

Tirana Cultural Attractions

Bunk 'Art

Top choice museum in Tirana

This fantastic conversion – from a massive cold war bunker on the outskirts of Tirana into a history and contemporary art museum – is Albania's most exciting new sight and easily a Tirana highlight. With almost 3000 sq metres of space underground spread over several floors, the bunker was built for Albania's political elite in the 1970s and remained a secret for much of its existence. Now it hosts exhibits that combine the modern history of Albania with pieces of contemporary art.



National History Museum

Top choice museum in Tirana

The largest museum in Albania holds many of the country's archaeological treasures and a replica of Skanderbeg's massive sword (how he held it, rode his horse and fought at the same time is a mystery). The excellent collection is almost entirely signed in English and takes you chronologically from ancient Illyria to the post-communist era. One highlight of the museum is a terrific exhibition of icons by Onufri, a renowned 16th-century Albanian master of colour



National Gallery of Arts

Top choice gallery in Tirana

Tracing the relatively brief history of Albanian painting from the early 19th century to the present day, this beautiful space also has temporary exhibitions. Downstairs there's a small but interesting collection of 19th-century paintings depicting scenes from daily Albanian life, while upstairs the art takes on a political dimension with some truly fabulous examples of Albanian socialist realism. Don't miss the small collection



of communist statues in storage behind the building, including two rarely seen statues of Uncle Joe Stalin himself.

Clock Tower

Tower in Tirana

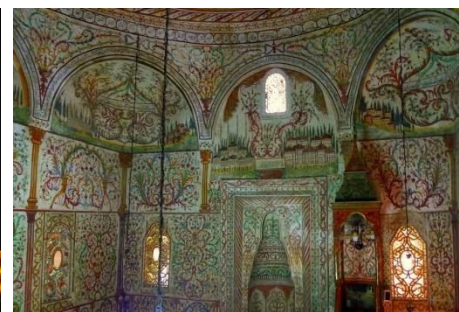
Tirana's 35m-tall clock tower was completed by Ottoman architects in 1822, and it was for years the tallest building in the capital, sounding a bell every hour on the hour. You can climb it for impressive views of Skanderbeg Square.



Et'hem Bey Mosque

Mosque in Tirana

To one side of Sheshi Skënderbej, the 1789–1823 Et'hem Bey Mosque was spared destruction during the atheism campaign of the late 1960s because of its status as a cultural monument. Small and elegant, it's one of the oldest buildings left in the city. Take your shoes off to look inside at the beautifully painted dome.



Fortress of Justinian

Ruins in Tirana

If you turn up Rr Murat Toptani, behind the National Art Gallery, you'll pass the 6m-high walls of the Fortress of Justinian, the last remnants of a Byzantine-era castle. The Fortress of Tirana is one of the greatest cultural and historical monuments in Tirana. It is a fortification with rectangular shaped layout 160mx125m stretching more on the east-west direction. Judging from the technique and construction used to build it is thought that it has



been constructed around the end of the 18th century. It is supposed to have been built by Ahmet Pasha Bargjini (1788- 1809)

Former Residence of Enver Hoxha

Historic building in Tirana

This simple three-storey villa was the home of Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha for decades, and his wife continued to live here for years after his death in 1985. While the Albanian communist leaders clearly lived a much simpler life than their comrades in Romania, for example, it was still another world for the people on the street, who thronged here in amazement when the “Blloku” was finally opened to the public in 1991. The house is closed to the public.



Pyramid

Notable building in Tirana

Designed by Enver Hoxha's daughter and son-in-law and completed in 1988, this monstrously unattractive building was formerly the Enver Hoxha Museum and more recently a convention centre and nightclub. Today, covered in graffiti and surrounded by the encampments of Tirana's homeless, its once-white marble walls are now crumbling, but no decision on whether to demolish or restore it has yet been reached. It's sometimes open for temporary exhibits, for which it's a surprisingly great venue.



Tanners' Bridge

Bridge in Tirana

A rather incongruous 19th-century stone bridge remains remarkably well preserved in Tirana's modern centre and is one of just a few remnants of Ottoman Tirana. Be careful walking over it as its smooth stone surface can be



very slippery. It's at the end of street- President George W Bush.