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UNESCO CITIES

Albania, though a small country retains in its bosom a valuable cultural heritage. The latter is embodied in many different objects, dating back to prehistoric times to the present day. The cultural and historical heritage of our country is also valued by the most important international organizations that relate to the preservation of cultural assets with values for humanity, such as UNESCO.

There are three sites in the Albanian list. They are the ancient city of Butrinti and two cities with special architecture such as Berat and Gjirokastra. In addition to these three sites in our country, Albanian iso-polyphony is part of the world oral heritage of UNESCO.

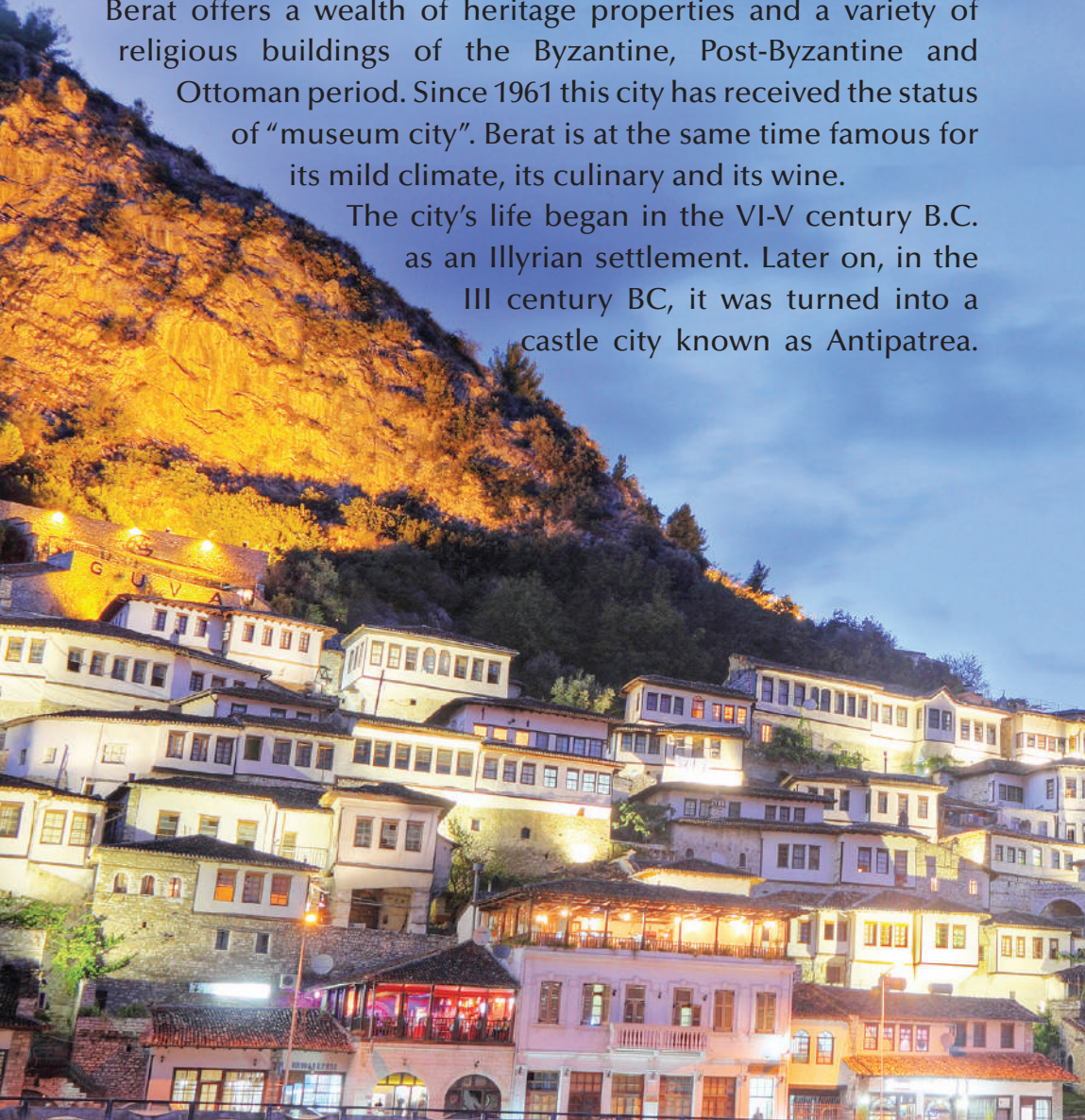
Below we present you a panorama of not only relevant sites but also other attractive sites located close to them.

BERAT

This 2416 years old city, one of the oldest cities in Albania, is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

It is located at a distance of 120 km from the capital city, Tirana. Berat offers a wealth of heritage properties and a variety of religious buildings of the Byzantine, Post-Byzantine and Ottoman period. Since 1961 this city has received the status of “museum city”. Berat is at the same time famous for its mild climate, its culinary and its wine.

The city's life began in the VI-V century B.C. as an Illyrian settlement. Later on, in the III century BC, it was turned into a castle city known as Antipatrea.



In 1336 it was mentioned by name "Antipatrea". The castle expanded afterwards, particularly during the feudal dominion of the Muzakaj family. Several churches with precious frescoes and icons as well as a calligraphy school were built within the fortress. Uniquely today, residents still live inside of the castle walls. The three major neighborhoods of the old city are Mangalemi, Gorica, and Kala, where the castle itself is located. What draws the visitor's attention is the famous view of white facades of the houses as well as the numerous windows that are placed one above the other. For this reason, Berat is also known as "the City of the Floating Windows". The arched bridge of Gorica, built in 1780, is a beautiful architectural monument constructed to link Gorica with Mangalemi.

Berat is famous for religious monuments where a complex of Byzantine and post-Byzantine monuments prevail. To be mentioned are St. Michael's Church (XIII century) and St. Mary of Blachernae Church -, (reconstructed in the XIII-XIV century), Church of St. Trinity (XIV century) and St. Theodore's Church (XVI). While in the Cathedral of Saint Mary, built in 1797, is located the museum of icons of Onufri (the prominent icon





G U V A



painter of the XVI century) and his son, Nikolla. In the museum's premises, an iconostasis with wood carvings is immediately noticeable, which dates back to 1806. There are over 100 icons on display, including not only works by Onufri and his son Nikolla but also works of other artists such as Joan Cetiri, Konstandin Shpataraku, Onufer Qiprioti, David Selenicasi and many anonymous painters. Besides icons, old objects of religious services are also displayed in this museum.

Another interesting object to visit is the ethnographic museum, which is located in an XVIII century building. This is a typical and interesting two storey building, the first floor being built with stone, while the second is made of wood.



In 1417 Berat was captured by the Ottomans. After this event, Islamic cult objects were also honored in the city, which today attract visitors. Here we can mention the King Mosque, the Mosque of Singles, the Lead Mosque, the ruins of the Red Mosque in the fortress, the ruins of the White Mosque, the Halveti Teqe (XV century) etc. Apart from its architectural and museum values, the city of Berat is a good place to organize trips to the canyons of Osuni (ideal place for water sports such as rafting), for climbing to the Tomorri National Park. For those who love archeology, we recommend visiting the ruins of the ancient city of Dimal, located in Krotine, in the area of Shpiragu. This ancient city was first discovered by the Austrian archeologist Prashniker in 1920. Here are revealed two seals that are named "Dimal". This city has played a role in the events of South Illyria in the late III - II centuries BC during the Greek -



Roman and Macedonian - Roman wars. The ancient historians Livy and Polybius mention it as a city of political importance. Dimal is also known as the city where the last battle between Illyrian Demeter regiment, lighthouse and Roman corps in 219 BC took place.

Berat is famous for its culinary and wine production, where wine tasting tours are organized by wineries producing wine in this region. (Cobo and Luani wineries). Among the traditional dishes it is worth tasting “përshesh me gjel deti” (Turkey), “çorba e Tomorrit” (Tomorri’s pottage), etc.



GJIROKASTRA

The Museum - City of Gjirokastra is built on the eastern side of Gjere Mountain. Since 2005, part of the UNESCO world heritage, the origin of the city starts with the castle of Gjirokastra, built in IV century. The city was named Argyrokastro, in 1336. In 1417, it was conquered by the Ottoman army. The city reached its peak over 1800-1830, when monumental assembly houses were built. The first neighborhoods are those of Bazaar and Hazmurate. The main characteristic of Gjirokastra is the intensive use of stone in building the houses, which look like small fortresses, the streets of cobblestone, which all lead to Bazaar. You can also visit the Mosque of Bazaar here, built in 1557. Due to all these features, Gjirokastra is also known as the "The Stone City". The most important structure of the city is the castle, which is the biggest castle in Albania. Inside the castle, you can visit the Museum of Weapons, opened in 1971. Weapons from the









prehistoric times up to the World War II are exhibited on here. The National Folk Festival has taken place in this castle during the years.

During your stay in Gjirokastra, you can visit the Ethnographic Museum, located in the house where the former communist dictator Enver Hoxha was born. This house (today a museum) is located in the Palorto quarter. You can also visit the house of Zekat family in Palorto, in a dominating position, which has undergone restoration. It is one of the most magnificent and characteristic buildings of Gjirokastra. Built in 1811-1812, it is a magnificent three-floor building and has two twin towers. A special feature of the house is the wooden carved ceilings and the characteristic guest room. From the wooden balcony in the third floor, you can enjoy an impressive view of Gjirokastra. In the neighborhood Varosh is situated the home where the prominent contemporary writer Ismail Kadare was born. He has been several times a candidate to win the "Nobel Prize" for literature, and has been honored with other international prizes

and awards as the “Legion of Honour” by the French state, “Man Booker International Prize” for 2009, “Prince of Asturias” for arts by the Spanish state. His works have been translated into many foreign languages. His house has been restored and is at the guests disposal.

In the center of the city, in Çerçiz Square is the entrance to “Atomic Bunker”. This is an object that belongs to the Cold War period and was built to provide protection from any possible nuclear attack. In recent years this object has been considered of interest by tourists in Gjirokastra..



The town of Gjirokastra is also known for its culinary art; we can mention special dishes like pasha qofte, shapkat, oshaf with dried figs (a dessert with sheep`s milk, sugar and dried figs), etc. In Gjirokastra you can visit interesting sites, part of the cultural heritage as well as natural wonders.

The archaeological park of Antigone is located near Saraqinishte village in the region of Lunxhëria, east of Gjirokastra. It is 14km away from Gjirokastra. The archeological park has a surface of 92 hectares and was founded by King Pyrrhus of Epirus in 295 B.C., who named the town after his first wife, Antigone. At the end of III century and the beginning of II century BC, it grew into an important economic, cultural and political center and took the form of a state (polis). It was surrounded by walls, 4,000 meters long. There are many attractions to be visited in the archaeological park Antigone such as: the mosaic, columns, promenade, an antique scale, the surrounding walls, etc.



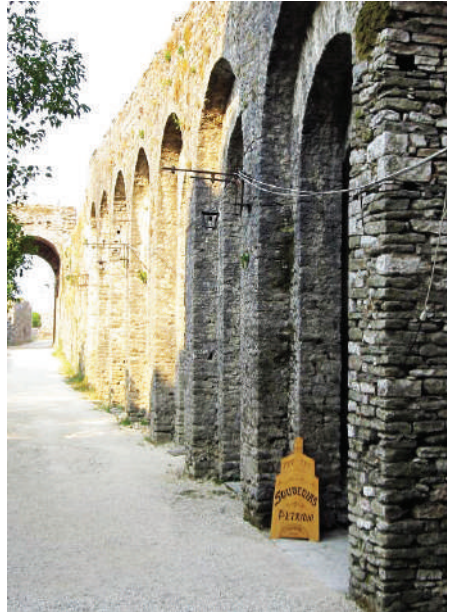
In the village of Labove e Kryqit, located near the small town of Libohova, you can visit one of the oldest and the most beautiful Byzantine churches in Albania, dedicated to St. Mary. It is built in a style similar to that of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul. It was thought that the church used to have a relic, which is missing now. It was part of the cross where Jesus Christ was crucified.

The ancient theatre of Adrianapol is located near the village of Sofratika, 14 km away from Gjirokastra, along the Gjirokastra - Kakavije (Greece) highway. The Adrianapol amphitheater was discovered by the Austrian archaeologist Prashniker. It dates back to the II century B.C; it has a capacity of 4,000 seats and has 27 stairs.

Cajupi's field lies in Lunxheria area, which is 1,310 meters above sea level; it is a flat area, which is used as climatic resort and surrounded by many sources of cold water. The road to reach this mountain destination is paved.







BUTRINT

Butrint is undoubtedly one of the most important tourist attractions in Albania. The Archaeological Park, which is inscribed in UNESCO, and the National Park of Butrint are located in the southernmost part of the country. Butrint is situated 18 km away from the coastal city of Saranda and lies in the south of Butrint Lake. The Channel of Vivari, which stems from the lake with a length of 3 km, links it with the Ionian Sea. In front of Butrinti you can see the Greek island of Corfu. Butrint has a rather favorable geographic position and is easily accessible by visitors. Many international tourists, who enter Albania through the port of Saranda, visit the ancient city of Butrint.

Butrint is mentioned by the poet Virgil in his poem "Eneida". According to him, the city was established by the Prince of Troy Aeneas (Enea) during his trip from Troy to Rome. On his way to

Rome he stopped in this place and sacrificed a bull (BUTHROTOS). For the first time it was mentioned by Hekatha (IV century BC). The archaeological site has an area of 15 ha. The ruins of the ancient city are found in the middle of a typical Mediterranean jungle, where you can see the laurels and other tall woods. Due to the high biodiversity of the ecosystem where the ancient city of Butrint is located, the National Park of Butrinti is part of the international convention of RAMSAR (since 2003).

The main objects to visit in Butrint are the



theatre, dating back to the IV century BC. It has a capacity of 1,500 viewers. You can also see the Baptiser with a colorful mosaic, which along with the basilica date back to the VI century AD, the Roman baths of the II century AD, the lion's gate and the lake, the walls and the Venetian castle of Ali Pasha which date back to the XIV-XVI centuries and were reconstructed in 1930. The Museum of Butrint is also placed there. Among the most notable discoveries found there is a statue discovered by the mission of the Italian archaeologist, Ugolini in 1928. He named the statue Dea (goddess of Butrint). This statue for many years was exhibited in Italy, but it was brought back in 1981 and has been exhibited for many years at the National Historical Museum in Tirana. The marble statue has been identified by archaeologists as the head of Apollo and it is one of the symbols







of antiquity in Albania.

In front of the archaeological site of Burtint, on the other side of the Vivari canal it is situated the triangular fortress, which has served as customs, while at the point where the Vivari canal meets the Ionian Sea you will see the other quadrangular fortress of Ali Pasha, which can be accessed by a floating tool. The area near Burtin is actually an archaeological area rich in monuments. Another interesting site is also the Çuka e Ajtoit, where tourists can go trekking.



The National Park of Butrint covers an area of 29 hectares. It consists of a variety of natural habitats, including coastal lagoons, wetland, coast, pastures, rivers and canals. The park is home to a variety of birds, insects, amphibians, mammals and reptiles. There are about 90 species of birds in this park. In winter, thousands of winter birds migrate to the field of Vrina, where the ducks dominate. Regarding the rarest species, the ones that we can mention here is "Epirus water frog" which is found only in this park. The Lake of Butrint is known for growing of mussels, which started in 1968. "Trekking paths" are offered for tourists in the Park. Such paths are Kalivose Itenerary, the Lake of Butrint, the Lake of Bufi, the Mountain of Sotira.





ISO – POLYPHONY

Iso-polyphony is an epic form of the oral art of singing in Albania, which has its origin since antiquity. Since November 25, 2005, it is part of the list of “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity”, protected by UNESCO. It is present today in southern Albania, specifically in the provinces of Gjirokastra, Tepelena, Vlora, reaching its peak on the Ionian coast, Himara and the surrounding villages. In different areas it is sung and has different intonations. Even within the city of Gjirokastra it is sung differently, according to its neighborhoods. A good opportunity to hear such live performances are various cultural activities held in Albania, where we can mention the Folklore Festival of Gjirokastra, which normally takes place every four years.

In addition to this great activity, various iso-polyphony festivals are also organized in the city of Vlora, or even the festival called Bylis Fonia, which takes place in the ancient city of Bylis.



