

Beach and friends

Category: Our travel blog in English
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After Dubrovnik we headed towards south and crossed Montenegro's border. Although it was the last day of October, the weather was warm and sunny, and we spent all our days in Montenegro at the beach. Since it is the first country on our trip that is not in the EU we had to buy a pre-paid sim card, of course its no problem and they have an extra offer for tourists. Usually, if it's something only for tourist you can count that it's super expensive. I don't know how much locals pay for their mobile internet but for the tourist package we paid 5 EUR for 500 GB ☐

Another fun fact about Montenegro, which makes traveling there easier, is that although Montenegro is not in the EU, their currency is euro.

The time we crossed the Albanian border, the weather had turned, and it was raining non-stop. We went to the closest big city called Shkodër and at the very center of it we ended up at a suspicious region with many tents, garbage was burning on the streets and goats along with dogs and cats were eating from the trash bins. Suddenly the road was blocked by trucks and when we stopped to turn around, a bunch of begging small kids with dirty faces surrounded our bus. We were shocked and didn't do our planned grocery stop. We just started driving towards Tirana. We soon started looking for a place to stop and rest a bit but along the whole way there was no forest, no place without buildings. At some point it was getting too late and we had to start looking for a place to park for the night. The moment we left the main road the streets turned out to be horrible, muddy and full of holes. When we finally found a promising place, we got stuck on claysoil. It took us 2 hours to dig out the bus. We freed ourselves by collecting gravel from the road and brunches from dead trees around to place it in front of the tires. When we finally got out it was already dark (we got stuck at 3 PM). What a day.. Another downside of Albania is trash. You will find it everywhere. There wasn't a single clean spot (at least „clean“ in our common sense). The first impression of Albania – not cool!

But it all changed and at the end we spent almost a month in Albania. We started in Tirana where we rented a flat (super big and nice with a very low price). We really liked Tirana, there is a lot going on, many bars, restaurants, shopping centers,

people drive like crazy without lanes, even the police is using smartphone when driving and doesn't use indicator to change the lanes. Food and drinks are good and cheap, service is nice.

After Tirana we drove to the coast. Since Albania is the first country on our trip where camping and free standing is allowed, we could finally use the luxury of parking just at the beach and not being afraid that police will come and send us away or even issue a fine. We could finally live the social media image of traveling with a van – waking up in the morning, looking out of the window and see the sun rise above the ocean. Another advantage is that since we (and others traveling with van) don't have to hide for the night, we could meet other travelers, and we did, a lot. From Albania we got so many friends with who we are still in contact. We have met them many times – in Greece, Bulgaria and now going to meet some of them in Turkey as well. Often we did a bonfire at the beach and sat around it with ten other travelers. It was November but the weather and water were still warm and perfect for a swim almost every day. The locals we met were all very friendly, the owner of one beach restaurant, called Buona Vila, let travelers not only stay at his property but use the shower and toilet as well... free of charge. He also spoke German, so if you are at the coast of Albania, this place is worth a visit. He and his family keep the beach where the restaurant is clean, so everyone can enjoy the beach without trash (as long as they don't look right or left ☹). An old guy who we met at Dhermiut beach even helped us to gather firewood for a bonfire. In Tirana I met a local guy Andi (Ragle was in Vienna then), we changed contacts and saw each other again in Sarande. We rented a flat there for many days, met Andi and other travelers from Dhermiut beach and Buona Vila again and went to a karaoke night at the American Blue bar. This place definitely gets our recommendation. It is run by an community (more like a family) of many foreigners from all over the world who work and live in Sarande.

After leaving Sarande we met with Markus and Sarah again at a nice beach with a clear blue water. On the evening we did a bon fire and ate stick bread (Stockbrot). Later this night Ragle and I got really sick, probably by drinking water from a dirty container. The whole night we were vomiting and shivering. The next day Markus (who luckily is a pharmacist and had a whole drug store in his car) gave us many pills against nausea, seizures, dehydration, pain, etc.. Thank you again! One painful day later we were more or less okay and drove on towards Greece.

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