



# Wine tour



**Discover the  
Unique Heritage  
of Albanian Wine**



## Wine Tour



Lezhë - Malësi e Madhe - Shkodër - Rrëshen  
Tiranë - Durrës - Berat  
Berat - Përmet - Mallakastër - Lushnje

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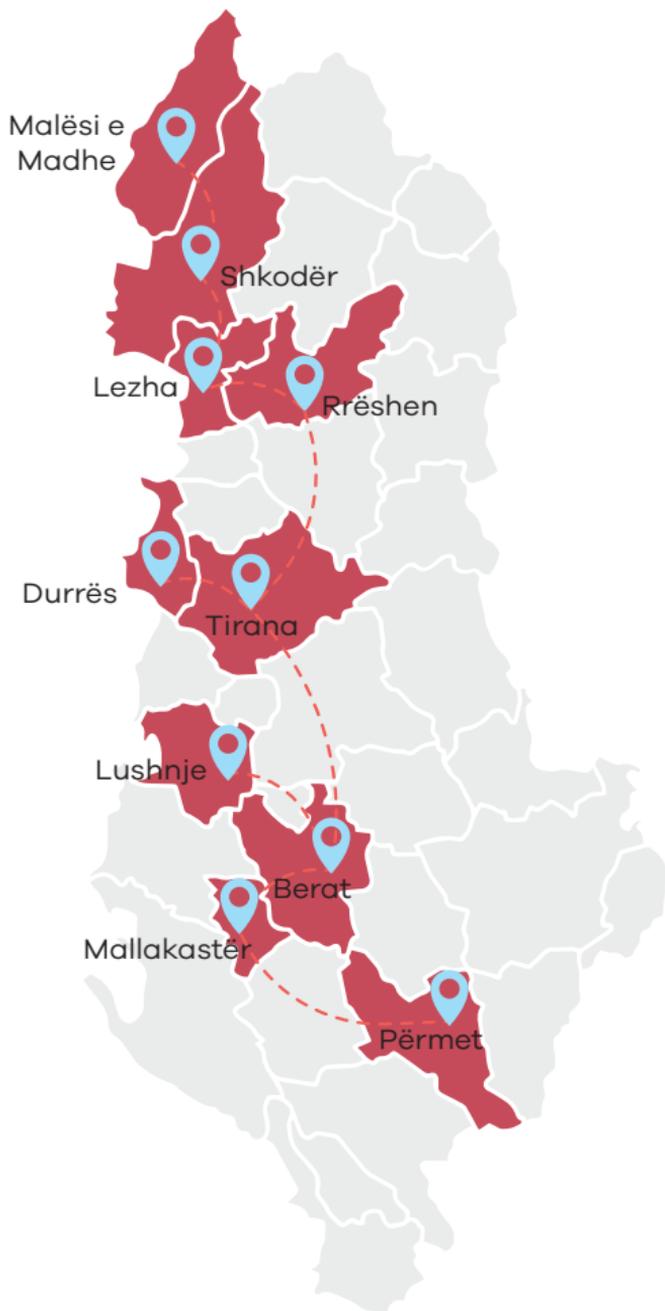


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## Exploring Albania's Winemaking Tradition

Located in the heart of the Mediterranean, Albania boasts a winemaking heritage that dates back thousands of years. With vineyards flourishing between the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, the country produces wines that reflect a diverse terroir and a deep-rooted tradition. Our expertly curated wine tours offer a unique opportunity to explore Albania's historic estates, family-run wineries, and modern cellars. These immersive experiences allow visitors to engage with winemakers, enjoy exclusive tastings, and understand the intricate relationship between land, climate, and viticulture.

Albania's wine industry remains a hidden gem, offering breathtaking landscapes, a rich cultural heritage, and a passionate community of vintners dedicated to producing high-quality wines. Whether you enjoy robust reds, crisp whites, or rare indigenous varietals, our tours offer an experience that combines exceptional wines with historical and cultural depth. Each tour is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of Albania's winemaking process, highlighting the techniques passed down through generations and the innovations shaping the country's wine future.



## Why Albanian Wines?

Albania's winemaking tradition is one of the oldest in Europe, yet its wines remain among the Mediterranean's best-kept secrets. What makes Albanian wines unique?

- **Ancient Heritage** – With over 3,000 years of winemaking history, Albania preserves some of Europe's oldest grape varieties, ensuring wines with truly unique profiles.
- **Indigenous Grape Varieties** – Many of Albania's native grapes, such as Kallmet, Shesh i Bardhë, and Vlosh, cannot be found anywhere else in the world, offering a rare tasting experience.
- **Diverse Terroir** – From coastal vineyards kissed by sea breezes to high-altitude vines thriving in mineral-rich soils, Albania's varied landscapes produce wines of exceptional complexity and depth.
- **Sustainable & Natural Practices** – Many Albanian wineries embrace organic and biodynamic farming, preserving biodiversity and crafting wines with minimal intervention.
- **Undiscovered Excellence** – Albanian wines offer outstanding quality and value compared to more commercialized wine regions, making them an exciting discovery for wine lovers.



## The Influence of Terroir on Albanian Wines

Albania's diverse terroir is a defining factor in its winemaking excellence. The country's unique topography, combined with its Mediterranean climate, provides ideal conditions for viticulture:

- **Mediterranean Climate** – Long, hot summers and mild winters create the perfect environment for grape ripening, preserving acidity and developing complex flavors.
- **Coastal Influence** – The proximity of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas moderates temperatures, preventing excessive heat stress and enhancing the freshness of wines.
- **Mountainous Terrain** – Vineyards at higher altitudes benefit from cooler temperatures and increased diurnal variation, producing grapes with vibrant acidity and refined aromatic profiles.
- **Soil Diversity** – The varied geology, ranging from limestone and clay to sandy and alluvial soils, influences the structure and minerality of the wines, contributing to their depth and complexity.

The careful balance of these environmental factors allows Albanian winemakers to craft wines that express both the character of their region and the essence of their native grape varieties.



## Albanian Wine Regions

Albania's wine production is distributed across four key regions, each distinguished by its altitude, climate, and dominant grape varieties.



- **Coastal Plains (Western Lowlands)** – Rising up to 300 meters (990 feet), this region encompasses Tirana, Kavajë, Durrës, Shkodër, Lezhë, Lushnje, Fier, Vlorë, Pukë, and Delvinë. The maritime influence ensures mild temperatures, fostering the growth of Kallmet i Zi, Shesh i Bardhë, Shesh i Zi, Debina e Bardhë and Vlosh which yield refreshing whites and smooth, fruit-driven reds.



- **Central Hilly Region** – Spanning elevations between 300 and 600 meters (980–1,980 feet), this area includes Elbasan, Krujë, Gramsh, Berat, Përmet, Librazhd, and Mirditë. The rolling hills provide well-drained soils perfect for structured reds like Kallmet i Zi as well as aromatic whites such Puls.



- **Eastern Sub-Mountainous Region** – At elevations between 600 and 800 meters (1,980–2,600 feet), this region covers Pogradec, Korçë, Leskovik, Mat and Peshkopi. The cooler climate and mineral-rich soils contribute to wines with high acidity and aging potential. Key grape varieties include Ceruja and Debine, producing crisp, mineral-laden whites and deeply structured reds.



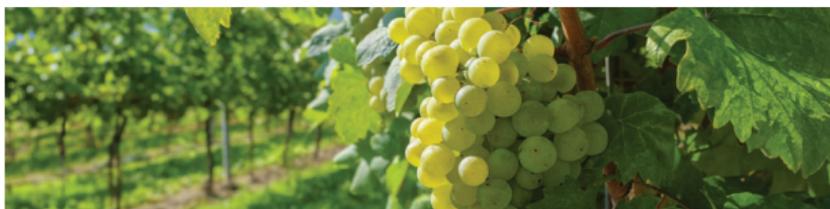
- **Mountainous (Highland) Region** – Vineyards in this region, reaching altitudes of 1,000–1,300 meters (3,300–4,300 feet), benefit from extreme diurnal temperature variations that enhance the aromatic concentration of the grapes. The clay-silica soils produce bold, long-lived wines with strong character and minerality, such as Kallmet i Zi and Shesh i Zi.

## Indigenous Grape Varieties of Albania

Albania is home to a variety of native grape cultivars, each offering distinct sensory experiences and historical significance. These include:



- **Kallmet i Zi (Red)** – Deeply rooted in Albanian viticulture, Kallmet i Zi is a distinguished grape variety recognized across Europe under different names, such as Kadarka in Hungary and Nero di Scutari in Italy. Its wines display an intense red-violet color with vibrant flavors of violets, apples, and dark berries. With balanced tannins and an alcohol content of 12–16%, Kallmet i Zi pairs perfectly with roasted meats, aged salami, and mushroom dishes.



- **Shesh i Bardhë (White)** – A widely grown indigenous variety, Shesh i Bardhë produces crisp, aromatic white wines with floral and citrus notes. The high acidity gives it a refreshing quality, making it perfect for seafood dishes, fresh salads, and delicate cheeses. It is often used to craft fresh, easy-drinking wines ideal for warm Mediterranean evenings.



- **Shesh i Zi (Red)** – A versatile and structured red grape, Shesh i Zi offers medium-bodied wines with flavors of ripe dark berries, soft tannins, and subtle earthiness. Its balanced acidity and smooth finish make it an excellent pairing for roasted meats, pasta dishes, and aged cheeses. Some winemakers blend it with other varieties to enhance complexity and depth.



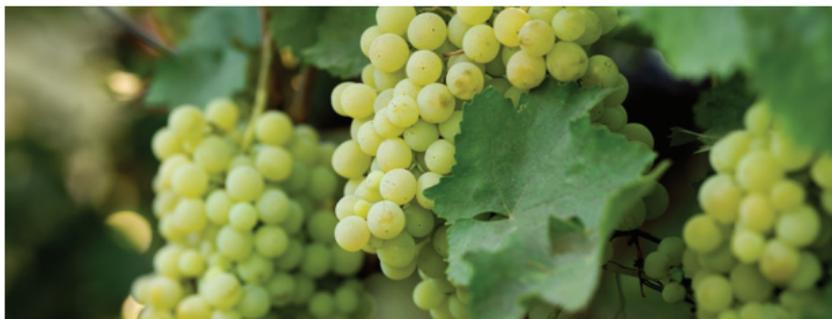
- **Vlosh (Red)** – A rare and ancient grape variety, Vlosh is known for producing deeply colored wines with intense tannins and bold flavors of blackberries, herbs, and spices. Reflecting the strength and character of its mountainous origins, Vlosh pairs beautifully with game meats, wild boar, and rich stews.



- **Pulës (White)** – The ‘Grape of the Centuries’. Thriving in regions such as Berat, Elbasan, and Mallakastër, Pulës is known for producing wines with golden or chestnut hues, a strong floral bouquet, and herbal undertones reminiscent of mountain tea. With a high alcohol content (12-14%) and fresh acidity, Pulës wines pair excellently with fish, white meats, and soft cheeses.



- **Ceruja (White)** – This lesser-known yet highly prized white grape offers mineral-driven wines with delicate stone fruit and floral aromas. It has a well-balanced acidity that enhances its freshness and complexity, making it an excellent match for Mediterranean cuisine, seafood, and grilled vegetables.



- **Debina e Bardhë (White)** – A crisp, vibrant white grape known for its bright acidity and citrusy flavors. It thrives in high-altitude vineyards, producing wines with green apple, pear, and floral notes. Its refreshing character makes it an ideal companion for seafood, grilled vegetables, and Mediterranean salads.



- **Serrina e Kuqe (Red)** – A lesser-known but unique red grape, Serrina e Kuqe is distinguished by its light red color, soft tannins, and flavors of cherry, red berries, and subtle spice. It is an excellent choice for pairing with poultry, and grilled vegetables.

## A Journey Through History

Winemaking in Albania dates back over 3,000 years, with roots in Illyrian civilization. The Illyrians were among the earliest grape cultivators in the Balkans, and their traditions continued under Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and Communist influence. Indigenous grape varieties such as Kallmet, Shesh i Bardhë, and Vlosh have been cultivated for generations, maintaining their unique identity within the broader European winemaking tradition.

During Roman period, Albanian viticulture advanced with improved pruning, fermentation, and storage techniques. Albanian wine became a sought-after commodity in the Mediterranean, with Roman merchants and aristocrats valuing its bold character. The Romans also expanded vineyard cultivation, refining red and white wine production.

In the Byzantine era, monasteries played a crucial role in preserving and advancing Albanian viticulture. Many of them preserved indigenous grape varieties and refined winemaking techniques. Monastic vineyards supplied wine for religious ceremonies and trade, ensuring continuity despite political upheavals. Byzantine influence reinforced wine's cultural and religious significance in Albania, intertwining it with local traditions and festive rituals.



The Ottoman expansion into Albania in the 15th century posed challenges for viticulture, as Islamic law discouraged alcohol consumption, leading to a decline in large-scale production. However, winemaking persisted in secret, especially in mountainous areas. Albanian winemakers preserved their heritage, producing wine for Christian communities and local use. Some vineyards, particularly those tied to religious institutions, continued to thrive, safeguarding ancient grape varieties.

Under Communist rule (1946–1991), state-controlled agriculture prioritized mass production over quality. Collectivization led to large cooperative vineyards focused on bulk exports, often neglecting traditional methods and indigenous grapes. Yet, resilient winemakers ensured native varieties like Kallmet and Shesh i Bardhë survived.



Brief break of the cooperative girls.  
©Sotir Capo, 1988, Albania

After Communism's fall in 1991, privatization revived family-run vineyards, restoring indigenous grapes and improving production techniques. Today, Albania's wineries blend tradition with innovation, emphasizing terroir, sustainability, and high-quality production for the global market.



## The Albanian Wine Industry Today

Albania's wine industry is thriving, blending centuries-old traditions with modern winemaking techniques. Since the fall of communism in the early 1990s, it has shifted from mass production to boutique and family-run wineries focused on quality. Winemakers are reviving indigenous grapes and adopting sustainable vineyard management practices, creating wines that reflect the country's unique terroir.

The industry's growth has been accompanied by rising exports, as Albanian wines gain international recognition for their authenticity and distinctiveness. Investments in infrastructure, technology, and education have helped local producers meet global standards while preserving tradition.

Visitors to Albania can now experience guided tastings at modern wineries, explore organic and biodynamic vineyards, and witness firsthand the revival of an ancient winemaking culture.





# Albanian Wine Tour

## Discover Kallmet, Shesh & Pulës

### An Immersive Journey Through Albania's Iconic Grape Varieties

Join us on a unique wine tour exploring the heart of Albania's viticultural heritage through three of its most revered indigenous grape varieties: Kallmet, Shesh, and Pulës. This exclusive tour takes you through the country's most stunning wine regions, offering a deep dive into the rich history, diverse terroirs, and expert craftsmanship behind these exceptional wines.

## Why Choose Our Tours?



**Authentic Experience:** Visit historic wineries and meet passionate winemakers preserving Albania's indigenous grape heritage.



**Exclusive Tastings:** Sample rare and award-winning wines, many unavailable outside of Albania.



**Breathtaking Landscapes:** Enjoy stunning vineyard views, from the coastal hills to the mountainous highlands.



**Gastronomic Pairings:** Savor traditional Albanian dishes thoughtfully paired with each wine variety.



## Kallmet Tour

### Kallmet: The King of Albanian Reds

Renowned as the royal red of Albania, has been cultivated for centuries, with historical records showing its importance as a tribute wine sent to the Vatican. Named after the village of Kallmet in Lezhë it can be found primarily in the Lezhë, Malësia e Madhe, and Shkodër regions, Kallmet thrives in mineral-rich soils and a mild Mediterranean climate.

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#### Wine Profile:

**Color:**

Deep ruby with violet hues

**Aromas:**

Violets, blackberries, dried plums, and vanilla

**Taste:**

Full-bodied, rich tannins, balanced acidity with a lingering finish

**Aging Potential:**

2-3 years, developing complex herbal and spice notes over time

**Pairing Suggestions:**

Roasted lamb, grilled meats, aged cheeses, and traditional baked dishes such as Fërgesë

## Tour Highlights:

- Visit premier Kallmet-producing wineries in Shkodër, Malsia e Madhe, Lezhe and Rreshen
- Experience exclusive barrel tastings of aged Kallmet
- Learn from expert vintners about the winemaking and aging process



## Shesh Tour

### Shesh: The Versatile Gem

Cultivated for centuries, Shesh i Bardhë (White) and Shesh i Zi (Red) are two of Albania's most traditional grape varieties, primarily grown in the central and coastal hills of Tirana, Durrës, and Berat. Named after the ancient village of Shesh, these grapes produce wines that range from fresh and vibrant to deep and complex.

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#### Shesh i Bardhë (White) Profile:



**Color:**

Pale straw with golden reflections



**Aromas:**

Green apple, peach, apricot, floral notes



**Taste:**

Medium-bodied, crisp acidity, mineral undertones



**Pairing Suggestions:**

Fresh seafood, soft cheeses, and grilled vegetables



## Shesh i Zi (Red) Profile:



**Color:**

Garnet red with ruby hues



**Aromas:**

Ripe cherries, blackberries, earthy spice



**Taste:**

Medium-bodied, velvety tannins,  
balanced acidity



**Pairing Suggestions:**

Roasted meats, game dishes,  
and pasta with rich sauces

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## Tour Highlights:

- Explore the rolling vineyards of Tirana and Durrës, the homeland of Shesh
- Guided tastings of both Shesh i Bardhë and Shesh i Zi
- Food and wine pairing masterclass with traditional Albanian cuisine



## Pulës Tour

### Pulës: The Hidden White Jewel

A rare and highly valued white grape variety, Pulës is found primarily in Berat, Përmet, and Mallakastër. It is known for its distinct mineral character and vibrant acidity, reflecting the limestone-rich soils and high-altitude vineyards where it thrives.

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### Shesh i Bardhë (White) Profile:



**Color:**

Golden yellow with greenish hints



**Aromas:**

Wildflowers, citrus fruits, mountain tea



**Taste:**

Crisp, well-balanced acidity, long-lasting minerality



**Pairing Suggestions:**

Freshwater fish, white meats, soft cheeses, and Mediterranean dishes

## Tour Highlights:

- Visit boutique wineries specializing in Pulës production
- Enjoy an exclusive tasting of Pulës wines aged in amphorae
- Discover the unique terroir of the Berat region and its limestone-rich soils





## Book Your Wine Tour Today!

Embark on a journey through Albania's most iconic wine regions and experience the history, passion, and craftsmanship behind Kallmet, Shesh, and Pulës. Contact us to reserve your spot on this exclusive wine adventure!



**Tour Locations:** Malsia e Madhe, Shkodër, Lezhë, Rreshen, Tirana, Durrës, Berat, Lushnje



**Availability:** Year-round, with seasonal vineyard experiences

**Website:** [agrotourism.gov.al](http://agrotourism.gov.al)



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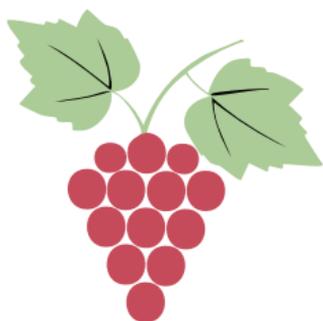
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