

Jim Gold International Folk Dance Tours

Albania!

Gjirokastra Folk Festival Tour

Folk Dancing, Culture, Art, History, Adventure !

September 20-30, 2020

Led by Lee Otterholt

Kosovo extension: September 30-October 2

**Tirana, Durres, Vlora, Kruja, Saranda,
Shkodra, and Gjirokastra!**

- ★ **Gjirokastra Folk Festival!**
 - ★ **Meet and dance with Albanian folk dance groups and teachers!**
 - ★ **International dancing with Lee Otterholt!**
- Price includes transfers, hotels, private bus, guide, sightseeing, festival, dance lessons, and all breakfasts, most dinners!**

Itinerary

Day 1: Sunday, September 20: Depart on airlines of your choice to Tirane, Albania. (Turkish Airlines usually has the best prices and schedule.)

Day 2: Monday, September 21: Transfer from Tirana International Airport to our hotel in Durres. Welcome dinner in a traditional restaurant. Overnight in the Arvi Hotel.

Day 3: Tuesday, September 22: Durres—Kruja-Durres

Drive to Kruja to visit the Historical Capital City of Albania. The Scanderbeg Museum, Ethnographic Museum and the Bazaar of Kruja are waiting for us. Lunch with local dishes and **maybe a folk show from the local Albanian Folk Group**. Back to Durres can be visited the Amphitheater of Durres and the Archeology Museum. Late afternoon dance with Lee,

introduction to Albanian folk dances! Dinner and overnight in Arvi Hotel

Day 4: Wednesday, September 23: Durres-Shkodra-Durres

Drive to Shkodra to visit the famous Rosafa Castle and one of the oldest towns in Europe.

Lunch, specialty on the Lake shore, fish or eel on clay tile. Drive back to Durres and afternoon.

Dance with Lee. Dinner and overnight Arvi Hotel.

Day 5-7 : Thursday-Saturday, September-24-26: Durres-Gjirokastra

Gjirokastra National Folk Festival

Spend 3 days watching Albanian folk groups from Albania, North Macedonia, Kosova, Calabria and wherever the Albanians live. In addition we will arrange private lessons so we can learn from and dance with many of these groups and get to know them up close and personally!

During the day can be organized short drives to historical sites and places around Gjirokastra. Gjirokastra, a UNESCO World Heritage town, tour the 14th century castle. Gjirokastra is best known as the birthplace of Enver Hoxha, dictator of Albania (1908-1985). His house, open to visitors, is an ethnographic museum. Visit Skendulli house. **Folk dancing with Lee and local teachers.** Afternoon workshops with folk dancers from different Albanian regions, evening enjoying the shows of the folk groups.

Day 8: Sunday, September 27: Gjirokastra—Blue Eye Spring— Saranda

Visit Blue Eye Spring, a wonderful natural site reached through a short walk through woodlands.

We continue to Saranda, **The Honeymoon Town it used to be called during the Communist times.** Spend a easy day and afternoon **dance with Lee and the local Folk Group to enjoy their Isopolyphonie songs and dances.** Dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Hotel Brilliant

Day 9: Monday, September 28: Saranda

Day trip to Corfu: Hydrofoil ride, sightseeing, possible meeting with local Greek folk dance group. Hydrofoil back to Saranda. Dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight at Hotel Brilliant.

Day 10: Tuesday, September 29: Saranda- Tirana

Drive along the spectacular Albanian Riviera looking down at the Ionian Sea. Continue driving north through the seven villages of the Himara region. The region of Himara is rich with natural and historical monuments such as Llamany beach and the 18th century Panormic castle of Ali Pasha. After a short coffee break at the springs of Borshi, we climb the Llogara Pass to drive down through the forest of Llogara National Park. Stop for refreshment and photos in Llogara. Continuing to the City of Vlora and reaching Tirana late at noon. If time permits also one last **Dance with Lee and Genc Kastrati.** Dinner and Overnight at Tirana International Hotel .

Day 11: Wednesday, September 30: Tirana & Airport

After breakfast we can make a short sightseeing walk to get a view of the most interesting buildings in Tirana as Het'hem Bey Mosque, Catholic Cathedral, Orthodox Basilica, the Pyramid and so on. Around noon departure at the Airport Mother Theresa!

Kosovo Extension

Led by Kliti Zeka

Day 11: Wednesday, September 30: Prizren

For guests who decide for the Kosovo Extension, we continue after the delivery in the airport of the rest of the group: Drive towards Kosova to Prizren. Lunch on the way or in the Old City of Prizren, maybe free time. After checking in at our hotel, located in the heart of Old Town, we make a walking tour to visit this beautiful city. The Catholic Cathedral, 14th century Serbian

Basilica, 16th century Mosque and the Museum of the Albanian League of 1878, are our highlights! The old city with such a moving history offers a lot from all the communities who are populating it till today, Albanians, Serbs, Turks, Bosnians and so on. Dinner in our Hotel or a restaurant in town. Also possible Folk Show. Overnight at Hotel Centrum.

Day 12: Thursday, October 1: Pej, Gjakova

Morning drive northwards to Pej. On route visit Gjakova, with the renovated bazaar, after the burning during the last war, 1999. The Hadumi Mosque, one of the oldest in Balkans, is a highlight with the wall paintings and a very rare/old architecture. Later we drive to visit one of the most important Serbian Monasteries, Visoki Decani, where the Serbian king from the 14th century is buried. Lunch on the way (optional). Our journey continues to Pej, where we check in at our hotel, Hotel Dukagjini! For dinner we drive inside the marvelous Rugova Canion at a local restaurant where we can enjoy and dance together with the local folk group from Rugova.

Day 13: Friday, October 2: Tuesday: Transfer to the Airport of Prishtina.

(People on the Kosovo extension should book return flight from Prishtina, not Tirana. It is more convenient than driving back to Tirana ... and the airfare from Prishtina is less expensive!)

Visit www.jimgold.com to see YOUTUBE tour videos !

Albania Land Only: \$2995

Kosovo extension: \$695

REGISTRATION FORM: I can't wait to go! Enclosed is my registration deposit of \$200 per person. Single supplement: \$395. Kosovo extension: \$695 Kosovo single supplement \$125. Hotel taxes and service charges: \$145. Gratuities and drinks during meals not included. Program subject to change without notice. Cancellations 90 days prior to departure: Total refund. Less than 90 days: No refund. Travel insurance recommended. **Total balance due June 15, 2020.**