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Jim Gold International Folk Dance Tours

Albania

Greece, Macedonia, and Kosovo

Vlora International Folk Festival Tour

Folk Dancing, Culture, Art, History, Adventure

May 21-June 2, 2025

Led by Lee Otterholt

Kosovo extension: June 2-4, 2025



Visit Tirana, Durres, Berat, Vlora, Kruja,
Saranda, Gjirokastra. Korca,
Greece: Lake Prespa. Dance with Yannis Konstantinou.
Macedonia: Ochrid

Vlora International Folk Festival !

Dance with Albanian folk dance groups and teachers!

International dancing with Lee Otterholt!

**Price includes transfers, hotels, private bus, guide,
sightseeing, two meals a day, festival, all dance lessons !**



Itinerary

Day 1: May 21: Wednesday- Depart on airlines of your choice to Albania.

Day 2: May 22: Thursday- Durres

Arrive in Albania. Check in to our hotel in Durres. Welcome dinner in a traditional restaurant. Overnight in the Arvi Hotel.



Day 3: May 23: Friday- Durres, Berat, Vlore



Morning walking tour of Durres. Drive through Albania's oil fields towards the fascinating town of Berat on the River Osum. The town is famous for its white-washed houses with many windows which give it the nickname "town of a thousand windows". The Castle, Maria Church with the ikon Museum and the 400 hundred years old quarters, give us a real flavor of the Albanian history and culture. When we leave Berat, we can also make a stop at one of the famous winery in Albania for wine tasting. Later we drive toward Vlora to end our day with folk dancing with Genc Kastrati, famous Albanian folk dance master teacher.



Dinner and overnight at Vlora International Hotel.

Day 4-6: May 24-26: Saturday/Monday- Vlora International Folk-Dance Festival "Aulona!"



Spend three day in beautiful city of Vlora watching Albanian folk dance groups and invited folk dance groups from other countries. In addition, we will arrange private lessons so we can learn from and dance with many of these groups and get to know them up close and personally.



Day 7: May 27: Tuesday- Vlora—Saranda



Drive along the spectacular Albanian Riviera looking down at the Ionian Sea. Upon leaving Radhima, the landscape dramatically changes as we climb through the forest of Llogara National Park. Stop for refreshment and photos in Llogara. Then drive south through the seven villages of the Himara region. Lunch in local restaurant in Himara. Himara is rich with natural and historical monuments such as Flag Pine, Himara Old Town and the 18th century Panormic castle of Ali Pasha in Porto Palermo Bay. After a coffee break at springs of Borshi, we'll continue our tour towards Saranda. Hear polyphonic songs performed, then folk dance with local Polyphonic Group Zeri i Bilbilit. Dinner in local restaurant by the sea. Overnight in Saranda's Brilant Hotel.



Day 8: May 28: Wednesday: Saranda-Blue Eye Spring-Gjirokastra-Korca

Start from our hotel at 8:30, stop at Blue Eye Spring. Then drive towards Gjirokastra, a UNESCO World Heritage town, tour the 14th century castle and nice walk through cobblestone streets of this beautiful town. Continue our day drive through the beautiful

mountain road of South Albania, enjoying amazing views of Vjosa Valley and forested mountains to reach the plain of Korca. possible dance lessons with Bardhi Pojani at The House of Arts in Korca. Dinner and overnight in Korca.

Day 9: May 29: Thursday: Greece Kastoria/Florina

After breakfast after a nice walk through the center of Korca, the Historical Bazaar, Mirahori Mosque, Orthodox Basilica we continue to northern Greece to reach our destination in Lake Prespa. Restaurant to dance with the locals and Maestro Yiannis Konstantinou. Overnight in Lake Prespa.

Day 10: May 30: Friday: Sv.Naum and Ohrid

After breakfast continue to North Macedonia, first stop at the city of Bitola (Manastir) to enjoy a walk in the beautiful streets, also to have a look at the Military school where Kemal Ataturk studied in the end of 19th century. Continue our drive to reach one of the oldest Lakes in the world, 900ft deep, on the shore of the City of Light, Ohrid, one of pearls of the Balkans with many Byzantine Churches and magnificent architecture. Afternoon a nice walk to enjoy this amazing town, possible Folk Show with local folk group. Dinner and overnight in Ohrid.

Day 11: May 31: Saturday- Ohrid- Elbasan- Kruja-Tirana

Starting from Ohrid we cross the border back to Albania, to drive more or less the ancient roman most famous route Via Egnatia first to Elbasan, old Scampini and later towards the Historical Capital of Albania, Kruja. We visit the museum dedicated to our national hero and symbol of our resistance, then Ethnographic Museum which is located in a traditional house built in the middle of the 18th century A.D (1764), by Ismail Pashe Toptani. Within the walls of the castle we will visit the Bektashi (a little-known Muslim sect) Dollma Teqe (Bektashi Mosque). After the visits we will have free time to explore and purchase Albanian souvenirs and antiques for very reasonable prices in the 400 years old Bazaar of Kruja. Lunch in traditional restaurant. Evening folk dance show with local Kruja folk dancers. Overnight in Tirana.



Day 12: June 1: Sunday- Tirana

After breakfast we'll walk around the center of Tirana, visit to Et'Hem Bej Mosque, built in 1789, and one of the most beautiful mosques in Albania. We visit the recently discovered ruins of the Justinian castle near the center of Tirana. We visit new Catholic Cathedral and the new Orthodox Basilica. En route we will pass Tirana's colorful buildings. While at the gallery, admire paintings dating back to the time of socialist realism. Lunch in local restaurant or free time to enjoy a cappuccino. (optional)

Our afternoon will be at leisure but in the evening, we explore the ex-block area where villas of the Albanian communist leaders are still standing nearby trendy boutiques, active pubs and exclusive jewelry shops. Dinner in a local restaurant. Folk dancing with Lee and/or Genci Kastrati. Overnight in Tirana at the Tirana International Hotel.

Day 13: June 2: Monday

We'll transfer you to Tirana international airport for your flight back home

Kosovo Extension

Day 13: June 2: Monday- Prizren

For guests who decide for the Kosovo Extension, we continue after the delivery in the airport of the rest of the group: Drive towards Kosovo to Prizren. Lunch on the way or in the Old City of Prizren, maybe free time. After checking in at our hotel, located in the heart of Old Town, we make a walking tour to visit this beautiful city. The Catholic Cathedral, 14th century Serbian Basilica, 16th century Mosque and the Museum of the Albanian League of 1878, are our highlights! The old city with such a moving history offers a lot from all the communities who are populating it till today, Albanians, Serbs, Turks, Bosnians and so on. Dinner in our Hotel or a restaurant in town. Also, possible Folk Show. Overnight at Hotel Centrum.



Day 14: June 3: Tuesday- Peja, Gjakova

Morning drive northwards to Peja. On route visit Gjakova, with the renovated bazaar, after the burning during the last war, 1999. The Hadumi Mosque, one of the oldest in Balkans, is a highlight with the wall paintings and a very rare/old architecture. Later we drive to visit one of the most important Serbian Monasteries, Visoki Decani, where the Serbian king from the 14th century is buried. Lunch on the way (optional). Our journey continues to Pej, where we check in at our hotel, Hotel Dukagjini! For dinner we drive inside the marvelous Rugova Canion at a local restaurant where we can enjoy and dance together with the local folk group from Rugova.

Day 15: June 4: Wednesday- Transfer to the Airport of Prishtina

(People on the Kosovo extension should book return flight from Prishtina, not Tirana. It is more convenient than driving back to Tirana ... and the airfare from Prishtina is less expensive!)

About Lee Otterholt



Lee Otterholt, born in USA of Norwegian-American parents, has lived and worked in Norway as a professional dancer, teacher, and choreographer. He founded the Center for International Folk Dance in Oslo, and was professor of dance folklore at the Norwegian National College of Ballet, and University College of Oslo. Lee established folk dance and performing groups in Norway, taught at festivals and workshops throughout Europe, United States, and East Asia, and authored folk dance and instructional manuals for Norwegian schools. He was a choreographer for the Opening Ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games in Lillehammer.

Albania Land Only: \$4995

Kosovo extension: \$995

REGISTRATION FORM: I can't wait to go! Enclosed is my registration deposit of \$200 per person. Single supplement: \$695. Kosovo extension: \$995 Kosovo single supplement \$225. Hotel taxes and service charges: \$185. Gratuities and drinks during meals not included. Program subject to change without notice. All tours have a professional guide. Over 10 participants, and tour will have an additional leader. Cancellations 90 days prior to departure: Total refund. Less than 90 days: No refund. Travel insurance recommended. **Total balance due February 18, 2025.**

Kosovo extension: Yes No

Name _____

Address _____

No. of people _____ Phone_(_____) _____ email _____

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Rates: Tour rates are subject to change in the event of currency fluctuations or increase in costs. Inclusive tour rates are per person in double occupancy. In case of computer or human

billing errors, we reserve the right to reinvoice clients with corrected billing.

Reservations: Deposits and Payments: Deposit of \$200 per person is required at time of reservation. Balance is due 90 days prior to departure date.

Changes: Prices and program subject to change without notice

Baggage: One baggage per person and a carry on is allowed.

Cancellations: Cancellations 90 days prior to departure: Total refund. Less than 90 days: No refund. Additionally, any cancellation fees imposed by the respective hotels, airlines, tour companies and cruise lines will be charged. Travel Insurance is non-refundable as are unused services.

Gratuities: Tipping to guides, drivers, transfer personnel and hotel staff is left to the discretion of the participants and is not included.

Insurance: Tour participants are **strongly recommended to purchase insurance** for trip cancellation, trip interruption, accident, sickness and/or loss of baggage and personal effects.

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