

ALBANIA

Country name	Albania
State title	Republic of Albania
Name of citizen	Albanian
Official language	Albanian (sqi) ¹
Country name in official language	Shqipëria
State title in official language	Republika e Shqipërisë
Script	Roman
ISO-3166 country code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	AL/ALB
Capital in official language(s)	Tiranë or Tirana (see geographical names policy below)
English conventional name of capital	Tirana

Introduction

Albania is a country in the Balkan peninsula of south-eastern Europe on the Adriatic and Ionian Sea within the Mediterranean Sea. In size it is similar to Belgium, Burundi or Massachusetts. It became independent from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 with international boundaries little different from today.

Geographical names policy

Albanian names are written in Roman script. Place names should be taken from official Albanian-language sources and all diacritical marks should be retained. Mapping can be found on Albania's [State Authority for Geospatial Information \(ASIG\) Geoportal](#).

Nouns in Albanian may be in the definite or indefinite grammatical forms, which usually makes a minor difference to the end of the word. Large-scale maps produced during the late Communist era (1970s and 1980s) typically used the definite forms, but **the practice in Albania now is to use the indefinite form, except in certain instances where the definite is required for grammatical reasons. PCGN advice is to follow this style, reflecting the forms as shown on current official Albanian cartographic products.** Specifically, the indefinite form is used for all populated place names, short-form administrative division names and all physical feature names which do not include a generic term. The definite form will be used for all long-form administrative division names and all physical feature names which contain a generic term.

Some English-language texts use the indefinite form for towns, but the definite for districts of the same name. This is a useful distinction but does not equate to Albanian usage. For reference, the *Counties of Albania* table below (p3) shows both definite and indefinite forms of the centre seats.

The capital of Albania is Tiranë. In the definite form, this is Tirana, which is also the usual spelling in English.

¹ ISO 639 language codes are provided for the languages referred to in this Factfile.

Languages

The official language of Albania is Albanian (Albanian: *shqip*)². Albanian is an Indo-European language, so is distantly related to e.g. English, German, but forms its own sub-group without any closely-related living languages. The standard spoken and written form of Albanian is revised and merged from the two main dialects, Gheg (aln) and Tosk (als), though it is based more on the Tosk dialect.

Linguistic minorities in Albania speak Greek, Macedonian, Aromanian and Romany. Aromanian is a Romance language similar to Romanian, but without a standard written form. Macedonian is official in the Pustec Municipality in eastern Albania, and names may be encountered in Macedonian in this area.³ Such names can be retained (in brackets, and romanized using the [BGN/PCGN 2013 Agreement on the Romanization of Macedonian](#)) alongside the Albanian forms where considered useful: e.g. Gllboçeni (Globočani).

Orthography

Standard Albanian is written using 25 letters of the Roman alphabet (excluding w). Two additional letters exist with diacritics: c with cedilla and e with dieresis.

Inventory of additional characters

Symbol	Unicode hex
Ç	00C7
ç	00E7
Ë	00CB
ë	00EB

Alphabetical order

Albanian dictionaries are in the same order as English except that the two letters with diacritics come after their counterparts without.

Upper-case letters are used in Albanian less often than in English. A generic geographical term may have a lower-case initial if it is part of a place name; PCGN recommends reflecting the presentation used on an official source⁴.

Territorial issues

Albania became independent in 1912 from the Ottoman Empire which lost most of its European territories following the First Balkan War. Albania now has international boundaries with four countries: Greece, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

² <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/2/41888.pdf>

³ <https://www.bashkiapustec.gov.al/home/>

⁴ It should be noted that the US BGN and therefore the Geographic Names Database capitalises generic terms.

Administrative structure

Since 2000, Albania has been divided into twelve counties (Albanian: *qark*). These replaced the 36 former districts (*rreth*). Each county (except Dibër) is named after its capital. They are divided into municipalities, 61 in total.

Counties of Albania

Full county name PCGN recommended form (definite form) ⁵	County capital (indefinite form) PCGN recommended form	County capital (definite form)	ISO 3166-2 code	No. of municipalities	Latitude and Longitude of county capital
Qarku i Beratit	Berat	Berati	AL-01	5	40 43N 19 57E
Qarku i Dibrës	Peshkopi	Peshkopia	AL-09	4	41 41N 20 26E
Qarku i Durrësit	Durrës	Durrësi	AL-02	3	41 19N 19 27E
Qarku i Elbasanit	Elbasan	Elbasani	AL-03	7	41 07N 20 05E
Qarku i Fierit	Fier	Fieri	AL-04	6	40 44N 19 34E
Qarku i Gjirokastrës	Gjirokastrë	Gjirokastra	AL-05	7	40 04N 20 08E
Qarku i Korçës	Korçë	Korça	AL-06	6	40 37N 20 47E
Qarku i Kukësit	Kukës	Kukësi	AL-07	3	42 05N 20 25E
Qarku i Lezhës	Lezhë	Lezha	AL-08	3	41 47N 19 39E
Qarku i Shkodrës	Shkodër	Shkodra	AL-10	5	42 04N 19 31E
Qarku i Tiranës	Tiranë	Tirana	AL-11	5	41 20N 19 49E
Qarku i Vlorës	Vlorë	Vlora	AL-12	7	40 27N 19 29E

Useful references

- Albanian Association of Municipalities: <https://aam.org.al/en/>
- Albanian language resources: <https://lrc.la.utexas.edu/eieol/albol>
- BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17679574>
- BGN Albania Country Policy:
https://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/Policies/Albania_Country_Policy_webversion_March2020.pdf
- CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html>
- FCDO Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/albania>
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
- ISO Online Browsing Platform (OBP): <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/>
- Languages: www.ethnologue.com; www.omniglot.com
- US Board on Geographic Names GEOnet Names Server (GNS):
<http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/>

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⁵ For cartographic purposes, where space may be an issue, a short form of the counties may be used (i.e. as per the name of the capital, except in the case of Dibër for Qarku-i Dibrës).