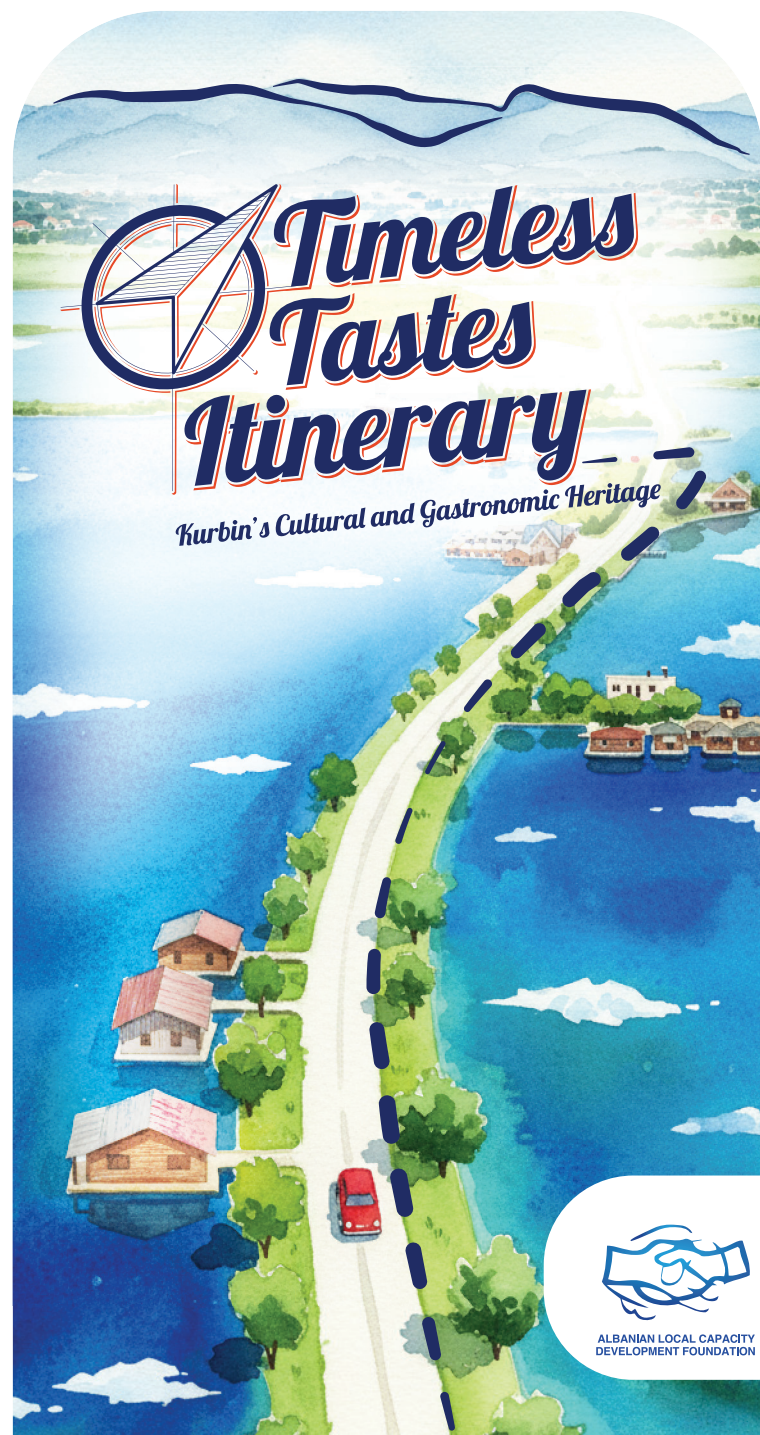




Timeless Tastes Itinerary

Kurbin's Cultural and Gastronomic Heritage

Located just 20 km from Rinas International Airport, Kurbin is an area that is sandwiched between two popular tourist destinations – Kruja, the very symbol of Albanian history and tradition, and Shëngjin, one of the most renowned seaside locations in the country. This geographical location makes the area an ideal stop for visitors who wish to experience history, culture and gastronomy in one go.

Renowned for its cuisine, Kurbin attracts both local and foreign visitors who enjoy its exquisite traditional cuisine, fresh local products and warm hospitality in the restaurants and agrotourism establishments in the area.

This gastronomic wealth is part of Kurbin's intangible cultural heritage, an area where the tradition of cooking is closely linked to its history, music, songs, dances, festivals and rites. Its culinary culture is not simply about food, as such. It is, instead, an excellent way to experience its local identity and culture in its entirety.

One of the most sought-after experiences is **Patok's Seafood Itinerary**, where one finds first-rate fresh fish products that come from the nearby lagoon. An increasing number of visitors also take the **Olive Route** in the interior of Kurbin, where traditional cuisine is combined with authentic products of the area and the history of olive trees that are thousands of years old.

Therefore, the gastronomy of Kurbin is a bridge that connects cultural heritage and contemporary tourism, creating a wholesome and authentic experience for every visitor.



Patok Lagoon

1. Patok Lagoon

Discover the natural wonders and seafood delights

Endless flavours of the sea

The Patok Lagoon is the most popular seafood destination in Albania, featuring over 27 restaurants that offer unique ways of cooking seafood both within the Lagoon and in the surrounding areas. Visitors can also enjoy traditional seafood specialties in places such as Gurëz (a restaurant called "Laguna e Vjetër") and Fushë-Kuqë (restaurant called "Misiri i Lokës"), located next to the picturesque site known as the Pheasant Woods ("Pylli i Fazanëve").

Visitors may enjoy various types of seafood, ranging from grilled fish to innumerable seafood dishes, such as traditional eel casseroles perfectly combined with fresh vegetable salads, corn bread dipped in delicious brine and local artisanal wines from the neighbouring areas of Rrëshen and Lezhë.

The stunning view over the **Patok Lagoon and the entire Bay of Drin on the Adriatic Sea** is mesmerising. Coupled with the welcoming service of the local restaurants, visitors are guaranteed to experience a warm family atmosphere in which dining becomes an unforgettable experience as the lagoon's natural beauty blends effortlessly with culinary traditions. Fresh fish and other seafood are cooked using recipes that have been handed down through generations, preserving their authentic taste and reflecting Kurbin's culinary identity.



Cornbread with sour cream



Fried eels

Enjoy the natural beauties of Patok's Lagoon

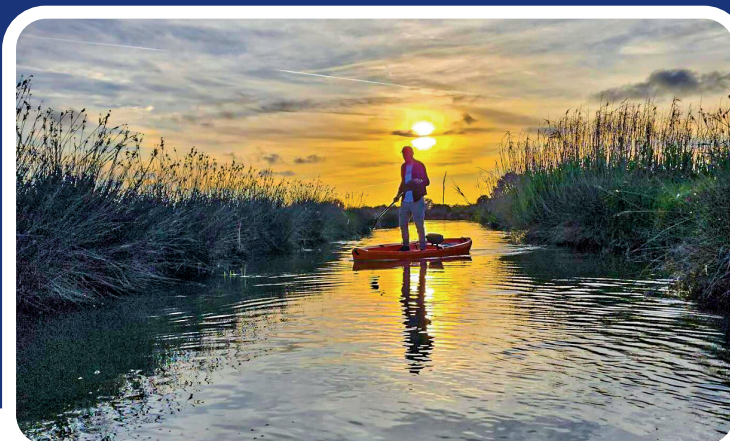
Located in the Patok-Fushë-Kuqe-Ishëm region, the **Patok Lagoon** is a protected area of about 47 km² and part of the **Kune-Vain-Tale-Patok-Fushë-Kuqe-Ishëm Natural Reserve** that lies along the Adriatic coast between the delta of Mat River and Cape Rodon. Some of its most important areas are the **Patok Lagoon, the Mat Delta, Droja, and Gordulla and Negli Swamps**.

Other than its natural values (aquatic and terrestrial flora and fauna), this protected reserve affords breathtaking vistas, whilst providing ample opportunities for nature enthusiasts.

These are some of the activities that may be enjoyed in the area:

Fishing

The local angler's association is happy to help out with their boats and extensive knowledge of the area. It is in their pleasant company that many hours and indeed entire days may be spent in the local lagoon or deltas fishing with nets, traps or simply fishing rods.



Sunset at Patok Lagoon



Beach at Patok Lagoon

Bird watching

Numerous observation decks across the lagoon allow for the observation of many rare bird species, be it native or migratory ones.

Particular types of adventures sports

Water enthusiasts may take boat rides in the lagoon, visit small islets and bathe in charming beaches of the virgin areas of Mat and Droja estuaries in the Adriatic. Adventure seekers, on the other hand, may enjoy kayaking in the lagoon, rafting in River Mat, walking or biking in the natural trails by the lagoon, as well as many other adventures.

Experiencing the many villages of Patok

Local beautiful homes with courtyards filled with flowers and fruit trees, and small arable plots of land tilled with particular craftsmanship attract many countryside lovers but also awaken the desire of any nature-loving visitor to get to know the area as well as possible.



Kayaking in Patok Lagoon

The crowning jewel of all the local treasures is the **Diocesan Shrine, Church of "Our Lady of Good Counsel"** in the village of Gurëz. The Catholic Church, with its architecture, is one of the most important centers of Catholic faith in the area. Inside the Diocesan Shrine one cannot but be touched by the stories of the clergy who were brutally killed during the communist regime. It is a museum that testifies to the sacrifices that people in this area were prepared to go through to fiercely protect their faith and religion.

Accommodation

Visitors may find accommodation in many guesthouses, in the camping areas adjacent to many local restaurants or in various hotels alongside the main national highway.



Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in Gurëz

2. Millennial Olive Groves

Experience the culture and tradition of Kurbin

Enjoy the heart of Kurbin, the rich flavours of traditional food and the millennia-old legends of olive groves

Kurbin is renowned for its fertile land and olive plantations that are thousands of years old not only in Gjorm, Zhejë, Shënmri (St. Mary's) and Mamurras but also throughout the hilly province. Olive trees are the natural witnesses to Kurbin's ancient history and traditions. Local residents proudly tell visitors how every newlywed couple would plant an olive tree on their wedding day, as a symbol of good fortune and their bond to the soil beneath their feet.

Visitors may visit the heart of Kurbin's territory and its olive groves either **on foot, by bike or car**, commencing their journey in the Adriatic coast and moving on to the hills where the centuries-old olive trees of Gjorm, Zhejë and Shënmri stand. To this day, local residents are proud to show guests the traditional way used to make olive oil, offering an authentic and unforgettable agrotourism experience.

The Olive Tour, already known across the Mediterranean, offers a rich experience to visitors.

If promoted appropriately, Kurbin's olive groves can become an important destination of this regional tour, blending the traditional, cultural and authentic taste of the region.



Gjorm Olive tree

Rich cuisine

Kurbin's Olive Route visitors may enjoy olive oil tasting or the delights of typical local dishes and products, such as chicken with porridge (*pujë me qull*), fried pork, kid goat meat from St. Mary's cooked in *karabec* and beans, canned olives, *laknur*, seasonal vegetables, black cabbage and local cheese accompanied by wine and artisanal *raki*.

Local establishments offer rich specialties of Kurbin's traditional cuisine. The proprietors of *The Lahuta e Vjetër Restaurant* (The Old Lute), a family-run establishment, encourage visitors to join the family and cook traditional dishes with them, as well as to take part in the daily chores of the business, and, as such, experiencing the countryside and its reality first-hand.

Other than the delectable food, there is no shortage of traditional festivities, such as the Zheja Festival, a blend of festivities and the Zheja wedding rite, St. Mary's Festival, Kurbin's Fli Festival and the Olive Feast, which further enrich visitors' experience.



Chicken gervish casserole



Leek pie



Milk pie

Other natural attractions

Where olive groves end, the **Skanderbeg Mountain range** begins with the beautiful **Gura e Gjormit** springs and the delightful stream of **Gjatoshi i Zhejës**, which flows into **Zheja Lake**. The course of these waters has created gorges, canyons and several stunning waterfalls, the most prominent of which is the **Gjormi Waterfall**. Visitors will encounter a mountain full of strawberry trees (*Lat. arbutus unedo*), the king's plant, a natural refuge for bees which release their honey into the wild. And from here, one cannot possibly overlook the captivating sunsets over the Adriatic, which with their stunning and mesmerising colours, are a magical experience in their own right.

Cultural and religious attractions

Gjorm, Zheja, Old Zheja and Shënmria are villages closely related to the history of Albania's National Hero, Skanderbeg, the Battle of Albulena (1457) in particular, and religious harmony among local inhabitants. The **Tekke of Gjorm, Shelbum's Church in Zheja and St. Mary's Church in Shënmri** are very popular religious locations and are frequented by residents of both the Christian and Islamic faiths. The **Ruins of St. Mary's Church** are a very special cultural asset and have been listed as a **cultural monument**. Oral records show that Skanderbeg and his wife, Donika, used to take part in services and prayers in this very church in the Middle Ages.



Gjorm Standing Stone



Gjorm Waterfall



Monument of the Battle of Albulena

Accommodation

Kurbin offers accommodation for any taste and type of traveller.

Visitors may enjoy a unique experience by either staying in local B&Bs, guesthouses and agrotourism establishments or camping in Gjorm, Zheja, Mamurras and Shënmri, relishing nature, traditional hospitality and the warmth of local residents.

Others who may prefer additional comfort can make use of the contemporary hotels along the Tirana-Prishtina national highway, as they offer comfortable rooms with suitable amenities, ideal for local and foreign visitors alike.

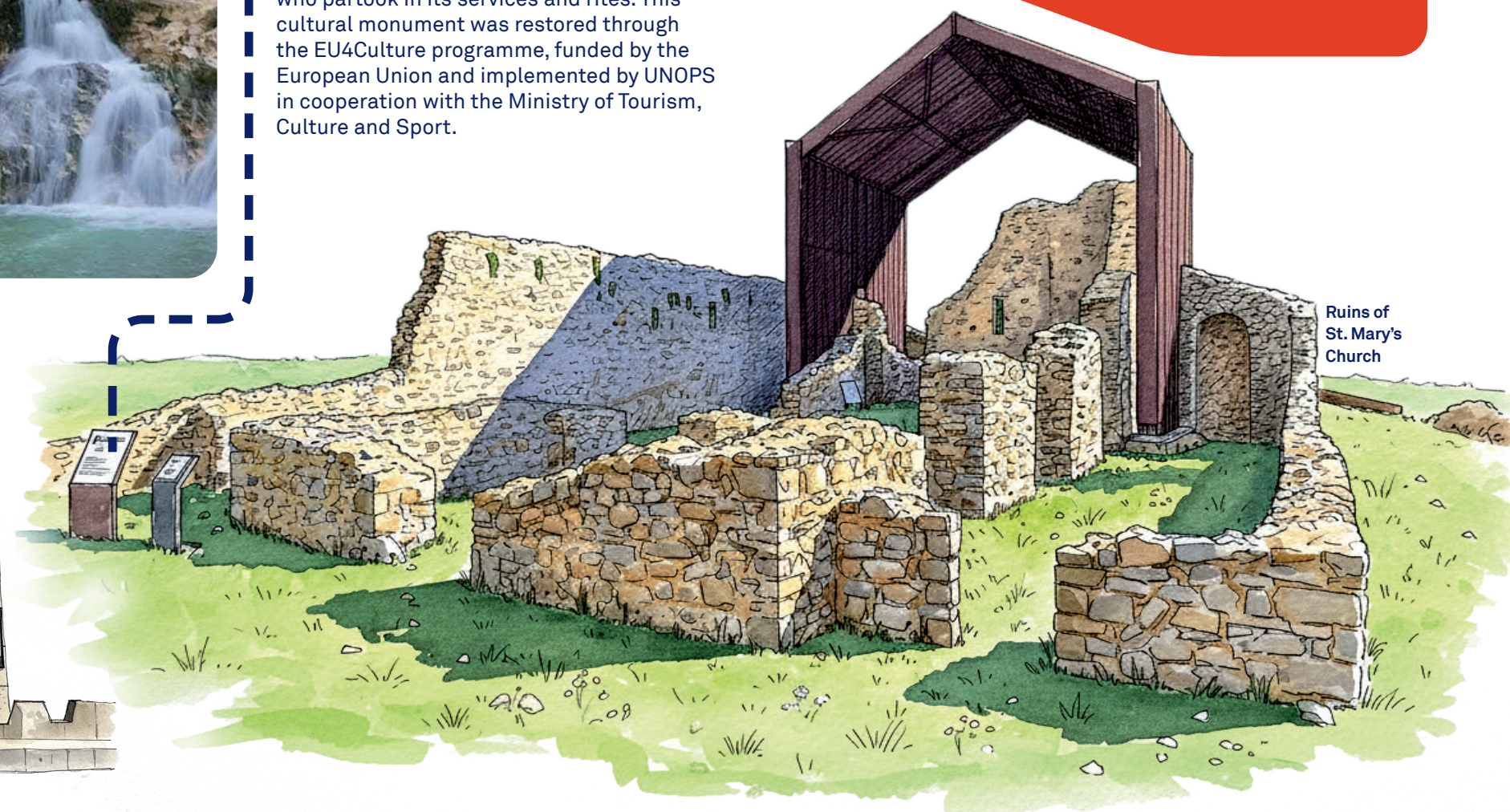
The **Ruins of St. Mary's Church** are an important cultural monument, with oral records showing that Skanderbeg and his wife, Donika, were among the churchgoers who partook in its services and rites. This cultural monument was restored through the EU4Culture programme, funded by the European Union and implemented by UNOPS in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Note

This leaflet presents a complete picture of what Kurbin has to offer in terms of culinary tourism, combined with cultural, historical, religious and outdoor visits. It is also a summary of the main places in Patok, where visitors can enjoy fresh seafood, the traditional dishes of inland mountainous areas, and local products that reflect the culinary tradition of this diverse region.

Readers will also find information on the most important attractions of the area, showing how visits to historical monuments, cultural and pilgrimage sites and natural landscapes may be easily combined with local culinary delights. This is how visitors can put together itineraries as per their interests, favourite past times, the number of days they wish to spend in the area, and the means of transport available.

This leaflet is intended as a guide for visitors, tour operators and travel agencies, providing ideas for tours and holiday packages they can organise, as either day trips or longer stays in Kurbin. The main objective is to showcase the area as a destination in which gastronomy, culture and nature may be perfectly combined so as to create a wholesome and enjoyable experience for all travellers.



Ruins of St. Mary's Church

The information is in your hands! Simply scan the QR Code and avoid using paper.



Information for the trails can be found in Wikiloc under the link www.wikiloc.com

Kurbin Municipality
Adress: Rruga Laç-Milot, Nr. 138, 4701, Laç, Albania
Web: www.bashkiakurbin.gov.al
E-mail: info@bashkiakurbin.gov.al

ALCDF
Albanian Local Capacity Development Foundation
Adresa: Bulevardi Bajram Curri, Rr. Shyqyri Ishmi, Pll. "Shpresa", Nr. 22/5, Tirane, Albania.
Tel: +355 4 451 8628
E-mail: info@alcdf.org
Web: www.alcdf.org

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Timeless Tastes Itinerary

Legend

- Municipal Hall
- CULTURAL MONUMENTS**
 - The Former Archbishopric of Durrës
 - The Ruins of the Church of St. Mary
 - The Castle of Sebastia
- RELIGIOUS SITES**
 - Church
 - Mosque
- NATURAL MONUMENTS**
 - Cabak Island
 - The Littoral Cordon of the New Coast
 - The Oaks of Saint Michael
 - The Cypress Forest of St. Mary
 - The Cave of St. Blaise
 - Patok Lagoon
- NATURAL ATTRACTIONS**
 - Gjorm Waterfall
 - Zheja Canyons
 - Gjorm Olive Tree
 - Ishmi Delta
 - Pheasants Forest
- TOURIST POTENTIAL**
 - Village of interest
 - Guesthouse
 - Camping
 - Rafting & Kayaking
 - Fishing Boat
 - Godulla Bridge
 - Pumping Station
 - Observation Point
 - Olive Factory
- HOTEL & RESTAURANT**
 - Hotel
 - Restaurant
- LAGOON ITINERARY**
 - Road to the Lagoon
 - Road to the Pheasants Forest
 - Pumping station - Godulla Bridge
 - Shtlinza - Ishmi Delta
- CHURCHES ITINERARY**
 - Laç - Church of St. Anthony
 - Laç - Milet Road towards the Former Archbishopric of Durrës
 - Fushë Kucë - Church of Our Lady of Good Counsel
 - Mamurras - Ruins of the Church of St. Mary
- OLIVE ITINERARY**
 - Laç - Patok - Adriatic - Mamurras
 - Skenderbeu Restaurant - Gjorm Olive Tree
 - Skenderbeu Restaurant - Zheja Lake - Zheja Canyons
- HIKING TRAILS**
 - Zhejë - Gjormi Waterfall
 - Laç - Church of St. Anthony
- WATER ATTRACTIONS**
 - Mat River
 - Zheje Lake
- RESIDENTIAL AREA**
 - Laç
 - Residential center
- ADMINISTRATIVE BOUNDARY**
 - Kurbin Municipality
 - Other Municipalities

