

# French Tourism to Albania - 2024 Comprehensive Analysis

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April 2025

## Executive Summary

This comprehensive report examines the evolving patterns and preferences of French tourists visiting Albania in 2024. As one of Albania's fastest-growing tourism markets, French visitors represent a significant strategic opportunity for the country's developing tourism sector.

Based on data collected from multiple sources, including border statistics, accommodation providers, and visitor surveys, this report provides actionable insights for tourism stakeholders, businesses, and policymakers interested in the French market segment.

### Key highlights from this 2024 report include:

- Approximately **210,000** French tourists visited Albania in 2024, solidifying France's position among the top Western European source markets
- French arrivals have demonstrated exceptional growth, with strong momentum in the post-pandemic recovery phase
- French tourists contributed an estimated **€89.7 million** to the Albanian economy in 2024
- The market shows increasing interest in diverse experiences beyond beach tourism, including cultural heritage and adventure tourism

- France represents a strategically important source for market diversification away from traditional regional visitors

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## Visitor Trends

French tourist arrivals to Albania have grown dramatically in recent years, particularly in the post-pandemic recovery phase. From the pandemic low in 2020, the market has expanded steadily to reach approximately 210,000 visitors in 2024, establishing France as an increasingly important source market for Albanian tourism.

### Key Insight:

French tourism to Albania has demonstrated remarkable recovery and growth, with 2024 showing an estimated 20-30% year-over-year increase in arrivals. This growth rate significantly outpaces the overall foreign tourism growth of 15.2% for the year, highlighting France's exceptional momentum.

### Year-by-Year Growth

#### Annual French Visitors to Albania (2020-2024)

Year	Estimated French Arrivals	Estimated YoY Growth	Total Foreign Arrivals	Overall YoY Growth
2020	< 30,000	-70% to -80% (est.)	2,657,818	-59%
2021	60,000 - 80,000	+100% to +170% (est.)	5,688,649	+114%
2022	100,000 - 120,000	+40% to +80% (est.)	7,543,817	+32.6%
2023	150,000 - 170,000	+30% to +60% (est.)	10,100,000	+35%
2024	~210,000	+20% to +30% (est.)	11,700,000	+15.2%

*Note: French arrival figures and YoY growth rates are estimates based on overall trends, partial data, and qualitative reports.*

This growth trajectory reflects several factors, including Albania's increased visibility in French media, its compelling value proposition compared to other Mediterranean destinations, improved air connectivity, and focused marketing efforts in Western European markets.

### Seasonality

French tourism to Albania demonstrates a distinct seasonal pattern, though with signs of gradual diversification throughout the year.

### Seasonal Distribution

Season	Months	Estimated % of Annual Total	Trends
Summer Peak	July-August	65-70%	Beach tourism dominance
Shoulder (Spring)	April-June	10-15%	Growing interest for cultural tourism
Shoulder (Fall)	September-October	12-15%	Popular with older travelers
Winter	November-March	5-10%	Gradual growth for city breaks

### Key Seasonal Patterns

- **Summer Concentration:** The majority of French tourists visit during the peak summer months, primarily drawn by Albania's coastal attractions along the Albanian Riviera. This pattern is consistent with typical European summer holiday periods, when beach destinations see their highest visitation.
- **Shoulder Season Growth:** French travel guides often recommend spring and autumn as ideal times to visit Albania, encouraging interest in these periods. Cultural tourists, hikers, and those seeking milder weather with fewer crowds increasingly choose these seasons for their visits.
- **Off-Season Potential:** While historically the quietest period, winter is seeing gradual growth in French visitors, particularly for city breaks to Tirana and potentially niche interests like skiing in the north. Data

shows French tourists represented 5% of non-resident accommodation visitors even in January 2025, indicating year-round interest.

The gradual extension of the tourist season aligns with Albania's national tourism strategy, which aims to promote year-round visitation. For the French market, interest in cultural sites, urban experiences, and outdoor activities contributes to this promising trend of seasonal diversification.

## **Travel Motivations**

French tourists are attracted to Albania for a diverse range of experiences, with several key motivations driving their decision to visit.

### **Primary Travel Motivations**

#### **Affordability and Value for Money**

One of the most compelling factors for French visitors is Albania's affordability compared to other Mediterranean destinations. The significant cost advantage for accommodations, dining, and activities makes Albania highly attractive, especially for budget-conscious travelers, families, and young people seeking value without compromising on experiences.

#### **Beaches and Coastal Beauty**

The Albanian Riviera, with its turquoise waters and scenic landscapes, is a primary draw for French tourists during summer. Areas like Ksamil, Saranda, Himara, and Dhermi offer beautiful beaches often compared favorably to Greek islands but perceived as less crowded and more affordable. This coastal attraction forms the backbone of summer visitation.

### **Cultural and Historical Exploration**

Albania's rich and complex history spanning Illyrian, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, and 20th-century periods holds significant appeal for French visitors interested in cultural tourism. UNESCO World Heritage sites like Butrint, Berat, and Gjirokastër are major cultural magnets, while Tirana's blend of architectural styles and museums attracts those interested in the country's more recent history.

### **Nature, Landscapes, and Adventure**

Beyond the coast, Albania's diverse geography attracts French hikers, nature enthusiasts, and adventure seekers. The dramatic Albanian Alps in the north (Theth, Valbona), national parks, mountains, and Lake Koman offer spectacular settings for outdoor activities. The country's 15 national parks and pristine natural areas provide diverse opportunities for nature-based tourism.

### **Authenticity and Novelty**

For many French travelers, Albania represents a relatively undiscovered corner of Europe, offering authentic experiences compared to heavily touristed destinations. The perception of being "off the beaten track" while still being accessible creates a sense of discovery that appeals to adventurous French tourists seeking novel destinations.

These diverse motivations allow Albania to attract a broad spectrum of the French travel market, from beach vacationers to cultural enthusiasts and adventure travelers. This multifaceted appeal creates resilience and growth potential across different travel segments and seasons.

## Demographics & Travel Styles

While specific demographic data for French tourists to Albania is limited, key patterns can be identified based on travel motivations, general European travel behaviors, and qualitative observations.

### Likely Demographic Segments

- **Young Adults (18-30):** This segment is drawn to Albania's affordability, vibrant nightlife (especially in Tirana and coastal towns), beaches, and adventure opportunities. They often travel solo, as couples, or in small groups, frequently choosing budget accommodations like hostels or guesthouses.
- **Couples (30-55):** A significant portion of French visitors fall in this category, seeking a mix of relaxation on the Riviera, cultural exploration, scenic drives, and good value for money. They typically travel independently, often renting cars for flexibility.
- **Families:** Albania's family appeal comes from affordable prices, safe environment, attractive beaches with calm waters, and potential for engaging cultural experiences. Family travelers often prefer apartment rentals or family-friendly hotels.
- **Older Travelers/Seniors (55+):** This growing segment is particularly interested in Albania's history and cultural heritage. They tend to prefer traveling during the milder shoulder seasons and may opt for more comfortable accommodations or organized tours.

## Travel Styles

The French market comprises various travel styles, with independent travel being predominant. Solo travelers, couples, and families arranging their own trips are common, driven by desires for authenticity, flexibility, and value. While organized tours catering to French speakers are less dominant than in more established destinations, they are growing, particularly for cultural circuits or hiking itineraries.

## Accommodation Preferences

French visitors utilize a diverse range of accommodation options:

- **Hotels:** From budget to mid-range in cities and coastal resorts
- **Guesthouses (Bujtina):** Popular in rural and mountainous areas, offering authentic local experiences
- **Apartment Rentals:** Significant for families, groups, or longer stays
- **Hostels:** Primarily used by younger, budget-conscious travelers
- **Camping:** An option for more adventurous travelers

It's worth noting that official statistics capture only a portion of actual stays, as many accommodations remain unregistered. The French market appears to value authentic, comfortable, and affordable lodging options that allow them to experience local hospitality.

## Top Destinations Visited

French tourists exploring Albania are drawn to a combination of coastal beauty, historical significance, and natural landscapes, with several key destinations dominating their itineraries.

## Primary Destinations

### Tirana

As Albania's capital and main international gateway, Tirana serves as both an entry point and a destination in its own right for French visitors. Its unique blend of Ottoman, Italian, and Soviet-influenced architecture, vibrant café culture, museums (like Bunk'Art), and overall urban energy make it appealing for city breaks and cultural exploration.

### Albanian Riviera

The southern Ionian coastline is a major draw for French summer visitors, with several key hotspots:

- **Saranda:** A major coastal city and hub for exploring the south
- **Ksamil:** Famous for its beautiful beaches and small islands, often compared to Greek islands
- **Himara & Dhermi:** Coastal towns known for stunning beaches and relaxed atmosphere

### UNESCO World Heritage Sites

These cultural landmarks feature prominently in French tourist itineraries:

- **Berat:** Known as the "City of a Thousand Windows" for its Ottoman architecture cascading down a hillside
- **Gjirokastër:** The "City of Stone," a preserved Ottoman town with a commanding castle

- **Butrint:** An extensive archaeological park showcasing ruins from Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Venetian periods, located near Ksamil

## Durrës

Albania's main port city attracts French visitors with its long sandy beaches and significant Roman ruins, particularly the amphitheater. Its proximity to Tirana makes it easily accessible for day trips or as part of a broader itinerary.

## Emerging Destinations

Beyond these established hotspots, French tourists are increasingly exploring:

- **Northern Albania / Albanian Alps:** The villages of Theth and Valbona, the scenic Lake Koman ferry journey, and the gateway city of Shkodra are gaining popularity among French hikers and nature enthusiasts.
- **Inland Cultural Sites:** Locations like the ancient ruins of Apollonia, the cultural city of Korça, and growing agritourism offerings are attracting French travelers seeking authentic experiences beyond the coast.
- **Kruja:** This historic mountain town associated with Albania's national hero Skanderbeg offers significant historical interest and is easily accessible from Tirana.

While coastal destinations and UNESCO sites remain the primary draws for first-time French visitors, the growing interest in northern Alps and other inland areas demonstrates an evolving market seeking more diverse and authentic experiences.

## Length of Stay

Determining the precise average length of stay for French tourists is challenging due to data limitations, but patterns can be identified based on travel behavior and market comparisons.

### Estimated Stay Duration

Official statistics on accommodation establishments show an overall average stay of only 2.4 nights per visitor for 2024, covering both residents and non-residents. However, this figure is heavily influenced by short trips from neighboring countries and captures only stays in registered accommodations.

Given that French tourists travel a greater distance than visitors from neighboring countries and often aim to explore multiple regions, their average stay is likely significantly longer than this overall figure. A reasonable estimate would place typical French visitor stays in the range of **5-10 days**, aligning with standard European holiday lengths and the multi-destination nature of many French itineraries.

### Stay Length by Travel Type

Traveler Type	Typical Stay	Travel Pattern
Cultural Explorers	6-8 nights	Multiple destinations, inland focus
Beach Vacationers	7-10 nights	Primarily coastal, possible day trips
Adventure Travelers	5-10 nights	Mix of mountains and coastal areas

Traveler Type	Typical Stay	Travel Pattern
City Break Visitors	3-4 nights	Concentrated in Tirana and surroundings

The data suggests a gradual but significant shift away from extreme seasonality. Record tourism revenues outside the peak third quarter confirm this trend, with over €1 billion recorded in both Q2 and Q4 of 2024 for the first time. This extension of the tourist season is actively encouraged by Albania's tourism strategy, which aims to promote year-round visits through diversified offerings.

For the French market, interest in cultural sites, city breaks in Tirana, and hiking in the Alps likely contributes to increased travel during shoulder seasons, supporting a more balanced tourism economy throughout the year.

## Economic Impact & Spending Behavior

French tourism makes a significant and growing contribution to Albania's tourism economy, with distinctive spending patterns emerging.

### Average Spending

According to Bank of Albania data, the average spending per foreign visitor across all nationalities was €427 per trip in 2024, representing a 20% increase compared to 2023. While French-specific spending data is unavailable, this overall average serves as a benchmark.

French tourists may differ from this average in several ways. Their likely longer average stay compared to regional visitors and participation in activities like guided tours or adventure sports suggests potentially

higher spending. Conversely, the emphasis on affordability as a motivation could mean many French visitors are budget-conscious, possibly keeping their average spending closer to or below the overall average.

In the absence of nationality-specific data, applying the overall average of €427 per visit to the estimated 210,000 French visitors yields an approximate total economic contribution of **€89.7 million** for 2024.

## **Spending Context**

This estimated €89.7 million contribution from French tourists represents approximately 1.8% of Albania's total tourism revenue of €4.99 billion in 2024. While this percentage may seem modest compared to dominant markets like Kosovo or Italy, the rapid growth rate of the French market makes its contribution increasingly significant.

The overall tourism sector generated a positive travel balance of €2.3 billion in 2024 (foreign tourist spending minus Albanian spending abroad), highlighting the sector's vital role in the national economy.

Current economic impact appears driven more by the increasing volume of visitors, including from France, rather than exceptional per-visitor spending. While the €427 average spend is positive, particularly given its increase from 2023, it also indicates opportunity for growth. Developing higher-value tourism products, improving service quality, and attracting segments less focused purely on budget considerations could potentially increase the average spend per French visitor, amplifying their economic contribution beyond volume growth.

## **Estimated Economic Impact of French Tourism in Albania (2024)**

Metric	Value	Notes
Estimated French Visitor Arrivals	~210,000	Estimate based on partial data and growth trends
Average Spend per Foreign Visitor (per trip)	€427	Figure for all nationalities; French-specific data unavailable
Estimated Total Spending by French Visitors	~€89.7 million	Calculation: Est. Arrivals * Avg. Spend
Total Albanian Tourism Revenue (All Foreigners)	€4.99 billion	Record high for 2024
Estimated French Share of Total Tourism Revenue	~1.8%	Calculation: Est. French Spending / Total Revenue

## Market Comparison

Benchmarking the French market against other key source countries provides perspective on its relative size, growth dynamics, and strategic importance within Albania's tourism portfolio.

### Comparative Analysis (2024 Estimates)

Source Market	Estimated Visitor Arrivals	Market Share (%)	YoY Growth (%)	ALOS (Qualitative)	Strategic Importance
France	~210,000	~1.8%	+20-30%	Medium-Long (5-10 days)	High growth, Western EU diversification, aligns with cultural/nature goals
Italy	~900,000	~7.7%	Strong (Consolidating)	Medium-Long	Largest Western EU market, established presence
Germany	~400,000	~3.4%	+28%	Medium-Long	Strong growth, important Western EU market
UK	~200,000 (similar level)	~1.7%	Strong (Consolidating)	Medium-Long	Significant Western EU market
Kosovo	3.5-4.0 Million	~30-34%	Moderate/Stable	Short-Medium	Dominant regional market by volume

*Note: Market share calculated based on 11.7M total arrivals. Average Length of Stay (ALOS) is inferred based on travel patterns.*

## Strategic Importance Assessment

France holds significant strategic value for Albanian tourism for several reasons:

1. **Market Diversification:** It provides crucial diversification away from the heavy reliance on regional markets (Kosovo, North Macedonia) and Italy. A broader base of source markets enhances sector resilience.

2. **Growth Potential:** As a large European nation with a strong outbound travel culture, France represents a substantial pool of potential visitors. The current high growth rate suggests significant untapped potential.
3. **Alignment with Strategic Goals:** French tourists' demonstrated interest in cultural heritage, nature/adventure, and travel outside the peak summer season directly aligns with Albania's national strategy to promote diversified, year-round, and sustainable tourism.
4. **Potential for Higher Value:** While currently attracted significantly by affordability, the French market includes segments (e.g., cultural tourists, experienced travelers) who may be willing to pay for higher quality and unique experiences as Albania's offerings mature.

Compared to Germany, France currently has lower volume but similar high growth momentum. Compared to the UK, France appears slightly larger or similar in volume but is frequently cited for its recent growth surge. Compared to Italy, France is smaller but growing rapidly, offering diversification within Western Europe. Against Kosovo, France offers a different market dynamic – lower volume but potentially higher per-trip spending and different motivations, contributing more to seasonal and geographical diversification.

The rapid expansion and evolving interests of the French market underscore its importance in contributing to Albania's desired shift toward a more diverse and potentially higher-value tourism product.

## Strategic Outlook

The French market presents significant opportunities for Albanian tourism, but realizing this potential requires strategic planning and investment to address evolving trends and challenges.

## Predicted Future Trends

- **Sustained Growth:** French arrivals are expected to continue growing, driven by positive word-of-mouth, increased media exposure in France, Albania's continued value proposition, and potentially enhanced flight connectivity, though possibly moderating from the exceptionally high rates seen in 2023-2024.
- **Continued Diversification:** The trend toward exploring beyond the coast and traveling outside the peak summer months is likely to strengthen. French tourists interested in hiking, culture, and authentic experiences will increasingly seek out the Northern Alps and inland heritage sites during spring and autumn.
- **Increased Focus on Sustainability:** Growing global awareness suggests French travelers may become more conscious of the environmental and social impacts of their trips, favoring destinations and providers demonstrating responsible practices.
- **Price Sensitivity:** While affordability is a key draw, significant price increases in Albania could dampen demand, particularly among budget-conscious segments. Maintaining a strong value perception (quality relative to price) will be crucial.
- **Maturing Expectations:** As Albania transitions from a novel discovery to a more recognized destination, French visitors' expectations regarding service quality, infrastructure standards, and information availability may rise.

## Strategic Opportunities

1. **Targeted Segment Marketing:** Develop campaigns specifically aimed at French segments like hikers/adventure travelers (promoting the Alps), cultural enthusiasts (heritage trails, festivals), families (safe, affordable beach/activity packages), and potentially seniors (off-season cultural tours).

2. **Digital Engagement:** Leverage French travel bloggers, influencers, and social media platforms to showcase diverse experiences authentically. Ensure key tourism websites and materials are available and optimized in French.
3. **Infrastructure and Service Quality Improvement:** Prioritize continued improvement of the national road network, especially routes accessing the Northern Alps and key inland attractions. Address environmental infrastructure challenges, particularly waste management systems, which can negatively impact visitor experience.
4. **Product Development:** Expand offerings beyond standard tours to include specialized experiences like gastronomy tours, wine tourism, enhanced agritourism stays, or potentially developing niche activities like recreational diving. Focus on improving the quality and consistency of accommodation and services.
5. **Improved Market Intelligence:** Enhance data collection mechanisms to gather more granular information on key source markets like France, including detailed demographics, spending patterns, length of stay, and satisfaction levels. This data is crucial for refining strategies and measuring success.

## Recommendations for Stakeholders

To effectively capture and expand the French market, Albanian tourism stakeholders should:

- **Strengthen French-language capabilities** in key tourism zones, including signage, information materials, and staff language skills
- **Develop strategic partnerships** with French tour operators, travel agencies, and specialized media outlets
- **Invest in training programs** to enhance service standards in the hospitality sector

- **Create thematic routes and experiences** that appeal specifically to French interests in culture, gastronomy, and nature
- **Implement destination management strategies** to mitigate potential over-tourism in hotspots and ensure sustainable development

Albania currently enjoys strong momentum in the French market, largely built on its novelty and affordability. Transitioning this initial interest into sustained, high-value tourism requires a strategic shift towards enhancing quality, diversifying experiences, and investing in the infrastructure necessary to meet evolving expectations of European travelers.

## Conclusion

The French tourism market represents a significant growth opportunity for Albania, with 2024 data showing both impressive volume increases and strategic alignment with the country's tourism development goals. With approximately 210,000 visitors contributing an estimated €89.7 million to the economy, French tourism has established itself as an important component of Albania's diversifying visitor base.

Several factors distinguish the French market and underscore its importance:

1. **Exceptional Growth:** With year-over-year growth estimated at 20-30% in 2024, significantly outpacing the overall market growth of 15.2%, France demonstrates remarkable momentum.
2. **Diverse Interests:** French tourists show interest in Albania's beaches, cultural heritage, and natural landscapes, supporting the country's efforts to develop more varied tourism offerings beyond coastal sun-and-sand holidays.

3. **Seasonal Distribution:** While summer remains dominant, French visitation shows potential for extending into shoulder seasons and winter months, particularly for urban and cultural tourism, aligning with Albania's goal of year-round tourism.
4. **Strategic Value:** As a large Western European source market, France helps reduce Albania's dependence on regional visitors and contributes to market resilience and diversification.

The path forward requires balancing growth with quality, addressing infrastructure challenges, enhancing service standards, and developing more sophisticated tourism products. By effectively nurturing this rapidly growing market segment, Albania has the opportunity to transform French tourism from an emerging trend to a cornerstone of its tourism economy.

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This report draws on data from multiple sources to provide a comprehensive overview of French tourism in Albania.

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## **About AlbaniaVisit Market Research**

The AlbaniaVisit.com market research team specializes in analyzing tourism trends and providing data-driven insights for destinations, businesses, and policymakers in Albania and the wider Balkan region. For partnership inquiries or custom research requests, please contact [info@albaniavisit.com](mailto:info@albaniavisit.com)

“French Tourism in Albania: 2024 Research & Insights.” AlbaniaVisit.com, May 2025,  
<https://albaniavisit.com/research/french-tourism-albania-2024>.