

Bethany Christian Services Ministry Observation Trip to Albania/Kosovo

Days 1&2 Departure/Arrival

Depart United States and arrive in Kosovo (we lose one day to time/date changes). We will settle into our hotel in Gjakova and enjoy dinner together at a local restaurant.

Day 3 Gjakova, Kosovo

Bethany's ministry in Kosovo focuses on working with families and children whose lives were torn apart by the Civil War in Serbia / Kosovo. We will observe a program that cares for and ministers to people who live on the fringes of the local dump from which many are forced to sustain themselves. We will leave that evening for Tirana, Albania.

Day 4 Group Homes/Counseling Center

Visit the Bethany-run orphanage which cares for 40-50 children ages infant through 5 years old. This orphanage complex was built by Bethany in 1993-1994 as a replacement for existing government-run orphanages that were in disrepair beyond belief (no heat, broken windows, little food, constant sickness). The entire cost of construction at these facilities was funded by contributions from Bethany donors in the US. Children living in the orphanage ultimately are either returned to their biological family, adopted by Albanian families, adopted through international adoption, or are moved to another orphanage when they "age out" of Bethany's system.

We will also visit a Bethany counseling center in the local maternity hospital. When Bethany began our ministry in Albania (1992), the number of abortions exceeded live births. Doctors supplement their moderate state-funded salaries by performing abortions often with old, unsterile equipment which frequently resulted in illness or in some cases the death of the mother. Doctors resisted Bethany Christian Services pro-life counseling which emphasized giving a child life because limited abortions interrupted their income stream. Praise God that today, Bethany is welcomed by the local doctors. We provide counseling in all of the Tirane maternity hospitals. Before having an abortion, women are required to receive counseling from a Bethany counselor.

We will also visit Bethany's community outreach family service center. All community based medical, social, and psychological services provided by Bethany are headquartered in this center.



Fall 2009



Day 5 Gypsy Village

We will visit the Bajaram Curri school program. Bethany provides guidance to Albanian Gypsy children, helping them ease into an educational system that in the past harshly rejected them.

We will also visit a village whose population is predominantly Roma Gypsy. This village is typical from which women and children are trafficked into Europe for the purpose of prostitution (see the enclosed story written by a Bethany volunteer).

We will then visit Bethany's recently begun Shepherding Home Program. Bethany Shepherding homes are private, Albanian families into which women who are at risk of being trafficked are temporarily cared for. Unfortunately, Albania experiences the highest per capita incidence of human trafficking of any developing Eastern European country. This program serves women who either are at risk of being trafficked, or who have been trafficked, and provides them immediate short-term shelter while we assist in planning for a more stable situation for them and their children.



Day 6 Sightseeing

We will visit Skenderbeg's Castle in Kruje. Skenderbeg is an Albanian warrior hero who saved the country from the invading Turks in the 15th century. Skenderbeg built a series of castles from the north to the south of Albania. As Turks were invading, smoke signals from one caastle to another warned of impending invasion and/or progress being made in replelling the invaders. Kruje is a mountainside village about an hour north of the capital city of Tirane, where Skenderbeg's castles remains today. We also will visit a museum in the castle and have lunch there. Some souvenir shopping is also available in the village of Kruje.

We will then visit the Albanian sea port/resort city of Durres. A highlight of the afternoon will be our visit to the colosseum. Little known is that Durres was a thriving sea port during the time of Jesus' ministry on earth. The gospels make mention of Paul's visit to Ileria (modern day Albania). The colosseum was the site of speeches, plays, and sporting battles.

Days 7&8 Departure/Return to USA/R&R

