite travelling as a tour group I thought we got off-the-beaten-track and experienced hidden gems.*  
- Mr & Mrs H, Hertfordshire



*The location was wild and spectacular. The trek was challenging at points but doable with a sense of achievement/purpose. The guide was really good, got a good understanding of the group and individual needs. He adapted and reacted sensibly and sensitively, good sense of humour.*  
- Mr & Mrs A, Gloucestershire.

*I loved staying in traditional guesthouses along the way, their home grown food was delicious.*  
- Seraphina Berry, Reservations Manager, Mountain Kingdoms

# Mountain Kingdoms - distinctly different

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## **Truly independent**

In an age where many so-called 'independent' travel companies have in fact been bought out by multi-national giants, we remain fiercely independent with all the benefits this offers our clients.

## **Value for money prices with an emphasis on quality**

We are not in the business of cutting our itineraries and services to the bone to offer eye-catching cheap prices. We use some of the best airlines, and typically 3 or 4 star hotels in cities. We include the majority of meals and private transport for road travel. We use excellent equipment and appoint well-trained staff and leaders. Last year, over 98% of our clients rated their Mountain Kingdoms holiday as 'excellent' or 'good'. We are members of AITO and bound by their quality charter.

## **Complete financial security**

You can book with us confident that your holiday has full financial protection. Flight inclusive holidays are financially protected by the Civil Aviation Authority under ATOL licence number 2973 and 'Land Only' holidays are covered by a bond secured with ABTOT.

## **No Surcharge Guarantee**

Your peace of mind is important to us so we have a No Surcharge Guarantee on all Land Only and Flight Inclusive bookings. This means that there will be no change to the price of your holiday once we have confirmed your booking, regardless of fluctuations in exchange rates or fuel prices.

## **Award winning Responsible Tourism**

We feel strongly that all our holidays should benefit local communities, protect the environment and respect local traditions, religion and heritage. You can read more about the charities we support and our Responsible Tourism commitments and initiatives on the following page or at [www.mountainkingdoms.com](http://www.mountainkingdoms.com).

## **Genuine small group travel**

Almost all of our holidays have a maximum group size of just 12, plus leader. This provides more contact with your leader, readier access to off-the-beaten-path areas, greater interaction with local communities and a reduced environmental impact.

## **Loyalty Discount**

If you have previously travelled with us we recognise your loyalty with a discount on future trips.

## **Booking your holiday - it couldn't be easier**

Once you've chosen your Mountain Kingdoms holiday you can book online, call the office or complete and post a booking form which can be found in our brochure or downloaded from our website. If you would like to hold a place on one of our trips, whilst you make up your mind, please give us a call to make a provisional booking. This is a no-obligation, no-cost booking and we will hold your place until space comes under pressure or we need your decision.

## **Comprehensive information**

When we receive your booking we send you a full trip dossier which contains details of visas and vaccinations required, a suggested gear and clothing list and lots of useful information. In fact, everything you need to know to give you peace of mind and allow you to prepare for your trip of a lifetime.



## RESPONSIBLE TOURISM STATEMENT CLIMATE EMERGENCY PLAN



For over 33 years, Mountain Kingdoms has been offering people the chance to visit amazing places on this extraordinary planet. We now offer trips to all corners of the world, but we are conscious that inevitably our holidays have a detrimental impact on the world around us, and we want to do all we can to reduce our carbon emissions. We are a signatory to Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency, along with a growing number of like-minded, reputable tour operators. For more information, please visit [www.tourismdeclares.com](http://www.tourismdeclares.com)

From 2020 onwards, we will be focusing on how we can reduce the carbon emissions that our holidays produce, and how to counterbalance this carbon by supporting carbon offset measures.

Here are some of our current and future plans to minimise the impact of our business as a whole:

### Carbon Offsetting

#### Already doing:

- ✓ We have been offsetting carbon since 2007, but will be increasing our donations to the [Ecoan](#) tree planting project in Peru this year. This is with a trusted partner where the funds go directly to a project where the community plants trees on its own land.

#### Will do:

- ✓ We are working on making our carbon offsetting more accurate and targeted.
- ✓ In future, we will add to that a further estimate for carbon produced by hotels, local road travel, trains and internal flights to arrive at a carbon offset sum for each trip we operate.
- ✓ Carbon offsetting will be included in our holiday prices. For our Flight Inclusive holidays it will include the international flight and any emissions produced by inland travel and accommodation. Our Land Only prices will include the cost of offsetting emissions caused by inland travel and accommodation.

### Reducing Carbon Emissions

#### Already doing:

- ✓ We already offer the majority of our customers a free filtered water bottle which means they can instantly cut down on their single-use plastic consumption. This will be an ongoing project.
- ✓ We already predominantly use locally owned hotels, but will continue to ensure that, where possible, we use these rather than multinational chains.
- ✓ We have joined the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency initiative to stand alongside like-minded travel companies, to work together to initiate best practices to make tourism as sustainable as possible.

#### Will do:

- ✓ We will re-evaluate our flights to make sure we are using the most fuel efficient airlines with the youngest fleets and, where possible, direct flights for each trip.
- ✓ We will stop offering unnecessary optional flights - for example our Everest sightseeing trip.
- ✓ We will eliminate unnecessary staff flights wherever possible.
- ✓ We will look at minimising internal flights.
- ✓ We will be asking all our worldwide agents and suppliers to look at their own carbon footprint and encourage them to reduce it.
- ✓ We will promote our more low impact trips to give customers an informed choice.

As part of our wider commitment to Responsible Tourism, we will continue to support a number of charities with whom we have had a long standing relationship over many years. These include: Shiva Charity in Nepal (Ginette Harrison School), Simien Mountains Mobile Medical Service and Porter Welfare, as well as setting aside a sum for emergency disaster relief should the need arise.

