

# Profile of Gjirokastra Region

## Geography

*Gjirokastra Prefecture* is located in south east of Albania and it has a central position in the southeastern Albania. The area of interest is the Drino river valley and the Hosi resource.



**Geographic map of Gjirokastra Region. Asterisk indicate study area**

Region's surface is 2880 km<sup>2</sup>. In its administrative division Gjirokastra Prefecture has 3 districts (Gjirokaster, Tepelene, Pemet), 6 municipalities (Gjirokastra, Libohova, Permeti, Kelcyre, Tepelena and MeMalliaj), 26 Commune and 271 villages (Figures 6, 7). The south east borders mainly of Gjirokastra and Permeti district are political borders with Greece, whereas all the other border is an administrative one and it goes in the west and southwest with the district of Saranda and Delvina, in the northwest with that of Ballshi, in the North with Berat and in the northeast and east with the districts of Skrapari and Kolonja.

Gjirokastra Prefecture has a favorable geographical position. It is situated in the center of southern Albania and it is passed through by the two most important valleys of southern Albania, the valley of Upper Vjosa and the valley of Drino River. Here, in these valleys is concentrated the greatest part of Gjirokastra Prefecture population and at the same time these are the main economic and industrial parts of the region, in which are concentrated the main agricultural crops, industrial and administrative centers.

### Geographic location of Gjirokastra District

Name	Degree	Place	Village	Height of mountain in (m)
Latitude				
North	49 <sup>0</sup> 13' 50"	Zagoria	Doshnic	1295
South	39 <sup>0</sup> 47' 10"	Drop.Siperm	Sotire	1806
Longitude				
East	20 <sup>0</sup> 27' 50"	Pogon	Sopik	2199
West	19 <sup>0</sup> 53' 10"	Kardhiq	Golem	1568



Administrative borders in Albania

Social

*Gjirokastra District* is located in South-east Albania and is one of the 3 districts of Gjirokastra Prefecture (Figure 8). Gjirokastra district from the administrative point of view consists of two municipalities (Municipality of Gjirokastra and that of Libohova), 11 Communes (Antigone, Cepo, Dropull i Siperem, Dropull i Poshtem, Lazarat, Libohove Qender, Lunxheri, Odrie, Picar, Pogon, Zagorie ) and 95 villages. Traditionally Gjirokastra town is the center of Gjirokastra Prefecture. Gjirokastra town is 400 m above sea level.

*Tepelena district* is located on the southeastern region of Albania. Tepelena district from the geographical point of view is bordered to the northeast with the district of Berati, to the northwest with Mallakastra district, to the west with Vlora and to the south with Gjirokastra district, and to the east with Permeti.

Tepelena district from the administrative point of view consists on two municipalities (municipality of Tepelena and that of MeMalliaj), 8 Communes (Tepelene Qender, MeMalliaj Fshat, Buz, Luftinje, Krahes, Qesarat, Lopes, Kurvelesh) and 77 villages.

#### Geographic location of Tepelena District

Name	Degree	Place	Village
Latitude			
North	40 <sup>0</sup> 33'00"	Allkomemaj	Krahes
South	40 <sup>0</sup> 10'00"	Hormove	Qender
Longitude			
East	20 <sup>0</sup> 30'00"	Shales	Buz
West	19 <sup>0</sup> 45'00"	Nivice	Kurvelesh

*Permeti District* is located on the southeast of Albania in the geographic coordination given in the Table 10. It is one of the three districts of Gjirokastra Prefecture. (Along the district of Gjirokastra and Tepelena).

It is bordered:

- In North with district of Skrapar and Korca
- In East with Kolonja District
- In North-west with Berati district
- In west with Tepelena district
- In South with Gjirokastra district
- In south-east with the Greek country (Konice)

The height above sea level is 804m, 100 m higher than the average height of the Republic. Permeti district is mainly a mountainous region. The main mountains are Mount Nermecka (the highest point of which is 2482m and this is the highest point of

Permeti district too) and the Mount Dhembel 2080m. These two mountains form the Mountain range Dhembel –Nermecke.

The main river is Vjosa (Aos River), which springs from the mountains in Greece and traverses the territory of Permeti district with 58km in all.

The general surface of the district is 929km<sup>2</sup>, and this is 3.2% of the total Albanian Surface.

#### Geographic location of Permeti District

Name	Degree	Place	Village
Latitude			
North	40 <sup>0</sup> 30'00"	Bubes	Ballaban
South	40 <sup>0</sup> 38'20"	Vllahopsillotere	Carcove
Longitude			
East	20 <sup>0</sup> 05'00"	Zavalan	Frasher
West	20 <sup>0</sup> 36'00"	Limar	Deshnice

Permeti district consists of two municipalities (Permet and Kelcyra) 7 Communes that are Ballaban, Suke, Dehsnice, Piskove, Frasher, Petran, Carcove and 99 villages.

Gjirokastra prefecture has a **population** of 169.908 inhabitants and surface 2880 km<sup>2</sup> and average population density 59 inh/km<sup>2</sup>, that's to say half of the population is concentrated in the hilly relief especially on the lower hilly relief 300-500m above sea level, than the other heights of 100-300m. Natural increase of the population varies in wide limits and it's such that shows about different influences and reasons. In Gjirokastra town this increase of the population is 14-15%, whereas in the other regions of Tepelena town is 18-19%. The tendency is towards the lowering of this coefficient. The average age is 27 years.

Respectively, according to the districts these data are (Table 11):

*Gjirokastra district* has a population of 77.409 inhabitants and surface 1137km<sup>2</sup> with an average population density 68inh./km<sup>2</sup>. Gjirokastra municipality has a population of 35.293 inhabitants and surface 3.6 km<sup>2</sup> and average population density 89 inh./km<sup>2</sup>. The population on the villages is 42.116 inhabitants spread in 95 villages. The number of families on district level is 17 989.

*Tepelena district* has a population 50.637 inhabitants and surface 817 km<sup>2</sup> and average population density 62 inh./km<sup>2</sup> and an average height above sea level 732m. Tepelena municipality has 9395 inhabitants; McMalliaj municipality has 8448 inhabitants and the communes 32.726 inhabitants. The district center is Tepelena town.

The population of *Permeti district* is spread in two towns and 99 villages. The towns are: Permeti with 11.048 inhabitants and average population density 2000 inh./km<sup>2</sup> and Kelcyra with 4520 inhabitants and average population density 2000inh./km<sup>2</sup>. The village population is 26260 inhabitants and density 29 inh./km<sup>2</sup>. The general number of the district families is nearly 9900 spread as below:

4230 families in towns and

5632 families in villages.

The average number of population per families is 3.7 persons per family and in the village is 4.7 persons.

#### Population distribution in Gjirokastra Prefecture

	Gjirokaster			%	Tepelene			%	Permet			%
	Female	Male			Female	Male			Female	Male		
<b>District</b>	<b>77,409</b>	39.094	38.853		<b>50,637</b>	24.497	25.468		<b>42,027</b>	20.732	21.295	
<b>Municipality</b>	35,293	18.306	17.635	46	17,911	8.880	8.951	35	15,860	7858	8008	42
<b>Communes</b>	42,116	20.788	21.217	54	32,726	15617	16.517	65	26.167	12874	13239	58

60% of prefecture population lives in villages or rural areas and the rest in the urban areas or towns. The number of population that lives in the Prefecture municipalities is 68.940 inhabitants, 34.732 of whom are females and 34.212 are males; it's nearly the same number for both sexes. In the Communes this number is 100.964 inhabitants, 50.450 of whom are females and 50.445 are males.

In the last 10year period the number of the urban the rural population has increased as a result of the mechanic movement of the natural increase of this population. The demography according to the urban and rural centers is given in the Table 12.

### Economy

In Gjirokastra Prefecture the Labor force is as it appears in Table 13.

#### Basic Demography of Gjirokaster Prefecture

	PREFECTURE					DISTRICTS				
	End	Medio		Gjirokaster		Permet	Tepelene			
	1998	1999								
Municipality	169,777	169,908	41%	77,409	46%	41,862	38%	17,911	35%	50,637
	68,724	68,944		35,293		15,740				

Communes	101,053	100,964	59%	42,116	54%	26,122	62%	32,726	65%
<b>People in work age</b>	<b>65,972</b>	<b>83,714</b>		<b>38,338</b>		<b>20,548</b>		<b>24,828</b>	
active people	48,929	67,800		29,575		17,478		20,747	
unemployed people	8,075	6,946		2,640		2,200		2,106	
student and invalid people	8,968	8,968		6,123		870		1,975	
<b>Active people</b>	<b>48,929</b>	<b>67,800</b>		<b>29,575</b>		<b>17,478</b>		<b>20,747</b>	
Farmers	24,003	23,770	35%	10,358	35%	6,272	36%	7,140	34%
Employees	13,210	13,042	19%	7,273	25%	2,580	15%	3,189	15%
Unaccounted for	11,716	30,988	46%	11,944	40%	8,626	49%	10,418	50%

Source: Statistic Department Gjirokastra Prefecture office

### Workforce in Gjirokaster Prefecture

SECTORS		1998	1999		Gjirokaster		Permet		Tepelena	
<b>Farmers</b>		<b>24,003</b>	<b>23,770</b>		<b>10,358</b>		<b>6,272</b>		<b>7,140</b>	
	crop	9,715	8,993	38%	4,172	40%	2,757	44%	2,064	29%
	livestock	13,089	13,578	57%	5,667	55%	3,197	51%	4,714	66%
	others	1,199	1,199	5%	519	5%	318	5%	362	5%
<b>Employees</b>		<b>13,210</b>	<b>13,042</b>		<b>7,273</b>		<b>2,580</b>		<b>3,189</b>	
	Public subjects	10,085	9,897	76%	5,100	70%	1,922	74%	2,875	90%
	Private subjects	3,125	3,145	24%	2,173	30%	658	26%	314	10%

As mentioned above agriculture (including animal husbandry, forests and pasture grounds) is and will be even in the future the main force of the economic development of the region. Some of the main existing problems that influence the increase of agricultural products are the following:

- The small number of farms and lack of their organization. It results on the small number of cattle, which in most cases are breed in family level with 1:2 cows and 10:30 sheep and goats. The lack of experience of the operation methods in the free market economy.
- Absence of high quality of different seeds, the poor quality of animal husbandry and small number of their breeding, lack of proteins in animal's food.
- Lack of granting credits for the farmers
- The inadequate network of irrigation, lack of maintenance and improvements.
- Lack of sensibility of the industrial and municipal centers about the productive areas and the main markets of the agricultural products.
- Lack of such places for agricultural products processing.
- Low level of incomes of domestic (household) consumers and lack of any possibility for foreign investment in the Prefecture and the export of these products as well brings about a great disadvantage for our region.

The primary sectors for *Gjirokastra* district are:

- Agriculture
- Animal husbandry
- Commerce

The most important economic activity in the villages is agriculture. Much of the agriculture is subsistent farming but a large portion of the agricultural activity gives some income. Livestock is the most important money earner. 55% of the farmers have livestock, 40% deals only with crops while 5% are dealing with various other farming activities. There are about 7,800 cows from which milk and meat are sold locally. There are about 145,000 sheep and 40,000 goats in the district. A substantial amount of sheep meat is probably sold to Greece (smuggled) and the milk is used for cheese production. The cheese is sold in the domestic market and Gjirokaster Prefecture is famous for its dairy products.

The other parts of the agriculture are rather under developed due to lack of equipment and irrigation systems.

Due to the proximity to Greece and the language skills in the Greek minority trade with Greece is an important economic activity. There are several big wholesalers in the district that serves the rest of Albania with a large variety of goods imported from Greece.

Because of a constant influx of people seeking visas to Greece at the Greek Consulate in Gjirokaster town, there are at any time around 250 people in Gjirokaster. This is an important source of income for local restaurants and shops as well as hotels and family guesthouses.

The flagship of the Gjirokaster industry is the Glina mineral water factory, which has positioned it self to be the “national” mineral water of Albania. The factory is situated near a mineral water spring in Libohova Qender commune on the eastern side of the valley, near the Greek border. Other beverage producers are Fresh Company, which produce a number of different soft drinks, and Boukas Company, which produces alcoholic beverages.

There is a tendency of a Maquilladora [\[1\]](#) effect in Gjirokaster district. There are several garment factories in Gjirokaster most with 50-100 workers but two has over 100 workers, all are producing for the Greek market. Hundreds of housewives are engaged in embroidery of “Greek handicrafts” for the tourist market in Greece. There are also export of furniture, processed marble, and natural stone for buildings and shoes.

There are also several small factories producing for the domestic market. Examples of products are paint, paint boxes, fences, plastic bags and several types of construction components.

The priority sectors in *Tepelena* district are:

- Animal husbandry
- Commerce

It is difficult to point out the economic level of Tepelena district. Apparently this level seems to be lower than the other two districts of the Prefecture. The height above sea level influences in the raising of animals. This sector is the main resource of the incomes in the private economies of Tepelena families.

66% of the farms deal with animal breeding, 29% deal with wheat's growing, and 5% with other agricultural activities. In Tepelena district are 275.974 sheep and 12.449 cows.

From the economic point of view and that of exploitation here exists the possibility to build up factories, dairies for the processing of animal husbandry's by products. Today, here exist some primitive dairies, which in a spontaneous way process the milk to make cheese and other by-products.

Tepelena has a Mediterranean microclimate and this makes possible the growing of olives. There are 41.260 roots of olive trees. We can also mention even the vineyards with 38.680 roots of grapes.

In Tepelena district are grown and collected in an individual way the medical plants (tealeaves, orchids, phomis, trigonella, lindon tree leaves, juniper, wormwood, laurel tree leaves etc). These plants are collected by wholesale dealers of the other districts and are exported privately in the European countries.

There isn't any kind of industry in the region except the Factory of Mineral Water that packs the water in plastic bottles labeled "Uji Ftohte Tepelene" (Figure 8), which is invested by Italians.

There are two mines of coal and phosphor in MeMalliaj and Gusmar, which as a result of the old technology and lack of demand in our markets do not function any more.

The only trade that is developed in Tepelena is the trade of goods and agricultural products, which supply all its consumers.

There are some cafés restaurants and hotels in the town center with 32 rooms and 48 beds.

Vjosa River makes possible the growing and cultivation of fish especially that of river trout. So, the first private reservoir of trout is set up near the Bridge of Hormova village. Although it is in its first steps, this business is very successful and it promises a lot even for the future.



**Sparkling water factory : "Cold Water"**

Economic data for *Permeti* district

The agricultural sector is the moving force of the local economy. The products in which the district is specialized are:

Fruits, medicinal plants, vineyards, tobacco, goats, raki, wood and wooden products, wheat that is traditionally grown in this region etc.

There are some factories in Permet: the factory of tiles in Kelcyra, tailors' workshop in Permet (Ltd), furniture shops in Permet and Poultry near Permet etc.

In Permet and Kelcyra are concentrated all the main workshops of the district.

## **Tourism**

Gjirokastra Prefecture displays a great interest in tourism, due to its geographical position and cultural, historical and architectonic heritage. The development of tourism is the priority of the region not only for the present but even for its future because with it is closely related the infrastructure, urbanization, industry, agriculture etc.

Its great historical, architectonic, cultural, natural values that offer a lot of landscapes and tourist sites of the prefecture make the essential basis to be frequented by different visitors not only of the country but even foreigners.

So the maintenance of these tourist values of this region in general and especially Gjirokastra town must be one of the main preoccupations of state Institutions, NGO-s and above all it's a duty of people in towns and villages to be conscious and sensible towards these values. Up to now this tourist potential of this region is in little efficiency. A tourist town like Gjirokastra serves at the same time not only as a regional market center but

even as an interregional one. Tourist sites like Valley of Benca, uji Ftohte Tepelene, Kelcyra Pass, National Park “Fir tree of Hotova”, Viroi, Sotira etc are great reservations for the development of hotels, gastronomy, retail market etc.

Tourism has always been considered as the most substantial sector in the future development of the region.

## **Geomorphology**

The territory of Gjirokastra prefecture from the geomorphology point of view displays the most visible diversity with forms, elements and such phenomena that directly reflect in the development of tourism. The basic morphologic features of the region are firstly specified according to the structure, lithologic components and the conditions of paleo (old) geographic development. So the most important elements are fields, valleys, hills and mountains and the specific ground and underground ecosystems. The horizontal parcelling of the relief reaches these figures 0,1 – 5km. Km<sup>2</sup>. whereas the vertical parcelling reaches in some sectors 800-1000km, km<sup>2</sup>. The complexity of the factors such as those of relief formation, has defined the diversity of different types of relief, the most predominant of which are Q structural-erosive, rivers, Karstic, icy relief etc.

### **Plains, rivers, lakes**

The territory of Gjirokastra Prefecture is characterized by a mountainous and valley relief, in which mountains and valleys are predominant and the most characteristic morphologic feature is the combination of the mountain ranges with the valley. From west to east there is this formation: the mountain range Stugare-Mali I Gjere – high plateau of Kurvelesh. Drino’s valley. Mountains range Shendelli-Lunxheri-Bureto, Pogon-Zagori-Mezhgoran’s valleys. Mountainous Trebeshine- Dhembel-Nemercke.Vjosa valley. Mountainous range Melesine-Postelan. The mountainous ranges and valleys have a general Southeastern and northwestern direction. They are cut off by a number of narrow and deep passes and gorges that show for a rough and parcelled terrain. The highest points of this relief are to be found on southeast, in mount Nemercka 2486m (Drita’s peak).

## **Geology**

Gjirokastra Prefecture is distinguished for its plain geological construction. It is stretched on the outer southern Albanides and is included oh the Ionic –tectonic area. We can find on its lithological components the followings: evaporites, carbonates, flysch, molasses and quaternary depositions. The oldest depositions are the evaporites, which are in a limited area in the forms of molecules in Fushebardhe. Kurvelesh. Glina and Peshkepi. The carbonated formations of different ages can be found in such areas belonging from the upper Triassic up to Paleogene. These are widely spread and are found mostly in the shoulders of the mountainous ranges. The Quaternary depositions are widely spread in the valleys of Vjosa, Drino and other branches of these rivers and they are to be found

even at the foot of the mountains. From the tectonic point of view, the structural organization of this territory is very simple.

It is characterized by the settings and alterations one after the other of the anticline and syncline structures in which we can mention the anticline zone of Berat, the synclinal zone of Permet and Drino-MeMalliaj. The powerful tectonic processes are accompanied even with the clear cutting of these areas such as those of Dhrovjan-Selenice. Borsh-Kardhiq. Vlore- Tepelene. These processes have a close relation to the seismic ones that are still active even nowadays.

## Land Use

The rational exploitation of the farmland in our Prefecture is 70% of the arable land that is cultivated and the other part is left out of being cultivated. This surface is a great reserve, which will reflect on the increase of agricultural products and the incomes too, because the arable land per head of the population is nowadays very low, at about 0,2 ha/head. So, it is necessary to consolidate the ownership of land. In reality only 71% of the farmland is divided to the people and 12000ha has been refused by them and this makes 11% of the refused farmland in Republic level. The ending of this reform about the ownership of the land will be the basis to normalize the functional market of land.

**Land use in Gjirokastra Prefecture**

<b>District</b>	<b>Total Surface</b>	<b>Agriculture</b>	<b>Pasture</b>	<b>Forest</b>	<b>Other</b>
Gjiorkastra	113,734 ha	16,730 ha 15%	41,291ha 36%	29,124 ha 26%	26,580 ha 23%
Tepelena	81.700 ha	14,526 ha 18%	30,643 ha 38%	17,190 ha 21%	19,341 ha 23%
Permet	92,956 ha	13,055 ha 14%	23,169 ha 26%	38,348 ha 41%	17,934 ha 19%

In Gjirokastra Prefecture (Table 14) are widely spread all the vertical zones of lands. But those that are mostly widespread are the grayish - brown and brownish lands which are located on the lower part of the relief. The lawn lands are spread on the height 1500m above sea level. A considerable territory occupies even the rocky terrain and the sterile skeleton grounds.

## Environment, natural resources

Ecosystems are geomorphologic elements that play a special and important role to the environmental development biological diversity, protection and preservation of the

surroundings. Generally here exist highly slanted territories, so there are various kinds of such ecosystems like that of the rivers, valleys or fields, the hilly-mountainous ecosystems, pastures, rocky ecosystems, canyons etc. The thing that attracts everybody's attention is that in a small territory there are 2 or more kind of ecosystems for example: on Kelcyra Pass through only a look you can notice the ecosystem of the river, hill and that alpine. The same ecosystems are to be found in Benca pass as well.

The ecosystems in this region are rare phenomenon with tourist values and play a considerable role in the development of tourism. You are astonished by how this ecosystems change suddenly from the horizontal direction to the vertical one, of the roughness of this terrain and the great contrasts that exist between them.

### **Flora and fauna**

The flora of Gjirokastra prefecture is very rich in diversity and it's stretching as well. This expresses the mutual and complex cooperation of the lithologic construction, climacteric and soil conditions from different vegetation's stories, which are very difficult to be distinguished, the one from the other, not only on the vertical direction but even that horizontal. They are mixed with each other. The wide variety of plants and woods are characterizing Flora. There are 420 species that contains vessels. If we refer to the Albanian species, which are 3250, 13% belong to Gjirokastra territory. Another important feature of Gjirokastra prefecture flora except its diversity is even its Balkan character. By the researches that are done in Albanian flora (there aren't any analysis for Gjirokastra flora) it is concluded that the Balkan floristic element is only 22% of all Albanian flora. Approximately 15% species are Balkan ones that is to say you can find them only in the Balkan Peninsula whereas the other part are sub-Balkan spread in a wider area. Gjirokastra flora is distinguished even for its Mediterranean character. So the Mediterranean floristic element consists in a great number of species, which are divided in their respective percentages into Euro-Mediterranean climate. Another element is the European floristic character, which reflects considerably in the Albanian flora and 18% of the species that are found here. The southern European species are the most widely spread in this territory. The relation of our flora with that of the southern are is not strong because here influences even the Greek element. The number of species that are the same with the Greek ones is 150 and they are mostly spread in this area with Mediterranean bushes.

The Mediterranean species that predominate in the vegetation covering of the region are spread in 4 vertical and phytoclimacteric belt: bushes belt which is widely spread in the lowlands: oak trees belt, it is the most important belt in the region. Mediterranean fir tree represented by the coniferous like: Macedonian fir tree, white fir tree and black plane trees which are grown on the altitudes 1000-18000m above sea level. The highest belt is that of alpine pastures, which are spread in the altitude 1700-2400m and the vegetation, here form very rich pastures.

There are a lot of medicinal and curative plants. The number reaches 50 kinds of such plants. The animal kingdom is represented by the meat eaters, herbivores, different kinds of birds and wide variety of fish which are raised in the inter and sweet waters of the rivers. The most widely spread animals are hares, deer, wild boars, marten, bears, wild cat etc, in the rivers are lurking different kinds of fish like trout eels etc.