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Tirana City In Albania

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Abstract

This work is the result of a study trip to Albania that the author took in the company of architect Ramadan Aliu in September 2012. At that time, architect Aliu was a doctoral student at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Sarajevo, and he worked on his doctoral dissertation (Comparative analysis of selected examples of cities in Macedonia and Albania) under the mentorship of the author. Butrint was one of the places/cities they visited. Besides Butrint, these were Berat, Durrës, Gjirokastër, Krujë, Shkodër, Tirana, Vlorë and many natural sights such as the famous source of 'The Blue Eye' ('Syri i Kaltër', for example). The aim of the study trip was to get to know cities on the spot and to contribute to the author's theory of „Architecturally Defined Space“ through their analysis (through 'cabinet work').

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Keywords: Albinia, Tiranaë, Synergy of natural environment, social environment and man.

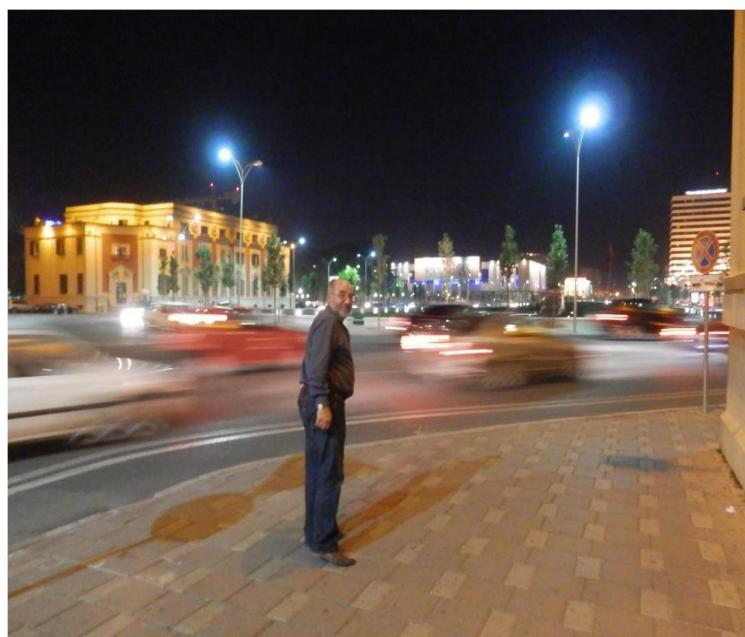
1. Introduction

This work is the result of a study trip to Albania, on which the author went in the company of architect Ramadan Aliu in September 2012. At that time, architect Aliu was a doctoral student at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Sarajevo, and he was working on his doctoral dissertation (Comparative analysis of selected examples of cities in Macedonia and Albania) under the mentorship of the author. Butrint was one of the places/cities they visited. Besides Butrint, these were Berat, Durrës, Gjirokastër, Krujë, Shkodër, Tirana, Vlorë and many natural sights like the famous 'Blue Eye' spring ('Syri i Kaltër', for example). The presentation of the architecture of these cities was done in accordance with the author's theory of Architecturally Defined Space (ADS) presented in the book: Hadrovic, Ahmet (2007). Defining Architectural Space on the Model of the Oriental Style CityHouse in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia, Booksurge, LLC, North Charleston, SC, USA and in a series of his published works^[1-29] (Figures 1, 2).



Source: Hadrovic A. (2018). Architecture in the travelogues of an architect. Book 1: Balkan, Faculty of Architecture University in Sarajevo, Sarajevo, pp. 25-105(inBosnian)

Fig 1: Map of Albania. (Red squares and rectangles indicate places visited by the Author)



Source: Ramadan Aliu (September 26, 2012)

Fig 2: Author at Skanderbeg Square in Tirana Fotos: Ramadan Aliu (September 26, 2012)

Tirana (Albanian: Tiranaë) is a city (with an estimated population of 535,702, 2025) [30] located in the central part of Albania, which is its largest and capital (Geographic coordinates: 41°19'42.64"N, 19°49'05.35"E, Elevation: 108 m). It is 131 km from Podgorica, 153 km from Skopje and 613 km from Athens as the crow flies. The city was founded (1614) by the Ottoman Pasha Sulejman Bargjini, but traces of human presence in this area date back to the Paleolithic era, where the Illyrians had their settlement. After the Illyrian Wars (229–219 BC), ancient Rome took control of this area. With the collapse of the Roman Empire (476), the area of Tirana was included in the Byzantine Empire. Here, the Byzantine emperor Justinian I the Great (482-565) built (520) his castle, which was called Tirkana or Theranda. Back in 1510, Tirana was a small village (as the Albanian Catholic priest from Shkodra Marin Barleti reports in his book about Skenderbeg). During the Balkan Wars, Tirana was briefly occupied by the Serbian army, and then by the Austro-Hungarian army. At the end of World War I (1917), Austro-Hungarian architects drew up the first plans of Tirana according to the patterns of modern European urbanism, and in 1923, the first regulatory plan of the city. The city center was designed by the Italian architects Florestano de Fausto (1890-1965) and Armando Brasini (1879-1965), where the position of the buildings of individual ministries was defined. The plan survived a series of changes made by the Albanian architect Eshref Frashëria (1874-1938), the Italian architect Castellani and the Austrian architects Weiss and Kohler. During World War II, Albania was occupied by Italy (1941-1943), and then by Germany (1943-1945). It was liberated by the partisans led by Enver Hoxha. After becoming (1920) the capital of Albania, Tirana has been experiencing constant development in every respect. It is the administrative center

of the country, a university and scientific center, the center of many cultural and artistic institutions and events, a media center, the headquarters of world embassies, the headquarters of major companies... It has its own airport (since 1957) called Mother Teresa Airport (Aeroporti Nënë Tereza).

2. Natural resources and sights

Tirana is located in the vast plain of the river Ishm, which is open to the Adriatic Sea in the northwest, while it is surrounded by mountains on the other sides. This natural-geographical position results in a very favorable climate (the influence of the Mediterranean climate from the Adriatic Sea, which is only 30 km from Tirana), which is also reflected in the fact that it is the eighth sunniest city in Europe (with 2544 hours of sunshine per year). The great wealth of Tirana is its Great Park (Parku i Madh i Tiranës). The park was established (1956) on an artificial lake with an area of 289 ha. Within the park is the Presidential Palace and the Church of St. Procopius. Next to the park are the Zoological and Botanical Gardens. The artificial lake Farka (Liqeni and Farkës) with an area of 75 ha is located 9.6 km southeast of Tirana. The river Lana (Lanë), although small, represents the great natural wealth of Tirana. Its source is in the mountains east of Tirana.

Dajti Mountain (Albanian: Mali i Dajtit) is a huge natural wealth of Tirana and Albania as a whole. The mountain is located 26 km from Tirana and 50 km from Mother Teresa Airport. In the mountain (which was declared (1966) the National Park of Albania) there are rich forests of pine, oak and beech and numerous canyons, waterfalls, caves, lakes and old castles. The area of this national park is 29384 ha. The mountain can be reached by asphalt road and gondola from Tirana itself (Figures 3,4).

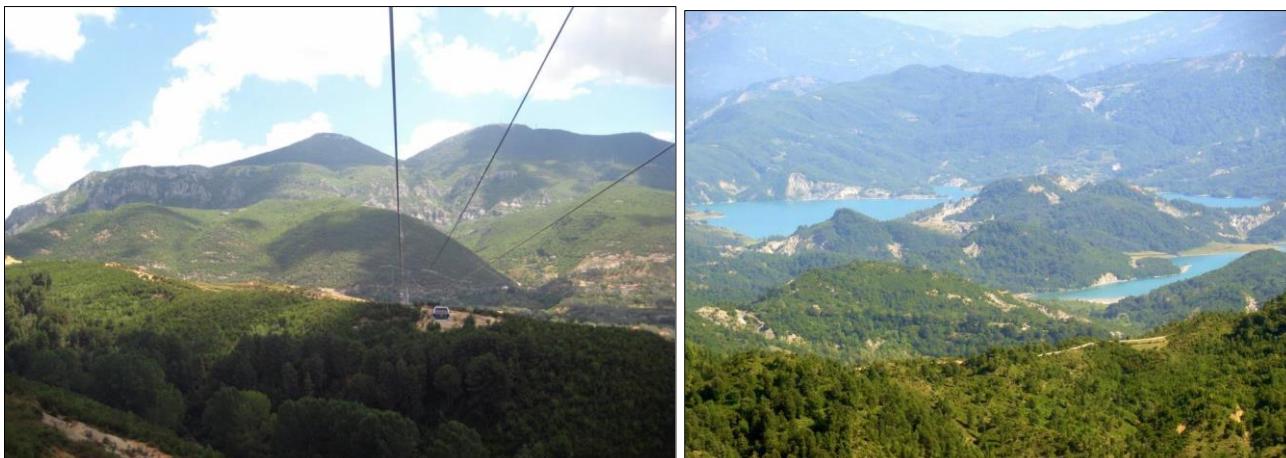


Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tirana_County#/media/File:Tirana_from_South.jpg, Accessed: December 25, 2025



Source: <https://www.lesroches.edu/event/one-one-counselling-tirana/>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 3: Tirana city



Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d3/Dajti_Ekspress.jpg, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Source: https://parksdinardes.org/me/park/nacionalni_park_dajti_planina/, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 4: Mount Dajti (Albanian: Mali i Dajtit)

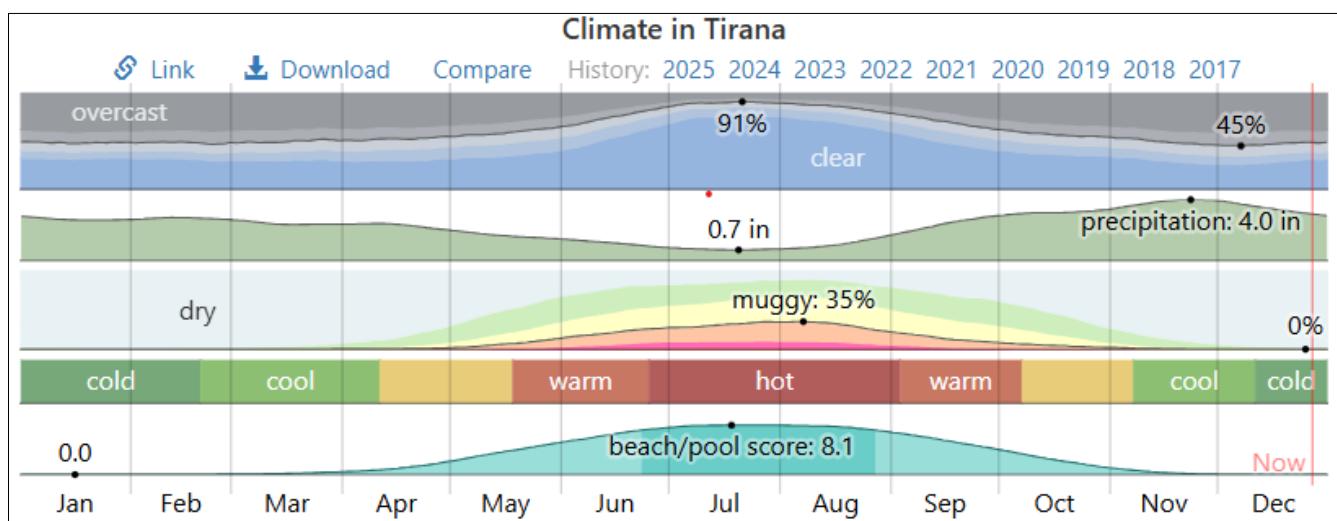
In Tirana, summers are short, hot, dry, and mostly clear, while winters are long, very cold, humid, and partly cloudy. Over the course of the year, temperatures typically range from 0°C to 32°C and rarely fall below -1°C or exceed 36°C. The hot season lasts for 2.9 months, from June 15 to September 11, with an average daily high above 29°C. The warmest month of the year in Tirana is July, with an average high of 29°C and a low of 16°C. The cold season lasts for 3.8 months, from November 22 to March 17, with an average daily high below 16°C. The coldest month of the year in Tirana is January, with an average low of 0°C and a high of 10°C. In Tirana, the average percentage of sky covered by clouds experiences significant seasonal variation throughout the year. The clearest part of the year in Tirana begins around June 6 and lasts for 3.4 months, ending around September 20. The clearest month of the year in Tirana is July, during which the sky is on average clear, mostly clear, or partly cloudy 90% of the time. The cloudiest part of the year begins around September 20 and lasts for 8.6 months, ending around June 6. The cloudiest month of the year in Tirana is December, during which the sky is on average overcast or mostly cloudy 53% of the time. A rainy day is one with at least 0.04 inches of liquid or trickle precipitation. The chance of rainy days in Tirana varies throughout the year. The wet season lasts for 7.9 months, from September 15 to May 11, with a greater than 23% chance of a given day being a rainy day. The month with the most rainy days in Tirana is November, with an average of 10.0 days with at least 0.04 inches of precipitation. The

drier season lasts 4.1 months, from May 11 to September 15. The month with the fewest rain days in Tirana is July, with an average of 3.2 days with at least 0.04 inches of precipitation. We distinguish between rain days as rain only, snow only, or a mixture of the two. The month with the most rain days in Tirana is November, with an average of 9.9 days. Based on this categorization, the most common form of precipitation throughout the year is rain alone, with a peak probability of 36% on November 20. To show variation within months, rather than just monthly totals, we show the amount of precipitation accumulated over a sliding 31-day period centered around each day of the year. Tirana experiences significant seasonal variation in monthly precipitation. Rain falls throughout the year in Tirana. The rainiest month in Tirana is November, with an average precipitation of 3.9 inches. The month with the least rain in Tirana is July, with an average rainfall of 0.7 inches. The length of the day in Tirana varies considerably throughout the year. In 2025, the shortest day is December 21, with 9 hours and 11 minutes of daylight; the longest day is June 21, with 15 hours and 10 minutes of daylight. The earliest sunrise is at 5:06 AM on June 14, and the latest sunrise is 2 hours and 0 minutes later at 7:06 AM on January 3. The earliest sunset is at 4:11 PM on December 8, and the latest sunset is 4 hours and 7 minutes later at 8:18 PM on June 27. Daylight Saving Time (DST) is observed in Tirana during 2025, starting in the spring on March 30, lasting 6.9 months, and ending in the fall on October 26. We base the level of comfortable humidity on

the dew point, as it determines whether sweat will evaporate from the skin, cooling the body. Lower dew points feel drier, and higher dew points feel more humid. Unlike temperature, which usually varies significantly between night and day, dew point usually changes more slowly, so while the temperature may drop at night, a humid day is usually followed by a humid night. Tirana experiences significant seasonal variation in perceived humidity. The wettest period of the year lasts for 4.2 months, from May 22 to September 29, during which the comfort level is humid, oppressive, or miserable at least 9% of the time. The month with the most humid days in Tirana is July, with 9.8 days of humidity or worse. The least humid day of the year is February 4, when humid conditions are virtually unheard of. The wind felt at any given location depends largely on local topography and other factors, and the instantaneous wind speed and direction vary more than the hourly averages. The average hourly wind speed in Tirana experiences slight seasonal variation throughout the year. The windiest part of the year lasts for 5.6 months, from October 20 to April 9, with an average wind speed of more than 7.0 miles per hour. The windiest month of the year in Tirana is February, with an average hourly wind speed of 8.2 miles per hour. The calmer part of the year lasts

for 6.4 months, from April 9 to October 20. The calmest month of the year in Tirana is June, with an average hourly wind speed of 5.7 miles per hour. The wind is most often from the south for 6.0 days, from April 5 to April 11, with a peak percentage of 33% on April 6. The wind is most often from the east for 1.5 months, from April 11 to May 28 and for 7.4 months, from August 23 to April 5, with a peak percentage of 35% on May 12. The wind is most often from the west for 2.8 months, from May 28 to August 23, with a peak percentage of 36% on June 29.

Tirana is located near a large body of water (e.g., ocean, sea, or large lake). This section reports the average surface temperature of that water for a wider area. The average water temperature experiences some seasonal variation throughout the year. The period of the year with warmer water lasts for 3.3 months, from June 20 to September 28, with an average temperature above 23°C. The month of the year in Tirana with the warmest water is August, with an average temperature of 24°C. The period of the year with colder water lasts 4.1 months, from December 19 to April 24, with an average temperature below 16°C. The month of the year in Tirana with the coldest water is February, with an average temperature of 14°C [31].



Source: Climate and Average Weather Year-Round in Tirana Albania

Source: <https://weatherspark.com/y/84331/Average-Weather-in-Tirana-Albania-Year-Round#Sections-Humidity>

Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 5: Tirana weather by month

3. Architectural cultural and historical heritage

In general, Albanian architecture is a cumulus of cultures and lifestyles derived from numerous civilizations that once established themselves there: Illyrians, ancient Greece, ancient Romans, Venetians, Ottomans. Monumental Roman architecture emerged from the period of the rule of the Roman Empire in this area, architecture that now represents an important attraction when visiting the country. This is especially visible in Butrint and Dures. Perhaps the most outstanding legacy was given by the Byzantine Empire. Cities and surrounding places such as Shkodër, Krujë, Korçë, Berat, Voskopojë, Gjirokaster, for example, are the architectural treasures of Albania.

Although Tirana was officially founded as a settlement only in 1614, traces of human presence have been discovered in this area since prehistoric times. The ancient Romans discovered the life potential of this place at the very beginning of their presence here (3rd century), as evidenced

by the rich floor mosaics of their houses. In the 6th century, the Byzantine emperor Justinian I (482-565) built a fortress here, which was also used by later rulers of Tirana.

Tirana is a modern city by all accounts, whose intensive development began at the beginning of the 20th century, when its basic urban matrix was defined, which respects the existing natural environment and uses it as its basic resource. Vast park areas with artificial lakes and Dajti Mountain are an integral part of the wider structure of the city with extremely open possibilities for its development with a wealth of content.

In addition to natural resources, Tirana's greatest asset is its openness to diversity, multiculturalism and religious tolerance.

Ancient Roman mosaic (3rd century). The floor mosaic was part of the decoration of a Roman house that was later converted into an early Christian church. This mosaic is the oldest cultural artifact in the area of today's Tirana (Figure 6).



Source:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/6c/Tirana%2C_Albania_2017-04_Tirana_Mosaic_02.jpg, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 6: Ancient Roman mosaic (3rd century)

Justinian's Fortress (Albanian: Kalaja e Justinianit) or Castle in Tirana (Albanian: Kalaja e Tiranës). The fortress dates back to the reign of Byzantium in these

areas (6th century). The fortress was used and extended by the Ottomans during the Ottoman Empire. Today, the fortress has a large number of restaurants (Figure 7).



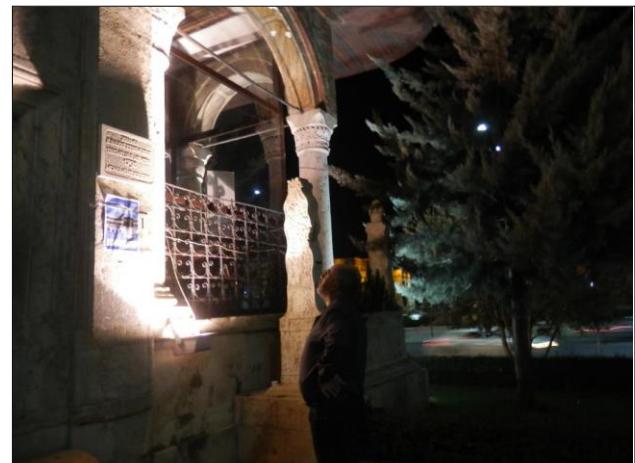
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/03/Castillo_de_Petrela%2C_Petrela%2C_Albania%2C_2014-04-17%2C_DD_02.JPG, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Source: <http://www.visit-tirana.com/sq/cfare-te-besh/keshtjellat-e-tiranes/164/kalaja-e-petreles>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 7: Justinian's Fortress (Albanian: Kalaja e Justinianit) or Castle in Tirana (Albanian: Kalaja e Tiranës)

The Haji Et'hem Bey Mosque (Albanian: Xhamia e Haxhi Et'hem Beut, Turkish: Hacı Edhem Bey Camii) is a Sunni mosque known for its frescoes outside and inside the portico depicting trees, waterfalls and bridges. The mosque was closed during the reign of Enver Halil Hoxha (1908-1985), so it was reopened as a place of worship in 1991, where 10,000 people attended. The construction of the mosque was started in 1791 or 1794 by Molla Bey, and it was completed in 1819 or 1821 by his son Haxhi Ethem Bey, the great-grandson of Sulejman Pasha. In front of the mosque was the old bazaar, to the east the Sulejman Pasha mosque, built in 1614 and destroyed during the Second World War, and to the northwest the Karapici mosque. The mosque was declared a historical monument and was restored in the late 1960s and early 1970s. On 18 January 1991, at the beginning of the fall of communism in Albania, despite the opposition of the

communist authorities, 10,000 people entered the mosque carrying flags. This event was a turning point in the rebirth of religious freedom in Albania. The Et'hem Bey Mosque consists of a prayer hall, a portico surrounding the north side, and a minaret. On the north side is the entrance to the prayer hall, which has a square layout and is built in a single volume. It is covered by a dome, and the dome is hemispherical and has no windows. The mosque's frescoes depict trees, waterfalls, and bridges. In the interior of the mosque, on the east side of the prayer hall and in the women's prayer area, the Süleymaniye Mosque with its four minarets, the same as that which appears in the Nezjenje Mosque in Berat, is depicted, among other landscapes. Most of the scenes that appear in the wall paintings are not realistic images, but imaginary scenes. The porch of the mosque is also decorated with numerous landscapes (Figure 8).



Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/478155685412551086/>,

Accessed: December 25, 2025

Source: Ramadan Aliu (September 26, 2012)

The Author in front of the Edhem-bey Mosque

Fig 8: Edhem-bey Mosque (1793)

Tabak Bridge (Albanian: Ura e Tabakëve). The bridge was built (18th century) over the Lanë stream during the administration of the Ottoman Empire in this area. The bridge is an important point on the Way of St. Dordja or

Putu Shengjergjit (Rruga e Shëngjergjit) which connected Durrës with the mountainous regions in the east of Albania (Figure 9).





Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b7/Tanners%27_Bridge.jpg, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Source: <http://wikimapia.org/10126784/sr/%D0%A2%D0%B0%D0%B1%D0%B0%D0%BA-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%81%D1%82>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 9: Tabak Bridge (Albanian: Ura e Tabakëve).

Clock Tower (Albanian: Kulla e Sahatit). The clock tower, which is 35 m high, was built in 1822 near the

Edhem-bey Mosque. The tower has been renovated several times to this day (Figure 10).



Source: Author (September 26, 2012)
Oriental-style townhouse (now a restaurant). This is one of the most beautiful examples of an oriental-style townhouse dating from the late 19th century (Figure 11)

Fig 10: Clock Tower (Albanian: Kulla e Sahatit).



Source: Author (September 26, 2012)

Church of St. Hearts (Albanian: Zemra e Kristus Catholic Church of Tirana). This is the oldest Roman Catholic church in Tirana, built in 1939. The church was closed (1967) by the decision of the communist regime and reopened in 1990 (Figure 12).

Fig 11: Oriental-style townhouse (now a restaurant).



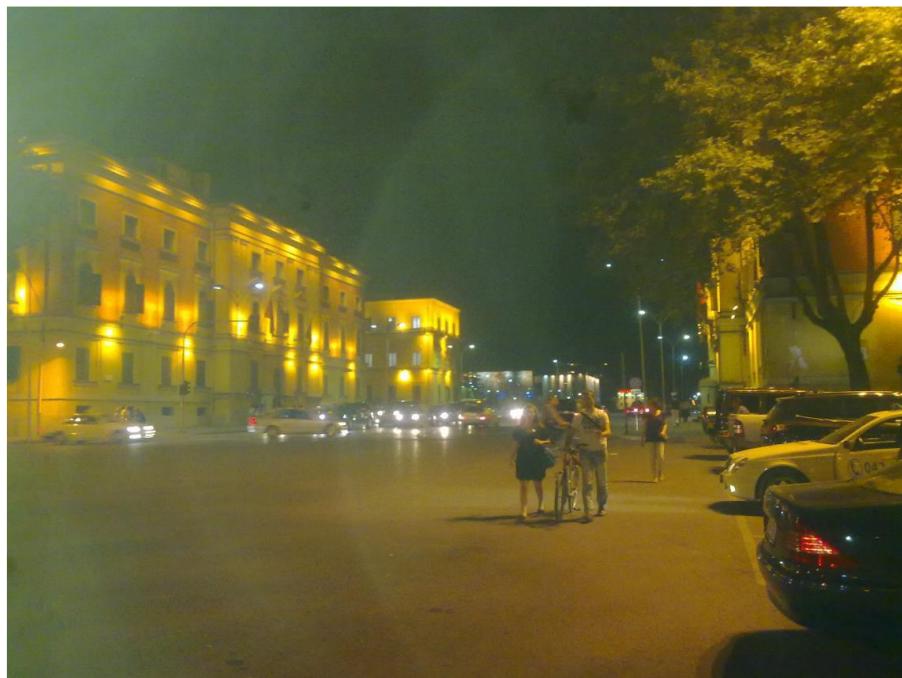
Source: <https://structurae.net/structures/sacred-heart-church-tirana>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Source: <http://wikimapia.org/4460944/Zemra-e-Krishtit-Catholic-Church#/photo/978282>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 12: Church of St. Hearts (Albanian: Zemra e Kristus Catholic Church of Tirana

Boulevard of People's Martyrs (Albanian: Boulevard Dëshmorët e Kombit). This is the main boulevard in Tirana that was built (1939-1941) according to the designs of the Italian architect Gherardo Bosio, during the Italian occupation. Immediately after its construction, the boulevard

was named Empire Avenue (Italian: Viale del Impero). In this boulevard are the buildings of all the most important state institutions: the Presidential Palace, the Prime Minister's Office, the Congress Palace, Hotel Rogner, the University of Tirana..., (Figure 13).



Source: Author (September 26, 2012)

Fig 13: Boulevard of People's Martyrs (Albanian: Boulevard Dëshmorët e Kombit).

National Theatre, Opera and Ballet of Albania (Albanian: Teatri Kombetar i Operas dhe i Baletit). The building was

built (1953) on Skenderbeg Square (Figure 14).



Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/55/Pallati_i_Operas_Kultures_dhe_Baletit.jpg, Accessed: December 25, 2025
 Source: Author (September 26, 2012)

Fig 14: National Theatre, Opera and Ballet of Albania (Albanian: Teatri Kombetar i Operas dhe i Baletit)

University of Tirana (Albanian: Universiteti i Tiranës). The University of Tirana was founded in 1957 (as the State University of Tirana). The university building was built on

Mother Teresa Square according to the project of the Italian architect Gherardo Bosio (Figure 15).



Source: Author (September 26, 2012)

Fig 15: University of Tirana (Albanian: Universiteti i Tiranës).

Mother Albania (Albanian: Nëna Shqipëri). The statue made (1971) of concrete (the work of Albanian sculptors Kristaq Rama, Muntaz Dhrami and Shaban Hadëri) represents the homeland Albania for which 28,000 Albanian partisans gave their lives, whose graves are located near the monument. The

12 m tall statue of the woman-Albania is placed on a 3 m high column. The text is engraved on the pedestal of the statue: Lavdi e perjetable deshmoreve te Atdheut (Eternal glory to the martyrs of the homeland), (Figure 16).



Source: <http://wikimapia.org/8741710/Mother-Albania>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Source: <https://i1.wp.com/michaelharrison.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/630-Mother-Albania-21-11-12.jpg>
Accessed: December 25, 2025



Fig 16: Mother Albania (Albanian: Nëna Shqipëri).

National History Museum (Albanian: Muzeu Historik Kombëtar). The museum was built in 1981 on Skanderbeg Square. On the entrance facade of the building is the famous

mural called "Albania". The museum houses exhibits that bear witness to the turbulent history of Albania (Figure 17).



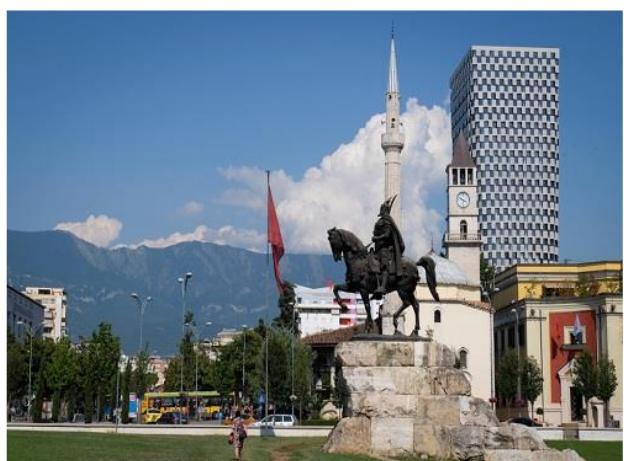
Source: https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/f0/Museo_Nacional_de_Historia%2C_Tirana%2C_Albania%2C_2014-04-17%2C_DD_10.JPG, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Source: <https://www.gpsmycity.com/tours/self-guided-museums-and-galleries-tour-of-tirana-3638.html>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 17: National History Museum (Albanian: Muzeu Historik Kombëtar)

Plaza Hotel. The hotel is of a high category (five stars) located right next to Skenderbeg Square. It was built (2007)

according to the project of the Belgian design firm 51N4E (Figure 18).



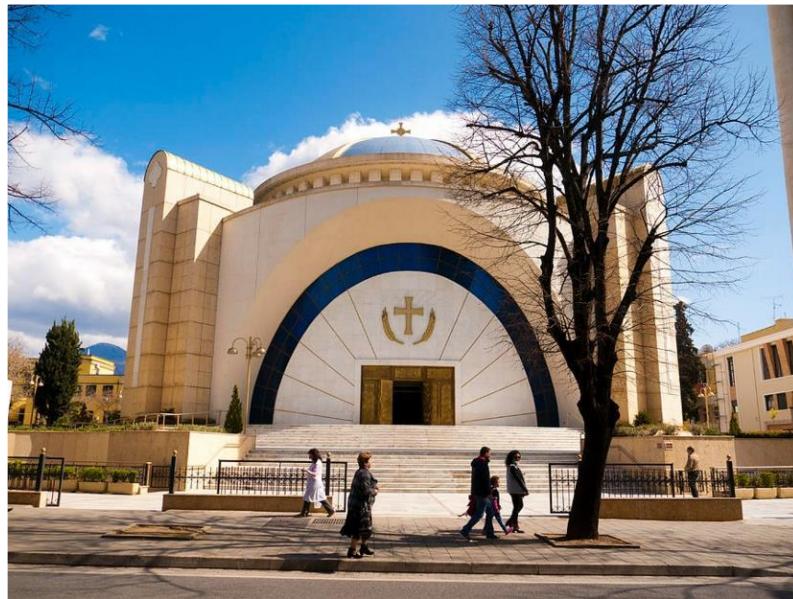
Source: <http://www.panacomp.net/plaza-hotel-tirana/>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 18: Plaza Hotel

The Church of the Resurrection (Albanian: Katedralja Ngjallja e Krishtit). This is one of the largest Orthodox

churches in Europe, built in 2012 (Figure 19).





Source: http://spc.rs/sr/albanska_pravoslavna_crkva_danas, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Source: <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/resurrection-of-christ-orthodox-cathedral-rae-tucker.html>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 19: The Church of the Resurrection (Albanian: Katedralja Ngjallja e Krishtit)

Toptani shopping center (2017). The center was built (2017) according to the design of Dutch architect Winy Maas. The

total sales area of the center is 12,790 m² (Figure 20).



Source: <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1401884&page=31>, Accessed: December 25, 2025

Fig 20: Toptani shopping center

Conclusion

The Tirana city was founded (1614) by the Ottoman pasha Sulejman Bargjini, but the traces of the presence of people in this area go back to the Stone Age, where the Illyrians had their settlement. After the Illyrian Wars (229-219 AD), ancient Rome dominated this area. With the collapse of the Roman Empire (476), the area of Tirana was included in Byzantium. Here, the Byzantine emperor Justinian I the Great (482-565) built (520) his castle, which was called Tirkan or Theranda. Back in 1510, Tirana was a small village (as the Albanian Catholic priest from Shkodra Marin Barleti reports in his book about Skenderbeg)

During the Balkan Wars, Tirana was briefly occupied by the Serbian army, and then by the Austro-Hungarian army. At the end of World War I (1917), Austro-Hungarian architects had drawn up the first plans for Tirana based on the patterns of modern European urbanism, and in 1923 the first regulatory plan of the city. The city center was designed by Italian architects Florestano de Fausto (1890-1965) and Armando Brasini (1879-1965), where the position of the buildings of individual ministries was defined. The plan survived a series

of changes made by the Albanian architect Eshref Frashëria (1874-1938), the Italian architect Castellani, and the Austrian architects Weiss and Kohler. During World War II, Albania was occupied by Italy (1941-1943), and then by Germany (1943-1945). It was liberated by partisans led by Enver Hoxha (1908-1985). After becoming the capital of Albania (1920), Tirana experienced constant development in every respect. It is the administrative center of the state, a university and scientific center, the center of many cultural and artistic institutions and events, a media center, the headquarters of world embassies, the headquarters of major companies... It has its own airport (since 1957) called Mother Teresa Airport (Aeroporti Nënë Tereza).

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