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# Albania

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## I INTRODUCTION

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**Albania** (Albanian *Shqipëria*, "Country of the Eagle"), republic in southeastern Europe, officially known as the Republic of Albania. It lies along the northwestern edge of the [Balkan Peninsula](#).

Separated from [Italy](#) by only 76 km (47 mi) of the Adriatic Sea, Albania, throughout its history, has been occupied by Italian powers expanding eastward into the Balkans or by Balkan powers expanding westward. In the 1500s Albania came under the rule of the Ottoman Empire (centered in what is now Turkey), and did not gain its independence until 1912. From 1944 to 1990 Albania was a staunchly Communist state, and in 1991

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Albania /æɪ beɪ niə/ (help · info), officially the Republic of Albania (Albanian: Republika e Shqipërisë pronounced [ ɾɛpublika t͡ʃipəɾiˈsɨ ], or simply Shqipëria ...

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Albania began its transition to a democratic state and market economy. The capital and largest city is Tirana.

## II LAND AND RESOURCES

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With a total area of 28,748 sq km (11,100 sq mi), Albania is roughly the size of the state of Massachusetts. The greatest distance from north to south is about 345 km (about 215 mi) and from east to west about 150 km (about 95 mi). Albania is bordered by the [Adriatic Sea](#) to the west, Greece to the south, the [Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#) (FYROM) to the east, [Serbia](#) to the northeast, and [Montenegro](#) to the northwest.

### A Natural Regions

Albania is a mountainous country in which about 70 percent of the land lies above 300 m (1,000 ft). Its mountains, which form a broad backbone from northwest to southeast, rise abruptly from the coastal lowlands to elevations of more than 2,400 m (8,000 ft). In the north are the most rugged mountains, where a massive limestone extension of the [Dinaric Alps](#) reaches inland for 40 km (25 mi) from nearby Montenegro. In the central uplands lies Mount Korab, the country's highest peak, at 2,764 m (9,068 ft). Strong erosive forces have created bare rock surfaces, deeply incised valleys, and a scarcity of meadowlands in this region. South of the Alps, the uplands are lower and more rounded, extending southeastward in a series of plateaus and ranges that merge with the [Pindus Mountains](#) in northern Greece.

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The western coastal region consists of low hills and lower reaches of valleys that open onto the coastal plain. This is Albania's most densely populated area and comprises most of the land used for farming. Even here a series of flat areas are interrupted by hill

country. Most of the soils are difficult to farm because of drainage and water-supply problems. Only the younger, lighter soils near the many rivers are easily cultivated, but are often flooded as well. Albania is subject to occasional earthquakes.

## B Rivers and Lakes

Albania's longest river is the [Drin](#), total length 282 km (175 mi), which originates at two headwaters in [Serbia](#) and the FYROM and flows through northern Albania. Other major rivers include the Seman, the Shkumbin, and the Aóös (Vjöse). Because most of Albania's rivers flow at high elevations, they are usually mountain torrents by the time they reach the coastal plain. In the mountains, rivers have cut deep gorges with near-vertical walls as high as 90 m (300 ft) above the water. The gorges make irrigation difficult, but are well suited for the huge dams that give Albania and nearby countries cheap hydroelectric power. Along the lower course of the rivers, irrigation is also difficult because sediment-laden streams often break out of their beds and shift channels. Irrigation is feasible only in valley bottoms. Albania also shares three large lakes with neighboring states. [Lake Scutari](#) in the north lies partly in Montenegro, [Lake Ohrid](#) in the east lies partly in the FYROM, while Lake Prespa in the southeast lies in Albania, the FYROM, and Greece.

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