

Krujë Castle



Krujë castle is located at the top of a craggy mountain 680 meters (2,230 feet) above sea level. From the castle there is a broad view that spans from Mount Tomori in the south to Ulcinj in the north with views of the Adriatic coast throughout. The castle itself has a unique elliptical shape that occupies 2.5 hectares (6.2 acres) and is believed to have been built in the 5th or 6th century A.D. and was subsequently rebuilt by the Byzantines in the 11th-12th century and then the Ottomans in the 16th-17th century. However, archeological excavations have indicated that the region has been inhabited since the 3rd century B.C.! The castle features an arched tunnel as its entrance and once inside you can find castle remnants, the watch tower, two museums, restaurants, and homes that are still occupied to this day.

The Watch Tower



The watch tower is located inside the Krujë castle walls and is one of the few remaining towers found within. It stretches an additional 16 meters (53 feet) above the castle walls and once provided a complete view of the horizon allowing the monitoring of enemy movements in three directions while staying protected to the east by Mount Krujë. The bell found inside the tower announced the death of Skanderbeg, the Albanian national hero, and can now be seen in the Skanderbeg Museum which can also found within the castle walls.

Zgërdheshit Fortress



The remnants of this fortress lie at the slope of a hill in the south-west region of Krujë and covers 10 hectares (25 acres). The stone structures found here are what remains of the ancient Illyrian city of Albanopoli. It is hypothesized to have been the center of the country's eponymous Alban tribe as described in the works of Ptolemy who detailed this location in his great work *Geographia*. Throughout the ruins are portions of short walls spanning 90 meters (300 feet) punctuated by what remains of three towers. It is believed that the town was originally divided into three sections much like other ancient cities, however all of the surrounding structures have not yet been located.

Abdyl Agës Bridge



The Abdyl Agës Bridge is situated between Mount Krujë and Mount Kurçajt in the southernmost part of Krujë and spans the Black River. It is believed to have been built in the early 1800's and is constructed entirely of limestone. The bridge is part of a medieval road that once led through this region and provided a safe crossing for the caravans that passed through.

Kurçajt Bridge



Kurçajt Bridge is located to the south of the Krujë region in the village of Kurçaj. It stretches over the Black River and served as an integral part of an old caravan trail connecting Krujë with Tirana. It was constructed in the late 1700's and is made from staggered stones raised gradually by concrete portions. The bridge was made with a unique asymmetric shape that reaches up to the opposite side like a staircase.

Dollmës Tekke Shrine and Skanderbeg's Tree



The Dollmës shrine can be found within the Krujë castle walls. The shrine was a place for spiritual retreat and character reformation for the Tekke faith. It was built in 1779 by the Dollmës tribe using the inscribed stones from other shrines. The building was constructed in the Byzantine style, however it features murals from the Baroque period. Inside the structure lies the tombs of people important to the Tekke faith. In front of the shrine's doors, on the sacred grounds, is a large olive tree planted on the day of Skanderbeg's wedding. Skanderbeg had at the time implemented a decree that all couples to be married must plant an olive tree for their wedding as a type of municipal taxation.

Skanderbeg Monument



In the center of town is a monument for the national hero, Gjergj Kastriot Skanderbeg. The statue was erected on November 28, 1959 and was designed by sculptor Pascal Odysseus. It was officially declared to be a national cultural monument in 1963. The statue depicts Skanderbeg charging into war atop his stallion with sword drawn.

Old Bazaar



The Old Bazaar, or Derexhiku as it was called, began operating approximately 400 years ago and once had about 150 individual merchants that lined the main road leading up to the castle gates. As the bazar expanded, homes and structures were built outside the castle walls which led to the further development of Krujë. Today, a smaller portion of the now formalized Bazaar operates along the cobblestone road leading to Krujë castle and continues to sell antiques and traditional handmade crafts such as woolen slippers, oriental rugs, and jewelry.

Spring of the Queen Mother



Situated inside Qafë-Shtama national park, 1100 meters (4,000 feet) above sea level, lies the Spring of the Queen Mother. The natural water from the spring is considered to have curative properties and was once brought to the royal family of King Zog daily. Today, the water is bottled and sold throughout the region, however what could be better than gathering some yourself straight from the spring while surrounded by dense forests of black pine?

Qafë-Shtama National Park



Located 25 kilometers (15.5 miles) northeast of Krujë and with an area of 2,000 hectares (5,000 acres) is one of several national parks found within Albania. Qafë-Shtama national park holds the natural water of the Spring of the Queen Mother and is the perfect location to hike and enjoy the natural unspoiled beauty of Albania. The park is comprised largely of black pine and beech trees and some lakes can be found throughout. A recreational center is located at the northern edge with cabins soon to come.

Weeping Gorge



Located 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) from the north of Krujë, along the road that leads to Qafë-Shtama national park is a memorial for martyrs of the Ottoman invasion. The memorial hangs at the edge of a massive gorge overlooking an expansive valley. Historical evidence shows that below these stones are the remains of 90 girls that chose to be thrown into the abyss rather than succumb to the Ottomans on June 16th, 1478.

Cave of Sari Salltëku



The cave of Sari Salltëku is located at the top of Mount Krujë and is approximately 15 meters (45 feet) deep and 4 meters (13 feet) high. The cave is considered sacred within the Bektashi faith and has been used as place of worship since the 1700's. Inside is a water source that is held sacred by those embarking on their Bektashi pilgrimage. Legends also tell of a hero that, within this cave, rescued some girls that were seized by a mighty dragon.

Skanderbeg National Museum



This museum was opened November 1, 1982 and also resides within the Krujë castle walls. The museum is centered around an epic man of the 15th century who held off the invasion of the Ottoman Empire for 25 years. The museum recognizes the lasting strength and subsequent loss of the army of Skanderbeg. The national museum engenders the character of a memorial and opens to a stunning sculptural fresco representing our hero Skanderbeg amongst his cohorts. The museum holds artifacts, writings, and accounts of Skanderbeg's life and death, while additional displays continue to be added as discoveries are made.

National Ethnographic Museum



Also located within the Krujë Castle walls is the ethnographic museum found in what was the home of the Toptani family. This house, built in a style known as Çadak, was characteristic of the Krujë area at the time and dates back to the year 1764. The Toptanis were noble rulers of the area up until their move to Tirana. The house was declared a museum in 1959 and was restored by professor Emin Riza. The home allows you to experience daily life in this time period and is complete with interactive cultural displays and original furnishings.