

## Itinerary



### 1. The National Historical Museum (where the old City Hall was)

It was inaugurated on October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1981 and it is the largest museum institution in Albania. For its building the Old Cityhall's building was sacrificed. It was finished in 1931 and until the 1980s when it was destroyed, it performed the functions of the Executive Committee of Tirana.

### 2. "Skanderbeg" Square and the Monument of "Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg"

The square has been named "Skanderbeg" on November 26<sup>th</sup> 1937. It was designed in a circular shape with a fountain in the middle, and the dominating building was the old City Hall which was later destroyed in 1980. This square was surrounded by traditional constructions: the Old Bazaar, the Clock Tower, the Et'hem Bey Mosque, the Church of Evangelization (which was later destroyed) etc.

But during the years of socialism Stalin's statue was placed in this square (November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1951). It remained there until 1968 when it was replaced by the monument of Gjergj Kastrioti Skanderbeg.

The monument was placed there on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of our national hero. This monument is the work of the sculptors Odhise Paskali, Janaq Paço and Shaban Hadëri and it was inaugurated on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1968.

### **3. Bank of Albania**

It was designed by prof. Vittorio Ballio Morpurgo (1890-1966), one of the most famous Italian architects of the time.

The works for the construction of the National Bank of Albania, the name by which it was known in those years, began in February 1937 and was carried out by "Staccioli & Fortuzi" under the supervision of the Engineer Cipriani. While the ceremony of its inauguration took place on October 30, 1938.

The architectural style of the bank belongs to the current of Rationalism, a current that flourished in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. This style is distinguished for large volumes and strong lines on facades.

All the circular hall is adorned by a giant mosaic, a work of art on a large scale, created by Italian artist Giulio Rosso in 1939.

After 77 years, on a symbolically chosen date, on October 30, 2015, the reconstructed building of the Bank of Albania was inaugurated. It coincided with the first opening of the Museum of the Bank of Albania.

### **4. The House of leaves**

Built in 1931, this building originally had the function of a clinic. During the Second World War, under German occupation, it belonged to the Gestapo.

While in the early years of the new regime, it became a center of the Sigurimi (secret police) used for investigations. From 1950, it became the headquarters of the technical and scientific section of the Sigurimi.

Today due to a project of the Ministry of Culture the "House of Leaves" has turned into a museum.

### **5. Orthodox Cathedral Resurrection of Christ**

It is conceived as a complex of buildings and auxiliary facilities, consisting of the seat of the Holy Synod, with the central administrative offices of the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania, conference rooms, museum and archive space, etc.

The centre piece of the complex is the cathedral itself, a true Byzantine traditional shape converted into a modern design. The image of Christ Pantokrator laid in mosaics dominates the dome of the church. The marble iconostasis and the fine icons deserve attention. At the cathedral's side raises a chapel decorated with beautiful frescoes.

### **6. Former villa of Enver Hoxha**

The villa where the former communist dictator Enver Hoxha lived was a construction of the communist-era with an architecture that imitates to some extent the architecture of the 1930s. Whereas the rest is a heavy concrete construction covered in white stone tiles.

## **7. Blloku**

The former - residence of senior members of the Communist Party leadership. This has been a restricted area for ordinary citizens.

Today it is especially frequented by young people because of the diverse complexes of luxury services and facilities.

## **8. The seat of the Presidency**

The building was conceived to be the representation of the Soviet Embassy in Albania. Its foundations were laid in 1959 under an agreement signed by the governments of the two countries. In 1961, when the Soviet Union ceased diplomatic relations with Albania, the building was not finished yet, therefore the embassy of the Soviet Union was never housed there.

In the absence of a national Albanian tradition, the building is extremely conventional with exaggerated ornaments typical of Stalinist architecture. The large volume of the building is influenced by the vertical rhythm of mass columns carried forward and away from one another and embedded window borders.

## **9. "Mother Teresa" square**

Situated at the end of "Dëshmorët e Kombit" Boulevard, in the southern part of Tirana, it was designed by the Italian architect Gherardo Bosio in the years 1939-41. Bosio designed the Imperial Boulevard (today the "Dëshmorët e Kombit" boulevard), which ended in "Piazza Littorio" square today the "Mother Teresa" square.

The buildings surrounding this square had different administrative functions, wanting to be summed up in a whole political and sports complex. Such were: "Casa della Gioventù Littoria Albanese" (G.L.A) - today is the Rectorate of the University of Tirana and the Archaeological Museum. GLA is a complex building. It is composed in the form of "U", which gives the possibility to organize its two sides. Opposite to it was "Casa del Opera del dopolavoro Albanese" (O.D.A) - now the University of Arts and in the center stood "Casa del Fascio" or "Palazzo Littorio" - today the Polytechnic University. The University building as the last element of the boulevard is characterized by heavy structural monumentality but also by clear and lucid lines.

The square holds the name "Mother Teresa" in honor of the Albanian Catholic nun.

## **10. Palace of Congresses**

It was designed and built in the 1980s as a symbol of communist ideology and expression of the power of the totalitarian regime. Works for its construction began in 1982 and

ended in 1986, four years later. The construction of the building was inspired by the traditional buildings of Gjirokastra, Berat and the tower of the North of Albania.

The Palace of Congress Palace is 70 meters long and 18-23 meters high. During the communist regime, the ruling party hosted its congresses here.

Today, the palace is used for conferences, festivals, trade fairs, ceremonies, concerts and other events.

### **11. Prime Minister's Office**

The Prime Minister's building was designed by the Italian architect G. Bosio in 1939. The object was created by two C or one L and one F symbolizing the lictor's axe. Bosio took care of the details by designing any interior as well.

At first, this headquarters served as the building of the offices of Luogotenence (the military envoy of the Italian Kingdom).

Since 1945, with the first postwar government to date, it serves as a building where the Council of Ministers and the State Protocol stand.

In 1974, on the front right of the building a mural bas relief was placed realized by a group of sculptors (Muntaz Dhrami, Shaban Hadëri, Hektor Dule, Kristaq Rama), that represents symbols of the people.

### **12. The Pyramid**

It was inaugurated on 14 October 1988 as the museum of dictator Enver Hoxha. This structure was designed as eagle wings, the symbol of the nation itself, but visible as such from above. From the pedestrian's point of view it resembles a pyramid.

For its design, a group of architects worked under the direction of Enver Hoxha's daughter and groom. Its construction started in 1986 and ended in 1988 serving as a museum for Hoxha's legacy until 1991.

After 1991 it was transformed into a center of conferences and fairs.

### **13. Dajti Hotel**

It was designed by the Italian architect G. Bosio in the years 1939-40. In April 1942, when the hotel was opened, Bosio was not alive. After the Second World War, the building was used for a short time as the headquarters of the communist government of that time.

It has been considered for a long time as the best hotel in Albania and was the only hotel where all foreigners coming to Tirana were accomodated.

Even after the collapse of the communist system, the hotel remained state-owned. In 2002, it ceased to function as a hotel. In the same year, the hotel Dajti was given the status "Cultural Monument".

#### **14. National Gallery of Arts**

The Pinacotheca was the first institution of figurative arts in Albania. Following a lot of genuine work and numerous efforts on 11 January 1954, the Tirana Art Gallery was officially opened.

The new visions about the development and exposure of figurative arts as well as the purchases increased the number of works of art and brought about the demand for a more functional building, which was inaugurated on 29 November 1974, at the "Dëshmorët e Kombit" Boulevard, a building where it is located even today. The building was designed based on a complete program for a fine art gallery with the function of exhibition, restoration and study of the fund as well as for the cultural function of organizing national and international conferences, workshops.

The National Gallery of Art contains a diversified collection, which includes about 4500 works by Albanian and foreign artists.

#### **15. The "Cloud" Installation**

One of the most popular works of the public art installation "Cloud", created by the well-known Japanese artist, Sou Fujimoto, is located in front of the National Art Gallery in Tirana.

This acclaimed work has stood for some time in the "Serpentine" Gallery in London, and is the most visited of the capital's public and foreign visitors.

"The cloud" occupies an area of about 541 square meters and the maximum height goes up to 7 meters. Besides continuous access to the general public, the "Cloud" will function as an independent space, with a busy schedule of activities, built in cooperation with local cultural partners, individuals, educational institutions, communities, etc. The Pavilion is intended as a free social space and therefore Fujimoto has described it as a transparent ground, a delicate, three-dimensional structure and each unit is made up of steel rods.

#### **16. The Castle of Tirana**

The castle is a fortification with a rectangular plan 160 x 200m with the longest part in the East-West.

The construction part preserved in some of the towers and segments of the surrounding walls indicates that the castle could have been built for the first time in antiquity, possibly in the early Byzantine period (IV - VI century) of our era. It is believed to belong to one of the fortifications built or rebuilt by the Justinian Emperor in the New Epirus (Durrës province).

A part of the surrounding walls that are seen today above the earth belong to the constructions of the last centuries, which were built by Ahmet Pasha Bargjini. (1788 - 1809) in the last decade of the eighteenth century on the ruins of the old castle.

In 1798 the castle fell into the hands of the Toptani family from Kruja. In 1817, it experienced a five-month siege, which had serious consequences not only for the castle but also for a large part of the city. After the bombardment the castle was partially reconstructed by the Toptani family.

### **17. Selim Pasha Toptani's Sarays (Mansion)**

The Sarays (Mansion) were built around 1833-1840 and are one of the few mansion of feudal lords preserved in the cities of Albania. They consist of 32 oriental styled rooms and facilities, adorned with different decorations. The Saray is an architectural complex with walls, yards, wells, roads, large gates, dwellings and auxiliary environments. Surrounded by massive stone walls, this complex forms a fortification, taking the look of a small castle. These constructions, characteristic of the feudal stratum, spread in the Tirana area during the second half of the 19th century.

### **18. Bunk'Art 2**

This museum was erected in the premises of the former anti-atomic shelter of the Interior Ministry. The Interior Ministry tunnel was built between 1981 and 1986 and can be considered one of the last "major works" performed by the communist regime.

This bunker in the then-code called the "Pillar Object" consists of 24 rooms, one apartment reserved to the Interior Minister and a large hall dedicated interconnection. Like many other bunkers of this magnitude, this is also built to cope with a potential chemical and nuclear attack.

*Hours:* Every day: 10: 00-20: 00

### **19. The clock tower**

The Tirana Clock Tower began to be built by Haxhi Et'hem Beu in 1822 and was completed with the contribution of rich families of Tirana.

Initially, the height of the tower was 30 m and the clock consisted of a clock winding up mechanism and a brass bell, whose number of pips indicated the time because there was no clock's face and hands. Its installation was made by the Tufina family, renowned with regard to clocks.

In 1928, the tower changed shape and got the appearance it has today. It was elevated 5 meters more, reaching 35 m, the balcony was built, 4 clock faces with hands were assembled and a Venetian typed roof was erected. In the framework of Tirana's modernization, the Albanian state bought a contemporary timepiece in Germany.

Since the tower has accompanied the development of the city, it was reflected in its appearance where the first half is of the Ottoman style, the entire stone-carved section, and the balcony and the part above pertains to the western style.

## **20. The Haxhi Et'hem Bey Mosque**

This mosque is the only one of the eight mosques of the XVIII-XIX century built in Tirana that we still see today.

Its foundations were laid in 1208 AH (1794) by Molla Bey but he died in 1223 AH (1807), after having completed the dome. His son Haxhi Et'hem Bey completed the temple in 1236 AH (1821) by building the minaret, roof, porch and finishing the interior decorations and paintings. Two years later in 1238 AH (1823) the exterior paintings and decorations were finished.

The mosque consists of the prayer hall, the portico on the north and east as well as the minaret. It was built with stones from the village of Shtish - Tufinë located on the eastern side of Tirana. None of the four façades of the mosque resemble one another.

The sanctuary has 18 windows in two horizontal lines, which in their large numbers give it a limited light creating a mystic environment.

This mosque is part of the complex buildings that make up the historical center of Tirana and constitutes an architectural complex along with the Clock Tower.

## **21. The tomb of Kapllan Pasha**

The tomb of Kapllan Pasha, one of the rulers of Tirana, was built at the beginning of the 19th century, supposedly in the years 1820-1830, and is part of the monumental tomb complex of the first mosque of Tirana, which was destroyed during World War II . This complex had six other graves of the same type, but with different size.

In itself shrine represents a monumental tomb with octagonal layout built of carved stones, four meters high and made up of eight classic columns bound to each other with arches. In one of the columns an inscription is inscribed speaking of Kapllan Toptani, which nowadays is illegible except for the date 1326 'h (according to the Muslim calendar).

Kapllan Pasha was buried here in the nineteenth century, but his remains were later moved to Istanbul.

## **22. New Bazaar**

The New Bazaar took life in 1931 and in the years that followed only recognized growth and development. It was created as the need to increase trading activity which could not be met only with Old Bazaar. This bazaar is located in that area of Tirana, which together with the neighborhood of Mujo represents one of the oldest areas of the city.

After the demolition of the Old Bazaar in 1959, the new Bazaar remained for a long time the only large center of trade in meat, fish, vegetables and fruits in Tirana.

Even today, the new Bazaar continues to be one of the largest markets for meat, fish, vegetables and fruit trading in the capital.

The Municipality of Tirana is re-dimensioning this area and turning it into a business development area providing a new investment model and community space. The New Bazaar will be a space that will be operational 24 hours, with the focus on trade issues in the morning and in the afternoon on culinary issues, for the restaurants around, and the development of activities such as festivals, fairs, etc.