

DISCOVER THE WONDERS

# SPIEKERMANN

TRAVEL  SERVICE



# MOSAIC OF THE BALKANS

Serbia - Macedonia - Albania - Kosovo - Montenegro  
- Croatia - Bosnia and Herzegovina

September 27 - October 13, 2024  
Led by Local Guides

*The amazing cultural mosaic of the Balkans' region and its diverse ethnic fabric, combined with its historical importance and natural beauty, offers a glimpse of Europe that is a hidden treasure. This strikingly beautiful region is radiant in the early summer months, when its acacia forests are flowering. Its famously beautiful region is radiant in the early summer months, when its acacia forests are flowering. Its famous coastline is dotted with sleepy villages on turquoise bays. Its rugged interior mountains are home to ancient Christian monasteries and churches, spectacular lakes, and waterfalls. Visit Roman ruins, medieval churches, fortresses and monasteries, colorful old Turkish bazaars, Ottoman citadels and mosques, and Austro-Hungarian town, many of which are UNESCO World Heritage sites. You will journey through the former Communist Yugoslavia: **Serbia – Macedonia - Albania -Kosovo - Bosnia and Herzegovina - Croatia**. It is a historical crossroads where east and west meet. The region is home to an eclectic mix of people: ethnically, geographically, and religiously. Join us on this enchanting journey and connect with friendly people who will overwhelm you with their legendary hospitality.*

**Ihab Zaki**  
Managing Director

**Friday, September 27**  
**Arrive in Belgrade (SERBIA)**



Upon arrival in **Serbia** (depending on your arrival time), meet and transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in and overnight. **(D)**

*Note: Standard check-in time is 3:00 pm. if you arrive on Sep 26 or early morning of Sep 27; an extra hotel night needs to be booked.*

**Saturday, September 28**  
**Belgrade**



Begin the day with a city tour of **Belgrade**, including a visit to the **City Hall**, the **National Parliament**, the **Old Palace**, the **Slavija Square**, **Terazije street** and **Square**, **Republic** and **Nikola Pasic Square**, **Knez Mihailova Street** - the main pedestrian area of downtown, **Albania Tower**, **Skadarlija** a bohemian street, the **National Theater**, **Saint Sava's Temple**. Enjoy a walk through the beautiful **Kalemegdan Park** and the fascinating **Belgrade fortress** with an unforgettable view of the confluence of two big European rivers, the Danube and the Sava. Have free time at leisure before heading for dinner at a local restaurant in Skadarlija, a famous bohemian quarter of Belgrade, then return to the *Hotel* for our overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Sunday, September 29**  
**Belgrade - Skopje (MACEDONIA)**



After breakfast, begin the day with a drive to **Skopje**, stopping en route at **Nis**, where we will enjoy a snack or lunch. Continue driving to **Skopje** and upon arrival, transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight **(B,L,D)**

**Monday, September 30**  
**Skopje - Bitola - Ohrid**



After breakfast, begin the day with a city tour of **Skopje**. Our panoramic tour will include a visit to the **old Railway station**, **Mother Teresa memorial house**, the **Stone Bridge**, **Daut Pasha Amam** (outside) – the monument of Islamic architecture, and the **church St. Spas**; have a short walking tour of the **old town** and its **bazaar**. Continue to **Bitola** (2.5 hrs.), and upon arrival, enjoy lunch at one of the traditional restaurants; then start the city tour with a visit to the **Heraklea site**,

including **Mangolia square**, the **statue of Philip the 2<sup>nd</sup>** and the **pedestrian street** with an ottoman architecture feel, the **Clock Tower** and **St. Demetrius church**. Continue to **Heraklea's archaeological site** & discover the well-preserved ruins of the **Roman baths**, the **baptistry** and the **Episcopal Church**, the **Jewish temple**, **Portico**, and an **ancient theater**. Continue the drive to **Ohrid** (1.5 hrs.), upon arrival, transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Tuesday, October 01**  
**Ohrid (St. Naum)**



After breakfast, begin the day with a city tour of Ohrid, including the Ohrid Fortifications; **Church of St. Sophia**, **St. Bogorodica Perivlepta**, **St. Jovan Kaneo** from outside, **St. Pantelejmon**, **Plaosniz** from outside **Old Bazaar**, **Antique Theatre**, Ohrid Traditional Architecture. Enjoy lunch at one of the traditional restaurants in the old town, then head for a **boat tour** of Ohrid Lake. In the afternoon, head to visit the **Monastic Complex of St. Naum**, then return to the *Hotel* for dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Wednesday, October 02**  
**Ohrid - Berat (ALBANIA)**



Begin the day with a drive (4 hrs.), where we will cross into the city of **Berat** (Albania), and after crossing the borders, head for lunch at a local restaurant. Berat is known as the "City of one thousand windows" and is declared a Museum City." Berat, overshadowed to the east by Tomorr Mountain (1.5 miles), is an ancient Illyrian settlement founded in the 4th century B.C. on the territory of the Illyrian tribe of Desarettes. The town comprises 3 parts; Gorica, situated on the far side of the river; Mangalem, situated on the fortress side of the river and the Residential quarter within the fortress known as Kalaja. The old part of the city has some religious buildings like a mosque and Byzantine churches. Visit the **fortress** and **Onufri Museum**. Enjoy dinner inner and then transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Thursday, October 03**

**Berat - Gjirokastra - Saranda**



After breakfast, depart to Gjirokastra (3.5 hrs.) with a stop en route for refreshments. Upon arrival, start with a visit to the **Castle of Gjirokastra**; hurtling through the sweeping plains of the Drino Valley, the ancient Ottoman city appears suddenly and unexpectedly, clattering up the steep slopes of the Gjerë Mountains high above the patchwork of verdant farmlands that paint this corner of Albania a vibrant, hazy green. Standing guard across the valley, the imposing Gjirokastra Fortress dominates the skyline amidst a sea of slate grey rooftops that hide a veritable labyrinth of cobbled alleyways and hidden staircases made for wandering. A place to put away the map and get well and truly lost. Visit the **Castle of Gjirokastra** and enjoy some free time in the bazaar. Have a traditional lunch at a local restaurant, then continue driving to **Saranda** (1.5 hrs.) and upon arrival, transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Friday, October 04**

**Saranda - Butrint - Vlora**



After breakfast, begin the day with a visit to **Butrint Archaeological Park** (40 min). This impressive walking tour will stir your imagination about the ancient world during the peak of Roman power and classical Greek mythology. Start with the Asclepius temple, theatre, Roman portico and baths, early Christian baptistery, byzantine basilica, defensive walls, and impressive gates. Enjoy lunch in Ksamili. After lunch, departure to Vlora through the fabulous Albanian Riviera. (4.5 hrs.). The stretch of coastline dubbed the 'Albanian Riviera' stretches from the Roman theatre of Butrint in the south to the remote Karaburun Peninsula in the north. Along the way, the Riviera takes in easy-going beach towns, forested mountain passes, bird- and terrapin-filled marshes, noisy resort towns, and brilliant snorkeling spots. Transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Saturday, October 05**

**Vlora - Ardenica - Durres - Tirana**



After breakfast, head to **Ardenica Monastery for a visit**, located 777 feet above sea level, then head to the **Ardenica hills**, famous for the Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos and many breathtaking landscapes. A **pagan temple** dedicated to the goddess Artemis existed where the monastery sits now, which explains the origin of the name Ardenica. The monastery was built in 282 and commissioned by the emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos of Byzantium. Perhaps the most interesting historical event recorded in Ardenica is Skanderbeg's wedding to his lifelong wife Donika, hosted on April of 1451 at the Chapel of St. Trinity Church, the monastery's very first church, built in the 10th century. Visit the most famous **St. Mary's Church** (Kisha e Shën Mërisë). Continue driving to Durres (1.15 hrs.) and upon arrival, have lunch at a local restaurant; then have a city tour of **Durres** where we will explore the ruins of the

town forum, the **Roman baths**, the **city center**, the **Town Hall**, the **Roman Amphitheatre**, the **Byzantine Walls**, and the **Venetian tower**, a panoramic display of discoveries and urban planning of this once an important city. Continue driving to Tirana and transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Sunday, October 06**

**Tirana - Kruja**



After breakfast, begin the day exploring the capital city of Albania, including some of the historical highlights, such as the **City Centre**, **Skanderbeg Statue**, **Et'hem Bey Mosque**, **Clock tower**, Italian buildings, and **Martyrs of the Nation Boulevard**. Then head to visit the **ex-communist buildings**, painted with vibrant colors and the expansion of the city. Visit of **National Historical Museum and** enjoy lunch at a local restaurant. Continue the drive to **Kruja** and begin the walking tour, which will take through the cobblestone pathway of the Ottoman bazaar, with wooden shops and displays of various gifts and antique household items. Visit within the walls of an old house that was turned into an ethnographic museum will invite you to a unique cultural aspect of life in northern Albania. Transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Monday, October 07**

**Kruja - Prizren (KOSOVO) - Decani - Pej**



After breakfast, begin the drive to **Prizren** (3.5 hrs.), in the newly created state of **Kosovo**. Visit the **old town** of Prizren. Discover Prizren the cradle of cultural wealth of Kosovo people. The walking tour includes visits to the Old town with its **Ottoman bridge**, **water fountain**, their unique **mosques** and **orthodox churches**. The city is known for its rich culinary tradition, mainly home-made products and dishes. Lunch in the old town. Visit of **Decan Monastery**. **Visoki Decani Monastery**, the first cultural monument on the territory of Kosovo, to be inscribed in the list of UNESCO World Heritage has long been known as one of the architecturally most interesting and best preserved Serbian medieval churches. Continue to Pej and transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Tuesday, October 08**

**Pej - Fierza Lake - Koman Lake - Shkodra**



Depart in the early morning (6:00 am) to **Fierza Ferry Terminal** (Albania). Fierza and Koman Lake were formed when the rugged Drini valley was dammed in the early 1970s, allowing Albania to quickly develop its industrial base and become an energy exporter. The huge lake behind the Vau Dejes dam contains some 320 million cubic meters of water and stretches 18 miles eastward to the town of Fierza, the location of a second dam that holds back another lake that goes all the way to Kukes near the Kosovo border. The boat trip passes between 3280-4921 feet high mountains and through a series of deep gorgeous, interconnected lakes, with hardly any signs of human activities on the shores – though occasionally, the

ferry will stop to let off some hardy. Continue driving to **Shkodra**, Budva, with a stop en route for lunch and refreshments (2hrs). Transfer to the Hotel for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

*Note: If the boat tour is cancelled due to weather conditions; in such case, you will visit Shkodra city, considered the capital of North Albania*

**Wednesday, October 09**

**Shkodra - Kotor - Budva (MONTENEGRO)**



After breakfast, drive to **Kotor** (40 min). Located along one of the world's most beautiful bays is Kotor, a city of traders and famous sailors with many stories to tell. The **Old City** of Kotor is well-preserved urbanization typical of the Middle Ages, built between the 12th and 14th centuries. Medieval architecture and numerous cultural heritage monuments have made Kotor land on the list of UNESCO's World Natural and Historical Heritage Sites. Visit **St. Tryphon Cathedral** and have some free time in the old town. Later enjoy a boat ride to the **Lady on the Rock Island**. Return to **Budva** and have some free time in the old town, then transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Thursday, October 10**

**Budva - Dubrovnik (CROATIA)**



After breakfast, drive to Dubrovnik (2.5hrs). Upon arrival, start with the walking tour. Whether it is the first visit to Dubrovnik or the hundredth, the sense of awe never fails to descend when we set our eyes on the beauty of the old town. Indeed, it is hard to imagine anyone becoming jaded by the city's white limestone streets, baroque buildings, and the endless shimmer of the Adriatic or failing to be inspired by a walk along the ancient city walls that protected a civilized, sophisticated republic for centuries. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant on the way to Dubrovnik, and upon arrival in the city, transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Friday, October 11**

**Dubrovnik - Mostar - Sarajevo (BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA)**



Begin the day with a drive towards **Bosnia & Herzegovina**, with a stop en route for refreshments. Upon arrival, enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, then in the afternoon, have a walking tour of Mostar, this little charming old town, listed under UNESCO Heritage sites, is enriched with lots of colors of traditional handicrafts productions which have played an essential role in the history of Bosnia. The **old bridge** and several other buildings were recently restored and rebuilt thanks to UNESCO's support. Visit the **Turkish House** and understand better the way of living in Bosnia. Don't forget to taste the traditional Bosnian Coffee and spend some free time in the bazaar. Continue to Sarajevo, and upon arrival, transfer to the *Hotel* for check-in, dinner, and overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Saturday, October 12**

**Sarajevo**



After breakfast, start the tour of **Sarajevo**, one of Europe's most oriental and culturally diverse cities, which spent over 300 years under Turkish rule until the Austro-Hungarians arrived in the late nineteenth century. The empire collapsed 50 years later when Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated here, hastening the outbreak of the First World War.

Visit **Tunnel of Hope** and learn about this tristful history of the siege of Sarajevo. Explore the **old town** and the **bazaar**, with its typical shops and great opportunity to interact with local folks. Return to the Hotel for dinner overnight. **(B,L,D)**

**Sunday, October 13**

**Sarajevo - USA**



After breakfast transfer to the airport for your flight back to the US. **(B)**

*"We reserve the right to change the order of activities/visits or sites due to unexpected events such as flight cancellations or changes of schedule, or any other reasons beyond our control. We will do our best to ensure that any necessary changes when/if needed to meet the needs of our clients".*



## Tour Cost (Land Only):

6 - 9 travelers \$6,995.00

10 - 12 travelers \$5,995.00

*Per person sharing in double occupancy*

**Single Supplement: \$1,295.00**

*Price based on group size minimum of 6 participants and maximum of 12 participants*

**Trip Grade: III Lodging Level: \*\*\***



### Tour Includes:

- Airport/Hotel/airport transfers.
- Accommodation in hotels as per the itinerary on bed and breakfast basis).
- Meals as mentioned in the itinerary (B: Breakfast, L: Lunch and D: Dinner).
- Transportation with a modern A/C motor coach.
- Sightseeing in each country as per the itinerary.
- Services of English-speaking guides.
- Escort of a tour manager (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).
- Entrance fees to all mentioned sites and museums.
- Bottled water on the bus during touring days.
- Gratuities to guide, drivers, and porters (provided minimum number of travelers is reached).

### Tour does not include:

- International Airfare USA-Belgrade / Sarajevo -USA.
- Visa (currently gratis to US citizens).
- Beverages and alcoholic drinks with or without meals.
- Items of a personal nature (camera fees, laundry, phone calls, emails, excess luggage, etc.).
- Transfers if not arriving/departing on scheduled tour dates.
- Dayroom/overnights necessitated by changes in airline schedules or early arrival.
- Trip surcharge to operate below required minimum participants.
- Gratuity to your tour manager (optional).
- Travel protection insurance. (HIGHLY RECOMMENDED)

### Trip Grade

**II Active** – Some hikes, slightly more demanding walks at or to sites, a few elevations, comfortable but busy schedule and some long rides.

### Lodging Level:

**\*\*\* Superior - Luxury:** Combination of lodges and hotels with additional amenities, refined service, and comfort level acceptable to western standards (4 stars).

