



Graçen (782m)

19.96234° 41.15182

BIG989



On-board video (in 3 parts) :

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kl2Ht2mroV4> (1st part)

Topography of Albania

Albania is probably one of the most unknown European countries in the cyclist community, though mountains cover 2/3 of its territory :

- Albanian Alps in the north, near Montenegro and Kosovo ;
- Korab Mts. (highest point of the country, 2753m), in the east, near Kosovo ;
- Pindus Mts., in the SE, at the Greek border, ...



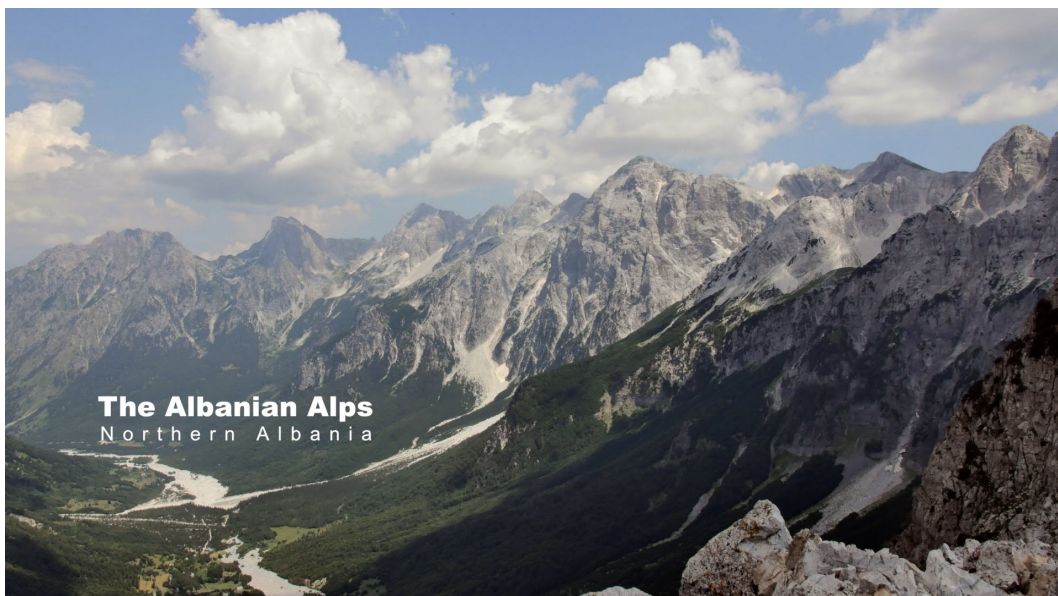
Korab Mts.

Also worth being seen, the 3 largest lakes : Shkodra (NW), Ohrid and Prespa (in the east, shared by FYR Macedonia).

In the past, the country had a bad reputation, but a lot of things have been done to fight against this prejudice :

- the country works hard to integrate the EU standards, in particular as regards customs controls ;
- the road network develop : a highway will enable to open up the country, making the connection between Croatia and Montenegro in the north and Greece in the south ;
- touristic facilities are being developed as well.

These arguments should help to climb the Albanian BIGs with less butterflies in one's stomach.



Tour of Albania

Official page on the website of the Albanian Federation : <https://albcycling.al/turi-i-74-i-shqiperise/>

Unknown, but however in its 74th edition in 2017. Created in 1925, organized without a break from the end of WW2, except in 1992, year of the regime change. The winner list is almost exclusively local, except a few Serbs. But the Italian hat trick in 2017 heralds perhaps new opportunities. Long live the Tour, for there is so many things to do in Albania. A 2 weeks Tour of the Balkans could also be a very interesting race.

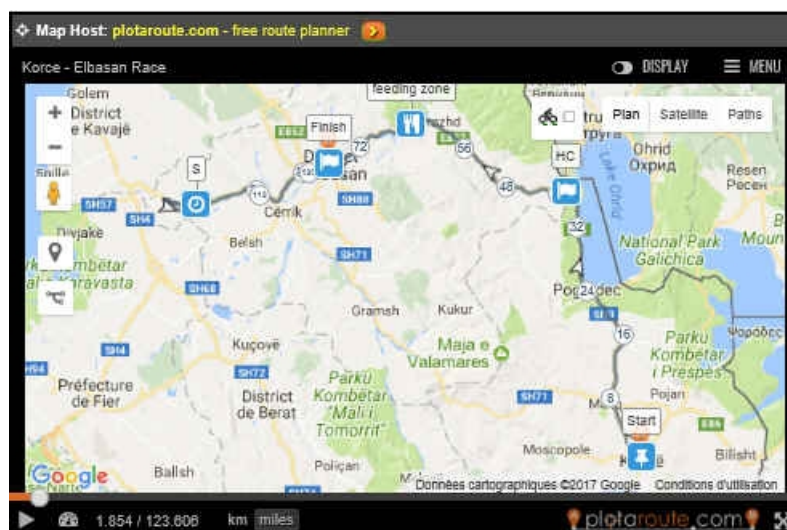
Program 2017 : 5 stages

1 Tiranë-Korçë	166km	1775m
2 Korçë-Elbasan	199km	710m
3 Elbasan-Vlorë	170km	2200m
4 Vlorë-Sarandë	160km	2160m
5 Sarandë-Fier	164km	3800m

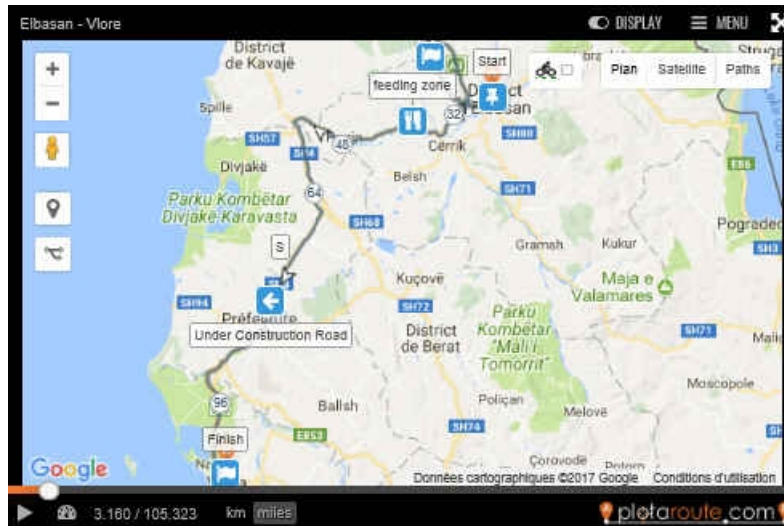
The official elevation gains must be confirmed.



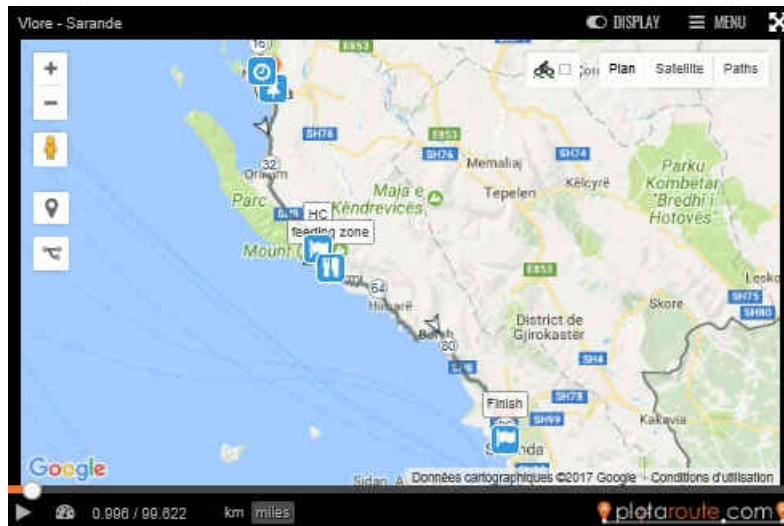
1st stage



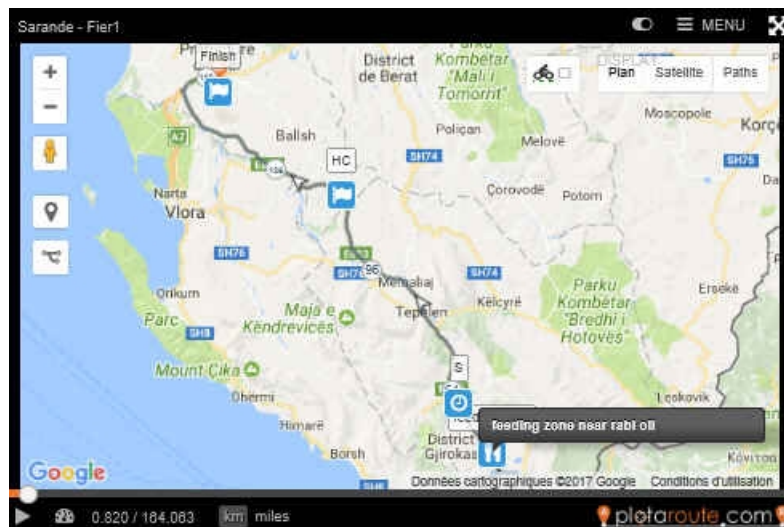
2nd stage



3rd stage



4th stage



5th stage

Graçen – Portrait

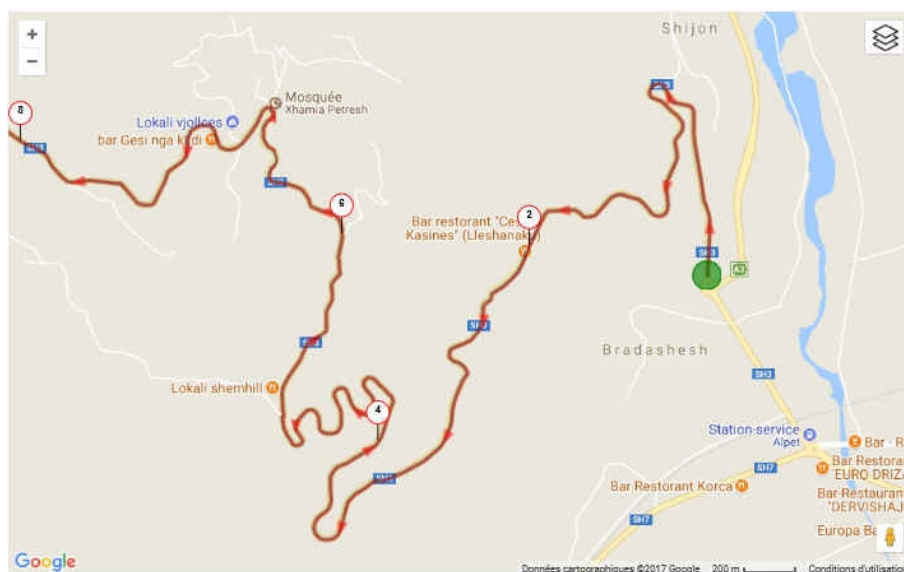
First KOM of the 3rd stage. A new parallel road with a tunnel relieves traffic congestion on the old road from Elbasan to Tirana. Graçen (especially its southern side) can now be reached thanks to a very nice country road, with a few hairpins in the first km. The top is situated on a beautiful ridge, bike ride at sunset is recommended.



Elevation gain : 681m (782-101m), foot in Bradashesh, near Elbasan-west.

Distance : 13,7km

Km % : 5,0 5,1 6,3 6,4 5,2 / 6,7 6,0 3,4 6,6 4,4 / 3,1 5,1 3,1 + 17m





1st straight line at 5%



Hairpins - km5



Finish in Graçen