

Albania



A country struggling to get back on its feet.

October 2013



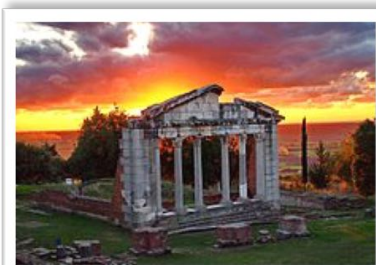
Tirana – not the most inviting capitals of the world...

A visit to the last outpost of communism, and still quite closed country in southern Europe – my expectations were not that high. In connection to a business trip, I spent a couple of days in Tirana back in the fall of 2013.

I stayed at the Dynasty Hotel, which was quite OK actually. Walking distance from the few, but main attractions of the city and with clean rooms, decent service and acceptable breakfast – I don't complain.

The country has transformed and changed over the years with the most recent changes taking place in 1991, when the Republic of Albania was proclaimed – previously being the People's Socialist Republic of Albania. Albania is a member of UN, Nato, WTO, World Bank but not yet the European Community.

The weather was gloomy, but quite fitting for a walk-around in the old and partly run-down centre of Tirana. The buildings from the Communist era still makes its mark everywhere. I included a visit to the **Clock Tower at the Skanderberg Square where the Opera House** and many other important buildings are located.



The Monument of Agonothetes in Apollonia. (6th century BC)





The city of Tirana

Not the most uplifting capitals to visit as a tourist.

Republic of Albania <i>Republika e Shqipërisë</i> (Albanian)	
	
Flag	Coat of arms
Capital and largest city	Tirana  41°19'N 19°49'E
Official languages	Albanian
Area	
• Total	28,748 km ² (11,100 sq mi) (143rd)
• Water (%)	4.7
Population	
• July 2016 estimate	3,038,594 ⁽¹⁾
• 2011 census	2,821,977 ⁽²⁾
• Density	98/km ² (253.8/sq mi) (63rd)
GDP (PPP)	2017 estimate
• Total	\$36.241 billion ⁽³⁾
• Per capita	\$12,582 ⁽³⁾

Piramida (International Centre of Culture) is the strange and run-down Pyramid in the city centre. It was built only some 30 years ago (1987), but already looks old. Kids are playing, running up-down the sides and it is covered with graffiti.

There are a few nice cafes and the odd restaurant to choose from. I tried the **restaurant Artigiano** which was OK, but nothing more. Include a walk around the Skanderberg Square which is quite lively with people on the move and a few shops and markets to stroll around. Otherwise **the Fortress of Justinian along Rruga Murat Tiptani** – one of the last remnants from the Byzantine-era.

If going back to Albania, I would probably only make a short stop upon arrival in Tirana and head out the coast which is said to be quite nice during the summer period. We'll see when this next trip will materialize. Many other things take priority over his however.....

