

# A sustainable mobility guide for Tirana

2021



# STROLLING TIRANA





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# Foreword

Dear visitors,

Welcome to Tirana! It is my great pleasure to welcome you in the capital and heart of Albania.

Before 2020, Tirana welcomed more and more tourists each year. People love our city for its openness, climate and lifestyle. In Tirana, you can have a city break for a few days or use it as your base to discover the beautiful landscape of our country. Global digital nomads find a place to rest in Tirana and historians discover centuries of history.

Of course, in 2020 we had fewer visitors than usual. We used this opportunity to make Tirana even more welcoming. We expanded our walking and cycling infrastructure and are upgrading our bus system. We want that all of us, tourists and inhabitants, have more of our city with less environmental impact.

Our Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan guides us to become an even more livable city.

*Erion Veliaj*  
*Mayor of the City of Tirana*



Photo: Municipality of Tirana

While many cities around the world are striving to become a 15-minute city, our dense inner city is already one.

It offers perfect conditions to take a stroll or go for a joyride on a bike. If you want to have a look at the more hidden spots, take one of our proposed bus tours and discover even more of Tirana.

I thank the Sustainable Urban Transport in Tirana Project of Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH for their contribution to this guide.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**Ismail Beka**

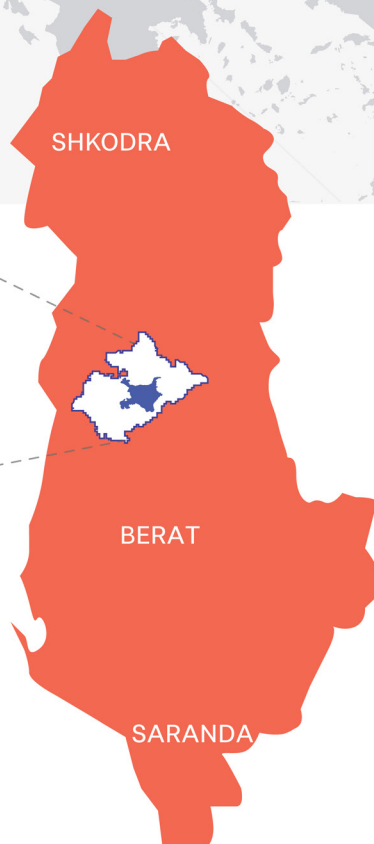


Photo: GIZ

For about three decades, Ismail Beka was part of the GIZ team in Albania. He supported socio-economic development and reforms as well as climate actions. His extraordinary contributions have brought visible change for the improvement of the country. With his professionalism and integrity, his unlimited commitment to help when needed, his dedication for his work and colleagues; and his love for the country and its people, Ismail Beka will forever remain an inspiring model of the values of the Albanian–German cooperation.

Ismail Beka also helped to bring this guide to life with his passion for exploring and sharing Tirana neighborhoods and communities with visitors and friends. One of the communities, a rural part of Tirana, is Shëngjergj (Saint George), and is included in this guide in his memory.

Explore,  
Embrace,  
Enjoy,  
Tirana.







# Tirana, a city between the sea and mountains

Today, Tirana is growing and changing every day as the center of political and administrative life of Albania. 80% of its inhabitants live within a 3 km radius of the city center – making it a dense and walkable city. As of January 1, 2020, Tirana had a population of almost 1 million inhabitants.

Housing almost all state institutions, diplomatic representatives, and being the largest center of education in the country, Tirana is vital to the country's prosperity.

Tirana is a city filled with hotels, restaurants, bars, pubs, youth and artistic centers that provide an active and diverse cultural life for locals and foreigners alike.

The city is increasingly becoming a center of national and international activities, including conferences, festivals, shows, and more, making it a well-known and inviting European city.

However, the past of the city looked different. Upon the conclusion of the Second World War, Albania was heavily influenced by the Soviet Union which was reflected in the significant changes made in Tirana's appearance as the city adopted more Stalinist styles of architecture until the early 1990s.

During the rule of Enver Hoxha, Tirana was called the Capital of Congresses as every five years delegates from all over the country would come for the congress to the city. The locations of these congresses currently city attractions: the University of Arts, the Palace of Culture, and the Palace of Congresses.

The first signs of settlement in Tirana date to the first century AD in the southwest part of the city near the natural spring of Shëngjini. Signs of first settlement in the area of Tirana can be found today at Tirana Castle, whose main fortifications were constructed during the early Byzantine period in the fourth through sixth centuries.

The history of Tirana as a modern city began with the establishment of four main buildings: a mosque, a Turkish bath, a bakery, and some inns in 1614. These buildings thus became the center of the new town. The Clock Tower is one of the oldest buildings in Tirana, dating back to the 19th century, built by the Ottomans.



Palace of Congresses (GIZ/Naun Telo)



PALACE OF CULTURE



Shetitorja Murat Toptani

Bulevardi Bajram Curri

PALACE OF CONGRESSES



UNIVERSITY OF ARTS



Air Albania Stadium

Grand Park

# Sustainable Mobility in Tirana

**Historically, Tirana is a city of sustainable mobility options.**

The ancient Ottoman quarters are the definition of dense, people-centered neighborhoods. During the Hoxha regime (1944–1985), private cars were not available to the general public – people had to walk, cycle or take the bus and there were only a few thousand cars in the entire country until 1990. After the collapse of the communist regime, car ownership rose quickly. This led to an increase of car usage and put the other modes, public transportation, cycling and walking under pressure. From **57,000** cars in **1993**, the number rose to more than **450,000** in **2020**. This has led to several negative consequences, such as traffic jams, air pollution, encroachment of pedestrian space by parked cars and increased safety and comfort concerns.

Tirana's municipal administration is keen to fight car culture by promoting and investing in sustainable mobility measures. In particular, the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), the Green City Action Plan (GCAP), the Tirana 2030 urban planning document (June 2016) for the city of Tirana are guiding policy documents. You can find more information on the **SUMP** here:



# Public Transport

**Buses are the only form of public transport in Tirana. Old pictures show how buses have always been the main public transport mean in the city.**

**As you can see, they were always colorful – some things never change!**

**Currently, there are 23 bus routes within the urban area and 15 inter-urban routes, which connect the city with surrounding rural areas.**

According to the most recent data, **36% of citizens in Tirana use public transport.** 92% of citizens report having public transport options near where they live. Public transport is the main means of transport in the city for women in particular, though the bus system is used by all citizens, with **up to 200,000 passengers daily.**

The ticket price per one trip is 40 lekë (approximately 0.32 Euro) but is not transferrable between different lines. You can buy tickets inside the bus directly from the conductors.





Modern diesel-electric hybrid buses  
(GIZ/Martin Schäfer)

Major bus stops are located around Skanderbeg square; behind the National Museum, the Tirana International Hotel, and the National Bank.

A bus trip can take you around the city (ring line or Unaza, line 14) or even into the suburbs (line 8, 15, or 12). You decide where you want to go, and just hop on the bus!

Source:

<https://www.tirana.al/en/points-of-interest/bus-lines>

# Walking



People walking around the lake in the Grand Park of Tirana -  
Parku i liqenit artificial të Tiranës (GIZ/Naun Telo)

**Walking is very popular in  
Tirana – over 30% of all trips  
are made on foot.**

The density and sunny climate – with over 300 days of sun – is beneficial for walking. There is also a walking social event known as xhiro, an Albanian tradition. In the evenings, people go out for a walk along the main road, a good chance for them to catch up with their neighbors, friends and family.

However, walking has been challenged the increasing dominance of cars in Tirana. Road safety is a concern while air and noise pollution are degrading the walking experience as well. Investments in walking and in cycling are already having a positive impact on both in Tirana.

# Cycling

Cycling has been an important means of transport in the past – like in many cities around the world before the rise of the automobile. However, only in recent years has cycling gained popularity once again. The city supports this development with the creation of a network of (protected) bike lanes. This network grew steadily over the years and is planned to be expanded further.

A recent survey revealed that one-quarter of citizens cycle, of which 9% cycles regularly (always and very often), 6% sometimes, and 10% rarely.

EcoTirana cargo bike (GIZ/Martin Schäfer)



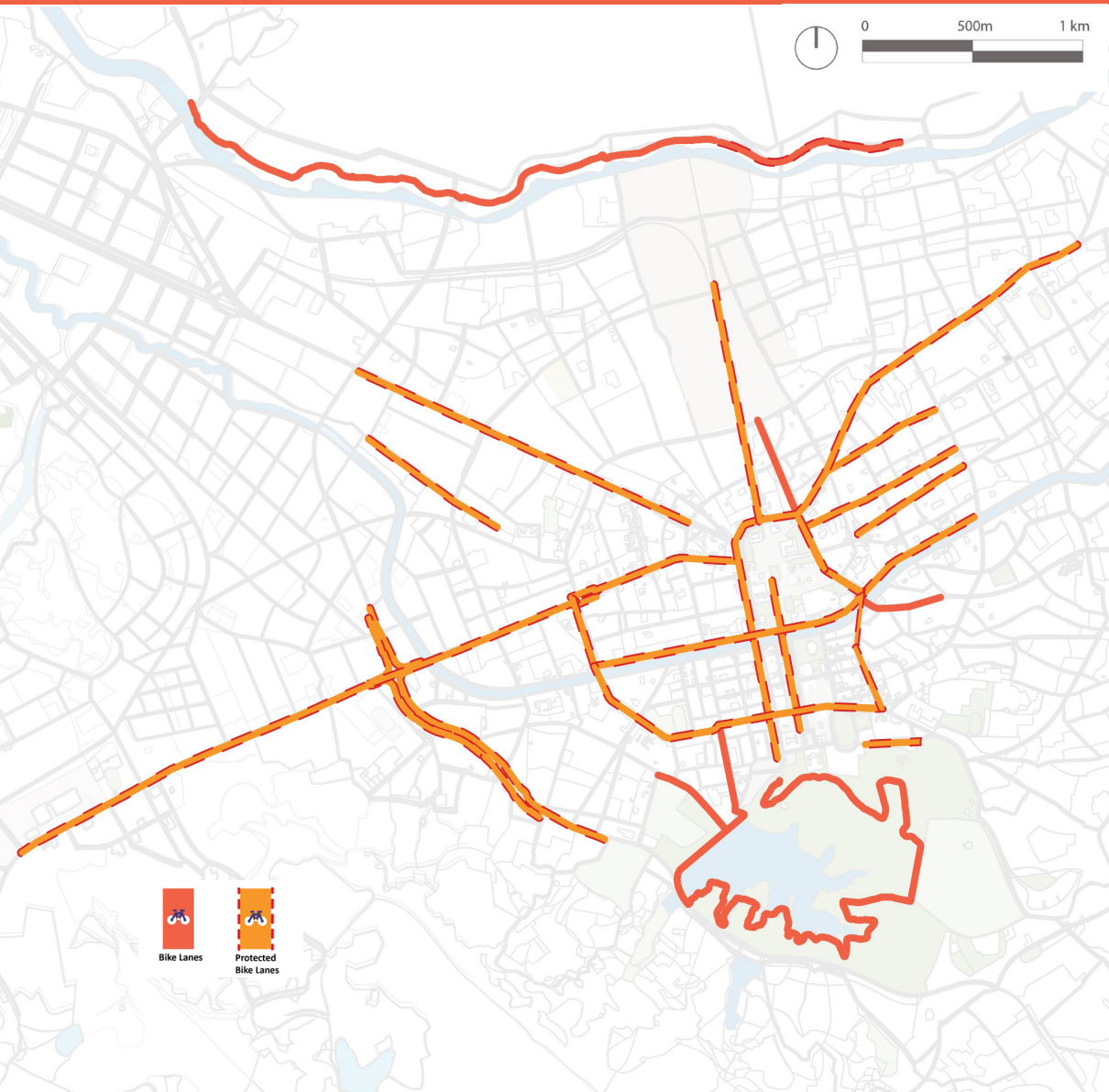
EcoTirana – the city's agency responsible for waste management – is using cargo bikes to collect waste from trash in the city. When strolling through Tirana, you will likely see one emptying dustbins and picking up garbage. This is a cost-effective, low-emission best practice which should inspire other cities.

Grandmother and nephew on a bike (GIZ/Naun Telo)





# Cycling Network of Tirana



# Excuse:

## Skanderbeg Square

**The Municipality of Tirana transformed Skanderbeg Square into an exclusively pedestrian square in 2017.**

What used to be 40,000 m<sup>2</sup> roundabout, mostly dedicated to cars, has become Tirana's biggest public square, where people can enjoy a car-free environment in much cleaner air. The square is used for public events throughout the year. You can also enjoy a coffee at one of the cafés around the square.

# Tirana's biggest public square

Skanderberg Square (GIZ/Christian Mettke)







# BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE

To comfortably get around in Tirana & Albania, you might want to check out the following two tables with Albanian words and phrases to make you sound like a local.

Hello!

**Për-  
shën-  
detje!**

# The basics

## English / Albanian

**Hello** Përshëndetje

**Excuse me** Më falni

**Thank you** Faleminderit

**How much is ...?** Sa kushton...?

**Please** Të lutem

**How can I...?** Si mundem...?

**What is your name?** Si quheni?

**My name is...** Quhem...

**I am sorry** Më vjen keq

**You're welcome** S'ka përse

**Pardon (me)** Më falni

**Goodbye** Mirupafshim

**Do you speak English?** A flisni Anglisht?

**I understand** Kuptoj

**I do not understand** Nuk kuptoj

**Good morning** Mirëmëngjes

**Good afternoon/Good day** Mirëdita

**Good evening** Mirëmbërma

**Good night** Natën e mirë

**Can you help me?** A mund të më  
ndihmoni?

**Where can I eat?** Ku mund të ha?

## Pronunciation

Pers-hen-det-je

Mah-FAHL-nee

Fah-lehm-meen-DEH-reet

SAA-koo-sch-ton

Teh-LOO-tehm

See-Moond-em

See-CHYOO-henee

CHYOO-hem

Mah-VYEHN-ketch

skah purr-SEH

Mah-FAHL-nee

meer-oo-PAHF-sheem

ah FLEES-nee ahn-GLEESHT

Koop-TOY

nook koop-TOY

Meer-muhn-JEHS

Meer-DEE-tah

Meer-MBRUH-mah

NAH-tehn-eh-MEER

Ah mond-teh-meh-

ndee-hmo-nee

Kooh Moond-the-hah

# Mobility Vocabulary

## English / Albanian

## Pronunciation

**Bus** Autobus

Auto-buus

**Bus Stop** Stacion autobusi

Staa-cíon auto-buusi

**Bike** Bìqikletë

Bee-chee-kleh-teh

**Walking** Ecje

Ets-ye/Es-ye

**Pedestrian Zone** Pedonale

Peh-doh-nah-leh

**Cycling** Çiklizëm

Che-kliz-em

**Street/Route** Rrugë

Ruh-geh

**Path** Shteg

Shtehg

**Straight** Drejt

Dreht

**Left** Majtas

Mah-tas/Mah-ay-taas

**Right** Djathtas

Dyah-taas

**Boulevard** Bulevard

Bou-le-varð

**Lane** Korsi

Kohr-see

**Highway** Autostradë

Auto-stra-deh

**Car** Makinë

Ma-ki-neh

**Taxi** Taksi

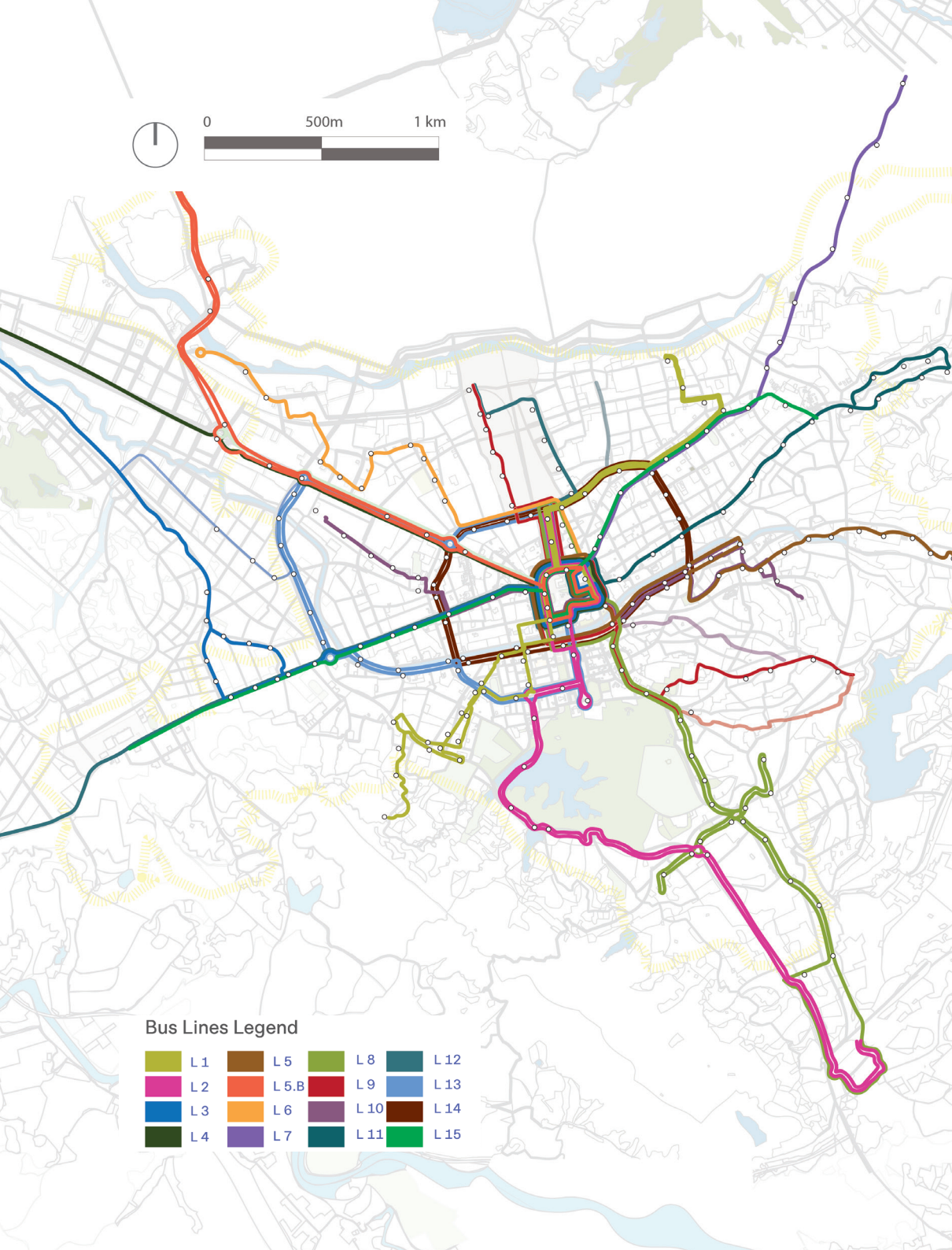
Taaxi

# Bus Network of Tirana





0 500m 1 km



### Bus Lines Legend

L1	L5	L8	L12
L2	L5.B	L9	L13
L3	L6	L10	L14
L4	L7	L11	L15



45 minutes

## Walking Tour 1: From Skanderbeg Square to the Grand Park

**A**

## **Starting Point A: Skanderbeg Square and statue**

### POINTS OF INTEREST:

- 1** Italian Architecture (Town Hall, Ministries)
- 2** Former Hotel Dajti
- 3** Taiwan Center and Park Rinia (Youth Park)
- 4** Piramida (the Pyramid)
- 5** Kryeministria (the Prime Minister's Office)
- 6** Blloku
- 7** Enver Hoxha's Former Residence
- 8** University of Arts

**B**

## **Ending point B: Grand Park**

This tour will lead you through the city center of Tirana. You will see many interesting landmarks and learn about the history of the city. Take your time and enjoy the vibrant city – the tour may take around 45 minutes.

## A - Skanderbeg Square (Sheshi Skënderbej)

Our first tour starts at the heart of Tirana. The square is often considered the best place to understand the history of the city, due to its many layers of construction. Every political regime tried to leave their mark on the square, often through constructing a building, and often through destroying one from a previous regime in the process. The square still reflects this eclecticism today. Many points of interest such as Tirana International Hotel, the Palace of Culture, the National Opera, the National Library, the National Bank, Ethem Bey Mosque and the town hall are located around the square. The architecture of each of these buildings shows a part of Tirana's history.



Skanderbeg Square (GIZ/Naun Telo)

## 1 - Italian Architecture

When walking from Skanderberg Square towards the south, you will discover the Bulevardi Dëshmorët e Kombit. It is the main southern axis leading to the Grand Park of Tirana. The boulevard was designed by Italian architects and many buildings reflect that. The Polytechnic University (previously the Casa del Fascio), the Academy of Arts, the Presidency, the Ministries, the former Dajti Hotel, the National Bank, the Prime Minister's Office and the Archeological museum all follow Italian architecture style. On both sides of the Boulevard are protected bike lanes.



Ministry of Tourism and Environment  
(GIZ/Naun Telo)

## 2 - Former Hotel Dajti

Shortly before the first large intersection, crossing the Lana River, you will find the Dajti Hotel on your left, long considered the best hotel in Tirana. It is located in the city center, right on the main boulevard and is named after Tirana's local mountain, Dajti. Today, the hotel is not in use anymore. It was designed in the early 1940s by Italian architect Gherardo Bosio, head of the Tirana Central Bureau of Construction and Urban Planning, while parts of the furnishings were designed by Gio Ponti. After the collapse of communism it remained in state property. It is currently under renovation.



### 3 - Taiwan Center

Opposite Hotel Dajti, you will face the Taiwan Center and the Rinia (Youth) Park. It is one of the most well-known and entertaining places in Tirana. With a surface of 10,000 square meters and positioned in the center of the city, it includes restaurants, bars, a bowling alley, arcade games, a club and a casino. There are several urban legends why the building is called Taiwan and you might try and come up with one yourself!



Parku Rinia (Youth Park) at Taiwan Center (GIZ/Naun Telo)



Pyramid of Tirana before reconstruction (Municipality of Tirana/Directorate of Promotion and Development of Tourism Industry)

### 4- The Pyramid

After crossing the Lana River, you will see the Pyramid on your left side. While from the point of view of passersby it resembles a pyramid. Its construction began in 1986 and was completed in 1988, serving as a museum of Hoxha's legacy until 1991. Afterwards, it served the children of Tirana as a playground (and a slide!). Currently the Pyramid of Tirana is under construction to become Albania's largest center for young people, mainly focused on digital education, information technology culture and for art, culture and professional courses or other youth activities. Hopefully, there will be a slide again!



Office of the Prime Minister (GIZ/  
Naun Telo)

## 5 - The Prime Minister's Office

Further south on the Boulevard and just behind the Pyramid, you will pass at the official office and residence of the Prime Minister of Albania (Kryeministria). The building was constructed in 1941. To enter the famous Blloku, turn right onto Ismail Qemali. If you instead continue straight, you'll find of the city's automated bicycle counters with which the Municipality gathers data about bicycle usage.

## 6 - Blloku

The most famous area in Tirana – Blloku (the Block) is also the most vibrant. Previously where only the communist elites lived, now the current ruling class calls it home, becoming a popular destination with numerous bars, cafes and restaurants. In Blloku you can still find the residence of the Albania's former communist leader Enver Hoxha.

There area's appeal lies in part in the different styles of its buildings. The area is easily accessible from different parts of Tirana via the main public transport route, called the Unaza (the Ring).

## 7 - Enver Hoxha's Former Residence

The three-story villa is located at the intersection of Ibrahim Rugova and Ismail Qemali streets. For decades it was the home of dictator Enver Hoxha, and his wife continued to live here for years after his death in 1985. It was another world for the people who thronged to this street in amazement when Blloku was finally opened to the public in 1991. Today, the house is closed to the public. To continue with our tour, please follow the Ismail Qemali street down until the end. You will turn left onto the Sami Frashëri Street. To reach our next point of interest, please head to the roundabout and turn left once again onto Abdyl Frashëri Street to walk back to the main boulevard. You will find bi-directional protected bike lanes on Abdyl Frashëri as in many parts of Tirana as well as wide sidewalks on both sides of the street.



Enver Hoxha's Former Residence  
(GIZ/Naun Telo)



## 8 - University of Arts

Once you arrive again on the boulevard, turn right towards Mother Theresa Square and the Polytechnic University of Tirana. You will pass the Presidential Office on your right and the Palace of Congresses on the left. The building of the University of Arts will be on your right at the Square. The University buildings around the square were designed by the Italian architect Gherardo Bosio in 1939, and it was finished in 1940. The building of the University of Arts at the time was named ODA (Casa del Opera del Dopolavoro Albanese, or The Albanian After Work House) and represents simple architecture, developed in a unique plan of the main facade.

It has a central entrance and a modular expansion at its parts. This gives a monumental view to the building. The architecture's building and those around feature the fascist rational style.

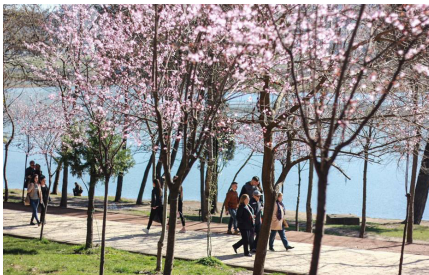
Today, this is the Albanian University of Arts, the main public institution of higher education in arts, founded in 1996.

If you cross the street towards the Polytechnic, you can enter the park on the right side of the building behind the taxi stand.

## B. The Grand Park of Tirana

The Grand Park of Tirana continues to be one of the most popular and frequented spots of the capital by locals and tourists alike.

Weekend is peak time in which the park warmly welcomes a multitude of park goers, those of whom seek recreation in the area's many open green spaces, promenades, playgrounds and eateries. The open-air theater is another great spot where regular stage shows featuring talented artists take place. The Grand Park of Tirana also boasts many multi-functional spaces for various sports and leisure activities. An artificial lake was created in the 1955.



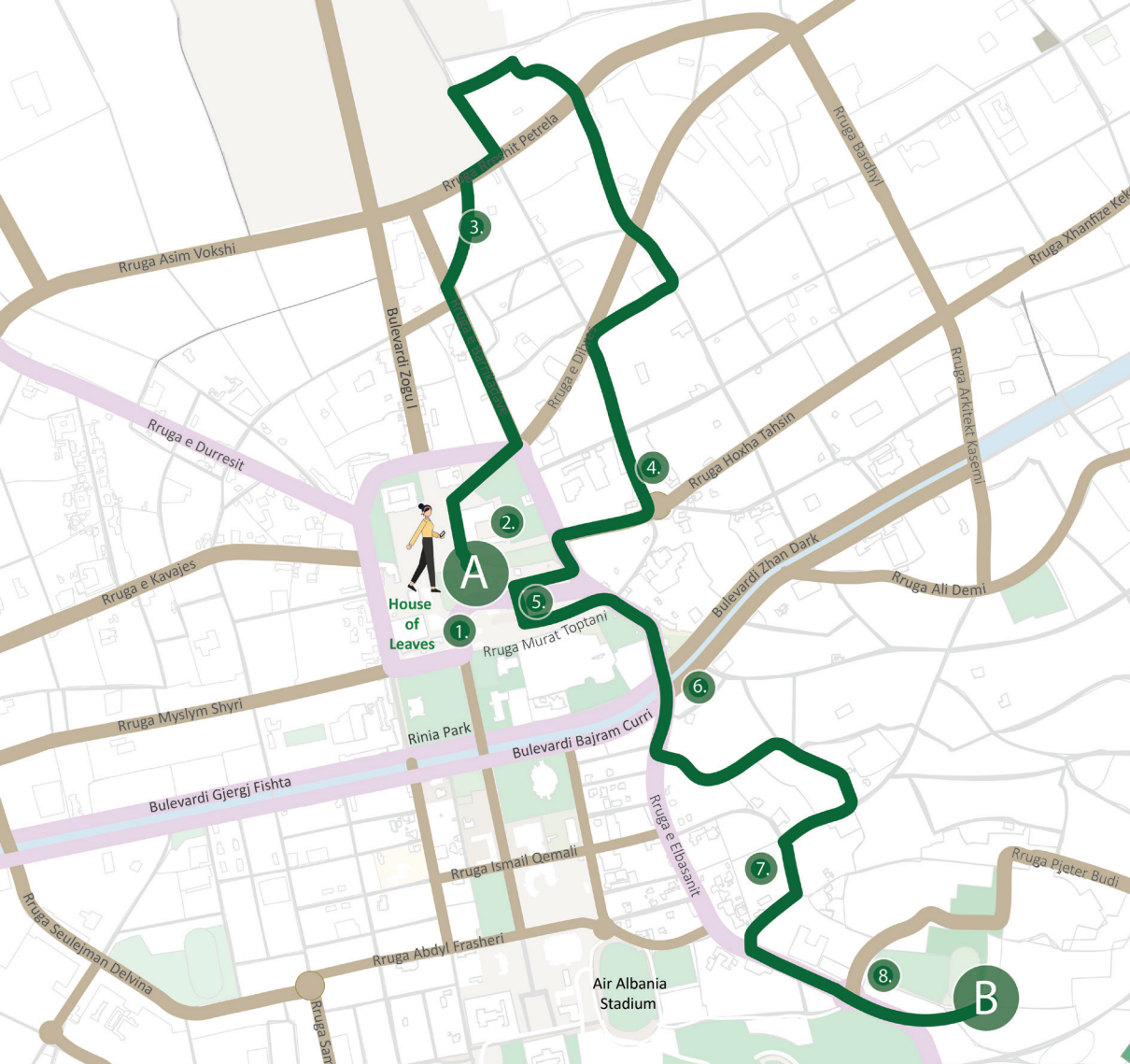
Grand Park (Municipality of Tirana/  
Directorate of Promotion and Development  
of Tourism Industry)

More than just a leisure spot, this popular park in Tirana also plays host to some of the country's most important memorials, commemorating great names of Albanian literature, as well as those who lost their lives during World War 2.



Grand Park (GIZ/Naun Telo)





2 hours

## Walking Tour 2: From Skanderberg Square to Student City

**A**

## **Starting Point A: Skanderberg Square and statue**

### POINTS OF INTEREST:

- 1**     **Clock Tower (Kulla e Sahatit)**
- 2**     **Palace of Culture (Pallati i Kulturës)**
- 3**     **Old Tirana (Tirana e Vjetër)**
- 4**     **The New Bazaar (Pazari i Ri)**
- 5**     **Castle of Tirana (Kalaja e Tiranës)**
- 6**     **The Tanner's Bridge (Ura e Tabakëve)**
- 7**     **Street markets (Tregjet e rrugës)**

**B**

## **Ending Point B: Student Quarter (Qytet Studenti)**

This tour shows you the hidden gems of the city. It takes you through the old quarters and off the beaten paths. You can discover the old and new Tirana and everything in between. Plan two hours for the entire tour so that you can take a break at one of the many cafés along the way.

## 1 - Clock Tower

The Clock Tower is located directly on Skanderberg Square. Tirana's Ottoman clock tower was built by the poet Haxhi Et'hem Bey and dates to 1822. Completed by the locals and raised to a height of 35 meters in 1928, when a German-made clock was also installed (the current Chinese-made clock is the fourth in the tower's existence), for a long time it was the tallest building in the city. The excellent views of the city center make the climb up the 90 steps to the top worth it. Brightly lit at night, the tower can be seen from the far end of Durrës Street (Rr. Durrësit) when entering the city from the airport. The tower was completely renovated in 2010.

Directly next to it is the also newly renovated Et'hem Bey Mosque.



Et'hem Bey Mosque (Urban Sketchers Tirana)

## 2 - Palace of Culture

The Palace of Culture is located to the east (towards the mountains) of Skanderbeg Square. It was built over the Old Bazaar of Tirana and the first brick was put by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev on June 3, 1959. After two years Soviet specialists departed permanently from Albania and thus the Palace of Culture was finished with the efforts of most prominent local architects and engineers. This building has significant architectural elements from the Palazzo dei Congressi in Rome and the building of Finland Station in St. Petersburg. It was finished in 1963. It houses some of the most important institutions of the social and cultural life in the capital, such as the National Opera and Ballet Theater and the National Library. You may also find some cafés from where you have a great view onto the Square itself.



Palace of Culture (Municipality of Tirana/Directorate of Promotion and Development of Tourism Industry)

## 3 - Old Tirana

For a real Tirana experience, you can't miss the old center. Situated northeast of Skanderbeg Square, this area is a living memory of what Tirana was before it became the big capital city you see today. Tirana was once a small town, with single family houses built out of adobe and wood. This area is one of the oldest neighborhoods. With many narrow cul-de-sac paths, you can easily get lost in the midst of the buzzing city. This area has changed drastically, but you can still find elements that bring you back to the old Tirana, with small houses, amazing gardens and high cypress trees.



Symbolically, a main node of the area is called “The Cypress”, as a marker of Tirana’s close affiliation to this tree.

Stop by to grab a coffee or to be amazed by the artist’s wonderful works – we promise you won’t regret it. On the way to the New Bazaar, you’ll cross Qemal Stafa Street – also known as ‘the bicycle street’. Here you find many small shops selling and repairing bikes. The men and women working here are directly benefitting of the further increasing popularity of the bicycle as a mode of transport.



Sali Shijaku House (Urban Sketchers Tirana)

## 4 - The New Bazar

The New Bazaar came to life in 1931 and the years that followed saw growth and development. It was created as growing commercial activity was spilling out of the Old Bazaar. After the demolition of the Old Bazaar in 1959 during the socialist period, the New Bazaar was for a long time the only major market for meat, fish, vegetables, and fruits in Tirana. The New Bazaar is located in an area of Tirana, which together with the Mujo neighborhood, represents one of the oldest areas of the city. Even today, the New Bazaar continues to be one of the largest markets for meat, fish, vegetables and fruits in the capital. The Municipality of Tirana revitalized this area and turned it into a pedestrian zone and community space. The New Bazaar is open 24 hours per day, where in the morning the biggest focus is on the trade of products and in the afternoon and night restaurants around the bazaar and cultural activities take place.

To reach our next point of interest, please go to the roundabout at the southern side of the New Bazaar. From there you take Luigj Gurakuqi Street back in the direction of Skanderberg Square. At the large intersection, turn left towards the Toptani Shopping Center. Directly behind this building, you'll find the entrance to the Tirana Castle.



New Bazaar (GIZ/Naun Telo)

## 5 - Castle of Tirana

The castle was a stop of the Via Egnatia. It was the center of a settlement, with a variety of names over the last two thousand years: Tirkan (4th century AD); Tergiana (1297), when it housed the chancellery of its ruler Charles I Anjou; and near its present form, Tyranna (1505), according to Barleti. The origin of this toponym has not yet been fully specified. But the castle, some of the oldest evidence of human settlement in the city, is located exactly where the old and new roads that connected the capital with the rest of Albania – north to south, east to west – and crossed. On the premises of the Tirana Castle there are traditional houses which have created the style of the Tirana civic building. The buildings inside the Tirana Castle were inhabited by the city's ruling families and thus they are also considered as the first buildings of local administrations.

Within the walls of the castle of Tirana, a new pedestrian area has recently been created, transformed into a recreational space serving as an environment where artisans and local traditions, cuisine and art are promoted.

You can walk through the area and exit on the other side. Once you reached the ring road with the Lana River in the middle, turn left towards your next destination. You will see a mosque on your left and need to cross the intersection. After another 100 m along the ring road, you will arrive at the Tanner's Bridge. By the way, you can cycle across Tirana from east to west (or the other way around) along the bike lane next to the Lana River.



Tirana Castle (GIZ/Naun Telo)



Tanner's Bridge (Urban Sketchers Tirana)

## 6 - The Tanner's Bridge

The Tanner's Bridge is an Ottoman period stone footbridge built in the 18th century by a tanner, craftspeople with a special position in social and economic life of this period in Tirana. The bridge was once part of the Shëngjergj Road that linked Tirana with the eastern highlands. The bridge went across the Lana near the neighborhood where butchers and tanners worked. It testifies the ancient traditions of the country. The Tanner's Bridge is distinguished for its harmonious architecture and for the proportional distribution of its elements. The Tanners' Bridge is composed of a main arch and has a height of about 7.5 meters. It is still used by pedestrians.

To reach the next destination, you will need to cross the ring road and the Lana River.

## 7 - Street markets

Walking from the Tanner's Bridge southwards towards the student quarter, you will pass through a maze of small streets. Here you find some of the best fruit and vegetable shops, as well as fish and dairy products. Albania's climate allows for many products to be locally grown such as oranges and olives, as well as local goat and sheep cheese: a real treat! The colorful display of the shops will let you know what the season has to offer and make for good photos!



Fruit and vegetable shop  
(GIZ/Naun Telo)

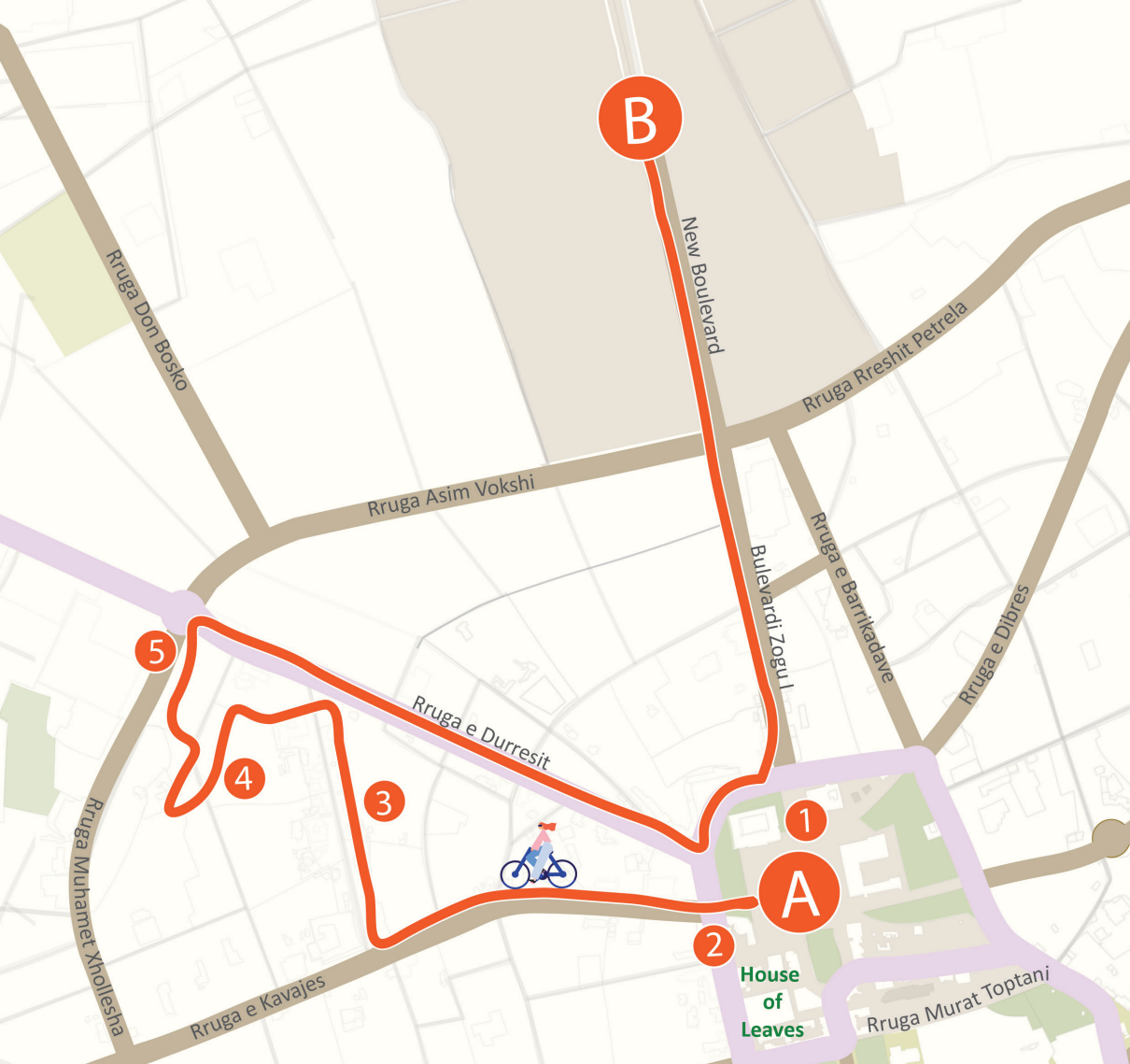
## 8 - Student quarter

The student quarter of Tirana, called Student City (Qytet Studenti), sits atop a low hill in the southeast of the capital. In 1990, the squat beige-and-gray dormitories surrounded an open area consisting of concrete and grass. The communist elite controlled most aspects of Albania's political shift, but that autumn the students took charge of that drab hilltop and rattled the regime. Democracy Square (Sheshi Demokracia) now invites guests to sit down at one of the many cafés and enjoy the youthful vibe.



Democracy Square in Student City  
(GIZ/Naun Telo)





around 30 min

## Cycle Tour 1: From Skanderberg Square to the New Boulevard



**A**

## **Starting Point A: Skanderberg Square and statue**

### POINTS OF INTEREST:

- 1**      **National History Museum**
- 2**      **National Bank of Albania**
- 3**      **Embassy Row**
- 4**      **Mosaic of Tirana**
- 5**      **Zogu i Zi Roundabout**

**B**

## **Ending Point B: New Boulevard**

This bike ride leads you on bicycle paths to the west and north of the center. At the Mosaic of Tirana, you can find the earliest signs of a settlement and at the New Boulevard (Bulevardi i Ri) towards the north some of the most recent. The tour takes around 30 minutes.

## 1 - National History Museum

Our first cycling tour starts at Skanderberg Square, right next to the National History Museum, containing a plethora of historical treasures, from the Bronze Age to the Communist era, and everything in between.

Inaugurated in 1981, this space now holds more than 5,000 artifacts in its multitude of well-designed pavilions. The National History Museum is recognizable by its iconic façade, which displays a gigantic mosaic entitled Albania (Shqipëria in Albanian). A construction of the Socialist Realism period, the mosaic fittingly depicts the glorified heroes of the working class. Memorable and imposing, the mosaic greets the visitor on arrival, and sets a precedent for what lies in store inside the museum.

## 2 - National Bank of Albania

The National Bank of Albania is located on the southwestern corner of Skanderberg Square. It was designed in 1936 by the Italian architect Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo, one of the most well-known Italian architects of the time.

The building belongs to the Rationalism architectural style, a fashion that flourished during the first half of the 20th century across Europe. This style is distinguished for large volumes and strong lines on facades. The entire round hall is embellished by a giant mosaic created by Italian artist Gulio Rosso in 1939. After 77, years on 30 October 2015 the reconstructed building was inaugurated, coinciding with initial opening of the Bank of Albania's museum.

From the National Bank, we take the median cycle lane on Kavaja Street (Rruga e Kavajes) to reach our next destination. After 700 m, cross the street to the right onto Skanderbeg Street (Rruga Skenderbeu), where Embassy Row is located. You'll see a roadblock and guardhouse.



National Bank of Albania (GIZ/Naun Telo)

### 3 - Embassy Row

Skanderberg Street contains many of Tirana's embassies. Also known as Embassy Row, this area doesn't allow unauthorized vehicles to pass, but provides ample space for pedestrians and cyclists. Besides its administrative character, it is also one of the most well-known places in Tirana because of its many coffee shops. Many people who pass here use the street as a short-cut between Kavaja Street and Durres Street. In the evening, the street turns into a promenade where many citizens stroll in their best outfits (xhiro).

For our tour, you need to ride until the end and turn left immediately after the embassy of the People's Republic of China. Follow the street until the next four-way intersection, where you will turn left once more. Take the third right to arrive directly at the Mosaic of Tirana, on your right.

## 4 - Mosaic of Tirana

The Tirana Mosaic is thought to have been part of a rural house built in the first century AD.

In the third century the settlement is thought to have been replaced by a condominium complex, divided into two parts in the *pars urban* (residential part of the villa) and *pars rustica* (manufacturing part of the villa) which also had agricultural function. Later in the fourth and fifth centuries, a paleo-Christian basilica was built on this site. The basilica was built in the central hall of the house. The church's architecture is simple, but uses geometry and design elements to enhance the entrance leading to the altar along a long, straight axis.

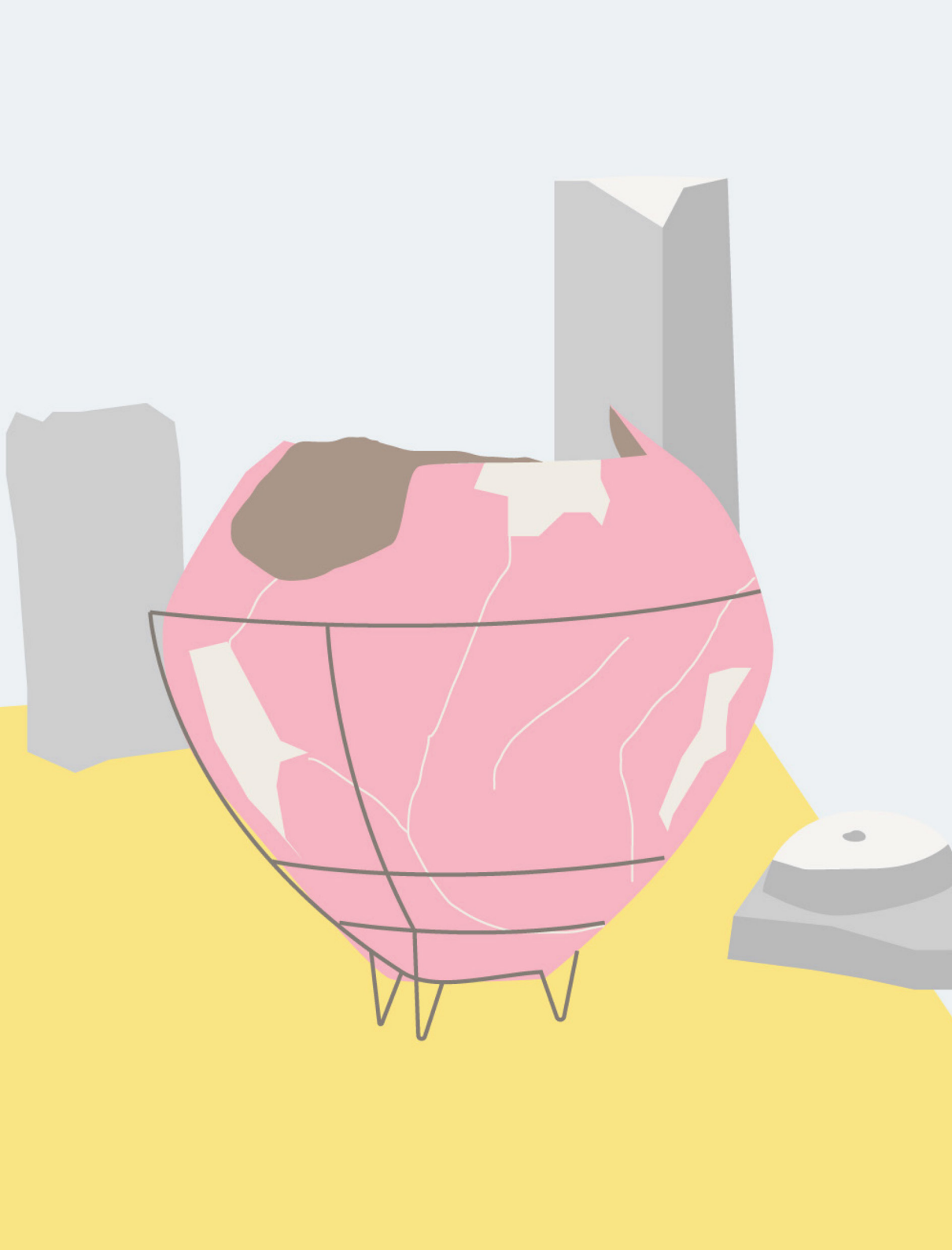
The Municipality of Tirana started re-designing the area in early 2021 to give pedestrians more space and increase the attractiveness of the area. During construction works, more historical elements were found.

You will have even more to discover thanks to the city's efforts to make Tirana a more walkable city!

In order to finish the tour, please turn northwards towards the large roundabout (Zogu i Zi). From there you take the first exit to Durres Street. The street has recently been redesigned with a bus lane and a bi-directional cycle path. On both sides, large sidewalks also call for a stroll. At the end of Durres Street, you will be once again at Skanderberg Square. Here turn left to ride behind the National History Museum towards the new boulevard to the north. Also here you find a median cycle path shaded by trees. You can follow the street as far as you feel and see changing Tirana.



Archeological findings from the Mosaic Tirana (Municipality of Tirana/Directorate of Promotion and Development of Tourism Industry)





30minutes

## Cycle Tour 2: From Tirana Castle to Farka Lake

**A**

## **Starting Point A: Skanderberg Square and statue**

POINTS OF INTEREST:

**1**

**Various Universities**

**2**

**Student City and  
Democracy Square**

**B**

## **Ending Point B: Green Suburbs of Tirana**



This tour brings you from the buzzing city center into calm nature. On Elbasan Street enjoy the shade of large trees on the sidewalks and a very active part of the city: people walking and crossing the street, cars moving back and forth and buses that stop to drop off and pick up passengers. The bike lane on this street is only rudimentary. On your way, you will also see some landmarks, i.e. the New Mosque directly at the starting point as well as the new Office Skyscraper at the intersection of the ring road and Elbasan Street. Follow the street until the roundabout (1 km), passing the US Embassy on your left mid-way.

At the roundabout, you take the third exit towards Student City (Qytet Studenti). You'll know you're on the right path if you pass the bus terminal on your right. You'll need some extra effort to climb the steep incline towards Democracy Square. As described at the walking tour, this is a great place to stop. To continue, continue uphill just a little bit further until reaching Pjeter Budi Street. Take a right here and follow the street until you arrive at the lake (approx. 2 km).

## 1 - Farka Lake

The artificial Farka Lake was built in the 1980s and it is one of the largest lakes in Albania used for irrigation. This area is distinguished for its biodiversity, natural heritage and the attractive hilly landscape. You have a great view over the whole city as well as towards Mount Dajti.



Farka Lake (Municipality of Tirana/  
Directorate of Promotion and  
Development of Tourism Industry)

Long since abandoned, a group of Tirana youths, inspired by similar projects in Kosovo and North Macedonia, decided it would make a perfect public space.

They dedicated themselves to turning the old factory into a social and cultural center for Albania's capital.

They reached out to Toestand, a Belgium-based initiative that revitalizes abandoned spaces, who had also helped to get Pristina's Termokiss and Tetovo's Social Cultural Space off the ground.

However, the global pandemic led to a scale-back of the project. The idea continues to live on in a hostel in the center of Tirana.

## 2 - Uzina Autotraktori

The 900 square meter industrial building in the Shkozë neighborhood in the suburbs of Tirana was formerly a cast iron foundry department of a tractor factory in its heyday.

## 3 - Panorama View

While the spot number 3 might be especially good to view a panorama, you will find many photogenic places around the lake. Enjoy it as long as you can as many new developments happen around the lake.

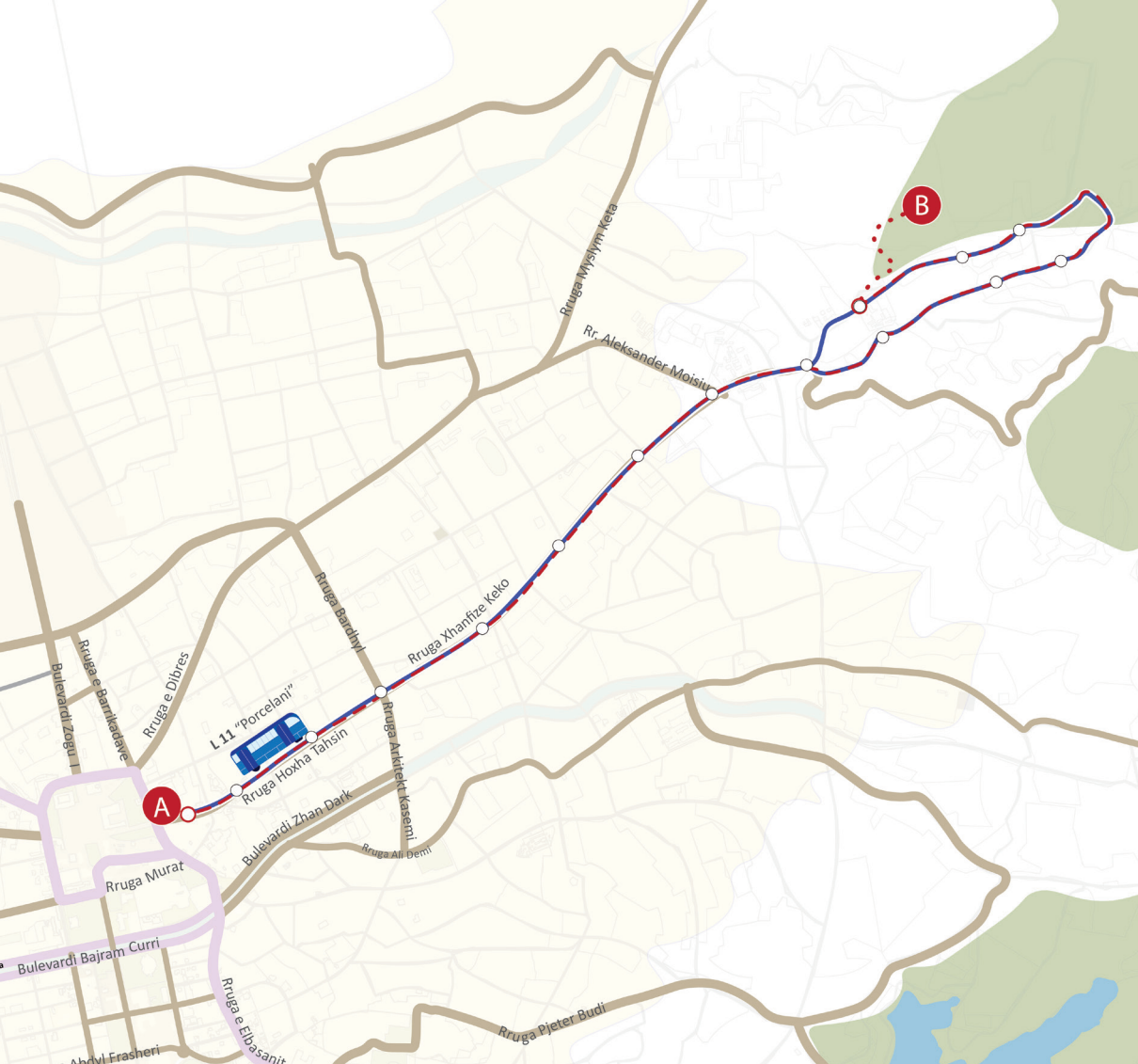
## 4 - Green Suburbs

On your way to the lake you might have spotted many old houses but also recently built ones. A few years ago, this area was still considered rural and far away. However, Tirana and Durrës are continuing to grow as more and more people want to live in the capital. In the city center, new high-rise buildings are further increasing the density, more houses are also being built in the suburbs. Ideally, the new homes are also connected to the bus network as well as accessible with (e-)bikes.



A look at the bucolic present of Farka Lake (GIZ/Naun Telo)





half-day trip

## Bus Tour 1: From Skanderberg Square to the Mount Dajti

**A**

**Starting Point A:  
Skanderberg Square  
and statue**

POINTS OF INTEREST:

**1**

**Eastern Tirana incl.  
Kinostudio neighborhood**

**B**

**Ending Point B:  
Mount Dajti and  
National Park**

**If you'd like to experience something rather than the city noise and crowded areas, then a nice bus tour from Skanderbeg Square can send you to the Dajti Cable Car Station. From this point you can travel with the cable car up to the top of Mount Dajti.**

The tour will start at the Line 11 bus stop, located behind the Palace of Culture on the east side of Skanderbeg Square. The station here, located on Luigj Gurakuqi street includes find different bus lines. Be sure to select the Line 11 Porcelani bus, which is blue. You will pass Hoxha Tahsin Street that goes along the New Bazaar, and then to Xhanfize Keko Street where you'll see buildings of various facades, starting from private houses surrounded by walls to the villas turned into businesses, and apartment blocks along the way. You will see many people pass by, drinking coffee along the street, shopping for groceries/personal items. The more you leave the city center, the less active the streets will be. You'll pass along the old Fabrika e Porcelanit (Porcelain Factory), one of the main historical industrial areas in Tirana. In total, you will pass around 10 bus stops before arriving at Shefqet Kuka stop, from where you can walk through a neighborhood to the cable car station, or you can wait for the bus to turn around and drop you at point 'B' as shown on the map. This will shorten your walking distance to the destination to approximately around 2-3 minutes. Either way, the easiest is to tell the conductor that you want to go to 'Dajti Ekspres' and they will let you know when to get off the bus.



## 1 - The Cable Car

The Cable Car started operating in June 2005. It takes around 15 minutes to reach the top of Mount Dajti at 1613 meters elevation; reportedly the longest cableway in the Balkans. On the mountain, you can go hiking or play mini golf, enjoy the fresh air and have a picnic. Come early to spend the whole day here. The cable car does not operate on Tuesdays. Lately, traces of prehistoric settlements and fortifications from later periods have also been discovered in the area.

Cable Car (Photo:GIZ/Naun Telo)



**Just 25 km east of the center of Tirana is Dajti National Park.**

## **2 - Dajti National Park**

It is the most accessible mountain from the city, and many locals go there to escape the bustle. The mountainside is covered in shady beech and pine trees and a number of walking trails wend up and down the mountain. Many hostels in town can arrange a day of hiking or mountain biking. If you just want to enjoy the view, there are numerous grassy picnic spots just beyond the top cable car station.







Skanderbeg  
Square

**A** Bus Station  
at "7 Xhuxhat"  
Tirana Parking

Tirane-Petrelle-Tirane

Farke

Sauk-Lunder

TEG (Shopping-Centre)

Lunder-Mullet

Stermas

Mullet

Arbane

Bus Line  
"Tirane-Petrelle-Tirane"

**B** Petrela  
Castle

half-day trip

## **Bus Tour 2: From the City Center to Petrela Castle**

**A**

**Starting Point A:  
Skanderberg Square  
and statue**

POINTS OF INTEREST:

**1**

**Southern Tirana and  
suburbs**

**B**

**Ending Point B:  
Petrela Castle**

**Tirana contains 13 municipal units or villages, located on the plains, hills and mountains surrounding the city. One of the most attractive hills is definitely Petrela. Here you'll find Petrela Castle, a well-preserved triangular fortress, just 15 km southeast of the city center on the road to Elbasan.**

It is on the top of a steep hill at 329 m altitude. The Castle was erected in the 6th century during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Justinian, and its name derives from the Latin *petra alba* ("white stone"). In the 15th century it was part of the defense system set up by the League of Lezha against the Ottomans, along with the citadel in Kruja. It was then the fiefdom of Muzakë Thopia who married Mamica, the sister of national hero Skanderbeg. It was the first of the fortresses of this network to fall in 1444 and was reinforced by the Ottomans in the following years. It is these fortifications that we still see today. The highest part of the ramparts, surmounted by a wooden structure, now houses a restaurant, from which one can enjoy a magnificent panorama of the plain and Tirana. Access to the fortress is free during the restaurant's opening hours, making it a popular Sunday outing.

To get there by bus, you'll need to go to the 7 Xhuxhat Tirana Parking at the intersection of the ring road and Elbasan Street. It is the same starting point ad for bike tour number 2.

The blue (mini) bus, with Tirane–Petrele–Tirane written on the front, will take you directly to Mamica Square, a just 3 to 5 minutes' walk from Petrela Castle. The ride takes around 40 minutes. The view from the castle will be worth it!







day trip

## Bus Tour 3: From Kinostudio to Shëngjergj

**A** **Starting Point A:  
Kinostudio**

POINTS OF INTEREST:

**1** **Rural parts of the  
Municipality of Tirana**

**B** **Ending Point B:  
Mountains and nature**

**Discover the cultural and  
natural riches that make  
Shëngjergj an unforgettable  
experience.**

**Take a day trip to Shëngjergj and discover one of the most scenic areas in Tirana and across Albania. Highlights include mountain lakes, fantastic landscapes around the famous Gropa Mountain, with breathtaking views and unique alpine flora.**



### **Bus Line 15** Tiranë–Shëngjergj–Tiranë

Tiranë–Shëngjergj					
First Bus <b>6:00</b>	<b>7:00</b>	<b>12:00</b>	<b>14:00</b>	<b>16:00</b>	April to <b>17:00</b> October
Shëngjergj–Tiranë					
First Bus <b>6:00</b>	<b>7:00</b>	<b>10:00</b>	<b>14:00</b>	<b>17:00</b>	April to <b>18:00</b> October

The bus station in Tirana is located in Kinostudio (next to the State Film Archive) – across from the end station of the Kinostudio–Kombinat line. In Shëngjergj, the main station is in the center of the village (Qender te Fshatit) near the town hall.

Along the Erzen River, starting from Domje e Malit, there are a considerable number of restaurants and cafes with fresh and local food. You can also eat in the center of Shëngjergj and Shënmeri, where you can also find accommodation in homestays and hostels with board.

You can also access some of the highest peaks of the Tirana region (Meceku in Malini me Gropa at 1870 m and Mali i Fagut at 1400 m). Enjoy the panoramic terrace in Shëngjergj, where the first school of the District of Tirana was housed inside a mosque whose ruins are still visible.





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TUMI is a global implementation initiative on sustainable mobility formed through the union of 11 international partners.

TUMI is united through one goal: changing mobility for the benefit of people and the environment, with a view to the future. TUMI supports transport projects around the world and enables policy makers to transform urban mobility. We believe in sustainable mobility for a better future. TUMI is based on three pillars: innovation, knowledge and investment.

Find out more: [transformative-mobility.org](http://transformative-mobility.org)

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giz-albanien@giz.de

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Text  
Ariela Hajdarmataj  
Klaudia Tufina  
Martin Schaefer  
Erisa Nesimi  
Christian Mettke

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